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PICS OF THE WEEK
2026 Saginaw Juneteenth
Celebration festival

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EVOC opens ‘August in August’ series with ‘The Piano Lesson’

EARTHEN VESSELS OF COLOR PRESENTS

THE
PIANO
LESSON
AUGUST WILSON

MEET THE CAST

Jason Sims
AS DOAKER

D. A. Brown
AS BOY WILLIE

Tayvonne Richmond
AS LYMON

Nicole Pennyman
AS BERNIECE

Simone Land
AS MARETHA

Raheem Saltmarsh
AS WINING BOY

Melvin McDowell, Jr.
AS AVERY

Renee Henry
AS GRACE

EVOC

JUL 31- AUG 1 | 7:30 PM

AN EVOC INAUGURAL PRODUCTION

DIRECTED BY
GLECIA WRIGHT-TATUM

THE BEGINNING OF THE AUGUST IN AUGUST SERIES

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — A piano can hold a song. In August Wilson’s hands, it can hold a family’s soul.

That is the power behind “The Piano Lesson,” Wilson’s Pulitzer Prize-winning drama that will come to Saginaw for a two-night run July 31 and Aug. 1 at 7:30 p.m. The production is presented by Earthen Vessels of Color as its inaugural production and the beginning of its “August in August” series.

Directed by Glecia Wright-Tatum, the play brings one of Wilson’s most haunting and beloved works to the local stage. Set in 1930s Pittsburgh, “The Piano Lesson” centers on a family heirloom piano carved with the faces and history of enslaved

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The Piano Lesson



CMU gives final approval to \$100 million medical education building in Saginaw

EDUCATION, PG 28



Saginaw: The swamp that named a college

COMMUNITY, PG 13



Flint PAL uses sports and mentorship to build trust with young people

YOUTH BANNER, COVER



Supreme Court upholds birthright citizenship, bringing relief to immigrant families

LATINO BANNER, PG 2

CELEBRATE THE
4TH OF JULY!

Locally

COMMUNITY, pg 19

From cover, The Piano Lesson

ancestors. To Boy Willie, the piano is a way forward — something that can be sold to buy land and build a future. To Berniece, it is sacred — a living reminder of what their family endured and survived.

Between them sits the question that gives the play its fire: What do we owe the past, and what are we willing to sacrifice for the future?

The Saginaw cast includes Jason Sims as Doaker, D.A. Brown as Boy Willie, Tayvelle Richmond as Lymon, Nicole Pennymon as Berniece, Simone Land as Maretha, Raheem Saltmarsh as Wining Boy, Melvin McDowell Jr. as Avery and Renee Henry as Grace.

Together, they bring life to a story filled with music, memory, family tension and spiritual reckoning. Wilson's characters do not simply speak; they carry generations. They laugh, argue, grieve and dream in a language that feels rooted, poetic and painfully human.

For EVOC, choosing "The Piano Lesson" as its first production is a bold opening statement. It places Black history, Black storytelling and Black theatrical excellence at the center of the stage. It also gives local actors the chance to step into one of the most important works in American drama.

The production also marks the start of the "August in August" series, a fitting tribute to Wilson, whose 10-play American Century Cycle remains one of the great achievements in modern theater. His work reminds audiences that history is not buried. It lives in homes, in songs, in silence — and sometimes, in a piano waiting to be played.

For two nights, Saginaw audiences will be invited into that room.

THIS DAY IN MICHIGAN HISTORY

JULY 1, 1919

Michigan issued its first driver's license **July 1, 1919**, to Gov. Albert E. Sleeper, according to Michigan Secretary of State materials. It marked a turning point as automobiles became central to daily life in the state that helped put America on wheels.

Michigan DRIVER'S LICENSE

DL # S 000 123 456 789
DOB 01/12/1967
JANICE SAMPLE
123 NORTH MAIN ST
LANSING, MI 48918-1234
Sex F Hgt 5'-06"
Class O
Rest Corrective Lens
Eyes BRO
End NONE
DONOR
VETERAN
01/12/67
DD 1200100000123

MICHIGAN BANNER

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MISSION

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

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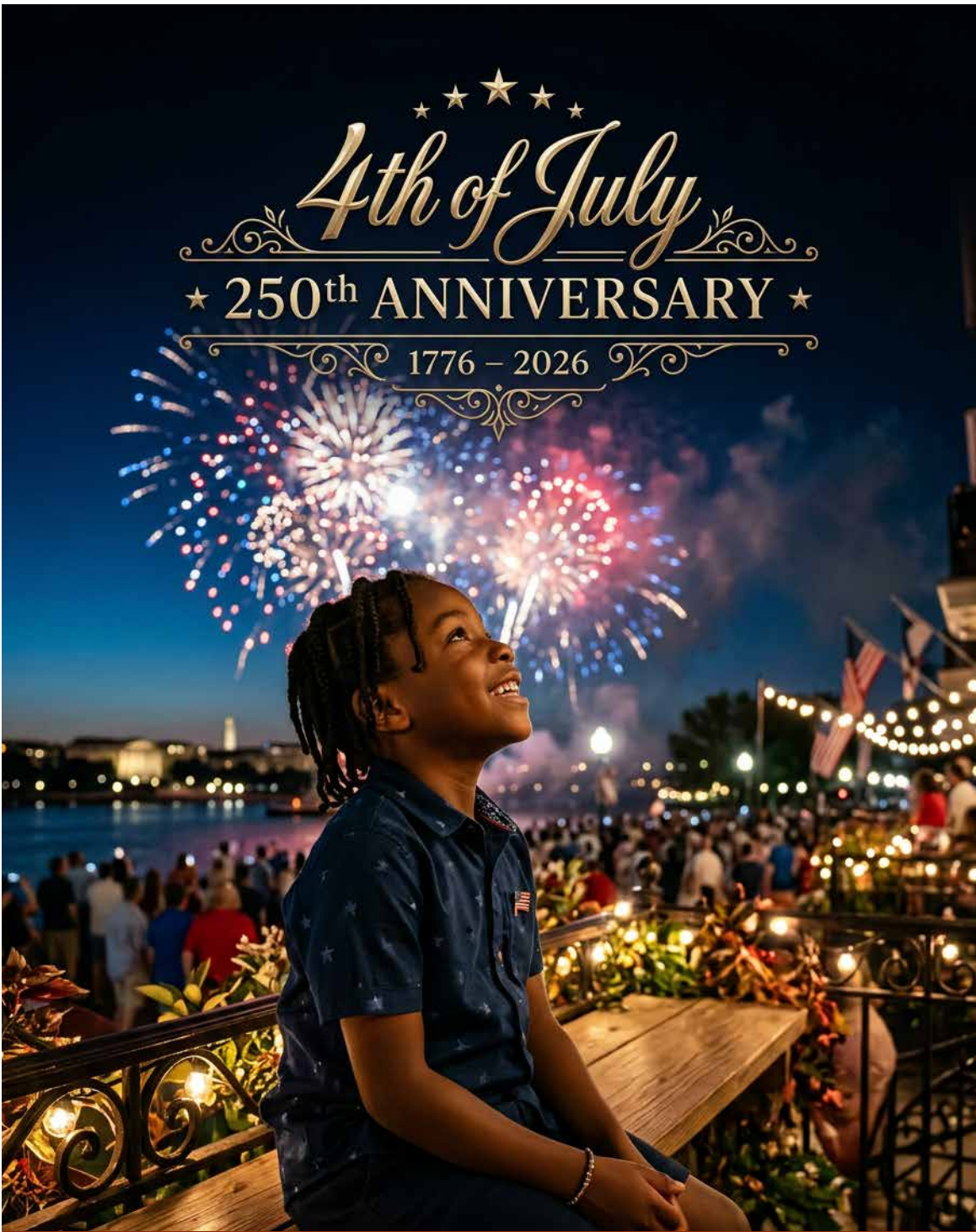
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MICHIGAN YOUTH BANNER

VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 13



Flint PAL uses sports and mentorship to build trust with young people

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. - In Flint, a summer basketball game can become more than a game. It can be a first conversation, a safer place to belong and a chance for a young person to be known by name before trouble ever begins.

The Flint Police Athletic League, often called PAL, was highlighted June 23 as one of the city's youth-centered efforts to build positive relationships between officers and children and teens. The program uses sports and other activities to help prevent violence by giving young people connection, structure and support during a season when school is out and families are looking for safe places for youth to spend time.

Sgt. Paul Spann, with the Flint Police Department, said young people pulled into crime or violence are often looking for acceptance and belonging. PAL attempts to meet that need with something healthier: teams, coaches, activities and adults willing to stay involved.

The program includes basketball, swimming and football. It also connects youth with cooking classes through Mott Culinary Arts, giving participants another pathway to explore skills and careers outside the traditional sports setting.

The work is taking place as Flint leaders continue to wrestle with youth violence and public safety. City data reported in June showed people under 18 accounted for nearly 30% of violent crime in Flint in 2025, a number that



FLINT POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE PROGRAMS ARE USING SPORTS, COOKING CLASSES AND MENTORING TO CONNECT CHILDREN AND TEENS WITH POSITIVE ACTIVITIES AND TRUSTED ADULTS. (PHOTO CREDIT: FLINT PAL)

has intensified conversations about prevention, recreation, jobs, mentoring and curfews.

PAL's approach is personal. Officers are not only responding to calls. They are showing up in gyms, pools, fields and classrooms. For young people, that can change how authority feels. For officers, it creates a chance to meet youth before a 911 call, traffic stop or investigation.

Milan Bowling, 18, is one example of the program's reach. Bowling came through PAL and was serving as a site supervisor, mentoring younger children. He said the program helped expose him to jobs and connections, including work with Flint's Depart-

ment of Public Works in downtown Flint.

That kind of experience matters because violence prevention is not only about stopping bad decisions. It is also about creating better options. A young person who has a coach, a summer job, a safe activity and a reason to be somewhere at a certain time is less likely to be left to the pull of the street.

Sports cannot fix every challenge in Flint. A practice cannot erase poverty, trauma or family pressure. But it can build discipline. It can give a child a place to be proud. It can put an officer and a teenager on the same team.

As the city considers broader

youth safety strategies this summer, Flint PAL offers a reminder that public safety can begin with a whistle, a court, a meal, a mentor and a young person who finally feels seen.



Midland youth help shape local giving as community foundation awards \$359K in grant



: THE MIDLAND AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION APPROVED \$359,053 IN SECOND-QUARTER GRANTS, INCLUDING TWO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MIDLAND AREA YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL. (FB/MIDLAND AREA YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL)

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. - Midland youth are not only the subjects of community investment. They are helping decide where some of that investment goes.

The Midland Area Community Foundation announced in late June that its Board of Trustees approved 11 grants totaling \$359,053 during the second quarter of 2026. The grants support community development, education, health, youth services and family support throughout Midland County.

Two of the grants were recommended by the Midland Area Youth Action Council, giving young residents a formal voice in

local philanthropy. That involvement turns grantmaking into a civic classroom, where students learn how needs are identified, how nonprofit programs work and how dollars can affect families they may know.

The second-quarter awards ranged from \$7,500 to \$60,000 and aligned with the foundation's community improvement areas: Building Our Livelihood, Developing Our Talent, Caring for Our People and Enriching Our Community.

Among the largest awards were \$60,000 grants to Big Brothers Big Sisters for a youth mentorship pilot, Shelterhouse for domestic violence services and Cancer Services for free patient support. Other grants sup-

ported schools, advocacy organizations, workforce readiness and services intended to expand access and strengthen organizational capacity.

Sharon Mortensen, president and CEO of the Midland Area Community Foundation, said the grantmaking reflects collaborative, donor-driven investment in long-term community transformation. The foundation also described the work as trust-based philanthropy, an approach that emphasizes relationships with nonprofits and practical support for the people closest to the work.

Youth involvement is especially meaningful because adults often talk about what young people need without giving them a seat at the table. Students can

speak directly about barriers affecting their peers, including transportation, mental health, belonging, tutoring, mentoring and safe activities outside school hours.

The grant cycle also shows how connected community needs are. A mentoring pilot, a domestic violence service, a cancer support program, a school initiative and a workforce project may look separate on paper. In real life, they can support the same families.

For Midland County, the June grants represent more than a funding list. They show a community trying to build capacity, respond to need and teach the next generation that giving is also a form of leadership.

Flint leaders consider earlier youth curfew after teen crime concerns

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. - Flint leaders returned to a difficult question June 22: What should the city do when some of its youngest residents are both at risk and, in some cases, involved in serious violence?

City officials discussed the possibility of moving youth curfew hours earlier for children under 17 after data showed people under 18 accounted for nearly 30% of violent crime in Flint in 2025. No formal proposal was expected to be introduced during the initial discussion, but council members signaled interest in revisiting the city's existing rules.

Mayor Sheldon Neeley said Flint is already trying to create more structure for young people through summer jobs and new recreation sites. He also noted that curfew policy is not new territory for him. Neeley was a Flint councilman when the city revised curfew rules nearly two decades ago, including daytime curfews during school hours.

The current rules vary by age and time of year. During summer, some teens are allowed to remain out as late as midnight. City leaders are now exploring whether those hours should be moved earlier as part of a larger effort to reduce late-night incidents.

The debate is not simple. Supporters of stricter curfews say earlier hours could give parents backup, help police intervene before violence escalates and reduce the number of young people on the streets late at night. Critics of curfews often warn that enforcement can fall unevenly, sweep up youth who are not causing trouble and strain relationships between police and families.

Neeley said any curfew change would need wraparound



FLINT OFFICIALS ARE REVIEWING WHETHER YOUTH CURFEW HOURS SHOULD BE MOVED EARLIER AFTER CITY DATA SHOWED MINORS ACCOUNTED FOR NEARLY 30% OF VIOLENT CRIME IN 2025 (MB GENERATED PHOTO).

support, including coordination with the judicial system, the Michigan State Police and city administration. That matters because a curfew without follow-up can become only a ticket or warning. A curfew connected to youth services, parental communication, transportation, jobs and recreation can become part of a prevention strategy.

For families, the issue is immediate. Parents want their chil-

dren safe. Neighborhoods want peace. Young people want places to go and adults who expect something from them. Officers need clear tools that are fair, consistent and focused on behavior rather than simply treating every young person outside after dark as a suspect.

The curfew conversation comes alongside other summer youth efforts in Flint, including job training and programs

such as the Flint Police Athletic League. Together, those initiatives point to the same reality: rules alone cannot raise children, and programs alone cannot prevent every dangerous night.

Flint's challenge is deciding not only what time young people should be home, but what the city is willing to build for them before the sun goes down.



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Latino Banner

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DIVERSIDAD

VAMOS ADELANTE

Supreme Court upholds birthright citizenship, bringing relief to immigrant families

BY MB STAFF

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Supreme Court on June 30 upheld birthright citizenship, preserving a constitutional guarantee that has shaped American identity for more than 150 years and bringing relief to immigrant families across the country.

The ruling rejected President Donald Trump's executive order that sought to deny citizenship to some children born in the United States to parents who were in the country unlawfully or temporarily. The court held that those children are subject to U.S. jurisdiction and are citizens at birth under the Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment.

For Latino and immigrant families, the decision carried immediate emotional weight. Birthright citizenship is not an abstract legal phrase for parents planning a future, enrolling children in school, applying for documents or working toward stability. It is the difference between a child being born into recognized belonging and being born into legal uncertainty.

The 14th Amendment was ratified in 1868 after the Civil War. Its Citizenship Clause states that all persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to its jurisdiction are citizens of the United States and of the state where they reside. The Supreme Court's 1898 decision in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* has long stood as a central precedent protecting citizenship for children born on U.S. soil, with narrow exceptions such



THE U.S. SUPREME COURT RULED JUNE 30 THAT CHILDREN BORN IN THE UNITED STATES TO PARENTS WHO ARE UNLAWFULLY OR TEMPORARILY PRESENT ARE CITIZENS AT BIRTH UNDER THE 14TH AMENDMENT.

as children of foreign diplomats.

The June 30 ruling came near the close of a high-stakes Supreme Court term and during a period of intense national debate over immigration, asylum, deportations and executive power. Immigrant advocates celebrated the decision, while opponents of birthright citizenship said they would continue seeking political or legislative paths to restrict it.

In Michigan, the ruling will be watched closely by families

with immigrant roots in Saginaw, Flint, Bay City, Midland, Detroit, Grand Rapids and agricultural communities across the state. Immigrant workers and families contribute to manufacturing, food production, small business, health care, education, faith communities and neighborhood life.

The decision does not end the broader national fight over immigration policy. Other recent rulings and federal actions have

created fear for migrants facing the loss of temporary protections or stricter enforcement.

But on the question of children born in the United States, the court preserved a foundational promise. A child born here is a citizen here.

For families who spent months wondering whether that promise might change, the ruling offered something rare in immigration law: clarity.

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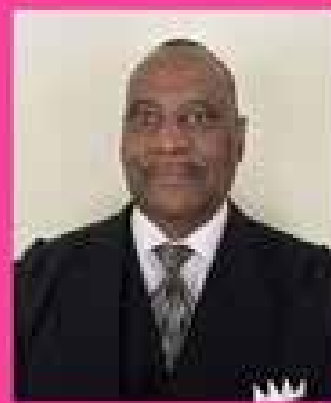
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Southwest Detroit festival celebrates Latin American music, folklórico dance and community pride



MONDO KANE PERFORMS AT THE CLARK PARK CULTURE AND ARTS FESTIVAL ON JUNE 27. (PHOTO CREDIT: FB/MONDO KANE)

BY MB STAFF

DETROIT - Clark Park became a community stage June 27 as the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Southwest Detroit partners gathered families for an afternoon of music, dance, food, art and cultural pride.

The Clark Park Culture and Arts Festival was scheduled from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, June 27, at Clark Park, 1130 Clark Ave. The free event did not require tickets and offered food while supplies lasted.

Organizers described the festival as a neighborhood gathering centered on music, local talent, family activities, resources and the culture of Southwest Detroit. The theme, "You Belong," reflected the

goal of making the park feel like a shared living room - a place where residents could see their own community honored rather than treated as an afterthought.

The lineup blended classical music and local culture. It included a DSO string quartet performing selections by Central and Latin American composers, young violin students from the Sphinx Overture program at Cesar Chavez Academy, the senior Ballet Folklórico group from the LA SED Youth and Senior Center, and local rock band Mondo Kane.

The festival was part of the DSO's broader community engagement work, which brings music beyond Orchestra Hall and into Detroit neighborhoods. In Southwest Detroit, that approach

matters because culture is not limited to one stage or one tradition. It lives in dance groups, school programs, family stories,

murals, food, language and parks where generations gather.

For Latino families, Ballet Folklórico offered more than colorful movement. It carried history, regional identity and pride. For young violin students, performing in the neighborhood gave music education a public purpose. For families watching from the grass, the event offered an afternoon where classical music, youth talent and Latin American traditions could stand side by side.

The festival also connected people with community resources, recognizing that celebration and support often belong together. A park event can be joyful while also helping families learn about services, programs and opportunities.

Southwest Detroit has long been one of Michigan's most important Latino cultural centers. Events like the June 27 festival show how arts organizations can be strongest when they enter a neighborhood as partners, not visitors.

On a summer afternoon at Clark Park, culture was not simply performed. It was shared.



CROWD AT THE CLARK PARK CULTURE AND ARTS FESTIVAL ON JUNE 27.



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Questions? Laura Geftos — lgeftos@mhcc.org

COMMUNITY

Saginaw: The swamp that named a college



BY DR. JACK WESTON NASH

Hard to believe, but it's true. Morehouse College — that Morehouse — traces its name back to a Baptist clergyman who cut his teeth in the lumber camps of Saginaw, Michigan.

In the mid-1800s, Saginaw wasn't a city. It was a swamp. Alexis de Tocqueville came through in 1831 and called it uninhabitable — a mosquito-choked fever land where "their presence would suffice to render a long sojourn there insupportable." For years, he was right.

Then America discovered the trees.

Towering virgin white pine, straight as church steeples and strong enough to frame a continent. The moment investors laid eyes on them, Saginaw stopped being a swamp and became green gold. Joseph Campau came first with a trading post and a modest mill. But once the sawblades hit, word spread like fire. The lumber boom hit, and Saginaw exploded overnight.

Thousands flooded in. French-Canadian axemen. Irish immigrants. Germans, Poles, freedmen — all chasing timber wages. Where there had been cattails, now there were saloons, boarding houses, rail spurs, and sawmills running twenty-four hours a day.

And with people came need. Houses. Grocers. Railroads. And churches.

Dozens of them, rising as fast as the stumps were cleared. But among the first was a Baptist congregation — rough-hewn, built by

men with sawdust in their beards and hymnals in calloused hands.

The Baptists in Saginaw didn't stay under one roof for long. In 1863, sixteen members broke from the East Saginaw congregation and organized the First Baptist Church of West Saginaw. They incorporated on November 19, 1863 — the very day Abraham Lincoln stood at Gettysburg and redefined America in 272 words. While Lincoln spoke of a nation's new birth of freedom, a handful of sawmill hands in Michigan were birthing a church. They had no building. They met in parlors, borrowed a Methodist sanctuary, even convened in the county courthouse jury room between trials. By 1864 they'd raised enough to timber-frame their first sanctuary — cut from the same white pine that was building Chicago.

That same year, a young minister from New York stepped off the train.

Henry Lyman Morehouse was 30, freshly ordained, and fresh out of Rochester Theological Seminary. He became pastor at the East Saginaw church and served from 1864 to 1873.

East Saginaw in 1864 was all grit and sawdust — lumberjacks drinking their wages, river rats fighting on the docks, speculators gambling on timber claims. The church he inherited was small, poor, and rattled by the splintering of its members. Most pastors wouldn't have lasted a winter.

Morehouse stayed nine years. He buried loggers killed in river drives and baptized their brothers in the same water. He argued with saloon owners on Saturday and filled the pews on Sunday. Under his preaching, the congregation swelled. By 1873, when he left, the church had grown from a handful to hundreds — and owned prime property in the heart of a boomtown, deeded and debt-free.

That property was proof. That

faith could hold ground in a town built on floating logs. But Saginaw was only his training ground.

When Morehouse left Michigan, the American Baptist Home Mission Society took notice. In the years after the Civil War, their greatest test was clear: four million newly freed men, women, and children, most denied education by law for generations.

Morehouse became their answer. From 1879 to 1893, and again from 1902 to 1917, he served as Corresponding Secretary of the Society. His job: raise the money, recruit the teachers, plant the schools.

He traveled relentlessly. Told Northern churches the same thing he'd learned in Saginaw — that a church isn't measured by its steeple, but by whether it leaves something standing after the boom is gone.

Under his leadership, the Society nearly doubled the number of Black Baptist colleges it supported, increasing attendance threefold. Spelman. Shaw. Virginia Union. And in Atlanta, the Augusta Institute — a struggling seminary for Black ministers founded in 1867.

The school moved, grew, and in 1897 became Atlanta Baptist College.

Then, in 1913, the trustees faced a choice. The college needed a name that stood for both faith unshakable and education uncompromising. They looked back to the man who'd proven a church could be both sawmill-tough and scholar-serious.

They remembered the young preacher who took a splintered congregation in a muddy boom-



HENRY LYMAN MOREHOUSE

town and built it into stone, brick, and permanence.

By vote of the Board of Trustees, concurred in by the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the name became "Morehouse College," in honor of Rev. Henry Lyman Morehouse, D.D., Corresponding Secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and the constant friend and benefactor of the Negro race.

Not for the log chapel beside the Saginaw River. But for what he'd come to represent: that religion without learning is shallow, and education without soul is empty.

From a swamp Tocqueville condemned... to a pulpit in a lumber town... to classrooms that would train Martin Luther King Jr., Maynard Jackson, and Spike Lee.

And from that swamp, the name Morehouse became a symbol of religion and education.

Bay City Fireworks Festival opens four-day America 250 celebration July 1

This year, the fireworks will mark not only Independence Day, but 250 years of a country still debating, changing and gathering in public spaces to celebrate its promise.

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FRONT ROW SEATING WITH DINNER, DRINKS, PROGRAM AND 2 DRINK TICKETS

FRIDAY, JULY 3RD

GENERAL ADMISSION
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RESERVED SEATING
\$25

PREMIUM SEATING
\$35

SATURDAY
JULY 4TH

PARK ADMISSION
\$5

tickets available at baycityfireworksfestival.com

THE BAY CITY FIREWORKS FESTIVAL OPENED JULY 1 WITH A FREE CONCERT AND CONTINUED JULY 2-4 WITH MUSIC, CARNIVAL RIDES, VENDORS AND NIGHTLY FIREWORKS. (PHOTO CREDIT: BAY CITY FIREWORKS FESTIVAL)

COMMUNITY

Midland Area Farmers Market prepares to celebrate 80 years of local tradition



THE MIDLAND AREA FARMERS MARKET, FOUNDED IN 1945, IS MARKING 80 YEARS OF CONNECTING RESIDENTS WITH LOCAL FARMERS, FOOD PRODUCERS AND SMALL BUSINESSES. FOOD PRODUCERS AND SMALL BUSINESSES.

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. - For 80 years, the Midland Area Farmers Market has done something simple and powerful: it has brought people face to face with the hands that grow, bake, raise and make their food.

The market is marking its 80th anniversary this summer, with a family-friendly celebration planned for July 11. The milestone was highlighted June 30 as organizers prepared to honor generations of vendors, shoppers and supporters who have made the market a Midland County tradition.

The market traces its history to 1945. In 2026, it opened May 2 in the Dow Diamond East parking lot and runs Wednesdays and Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. through Oct. 31.

Emily Lyons, director of the Midland Area Farmers Market, said the market has connected the community with local farmers, fresh food and one another for eight decades. The anniversary celebration, she said, is a chance to honor the people who helped make the market a cornerstone of Midland County.

Farmers markets have taken on renewed importance in recent years as families pay closer attention to food costs, local supply

chains and small business support. A market purchase can keep dollars in the region, help a farm family, support a food entrepreneur and give residents access to seasonal produce.

The Midland market also serves more than shoppers. It offers free booth space opportunities for nonprofit organizations during the market season, giving community groups a way to share their missions, recruit volunteers and connect with residents. It also invites musicians and entertainers to help create a lively atmosphere.

The anniversary comes during a year when the market is also promoting "80 Years Strong"

merchandise and encouraging residents to celebrate the history of local food in Midland.

For longtime shoppers, the market may carry memories of Saturday routines, first tomatoes, flowers, honey, baked goods or children learning where food comes from. For newer residents, it offers an entry point into community life.

A farmers market is not only a place to buy food. It is a public square, a small-business incubator and a weekly reminder that local tradition is built by showing up.

After 80 years, Midland is still showing up.

COMMUNITY



EXCITEMENT WILL RISE
WAITING FOR THE RED BALL TO FALL!

For a limited time in July, when the Red Ball is drawn, the Lottery will then draw a second set of Daily 3 numbers, giving you a second chance to win on the same ticket—making lots more winners! Visit your favorite Michigan Lottery retailer and play Daily 3 today.

The Daily 3 Red Ball Double Draw promotion runs Monday - Saturday evening drawings only.



Odds of winning: Daily 3: 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. Knowing your limits is always the best bet. Call 1-800-GAMBLER for confidential help.



COMMUNITY

Bay City Blue Star Memorial set for rededication ahead of Independence Day



THE BAY CITY BLUE STAR MEMORIAL MARKER IS BEING MOVED TO AMVETS POST 22, WHERE A REDEDICATION CEREMONY IS SCHEDULED FOR JULY 3 AT 1 P.M.

BY MB STAFF

BAY CITY, Mich. - A Bay City memorial honoring U.S. service members is getting a new home just before Independence Day.

The Bay City Blue Star Memorial marker is being moved to AMVETS Post 22, 520 N. Pine Road, with a rededication ceremony scheduled for 1 p.m. Friday, July 3. Veterans, families and community members are invited to attend.

Organizers said the ceremony will honor the service and sacrifice of all members of the U.S. Armed Forces and recognize

the national tradition of Blue Star Memorial markers. After the dedication, guests are invited to a community barbecue with hot dogs, bratwursts and refreshments.

Blue Star Memorials are part of a long-running national effort associated with garden clubs to honor the armed forces. The markers have appeared along highways, in parks, at veterans facilities, in national cemeteries and at civic or historic sites. They are meant to be visible reminders of respect for those who served.

The Bay City marker's relocation to AMVETS Post 22 gives it a setting closely connected to

veterans and their families. For many residents, memorials are not only objects. They are gathering points for grief, pride, memory and public gratitude.

The July 3 timing is meaningful. As communities prepare for fireworks and Independence Day celebrations, the rededication offers a quieter form of patriotism - one centered on service, sacrifice and remembrance.

The Blue Star tradition also connects generations. Older veterans may see their own service reflected. Families may remember loved ones who served. Younger residents may ask what the marker means and hear sto-

ries they otherwise might not learn.

At a time when civic life can feel divided, local memorial ceremonies can still bring people together around a shared obligation: to remember those who defended the country and to care for the communities they came home to.

The Bay City rededication will be brief compared with the long weekend of celebrations around it. But for the families and veterans who attend, it may be the moment that gives the holiday its deepest meaning.

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COMMUNITY

Region prepares for Fourth of July celebrations from Midland to Flint

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — The Fourth of July will stretch across the region this year in music, fireworks, food trucks, riverfront crowds and community traditions, with Midland, Bay City, Saginaw and Flint all planning public celebrations around Independence Day and America’s 250th anniversary.

In Midland, the celebration will begin with a historic note. A patriotic program is scheduled from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, July 4, on the Dow Diamond lawn, 825 E. Main St., featuring the Chemical City Band and a formal reading of the Declaration of Independence. Visitors also will be able to sign a 50-foot replica of the Declaration, a nod to the nation’s semiquincentennial year. Food trucks are scheduled to open at 4 p.m. on State Street, followed by live music from Teddy Petty & the Refugees at 6 p.m. at Main and McDonald streets and Stone Street Revival at 8 p.m. on the front lawn of Dow Diamond. Midland’s fireworks are expected to begin about 10:06 p.m., launching from the St. Charles softball diamonds and visible from areas around Dow Diamond, Founders Park, Whiting Overlook Park and other downtown viewing spots.

Bay City’s celebration will carry the scale and sparkle that have made its fireworks festival a regional destination. The Bay City Fireworks Festival includes concerts, carnival rides, concessions, vendors and three nights of fireworks over the waterfront. Festival events run around Veterans Memorial Park and Wenonah Park, with fireworks scheduled for 10:12 p.m. each night. The entertainment lineup includes a free Thunder-

struck concert July 1, Confederate Railroad on July 2, Hairmania on July 3 and After It All on July 4. The Skerbeck Family Carnival is scheduled from 4 to 10 p.m. Wednesday and 1 to 11 p.m. Thursday through Saturday.

The Bay City festival is one of those summer traditions that feels bigger than a single night. Families bring lawn chairs. Children look toward the sky before the first burst. Boats gather along the river. Music rolls through the parks before the fireworks take over. Veterans Memorial Park admission is listed at \$2 per person Thursday through Saturday, while Wenonah Park admission is listed at \$10 Thursday and Friday and \$5 Saturday.

In Saginaw, the holiday will again center on the river. Fireworks are scheduled over Ojibway Island on Saturday, July 4, with the riverfront area surrounding the island expected to offer some of the best viewing. The show is listed from 9 to 10 p.m., giving families a familiar place to gather as the city continues one of Saginaw County’s largest annual Independence Day traditions.

Flint will mark the holiday with a large downtown celebration combining music, arts, family activities and fireworks. The FIM Holiday Celebration & 11th Annual Flint Water Fest: America 250 Experience is scheduled from 5 to 10:30 p.m. Saturday, July 4, at the Downtown Flat Lot. The free event will feature a concert, carnival, food trucks, splash park, pickleball open play, a screening of “Captain America: The First Avenger” beginning at 5 p.m., a symphony performance and a fireworks finale. The headliner is “Crazy in Love,” a Beyoncé tribute band, scheduled for 9 p.m.

The Flint event also carries a special musical touch for the 250th anniversary. The Flint Institute of Music said the celebration will include a newly commissioned fanfare performed by ensembles from the Flint Symphony Orchestra, the Flint Youth Symphony and Jeunes Symphonique de Limonest.

Across the region, the holiday offers different ways to celebrate the same idea. Midland is leaning into history and civic reflection. Bay City is building a waterfront festival around music and fireworks. Saginaw is gathering along the river. Flint is turning downtown into a family-friendly America 250 experience.

Residents attending events are encouraged to check local parking, road closure and safety rules before heading out. Midland officials note several downtown road and trail closures and prohibit personal fireworks, including sparklers, in city parks during the event. Bay City festival rules also restrict items such as weapons, grilling, pets and some coolers in certain areas.

For one summer night, the region’s cities will glow from different points on the map — above ballparks, parks, rivers and downtown streets — as families look up together and mark another Fourth of July.

Fourth of July Events Guide 2026

Midland • Bay City • Saginaw • Flint

MIDLAND

- Date: Saturday, July 4, 2026
- Main event: 8:00 PM
- Location: Dow Diamond Lawn, 825 E. Main St., Midland
- Food trucks: 4:00 PM
- Live music: Teddy Petty & the Refugees at 6:00 PM
Stone Street Revival at 8:00 PM
- Fireworks: approx. 10:06 PM
- Viewing areas: Dow Diamond, Founders Park, Whiting Overlook Park

BAY CITY

- Dates: July 2-4, 2026
- Locations: Veterans Memorial Park & Wenonah Park
- Fireworks: nightly at 10:12 PM
- Carnival hours: Wed 4:00-10:00 PM; Thu-Sat 1:00-11:00 PM
- Featured music: Confederate Railroad (July 2)
Hairmania (July 3)
After It All (July 4)
- Bay City Fireworks Festival

SAGINAW

- Date: Saturday, July 4, 2026
- Fireworks: 10:00 PM
- Location: Ojibway Island (Rust Park)
- Address: 121 Ezra Rust Drive, Saginaw
- Best viewing: riverfront and surrounding island area
- A classic riverfront tradition

FLINT

- Date: Saturday, July 4, 2026
- Time: 5:00 PM - 10:30 PM
- Event: FIM Holiday Celebration & 11th Annual Flint Water Fest
- Location: Downtown Flat Lot, 125 E. Kearsley St., Flint
- Highlights: free concert, carnival, family fun, fireworks
- America 250 Experience

Times and details are subject to change. Check official event pages before attending.

POLITICS

Michigan budget talks approach deadline with no-tax framework and school meals still in focus

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. - Michigan lawmakers entered the final days before the July 1 budget deadline with leaders saying talks were moving toward a deal that would avoid broad tax hikes while leaving key questions about schools, roads and family support programs on the table.

As of June 26, lawmakers said negotiations were on track for a July 1 agreement. The discussions came at the start of a new fiscal planning cycle and amid pressure from schools, local governments and families waiting for clarity on state funding.

One of the issues still drawing attention was school meals. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Democratic leaders have pushed to continue Michigan's universal free school meals program, which provides breakfast and lunch at no cost to students. Supporters argue the program saves families money, reduces stigma in cafeterias and helps children focus in class.

Republican leaders, including state Rep. Bill G. Schuette of Midland, emphasized a no-tax-hike framework and fiscal restraint. Senate Democrats, led by Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks, continued to prioritize education, affordability and programs they say directly help families.

The budget conversation also included road funding, per-pupil school aid, state revenue projections and the long-term sustainability of programs expanded in recent years. School districts across the state, including Midland Public Schools, have been watching closely because local budgets depend heavily on state aid decisions.



MICHIGAN STATE CAPITOL BUILDING

The deadline matters because Michigan's fiscal year for schools begins July 1. When budget negotiations stretch late, districts are forced to approve spending plans based on estimates rather than final state numbers. That can affect staffing, programming, reserves and decisions about whether to use fund balance dollars.

For families, the debate can

sound distant until it reaches the kitchen table. Free meals, classroom funding, child care, roads, public safety and health programs all flow through state budget decisions.

The politics are familiar: Democrats argue for continued investment in programs that lower costs and support communities, while Republicans press for restraint and warn against

new taxes. The challenge is turning those positions into a balanced budget that can pass both chambers and earn the governor's signature.

As lawmakers approached the July 1 deadline, the question was not only whether they could agree on numbers. It was what those numbers would say about Michigan's priorities for the year ahead.

POLITICS

Saginaw weighs nuisance gathering ordinance as city officials review public safety, neighborhood concerns

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Saginaw city officials are weighing a proposed nuisance gathering ordinance that would give the city another tool to address disruptive parties and gatherings that officials say can threaten public safety, disturb neighborhoods and damage property.

The draft ordinance was presented to the Saginaw City Council during its June 22, 2026, council meeting, where it appeared as part of the city manager's management update materials alongside presentations on Hoyt Park and Consumers Energy. The proposal has not yet been adopted, but its appearance before council signals that city leaders are actively examining how to respond to gatherings that can quickly escalate into larger public safety problems.

At the center of the proposal is a straightforward idea: gatherings that create dangerous or unlawful conditions would be classified as a public nuisance under city code.

According to the draft language, the ordinance is intended to address parties or gatherings on premises within the city that are considered unsafe, create civil disturbances or otherwise become public nuisances. The draft says such events can involve illegally sold or provided alcohol, including alcohol made available to underage individuals, and can lead to excessive noise, traffic, overcrowding, firearms violations, property destruction and other violations of state law or city ordinance.

The proposed ordinance defines a "nuisance gathering" as a social gathering or party — whether stationary or mobile — on public or private property in



NO NUISANCE SIGN (MB FILE PHOTO)

the city that results in certain unlawful or disruptive conditions.

Those conditions listed in the draft include the use or possession of controlled substances, indecent exposure, public nudity, public urination or defecation, unlawful sale or consumption of alcohol, littering, damage to public or private property, blocked traffic that interferes with emergency response, excessive noise, fights and overcrowding that violates fire, building or zoning codes.

One section of the draft specifically states that noise could qualify if it is audible beyond 50 feet from the property line of the premises or from inside a neighboring building, structure or dwelling unit. That provision suggests the city is trying to address the kind of disturbances that often spill beyond one property and affect an entire block.

The proposal also takes a broad view of where such gatherings can occur. The ordinance defines "premises" to include not only buildings and dwelling units, but also adjacent exterior property, common areas, yards and parking lots. In practice, that means enforcement would not be limited strictly to activity inside a

home or building.

Under the draft, nuisance gatherings would be formally declared public nuisances and prohibited within the city.

Liability would not fall only on the person who organized the event. The proposed language says that any owner, occupant, tenant or other person with possessory control over a property who sponsors, hosts, invites, permits or allows a nuisance gathering to continue could be found in violation of the ordinance. The draft also says people attending a nuisance gathering could face violations as well, even if they do not control the property.

That broad scope reflects the city's concern that repeated disturbances can impose costs well beyond the host property, affecting neighbors, straining police and emergency services and undermining quality of life in residential areas.

At the same time, the draft includes some legal guardrails. It says proof of specific intent would be required in any prosecution under the section, meaning officials would need to establish that a person knowingly allowed or participated in the prohibited conduct. The draft

also says the section would not apply where the violation corresponds to a matter investigated and enforced by the Michigan Liquor Control Commission or its successor agency.

Although the June 22 presentation did not amount to final council action, the discussion places the issue squarely on the city's public policy agenda as summer activity increases and neighborhoods are more likely to experience outdoor parties, large gatherings and late-night disturbances.

For many residents, the issue goes beyond noise. When gatherings involve alcohol, overcrowding, blocked streets or property damage, the impact can ripple through a neighborhood, raising concerns about safety, emergency access and the ability of nearby residents to enjoy their homes in peace.

The draft also reflects a broader balancing act for local government. City leaders must weigh residents' right to gather socially against the responsibility to protect neighborhoods from conduct that crosses the line into public nuisance or unlawful behavior.

If the ordinance advances, it could become a significant enforcement and prevention tool for the city, particularly in situations where recurring gatherings generate repeated complaints or create a documented threat to public order.

For now, the proposal remains just that — a draft. But by placing it before council on June 22, city officials signaled that nuisance gatherings are no longer being treated as isolated quality-of-life complaints. Instead, they are being considered as a broader public safety and neighborhood stabilization issue that may require a stronger legal response.

POLITICS

High court to consider whether state and local assault weapons bans violate Second Amendment



THE U.S. SUPREME COURT AGREED JUNE 30 TO HEAR CHALLENGES TO SEMIAUTOMATIC RIFLE BANS IN CONNECTICUT AND COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS, A CASE THAT COULD RESHAPE GUN POLICY NATIONWIDE.

BY MB STAFF

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to take up a major Second Amendment case that could determine whether state and local governments may ban AR-15-style and similar semiautomatic rifles.

The justices said June 30 they will hear appeals challeng-

ing laws in Connecticut and Cook County, Illinois. Lower courts had upheld the bans, rejecting arguments that the laws violate the constitutional right to keep and bear arms.

The case is expected to be heard during the court's next term, which begins in October. It could have consequences well beyond Connecticut and Illinois,

especially for states and local governments that have restricted firearms commonly described as assault weapons.

Supporters of the bans say the laws are needed because AR-15-style rifles and similar weapons have been used in mass shootings and can inflict devastating injuries quickly. Connecticut enacted its law after the 2012 Sandy Hook

Elementary School shooting and later expanded it. Cook County's ordinance includes restrictions on popular semiautomatic rifles.

Gun rights advocates argue that the firearms are widely owned by law-abiding Americans and therefore protected by the Second Amendment. They say governments cannot ban arms that are in common use for lawful purposes.

The Supreme Court's modern gun rights decisions have changed the legal landscape. In 2008, the court recognized an individual right to possess firearms for self-defense. In 2022, it set a more demanding test for gun restrictions, requiring regulations to be consistent with the nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation.

That history-focused test has led to new challenges across the country and uncertainty for lawmakers trying to craft gun policies that survive review.

Michigan does not currently have the same kind of statewide assault weapons ban at issue in the case, but the ruling could shape future state debates. It may also influence local governments, school safety advocates, gun owners, prosecutors and legislators watching how far the court is willing to extend Second Amendment protections.

The case lands in a country still divided by mass shootings, crime concerns and constitutional claims. For some families, bans are a common-sense safety measure. For others, they are an unconstitutional limit on self-defense and individual liberty.

The Supreme Court will now decide how much room governments have to regulate some of the nation's most debated firearms.

HEALTH

Cooling centers open across mid-Michigan as extreme heat warnings hit the Great Lakes



COOLING CENTERS OPENED ACROSS MID-MICHIGAN BEGINNING JUNE 29 AS DANGEROUS HEAT AND HUMIDITY INCREASED THE RISK OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS. (MB GENERATED PHOTO)

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. - Cooling centers opened across mid-Michigan beginning June 29 as dangerous heat and humidity pushed communities to prepare for heat-related illness during the week leading into Independence Day.

WNEM reported that communities were opening places where residents could escape the heat, while emergency rooms across mid-Michigan prepared for more cases of heat exhaustion, dehydration and other heat-related conditions.

The heat was part of a larger system affecting the Midwest and Great Lakes region. The As-

sociated Press reported that heat indices in some areas were expected to rise above 100 degrees, with warnings across Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Iowa.

Public health officials urge residents to take extreme heat seriously, especially older adults, infants, young children, people with chronic health conditions, outdoor workers, unhoused residents and people without reliable air conditioning.

Signs of heat exhaustion can include heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, nausea, headache and a fast pulse. Heat stroke is a medical emergency and can involve confusion, fainting, very

high body temperature or hot skin. Anyone experiencing severe symptoms should call 911.

Cooling centers can include public libraries, senior centers, recreation centers, community centers and other public buildings. Residents who need help finding a nearby location can contact Michigan 2-1-1 or local emergency management offices.

The timing of the heat wave raised additional concerns because of holiday gatherings, outdoor work, fireworks events and travel. Alcohol and sugary drinks can worsen dehydration. Health officials generally recommend drinking water, limiting outdoor activity during the hottest part of

the day, checking on neighbors and never leaving children or pets in vehicles.

Heat is sometimes treated as less dramatic than storms, but it can be deadly. It is especially dangerous when nighttime temperatures stay high because the body has less chance to recover.

For families without air conditioning, a cooling center can be more than a convenience. It can be a lifeline.

As mid-Michigan moves through the heat wave, the message from health officials is simple: take breaks, drink water, seek shade or air conditioning, and check on someone who may not be able to ask for help.

HEALTH

Michigan health officials investigate fast-growing parasite outbreak

BY MB STAFF

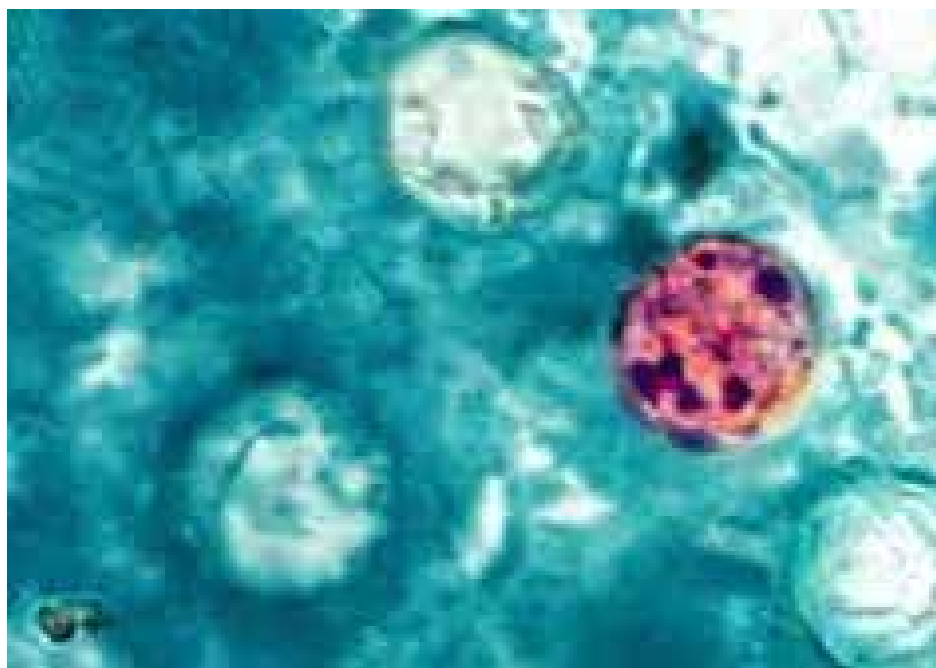
LANSING, Mich. — Michigan health officials are investigating a large and growing outbreak of cyclosporiasis, a diarrheal illness caused by a microscopic parasite often linked to contaminated food or water.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development announced July 1 that more than 170 cases had been reported as of Tuesday, June 30, across Monroe, Lenawee, Washtenaw, Wayne, Livingston, Shiawassee and Jackson counties during the previous nine days. Michigan typically identifies about 50 cyclosporiasis cases in an entire year, making the recent surge unusually large and concerning for state and local health officials.

No specific food, restaurant, grocery item or water source had been identified as the cause of the illnesses as of the state's announcement. Health officials said the investigation remains active, with state and local public health workers interviewing patients to look for a common exposure that could help explain the outbreak and prevent additional cases.

"Outbreaks of cyclosporiasis have been occurring across the United States and now here in Michigan," said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, MDHHS chief medical executive. "Based on the unusual number of cases we have identified in a little over a week, we anticipate additional cases of illness being reported."

Cyclosporiasis is caused by infection with *Cyclospora cayentanensis*, a parasite that infects the small intestine. The illness is usually spread when people consume food or water contaminated with feces. In the United States,



MICHIGAN HEALTH OFFICIALS ARE INVESTIGATING A FAST-GROWING OUTBREAK OF CYCLOSPORIASIS, A DIARRHEAL ILLNESS CAUSED BY THE CYCLOSPORA PARASITE. RESIDENTS ARE URGED TO WASH PRODUCE, PRACTICE SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND CONTACT A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER IF THEY EXPERIENCE SUDDEN, ONGOING DIARRHEA.

outbreaks have often been tied to fresh produce, particularly during the warmer months, though Michigan officials have not yet identified the source in this outbreak. The illness is not known to spread directly from person to person.

The largest number of reported Michigan cases so far has been in Monroe County, with 70 cases as of June 30. Lenawee County had 33 cases, Washtenaw County had 21, Wayne County had 12, Jackson County had seven and Shiawassee County had seven. Another 24 cases were reported across 11 other counties and the city of Detroit. Those who became ill ranged in age from 8 to 84, with an average age of 44.3 and a median age of 41.

Symptoms can begin two to 14 days after exposure. They may include frequent watery diarrhea, loss of appetite, weight loss, abdominal cramps, bloating, nausea and low-grade fever. Vomiting is less common. Without treatment, the illness may last from several days to a month

or longer, and symptoms may appear to improve before returning.

State health officials are urging residents with sudden, ongoing diarrhea to contact a health care provider, especially if other people in the household are experiencing similar symptoms. Health care providers in southeast Michigan are also being urged to consider cyclosporiasis when evaluating patients with acute gastrointestinal illness. Symptoms can significantly improve with antibiotic treatment, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, commonly known as TMP-SMX, as the treatment of choice.

The Michigan outbreak comes during the national cyclosporiasis season, which the CDC considers to run from May 1 through Aug. 31 because case counts typically rise in spring and summer. As of June 16, the CDC had received reports of 145 domestically acquired cyclosporiasis cases in 17 states, including 20 hospitalizations and no deaths. Those

national figures were reported before Michigan announced its latest case count.

Jennifer Bonsky, director of MDARD's Human Food Division, said the department is working with local health departments to identify the source of the outbreak and keep consumers safe.

"In these moments, it becomes even more important to follow all of the essential food preparation guidelines, such as washing your hands before and after preparing food and washing produce before it is consumed," Bonsky said.

Health officials recommend washing hands with soap and water before and after handling raw fruits and vegetables, washing produce thoroughly under running water before eating, cutting or cooking, scrubbing firm produce such as melons and cucumbers with a clean produce brush, cutting away damaged or bruised areas, and refrigerating cut, peeled or cooked produce within two hours. Produce labeled "prewashed" does not need to be washed again at home.

The CDC says no one fully knows how *Cyclospora* gets into food and water, but the best prevention is avoiding food or water that may be contaminated. Routine chemical disinfection or sanitizing is unlikely to kill the parasite, especially in areas where cyclosporiasis is regularly found.

For now, the advice from public health officials is simple but urgent: take stomach illness seriously, seek medical care for sudden or persistent diarrhea, and cooperate with local health department investigators if diagnosed. Every interview, officials said, can help narrow the search for a source and protect other families from becoming sick.

HEALTH

Michigan erases \$74 million in medical debt for nearly 72,000 residents

BY MB STAFF

LANISING, Mich. - Nearly 72,000 Michigan residents will receive letters telling them that medical debt has been erased under the state's second round of debt forgiveness.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced June 22 that more than \$74 million in medical debt would be forgiven for 71,871 Michiganders. Recipients were expected to begin receiving notification letters that week.

The relief is part of Michigan's partnership with the nonprofit Undue Medical Debt. Combined with the \$144 million in medi-

cal debt forgiveness announced in July 2025, the state said it has now provided more than \$200 million in relief.

Medical debt can follow families for years. A hospital stay, emergency procedure, cancer treatment, accident or chronic illness can lead to bills that damage credit, delay housing applications, make it harder to buy a car or force families to choose between care and other basic needs.

The state's program is designed to erase eligible debt without requiring residents to apply. In many medical debt relief programs, recipients are selected based on factors such as income

or whether medical debt consumes a large share of household income.

Whitmer said the effort is meant to lower costs and prevent illness or injury from pushing families into financial crisis. The governor also renewed calls for legislative action to support additional medical debt relief.

The announcement matters in communities across the Great Lakes Bay Region and Flint, where many families are still recovering from years of inflation, wage pressure and health care costs. Medical debt often affects people who have insurance as well as those who do not. High

deductibles, out-of-network charges and uncovered services can still leave families with large bills.

Debt forgiveness does not solve every problem in the health care system. It does not lower future premiums, expand provider access or prevent new medical bills. But for people receiving letters this summer, it can remove a burden that may have felt impossible to pay.

For those households, the June 22 announcement is not only a state program. It is a fresh start - one less envelope to fear, one less account in collections and one more chance to breathe.



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HEALTH

MyMichigan Midland volunteers raise more than \$273,000 for patient care

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. - At MyMichigan Medical Center Midland, a bag of popcorn, a gift-shop purchase and a volunteer's smile have added up to a major investment in patient care.

MyMichigan Health announced June 25 that volunteers at the Midland medical center raised more than \$273,000 in 2026 through Gift Shop and Popcorn Cart sales, along with special fundraising events. The money supported equipment and resources for departments throughout the medical center.

The funds also helped install a public blood pressure kiosk at the hospital's main entrance, giv-

ing visitors and patients an easy way to check an important health measure.

The Gift Shop and Popcorn Cart have become familiar parts of the hospital experience for employees, patients and visitors. For someone waiting during a long appointment or visiting a loved one, a snack, small gift or friendly conversation can make the building feel less clinical and more human.

Denise O'Keefe, executive director of the MyMichigan Health Foundation, praised the volunteers not only for the dollars raised but also for the compassion and service they bring to the medical center each day.

Hospital volunteers often work quietly, but their impact is

wide. They greet visitors, help people find their way, support fundraising, provide comfort and create small moments of normalcy in a place where many people are anxious, sick or grieving.

The fundraising also shows how modest transactions can become meaningful health investments when they are repeated over time. A single popcorn sale may seem small. Thousands of them can help buy equipment, improve services and support departments that care for the region.

MyMichigan Medical Center Midland and the MyMichigan Health Foundation thanked Gift Shop and Popcorn Service volunteers for their dedication and support.

Residents interested in volunteering can contact Diana Brookens, manager of volunteer services, at (989) 839-3340.

The June announcement is a reminder that health care is not delivered only by doctors and nurses. It is also supported by people who show up with time, kindness and the belief that even a small act can become part of healing.



MYMICHIGAN HEALTH

Ten16 Recovery Network receives national grant to strengthen rural opioid response

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. - A Midland-based recovery organization has received national support to help rural communities respond to opioid use disorder and overdose.

Ten16 Recovery Network, on behalf of Recovery Centers of Michigan, received a grant from the Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts, known as FORE. The grant was announced in late June as part of a national investment in community-based organizations working to strengthen opioid response.

Recovery Centers of Michigan is a collaboration of seven nonprofit substance use disorder

treatment and recovery organizations serving rural communities across northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. The grant will help the group build shared infrastructure, improve access to treatment and recovery supports, and strengthen care coordination.

Sam Price, president and CEO of Ten16 Recovery Network, said rural providers are often asked to meet urgent needs without the infrastructure larger systems have. The grant is intended to help build the systems behind services so people can connect to care more quickly and sustainably.

The funding will support the development of shared systems, including a centralized Admin-

istrative Services Organization. It also may help with clinical supervision, credentialing, care coordination and preparation for better record integration among providers.

Rural opioid response is challenging because distance, transportation, workforce shortages, stigma and limited treatment access can delay care. A person seeking help may have to travel far for medication-assisted treatment, counseling, recovery coaching or crisis support. Families may struggle to know where to turn.

FORE awarded \$3.7 million to 25 community-based organizations in this grant cycle. Since 2018, the foundation has distributed more than \$56 million na-

tionally to address the opioid epidemic with community-driven, patient-centered strategies.

For mid-Michigan, the Ten16 grant reinforces the importance of recovery infrastructure beyond major hospitals and larger cities. The opioid crisis is not limited by county lines, and rural families often face the same grief and urgency with fewer nearby resources.

The grant will not end the crisis by itself. But it can help build a stronger network - one that makes treatment easier to find, recovery easier to sustain and help easier to reach before another overdose becomes another family's loss.



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Dr. Twannie Gray,
DSW, LMSW, CAADC
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EDUCATION

CMU gives final approval to \$100 million medical education building in Saginaw



CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES GAVE FINAL APPROVAL JUNE 25 FOR A \$100 MILLION MEDICAL EDUCATION BUILDING IN SAGINAW.

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. - Central Michigan University has taken the final step toward a \$100 million medical education building that will move the university's medical training deeper into the heart of Saginaw.

CMU's Board of Trustees gave final approval June 25 for the MyMichigan Health CMU Medical Education Building. The decision clears the way for construction of a facility intended to consolidate the College of Medicine's operations in the Great Lakes Bay Region and allow all four years of medical education to be based in Saginaw.

The building will be named

in recognition of a major philanthropic gift from MyMichigan Health. CMU has also received a major commitment from Covenant HealthCare as part of the medical school's larger Saginaw expansion. Earlier reports said MyMichigan Health and Covenant each pledged \$40 million toward the project.

The project is part of the broader Medical Diamond initiative, a vision to grow a bioscience and medical education corridor along the Saginaw River. Supporters say the effort could strengthen Saginaw's role as a regional health care and education hub.

CMU launched its medical school in 2010 with a mission tied to addressing physician short-

ages, especially in underserved areas. The school has grown beyond the capacity of its original Mount Pleasant facilities, where first- and second-year students have studied before moving into clinical training.

Moving all four years to Saginaw is expected to create a more unified medical education experience, place students closer to clinical partners and deepen relationships with hospitals and community health providers.

The move could also free space in Mount Pleasant for nursing and other health programs, allowing CMU to expand different parts of its health education pipeline.

For Saginaw, the building represents more than a univer-

sity project. It is an investment in people who may one day serve patients in the region. Medical students who train in a community are more likely to understand its needs, from chronic disease and maternal health to transportation barriers and access to primary care.

Groundbreaking is expected after final preparations, with WNEM reporting that a fall groundbreaking was planned.

The June 25 vote was a major education and economic development moment for Saginaw - one that connects classrooms, clinics, riverfront redevelopment and the long-term need for more physicians in Michigan communities.

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EDUCATION

Midland Public Schools approves budget with \$12.8 million shortfall



THE MIDLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVED THE 2026-27 GENERAL OPERATING BUDGET JUNE 22 WITH A PROJECTED \$12.8 MILLION SHORTFALL.

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. - Midland Public Schools approved its 2026-27 general operating budget June 22 with a projected \$12.8 million shortfall, a decision that keeps programs moving but signals continued financial pressure on the district.

The Board of Education approved the budget in a 6-0 vote during a special meeting. The vote came one week after the board failed to approve the budget at its June 15 regular meeting, when only four of seven board members were present and a 3-1 vote fell short of the four affirma-

tive votes required.

The approved budget includes projected revenue of about \$106.5 million and expenses of about \$121.7 million. After other adjustments, the district calculated a \$12,803,442 shortfall to be covered by the general fund.

Superintendent Penny Miller-Nelson had told the MPS community June 15 that the district anticipated a deficit of approximately \$13 million. She said several factors contributed, including uncertainty in state funding and a projected 7.7% decrease in state revenue compared with the previous year.

Associate Superintendent Anna Wamack explained dur-

ing the June 22 process that the district had reduced an initially projected \$16.9 million deficit by about \$1.7 million. Board members said they appreciated receiving more detailed information, while also acknowledging the need for earlier and deeper budget planning in future years.

Despite the deficit, district leaders said MPS has sufficient reserves to cover the shortfall. The budget maintains a fund balance of about 15.7%, above the board's minimum policy requirement of 12%.

Still, the numbers reveal the squeeze facing districts. State aid, enrollment, staffing costs, transportation, facilities and

program needs all collide in a school budget. When revenue falls or projections shift, districts must decide how much to cut, how much to preserve and how much reserve funding to use.

The budget includes investments tied to student retention, including the district's Flex Learning Center hybrid high school and other programming meant to meet student needs.

For families, the June 22 vote avoided immediate uncertainty. But for the district, the larger issue remains: a one-year budget can be approved, but long-term sustainability requires a clearer plan.

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EDUCATION

Flint breaks ground on new high school at former Central campus



FLINT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS BROKE GROUND JUNE 17 AT THE FORMER FLINT CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL SITE, MARKING THE START OF THE CITY'S FIRST NEW HIGH SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN MORE THAN 50 YEARS.

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. - Flint Community Schools broke ground June 17 on a new high school at the former Flint Central High School site, marking a historic milestone for the district and the city.

The groundbreaking ceremony was scheduled for 4 p.m. Wednesday, June 17, at the former Flint Central campus, 601 Crapo St. District leaders, elected officials, students, staff and community partners gathered to celebrate the start of construction.

The project represents Flint's first new high school construction in more than 50 years, ac-

cording to construction industry coverage of the event. The new campus will rise on the historic Central-Whittier site, a location tied to generations of Flint students and memories.

Flint Community Schools described the project as one of the most transformative efforts in the district's recent history. The new high school is intended to be a modern learning environment designed to inspire excellence, innovation and community pride.

The groundbreaking carried emotional weight because the former Flint Central High School is more than a piece of property. For many residents, it represents

family history, school pride, sports, music, teachers, friendships and a time when Flint's public schools stood at the center of neighborhood life.

Building on that site gives the project a dual responsibility: honor the past while creating something that serves today's students and tomorrow's workforce.

A modern high school can offer updated classrooms, technology, career pathways, flexible learning spaces and safer, more efficient facilities. For students, the physical environment sends a message about whether the community believes they deserve quality places to learn.

The project also comes as urban districts across Michigan face challenges related to enrollment, aging buildings, funding and the need to prepare students for college, skilled trades, health care, technology and public service.

Flint's new high school will not solve every issue facing the district. But the June 17 groundbreaking gave the community a visible sign of progress.

For a city that has often had to fight to be seen beyond crisis, a new school rising from a historic site offers a different image: construction, investment and belief in the next generation of Flint scholars.

EDUCATION

CMU adopts \$460.3 million budget for new school year

BY MB STAFF

MOUNT PLEASANT, Mich. - Central Michigan University will begin the new fiscal year July 1 with a \$460.3 million operating budget that includes cost reductions, tuition increases and new investments in student support.

CMU's Board of Trustees voted unanimously June 25 to adopt the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1. Trustee Edward Plawecki said significant work went into developing a balanced budget that is fiscally responsible.

The budget is about \$2 million less than the current year and reflects reallocations as the university responds to enrollment pressures, rising costs and uncertainty around state fund-

ing. CMU said the plan includes strategic investments in academic and student success programs.

President Neil MacKinnon said the budget invests in critical support, including success coaches, additional academic advisers, career development services and online student support. WNEM reported that faculty and staff will receive pay increases under the budget, while MacKinnon and other senior officers will not.

The university also approved tuition increases. Lower-level undergraduate tuition will rise by \$20 per credit hour, while upper-level undergraduate tuition will increase by \$23 per credit hour. Graduate and doctoral tuition will rise by \$33 per credit hour. Student services fees will remain unchanged.

CMU officials said many students pay less than published tuition because of financial aid. Still, tuition increases are closely watched by families already balancing housing, food, transportation and other college costs.

The budget assumes a projected 3.5% decline in semester credit hours, partly because more students are entering college with credits already completed. Tuition revenue is expected to make up about 51% of CMU's income, with state appropriations projected to increase by \$2.6 million pending final legislative action.

The budget vote came the same day trustees took final action on the \$100 million medical education building in Saginaw, showing the university is trying to manage both near-term finan-

cial pressure and long-term strategic growth.

For students, the key question is whether the new budget will translate into stronger advising, better retention and clearer pathways to degrees and careers.

For CMU, the June 25 vote was about more than balancing a spreadsheet. It was about positioning the university to compete, support students and remain financially stable in a changing higher education market.




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EDUCATION

Nominations Encouraged for Michigan Lottery's Excellence in Education Awards to Honor Outstanding Educators

BY MB STAFF

Parents, students, school staff members, and others are encouraged to nominate outstanding public-school educators for the Michigan Lottery's 2026-27 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 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.

Winners of the weekly award are featured in a news segment on the Lottery's media partner stations: WXYZ-TV in Detroit, FOX 17 in Grand Rapids, FOX 47 in Lansing, WNEM-TV in Saginaw, WWTV-TV in Traverse City, and WLUC-TV in Marquette.

The winner of the 2026 Educator of the Year award was Brandon Bailey, a fifth-grade math and science teacher at Forest View Elementary. The school is part of the Cadillac Area Public Schools.

Hundreds of educators were nominated during the 2025-26



TEACHER IN CLASSROOM (MB FILE PHOTO)

school year, which was the 12th year of the Excellence in Education awards program. Thirty-four of these nominees, including Bailey, were selected to win a weekly award.

Previous winners of the Educator of the Year award:

2025 – Kelly Herberholz, a science teacher and administrative team intern at Dakota High School.

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 Uby 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 demon-

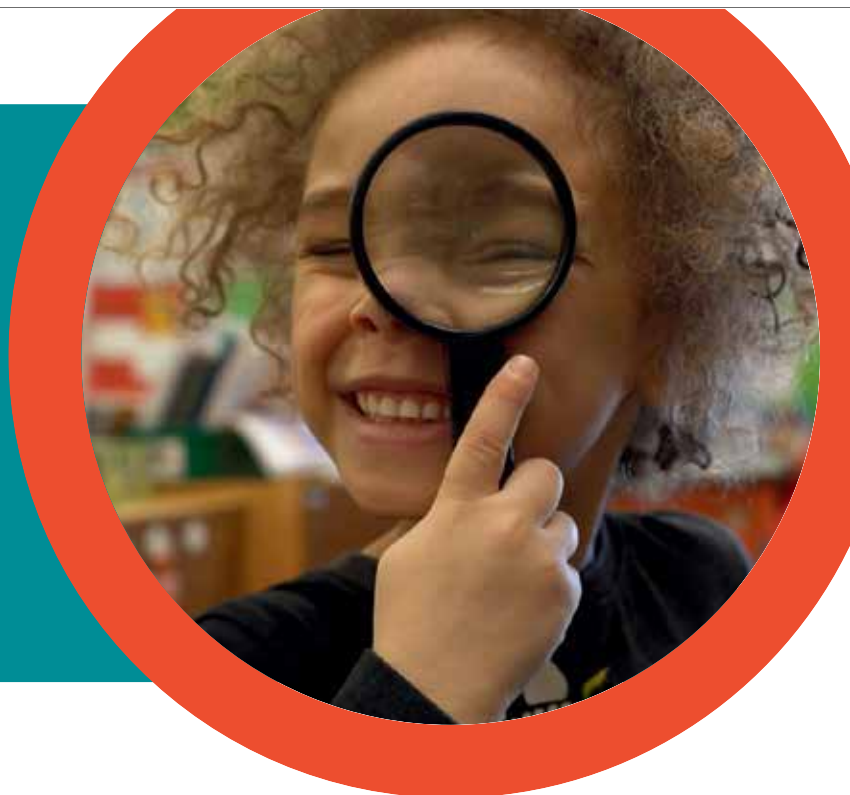
strate the following qualities:

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- 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.
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BUSINESS + FINANCE

Bay City's Lumberman's Mercantile earns \$25,000 Match on Main grantillion deal



LUMBERMAN'S MERCANTILE RECEIVED A \$25,000 MATCH ON MAIN GRANT TO SUPPORT IMPROVEMENTS TO ITS MIDLAND STREET BUSINESS IN BAY CITY.

BY MB STAFF

BAY CITY, Mich. - A Midland Street business in Bay City has received a \$25,000 state grant aimed at strengthening downtown commercial districts and supporting small business growth.

The City of Bay City announced June 24 that Lumberman's Mercantile was awarded a Michigan Economic Development Corporation Match on Main grant. The funding will support improvements to the business on Midland Street.

Match on Main is a reimbursement-based grant program

that provides up to \$25,000 for new or expanding place-based small businesses. The program is designed to help activate commercial districts, encourage private investment and support community-driven economic development.

Bay City Manager Dana Muscott praised the program's role in

fostering entrepreneurship and community vibrancy. The city also recognized Sara Dimitroff, Bay City's economic development project manager, for work connected to securing the grant.

Bay City has received Match on Main support for the past two years following its Essentials Certified Community designation through MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities program.

For a small business, \$25,000 can be significant. It can help pay for equipment, interior improvements, exterior upgrades, marketing, furniture, fixtures or other project costs that might otherwise delay growth.

For a downtown, the impact can extend beyond one storefront. A stronger business can draw more customers, improve the look of a block, encourage neighboring investment and add to the sense that a commercial corridor is active.

Lumberman's Mercantile is part of the larger Midland Street business district, an area with deep local identity and ongoing redevelopment potential. Grants like Match on Main are intended to help business owners take the next step while keeping local character intact.

The award also connects Bay City to a statewide effort. MEDC announced more than \$1.5 million in Match on Main grants in June to support 69 small businesses across Michigan.

For Lumberman's Mercantile, the grant is a practical investment. For Bay City, it is another sign that small businesses remain central to downtown energy, local pride and neighborhood economic life.

BUSINESS + FINANCE

MEDC grants support 69 small businesses and 338 jobs across Michigan

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. - Michigan is sending more than \$1.5 million in Match on Main grants to 69 small businesses across the state, a new round of funding expected to support 338 jobs and bring new life to downtown storefronts.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation announced the grants June 23. The Michigan Strategic Fund-supported awards are expected to create 117 new full-time jobs and 221 part-time jobs while activating more than 210,000 square feet of vacant or under-used commercial space.

The 2026 application cycle

drew a record 144 applicants from 83 communities, showing strong demand for small business and downtown development support.

Match on Main is a reimbursement-only grant program. It provides up to \$25,000 per project to support new or expanding place-based businesses. Grant funds are released after an approved project is completed, with MEDC reimbursing the applicant organization, which then reimburses the supported business.

Local recipients in mid-Michigan include Lumberman's Mercantile in Bay City, The Brunch Guy in Saginaw, a Mount Pleasant business connected to HBHF5 Properties

LLC and Babes Country Kitchen in Harrison.

Since the program launched in 2019, Match on Main has supported hundreds of businesses and helped leverage millions of dollars in private investment. MEDC describes small businesses as foundational to welcoming, vibrant commercial districts.

The program's focus on place-based businesses is important. These are the shops, restaurants, service providers and local brands that give a downtown its personality. They are also the businesses that often sponsor youth teams, hire local workers, support community events and know customers by name.

For small towns and urban neighborhoods alike, vacant

storefronts can send a message of decline. Filled storefronts send a different message: people are investing here.

The grants are not large enough to remove every challenge facing small businesses. Owners still face interest rates, labor shortages, construction costs, insurance, utilities and changing consumer habits. But a \$25,000 reimbursement can help make a project possible sooner.

The June 23 announcement is a reminder that economic development is not only about major corporations and large factories. Sometimes it starts with a bakery, a boutique, a brunch spot or a shop on Main Street.

Michigan Work Share changes aim to help employers avoid layoffs

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. - Michigan is expanding its Work Share program in July to give employers more flexibility to reduce hours instead of cutting jobs during temporary downturns.

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity announced June 24 that updates to the Work Share program, administered by the Unemployment Insurance Agency, will begin the week of July 19. The changes are part of bipartisan unemployment legislation passed in December 2024.

Under the current rules, employers with an approved Work

Share plan can reduce employee hours between 15% and 45%. Beginning the week of July 19, the allowable reduction will expand to 10% to 60%.

The goal is to help businesses keep skilled workers connected to their jobs while allowing employees to receive partial unemployment benefits to make up for some lost wages.

Work Share can be especially useful when a company faces a temporary slowdown but expects business to improve. Instead of laying off some workers entirely, an employer can reduce hours across a group of employees. Workers keep their jobs and benefits, and the business avoids losing trained staff

it may need later.

For employees, the program can reduce the shock of a layoff. A smaller paycheck is still difficult, but staying attached to a job can preserve health coverage, seniority, routine and long-term employment prospects.

For employers, retaining workers matters in a tight or uncertain labor market. Hiring and training new employees can be expensive, and businesses that cut too deeply may struggle to recover when demand returns.

The changes could matter in manufacturing, hospitality, retail, construction, health care support, professional services and other sectors that experience seasonal or economic shifts.

Small businesses may also benefit if they know about the program and can navigate the application process.

The announcement comes as national labor data show a mixed picture: job openings remain high, but hiring has been cautious. Programs such as Work Share are designed for exactly that kind of uncertainty.

Michigan employers considering the option will need approved plans through UIA. For workers, the key message is that reduced hours do not always have to mean losing a job.

Sometimes, sharing the work can help a business and its employees make it through a difficult stretch together.

BUSINESS + FINANCE

Midland 7 Brew coffee shop prepares to open near Meijer on Eastman Avenue

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — A new drive-through coffee stand has opened on one of Midland's busiest commercial corridors, bringing another national beverage brand to Eastman Avenue and adding a fast-service option for coffee, smoothies, sodas and energy drinks.

7 Brew opened its Midland location Monday, June 29, at 7142 Eastman Ave., near Meijer. The business celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Tuesday, June 30, hosted with the Midland Business Alliance. Local leaders, business representatives and company officials attended the event, which also included a \$1,000 donation to The ROCK Center for Youth Development, a Midland-area nonprofit that serves middle and high school students.

The stand is operated by Brewtopia LLC, a franchise group with nine locations. Jesse Billingham, 7 Brew's director of new stand openings, attended the June 30 ceremony along with franchise co-founder Salem Najjar and Midland Business Alliance representatives, including MBA Ambassador Matt Larson. Billingham said the company was encouraged by the early response from customers after opening the day before.

"The drive-through line hasn't stopped moving since we opened yesterday at 5:30 in the morning," Billingham told the Midland Daily News.

The Midland opening marks the latest step in 7 Brew's rapid expansion across Michigan and the country. The company was founded in Arkansas in 2017 and has grown quickly in recent years



7 BREW CELEBRATED THE OPENING OF ITS NEW MIDLAND DRIVE-THROUGH COFFEE STAND JUNE 30 AT 7142 EASTMAN AVE. THE COMPANY ALSO PRESENTED A \$1,000 DONATION TO THE ROCK CENTER FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT DURING THE RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY.

with a compact, drive-through-focused model built around speed, customization and customer interaction. The company's Michigan location page lists Midland among its in-state stands, along with communities such as Allen Park, Holland, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Monroe, Mount Pleasant, Muskegon, Owosso, Roseville and Traverse City.

Unlike a traditional coffee shop, the Midland 7 Brew does not have an indoor seating area for customers. The business is designed around two queuing lanes, walk-up ordering, app ordering and employees who approach vehicles to take orders and deliver drinks. The location serves beverages only, with no food service, a model company representatives previously said is intended to keep service moving quickly.

The menu includes coffee, cold brew, energy drinks, smoothies, shakes, teas, sodas and other customized beverages. Company representatives say 7 Brew offers more than 20,000 possible drink combinations, giving customers the ability to personalize

flavors, sweetness, temperature and drink type. Popular options include cold brew, energy drinks and the company's "7 Originals," such as the Blondie, cookie butter and sweet-and-salty drinks.

The new stand joins a heavily traveled Eastman Avenue coffee market that already includes Biggby, Starbucks, Creation Coffee and Coffee Grounds Shoppe. That concentration reflects both the strength of the corridor and the competition facing coffee businesses in Midland, where national brands and local shops often serve overlapping customers headed to work, school, shopping or errands.

The 7 Brew project moved through Midland city government last fall. On Oct. 13, 2025, Midland City Council approved a conditional use permit for Brewtopia Michigan LLC to build the stand at the site of a former car wash near the Meijer gas station. The old car wash was later demolished to make way for the prefabricated drive-through building. The council vote was 4-0, with Mayor Maureen Donker absent.

During that October meeting,

Erin McMachen of Birmingham-based Stonefield Engineering and Design explained that customers would not enter the building. Instead, they would order through an app or from employees outside, and drinks would be walked out to vehicles. The site plan also included crosswalks across the driveway and walk-up ordering for pedestrians.

The proposal did draw concern from at least one local business owner. Erin Magley, owner of Coffee Grounds Shoppe at 4951 Eastman Ave., spoke during the public hearing and raised concerns about the effect a national chain could have on existing local businesses. Her comments reflected a familiar tension in many growing commercial districts: new development can bring investment and customer traffic, while also increasing pressure on independent businesses already serving the community.

For 7 Brew, the company's pitch is not only speed, but atmosphere. Billingham said the brand emphasizes friendly service, music, conversation and a more personal drive-through experience.

That approach was visible at the grand opening, where the company paired its business launch with a donation to The ROCK Center for Youth Development. The nonprofit works with students through programs focused on healthy relationships, life skills, leadership and positive youth development.

7 Brew also plans a customer promotion shortly after opening. On Saturday, July 11, customers who purchase a large drink will receive a free 7 Brew T-shirt as part of the stand's "free swag day."

BUSINESS + FINANCE

U.S. job openings rise to two-year high, but hiring remains soft



U.S. JOB OPENINGS ROSE TO 7.594 MILLION IN MAY, BUT HIRING SLIPPED TO 5.17 MILLION, SHOWING A LABOR MARKET WITH OPPORTUNITIES BUT CAUTIOUS EMPLOYERS.

BY MB STAFF

WASHINGTON - U.S. job openings rose to a two-year high in May, but hiring remained soft, showing a labor market that looks steady on paper but still feels uncertain for many workers.

Reuters reported June 30 that job openings increased to 7.594 million in May 2026, the highest level in two years. At the same time, hiring slipped by 45,000 to 5.17 million, according to the Labor Department's Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey.

The job openings rate held at 4.6%, while the quits rate stayed at 1.9%. A low quits rate can signal that workers are less confi-

dent about leaving one job for another, even when openings are available.

The May data showed vacancies rising in leisure and hospitality, construction and manufacturing, while openings declined in health care, finance and transportation. Layoffs rose by 41,000 but remained low by historical standards.

For job seekers, the numbers may feel contradictory. More openings should suggest more opportunity. But softer hiring means employers may be posting positions while still moving slowly, screening more carefully or delaying final decisions because of uncertainty.

Reuters described the labor market as resilient but cautious. Employers are not cutting large numbers of workers, but many are also not hiring aggressively. That kind of "low-hire, low-fire" market can leave workers feeling stuck.

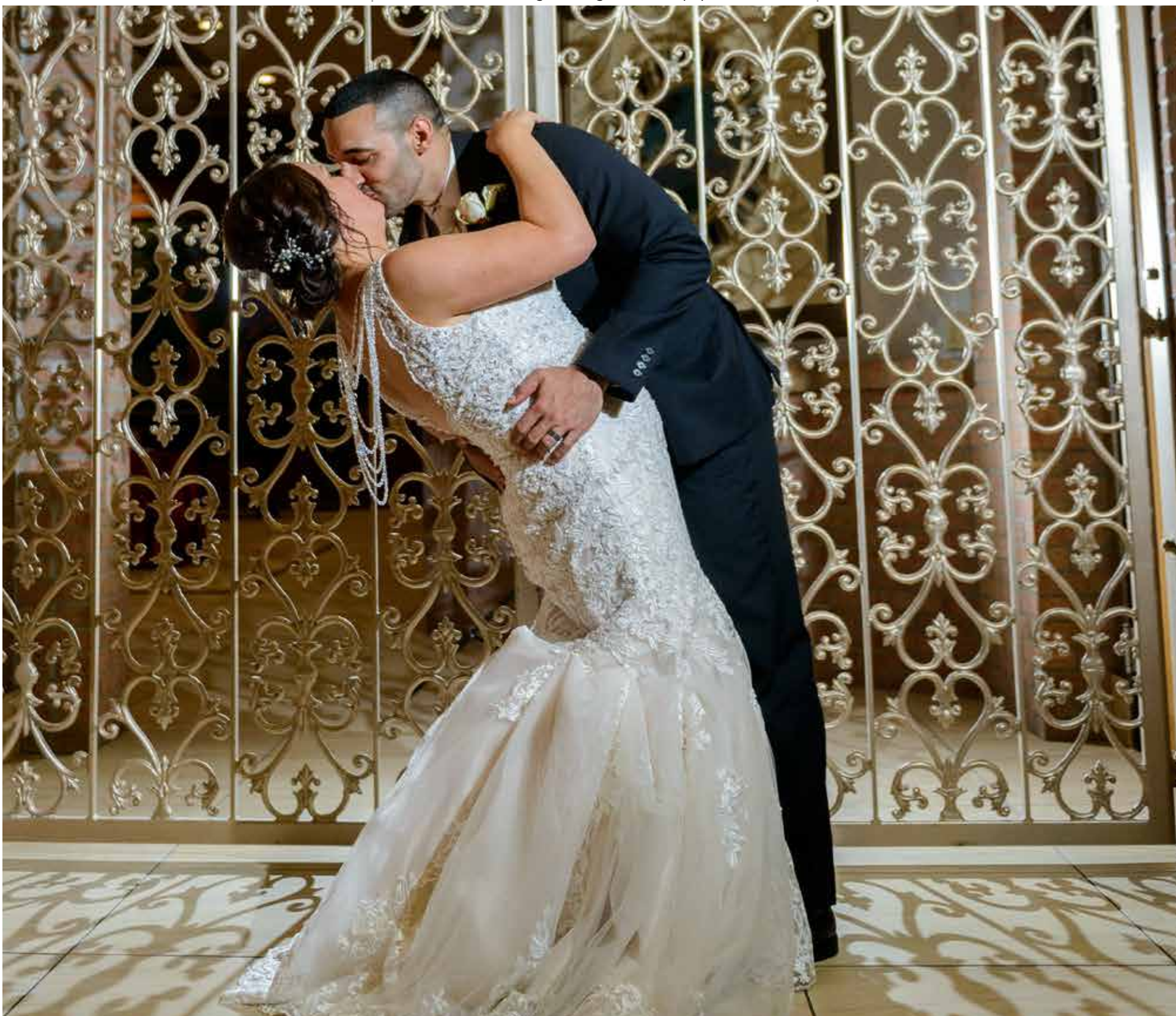
Consumer confidence data also showed more people saying jobs were hard to get, even as openings increased. The disconnect reflects a common frustration: seeing job listings online does not always translate into interviews, offers or wages high enough to meet rising costs.

For Michigan, the national numbers matter because manufacturing, health care, con-

struction, hospitality and small business all depend on labor conditions. Employers in Saginaw, Flint, Bay City and Midland may be trying to retain experienced workers while watching demand, costs and interest rates.

The data also gives context to state programs such as Michigan's Work Share expansion, which aims to help employers avoid layoffs by reducing hours when business slows.

The May report suggests the economy is not collapsing, but it is not booming for workers either. There are jobs on paper. The harder question is how many of them are becoming real paychecks.



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SPORTS

Loons' six-game winning streak ends in extra-inning walkoff at Lansing



THE GREAT LAKES LOONS' SIX-GAME WINNING STREAK ENDED JUNE 28 WITH AN 8-7, 10-INNING WALKOFF LOSS TO THE LANSING LUGNUTS.

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. - The Great Lakes Loons saw a six-game winning streak end the hard way June 28, losing 8-7 to the Lansing Lugnuts on a 10th-inning walkoff.

The Loons built a 4-0 lead with two runs in the first inning and two more in the fifth, but Lansing rallied with four runs in the sixth to tie the game. Great Lakes answered with three runs in the seventh, only to see the Lugnuts respond with three in the eighth.

Lansing completed the come-

back with one run in the bottom of the 10th inning.

Dilan Figueredo took the loss for Great Lakes, falling to 4-3 after allowing one unearned run in two-thirds of an inning. The Loons out-hit Lansing 12-6 but could not close out the game.

Emil Morales led the Great Lakes offense, going 3-for-5 with a home run, two doubles, three RBIs and two runs scored. Samuel Munoz added a two-run homer and finished with two hits.

The loss dropped the Loons to 42-30 before they moved on to a six-game road series at Fort Wayne beginning June 30.

Winning streaks in baseball often end with a quiet night at the plate or a dominant pitching performance by the other team. This one ended in a more frustrating way: Great Lakes scored enough to win, carried leads deep into the game and still watched Lansing celebrate at home plate.

But the game also showed why the Loons have been one of the more interesting teams in the Midwest League. Morales continued to swing a dangerous bat. The lineup produced 12 hits. The team kept answering until the final inning.

For young players, games like

this are part of development. A blown lead, an extra-inning road loss and a quick turnaround all test the same skill: how to respond the next day.

The Loons did not have to wait long. Two days later, Great Lakes opened the Fort Wayne series with a 12-2 win powered by three home runs, including Eduardo Quintero's grand slam.

The winning streak ended in Lansing, but the Loons' larger momentum did not disappear. In minor league baseball, the next bus ride always brings another chance.

SPORTS

SVSU to honor athletes, teams and longtime contributors in 2026 Cardinal Athletic Hall of Fame class

BY MB STAFF

UNIVERSITY CENTER, Mich. — Saginaw Valley State University will welcome a new Cardinal Athletic Hall of Fame class this fall, honoring former standouts whose names remain in the record books, championship teams that helped define Cardinal football and two longtime contributors whose work shaped the athletic experience for generations.

The 2026 Cardinal Athletic Hall of Fame class will be inducted Friday, Oct. 23, ahead of SVSU's home football game against Grand Valley State. Kickoff is scheduled for 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24.

This year's class includes five former student-athletes: Jeanette (Elwell) Badour, track and field; Sam Black, track and field; Kait Harris, volleyball; Lamar King, football; and Ken Tolfree, football.

SVSU also will induct the 1983 and 1984 football teams, along with contributors Jim Muladore, a longtime university administrator, and Rick Welzein, a longtime member of the game-day operations staff.

"We're excited to announce another elite class of inductees into the SVSU Cardinal Athletic Hall of Fame," said John Lewandowski, SVSU vice president for intercollegiate athletics. "This is one of my favorite weekends of the fall, as we celebrate our best of the best with the Hall of Fame induction ceremony."

Badour enters as one of the most accomplished sprinters in SVSU women's track and field history. A nine-time All-Ameri-



SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY WILL INDUCT FIVE FORMER STUDENT-ATHLETES, TWO FOOTBALL TEAMS AND TWO LONGTIME CONTRIBUTORS INTO THE CARDINAL ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME ON FRIDAY, OCT. 23. THE CLASS INCLUDES JEANETTE (ELWELL) BADOUR, SAM BLACK, KAIT HARRIS, LAMAR KING, KEN TOLFREE, THE 1983 AND 1984 FOOTBALL TEAMS, JIM MULADORE AND RICK WELZEIN.

can, she earned national honors in both NAIA and NCAA competition and was named Athlete of the Meet at the 1989 GLIAC Indoor Championships, where she won the 400 meters, 300 meters and 1,600-meter relay. She also represented Team USA in the 1989 European National Track and Field competition in France.

Black competed for SVSU from 2015 to 2021 and became one of the top multi-event athletes in school history. He won the 2021 national championship in the outdoor decathlon and still holds the program record with 7,807 points. He also earned three NCAA All-America honors and three GLIAC Field Athlete of the Year selections.

Harris, a member of the volleyball program from 2006 to 2009, helped lead SVSU to its first NCAA postseason appearance in 2008 and its first GLIAC championship in 2009. She remains one of only three Cardinal volleyball

players to earn All-America recognition from the American Volleyball Coaches Association and finished her career with 3,056 assists, fifth in program history.

King made a powerful impact in just two seasons with Cardinal football. He finished as SVSU's all-time leading pass rusher with 27.5 sacks and still ranks second in program history with 48.5 tackles for loss. In 1998, he was named GLIAC Defensive Lineman of the Year and earned first-team All-America honors. The following year, he became the first SVSU player selected in the first round of the NFL Draft, going No. 22 overall to the Seattle Seahawks.

Tolfree helped build the foundation of SVSU football. A four-year starter under legendary coach Frank "Muddy" Waters, he remains the program's career leader with 22 interceptions. As a senior in 1979, he helped lead the Cardinals to their first GLIAC

football championship and earned unanimous first-team All-GLIAC and NAIA All-America honors.

The 1983 and 1984 football teams will be honored for one of the strongest two-year runs in program history. Under coach George Ihler, SVSU went a combined 17-6 overall and 12-0 in GLIAC play, winning back-to-back conference championships for the first and only time in school history.

The 1983 team finished 9-3 and earned the program's first postseason victory, a 14-13 win at No. 2-ranked Central State in Oklahoma. The 1984 team followed with an 8-3 record, another perfect conference season and a return trip to the NAIA playoffs.

Muladore, a two-time SVSU graduate, served the university for nearly 50 years and rose to executive vice president for administration and business affairs. His leadership helped guide major athletic facility improvements, including the SVSU Fieldhouse addition.

Welzein has served SVSU Athletics for nearly five decades, beginning on the football chain gang in 1979. Over the years, he has worked in football, basketball, volleyball, swimming, lacrosse, indoor track and field and ticket operations, becoming one of the department's most familiar game-day faces.

Together, the 2026 class reflects the reach of SVSU athletics — from championship performances and professional careers to loyal service behind the scenes.

SPORTS

Flint's Claressa Shields returns to middleweight for Atlanta title fight

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. — Claressa Shields has spent her career turning impossible into routine.

Now, the Flint boxing champion is preparing for another major test — and another chance to stretch the limits of what women's boxing can be.

Shields, the undefeated undisputed women's heavyweight champion and one of the most decorated fighters in boxing history, will return to the middleweight division Saturday, Aug. 15, to face unified WBC and WBA middleweight champion Kaye Scott at State Farm Arena in Atlanta. The fight will stream live on DAZN, with the live presentation scheduled to begin at 9 p.m. ET.

The bout is a significant move for Shields, who enters with an 18-0 professional record and three knockouts. After competing at heavyweight and defending her undisputed crown, Shields is moving back to 160 pounds, a division where she has already made history. She previously became undisputed middleweight champion, including a landmark 2022 victory over Savannah Marshall at London's O2 Arena.

Scott, a 42-year-old Australian fighter with a 5-1-1 record, will defend the WBC and WBA middleweight belts she won in December 2025 after defeating Olivia Curry in a rematch. Their first fight was recognized as the WBC Women's Fight of the Year, adding weight to Scott's rise from decorated amateur to world champion.

For Shields, the fight is about legacy as much as belts.

"At this point in my career, every fight is about lega-



FLINT NATIVE CLARESSA SHIELDS WILL RETURN TO THE MIDDLEWEIGHT DIVISION AUG. 15 TO FACE UNIFIED WBC AND WBA CHAMPION KAYE SCOTT AT STATE FARM ARENA IN ATLANTA. THE FIGHT WILL STREAM LIVE ON DAZN.

cy," Shields said in the fight announcement. "Every fight now is about pushing the boundaries of what's possible — for myself, for women's boxing, and for the next generation coming behind me through Claressa Shields Promotions."

The Aug. 15 event will mark Shields' Atlanta debut and a new market test for her star power. State Farm Arena lists the event as the WBC/WBA Unified Middleweight World Championship, with the arena event scheduled to start at 5 p.m. and doors opening to the general public at 4 p.m. Tickets are on sale through Ticketmaster, according to the arena.

The event is also being promoted as the first women's boxing headliner at State Farm Arena and the venue's first championship boxing event since Gervonta "Tank" Davis fought there in 2019.

Shields' path to this moment began in Flint, where she grew from a young fighter at Berston Field House into a two-time Olympic gold medalist and one of the central figures in the rise of women's boxing. She has become a five-division world champion and the first boxer in the four-

belt era, male or female, to become undisputed in three weight classes.

Her most recent fight was Feb. 22 in Detroit, where she defeated Franchon Crews-Dezurn by unanimous decision at Little Caesars Arena to defend her undisputed heavyweight championship. All three judges scored that fight 100-90 for Shields, moving her professional record to 18-0.

That Detroit win continued a run of Michigan-based championship nights that helped turn Shields' fights into large-scale events. In recent years, she has repeatedly brought national boxing attention back to her home state, fighting in front of hometown and regional fans while building her brand beyond the ring.

Her move to Atlanta carries a different kind of meaning. Shields said the city represents a chance to show that the energy created in Detroit can travel.

"We've shown what women's boxing can do in Detroit," Shields said. "We've sold out arenas and created moments people remember. Now it's time to bring that same energy to Atlanta."

Scott enters the fight as a

champion with a long boxing résumé of her own. Before turning professional, she competed with the Australian National Team and built a reputation as a highly skilled amateur. As a professional, the Aug. 15 fight will be the biggest stage of her career.

Scott said she is proud to defend her WBC and WBA belts against Shields and views the matchup as an opportunity to prove herself against one of the sport's best fighters.

The fight also arrives at an important time for women's boxing. Shields has become one of the sport's most visible advocates for better pay, bigger platforms and more investment in women fighters. In November 2025, Reuters reported that Shields signed an \$8 million multi-year deal with Salita Promotions and Wynn Records, which the promoters called the richest contract in women's boxing.

That deal gave Shields another platform to build events around not only boxing, but entertainment, celebrity, music and culture. The Atlanta fight is expected to follow that model, with promoters positioning it as more than a title bout.

For Flint, Shields' next fight is another reminder of how far her story has traveled. From local gyms and Olympic podiums to world titles across multiple divisions, Shields has carried her city's name into arenas around the world. Each fight adds another chapter to a career built on skill, confidence and stubborn belief.

On Aug. 15, she will step into the ring again, this time trying to reclaim control of a division she once ruled — and to show, once more, that Flint's champion is still chasing history.



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FAITH IN FOCUS



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

Ministry Without Walls expands vision with community-focused mission

BY PASTOR JOHN DUNN

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

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

The organization's vision includes several key objectives:



PASTOR JOHN DUNN

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

between the church, volunteers, and community professionals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SPONSORED CONTENT

FAITH IN FOCUS

SERMONETTE SERIES

The Shepherd who provides peace

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters"

Psalm 23:1-2 KJV



BY MINISTER CAROLYN
CARTER TOWNSEL

One of the greatest images of God's love is that of a shepherd caring for his sheep. David begins Psalm 23 with a personal declaration: "The Lord is my Shepherd." He doesn't say a shepherd or the shepherd; he says "my" Shepherd. This reminds us that our relationship with God is personal. He knows us by name, watches over us, and faithfully provides for every need.

Because the Lord is our Shepherd, David confidently declares, "I shall not want." This does not mean we will never face challenges or desires, but it assures us that God will always supply what we truly need. His provision may not always come in the way or timing we expect, but it is always sufficient and always on time.

David continues by saying, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Sheep will not lie down unless they feel safe, protected, and cared for. Likewise, God invites us to rest in His presence instead of living in constant fear, worry, or anxiety. He knows that weary hearts need more than activity—they need peace.

Finally, "He leadeth me beside the still waters." Still waters symbolize refreshment, restoration, and calm. In a world filled with uncertainty and noise, God gently leads His children to places where their souls can be renewed. He doesn't drive us with fear; He leads us with love.

Beloved, Whatever season you are facing today, remember this truth: the Shepherd who leads you is also the Shepherd who provides for you. You may not know what tomorrow holds, but you can trust the One who is leading

you today. As long as the Lord is your Shepherd, you can rest in His care, walk in His peace, and confidently believe that He will provide everything you need.

Blessings to All,
Carolyn



FAITH IN FOCUS

Diocese of Saginaw publication earns four Catholic Media Awards

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. - Great Lakes Bay Catholic, the Diocese of Saginaw's publication, has been recognized with four Catholic Media Awards, adding national recognition to a local ministry of storytelling.

The diocese announced June 23 that Great Lakes Bay Catholic received the awards during the annual Catholic Media Awards on June 19. The Diocese of Saginaw/Great Lakes Bay Catholic is one of more than 365 member organizations in the Catholic Media Association.

The Catholic Media Awards

recognize excellence in journalism, communications, design, photography, digital media and faith-based storytelling among Catholic publications and organizations across North America.

For a diocesan publication, awards are not only about headlines or layout. They recognize the work of translating faith into stories that people can understand: profiles of parish life, explanations of Catholic teaching, coverage of local ministries, personal witness, service work and the everyday lives of people trying to live their faith.

Great Lakes Bay Catholic describes its mission as offering inspiring witness stories, advice for

daily living, clear and accurate teaching about the Catholic faith and news from around the Diocese of Saginaw and the world.

That kind of local Catholic journalism matters because faith communities are often held together by stories. A parishioner in Bay City may be encouraged by reading about a ministry in Saginaw. A teacher in Midland may see a shared mission in another school. A young adult may discover that the church includes people asking the same questions they are.

The awards also come at a time when local media, including religious media, face challenges of attention, funding and trust.

Publications must reach readers across print, digital and social platforms while maintaining accuracy and pastoral care.

For the Diocese of Saginaw, the recognition affirms that local Catholic stories can stand alongside work from larger dioceses and national outlets.

Behind each award is likely a team of writers, editors, designers, photographers, clergy, staff and parishioners who shared their experiences.

The June 23 announcement is a celebration of media work, but also of witness. In faith journalism, the best stories do not only inform. They invite people to see grace at work close to home.

Religious Liberty Commission draft calls for 'bridges' between church and state

BY MB STAFF

WASHINGTON - A new draft report from President Donald Trump's Religious Liberty Commission is renewing national debate over the meaning of religious freedom and the line between church and state.

The U.S. Department of Justice announced June 26 that the commission delivered its final draft report to the president during an Oval Office presentation. The commission was chaired by Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, with Ben Carson serving as vice chairman.

The Justice Department said the report was based on seven hearings held over the

past year and input from more than 100 witnesses of different ages, religions, expertise and backgrounds.

The Associated Press reported June 27 that the draft calls for replacing the familiar idea of separation between church and state with the idea of building "bridges" between them. The report generally supports more religious expression in public life and greater access to public money for faith-based organizations.

Supporters of the commission's approach argue that religious people and institutions should not be pushed out of public programs, schools, workplaces or civic life simply because their motivation is faith-based. They

say religious liberty protects the full participation of believers in a pluralistic democracy.

Critics worry that weakening church-state separation can lead to government favoritism toward certain religions, pressure on people who do not share the majority faith, or taxpayer funding for religious activity. They argue that separation protects both government and religion by preventing either from controlling the other.

The debate is not new, but it has become more intense as courts and lawmakers consider questions involving school prayer, public funding for religious schools, faith-based foster care, religious objections to

laws and expression in public workplaces.

For faith communities in Michigan, the report may feel both distant and personal. Churches, mosques, synagogues, Catholic schools, charities and ministries often interact with government through grants, zoning, education, social services and public events.

The central question is how to protect religious exercise while respecting a country of many faiths and no faith.

The commission's draft does not end that debate. It gives it new language - and likely new political energy heading into the next round of court cases and policy fights.

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FUNDRAISING GOOD TIMES

Nonprofit Mental Health – it's not equally experienced



BY MEL AND PEARL SHAW

The conversations around mental health have changed dramatically over recent years, and some of the stigma associated with having a mental health condition has lessened. But we can do more. We can do more for ourselves, our friends and family members, our neighbors, and co-workers. The “more” begins with understanding, listening, learning about the available resources, and recognizing when those around us are in need.

Words and phrases such as “depression,” “bi-polar,” “anxiety,” and “post traumatic stress disorder” are part of our communication but do we really know what they mean? How are we educating ourselves? And how are we understanding the interactions between individual mental health, our economic situation, immigration status, public policy, and family situations to name a few variables?

Here's what we know when it comes to nonprofits and mental health. First, there are many nonprofits dedicated to researching mental health and identifying treatments and new or combined therapies. There are organizations committed to providing referrals, information, and treatment. We also know that individuals working within nonprofits and those served by



MB FILE PHOTO

nonprofits are living with mental health conditions. NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is a national, grass-roots organization with a long history of supporting people affected by mental illness. Whether you are suffering, or living with someone who is, there is a program and support for you.

We also want to share information related to “burn out” which impacts so many working-people's lives, including those who work at nonprofits. We talked with Cait Donovan, co-host of FRIED: The Burnout Podcast in an earlier column, and we recommend her blog and column as a resource and a tool for creating personal – and workplace – change. It's this latter component of burnout – and mental health – that we want to encourage you to think about as part of Mental Health Awareness Month. While “burn out” is not a mental health illness or condition, it can exacerbate people's mental health, and it is an environmental and organizational condition that can

leave people feeling exhausted, stressed out beyond belief which can contribute to physical and mental health issues. And it affects different people differently.

We recently read “Who Burns Out, and Why?” from the Do Good Leadership Collective, written by Loretta Turner, MA, ACC and edited by Florine Causser. This report makes the case that “burnout is directly tied to workplace conditions...” and that “Black professionals, particularly those leading Black-led organizations, face disproportionate burnout risk due to longstanding structural inequities.” Turner identifies the following as being at higher risk for burnout: ex-

ecutive directors & CEOs, front-line workers who provide direct services, fundraising professionals, those working within immigrant-serving organizations, individuals whose lived experience matches those they are serving, and transgender and nonbinary people.

Burnout and stress can contribute to or exasperate mental health challenges. Taking the time to look at the environments that we are asking people to work within is one way to support each other and help reduce burn out and improve mental health. We encourage you to take time to read Turner's report.



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PICS OF THE WEEK

Hundreds of people gathered Saturday, June 20, at Morley Plaza for the Saginaw Juneteenth Celebration festival, held immediately after their signature parade. The community event featured food, vendors, music, giveaways and other family-friendly activities as residents came together to celebrate freedom, culture and unity.





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