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**Saginaw United wins first boys basketball district title; Nouvel beats Sacred Heart for district crown**

SPORTS, PG 39

## Saginaw artist and activist Nyesha LaToy Clark-Young passes away at 51



NYESHA LATOY CLARK-YOUNG (PHOTO CREDIT: PHIL EICH)

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Nyesha LaToy Clark-Young, a Saginaw artist, organizer and equity advocate whose work stretched across public art, environmental justice, health equity and grassroots community leadership, passes away Feb. 20 at age 51.

In Saginaw, Clark-Young became widely known as a creative force and civic voice — someone who moved be-

tween art spaces, nonprofit work and public policy conversations with urgency and purpose. She was a founding member of Saginaw CAP and served as the organization's director of advocacy, justice, equity and inclusion.

Her presence is also visible on one of the city's best-known public art projects. Clark-Young was one of the Saginaw painters on the Shine Bright Saginaw Silo Mural, the large-scale riverfront mural project that

transformed grain silos into a landmark piece of public art.

Clark-Young's advocacy extended well beyond the arts. She became a prominent voice during Saginaw's pandemic-era water shut-offs and remained active in public conversations tied to water access and state-wide water infrastructure improvements.

**Continues on pg 2, Nyesha LaToy**



**Bay City delays vote on immigration resolutions as mayor shifts focus to city manager search**

LATINO BANNER, COVER



**More than a cup of coffee**

COMMUNITY, PAGE 16

## From cover, Nyesha LaToy

Her professional and community roles reflected how deeply she was woven into the region's nonprofit and organizing networks. The Michigan Health Improvement Alliance lists Clark-Young as director of advocacy for community resilience in a joint role with Saginaw CAP, focused on grassroots advocacy, community resilience and reducing structural barriers to equity.

That same public profile identifies Clark-Young as a Saginaw native, multi-disciplined artist and dedicated activist, and shows the breadth of her community involvement. Her work included serving as creative director for AmusBE, art chairwoman for the Saginaw African Cultural Foundation, and an executive board member for The Ezekiel Project and Community Alliance for the People (Saginaw CAP). Her involvement also extended to the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition and the Saginaw USDAC Community Arts Outpost.

Taken together, those roles show the scope of Clark-Young's impact in Saginaw: arts and culture, justice and equity, neighborhood advocacy, health and resilience work, and coalition-building across organizations that often operate in separate spaces. Her work consistently connected them.

Her death has prompted grief across Saginaw's arts and advocacy communities, where she was known as both a creator and organizer — a person whose influence could be seen in public meetings, community projects and collaborative efforts across the city.

For Saginaw, Clark-Young leaves more than memories. She leaves a public legacy — in the city's art, in its advocacy work, in the organizations she helped strengthen, and in the people she inspired to keep building.

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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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1 week before each publication date of the 1st and 16th of each month

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**THE MICHIGAN BANNER  
CELEBRATES  
WOMEN'S  
HISTORY MONTH**

**IN THIS ISSUE** ▶

|                            |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Youth Banner</b> .....  | 4 - 5       |
| <b>Latino Banner</b> ..... | LB 1 - LB 5 |
| <b>Community</b> .....     | 11          |
| <b>Politics</b> .....      | 22          |
| <b>Health</b> .....        | 24          |
| <b>Education</b> .....     | 27          |
| <b>Business</b> .....      | 34          |
| <b>Sports</b> .....        | 39          |
| <b>Faith</b> .....         | 43          |

# MICHIGAN YOUTH BANNER

VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 5



## Bay City Public Schools approved for Army JROTC program at Bay City Central



BAY CITY CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

BY MB STAFF

BAY CITY, Mich. — Bay City Public Schools has been approved to launch an Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps program at Bay City Central High School, with student participation set to begin in the 2026-27 school year.

The approval came from the U.S. Army Cadet Command, and the program will be open to all Bay City Public Schools high school students, even though it will be housed at Bay City

Central.

District leaders are positioning the program as a new leadership and career-readiness option for students, with coursework focused on leadership, citizenship and personal responsibility. The curriculum will include history, government, health and wellness, along with leadership training, teamwork and community service.

"The introduction of the Army JROTC program represents a significant expansion of civilian, vocational, and academic leadership opportunities avail-

able to our students," Superintendent Grant Hegenauer said. "We are honored to partner with the U.S. Army Cadet Command to foster an environment where students can develop the versatile skills necessary for success in college, the workforce, or military service."

Bay City Public Schools will begin hiring for a Senior Army Instructor and an Army Instructor, with the goal of having both positions filled before the program launches next school year.

The district also said the 7th Brigade of the U.S. Army Cadet

Command will support local staff during implementation.

Army JROTC is a high school leadership and citizenship program and does not require military service from students who enroll, according to the U.S. Army JROTC program's public FAQ.

The new program adds another student leadership pathway for Bay City Public Schools as districts across Michigan continue expanding career-connected and extracurricular options tied to student engagement and postsecondary planning.

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**SCHOLARSHIPS**  
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**MARCH 16, 2026**

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- For additional information, please email [AKAHYOmega1908@gmail.com](mailto:AKAHYOmega1908@gmail.com).

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**SCHOLARSHIPS**

A number of scholarships will be awarded to deserving high school graduating seniors from the Saginaw area. Scholarships range from \$500 up to \$1,000.



Scholarship applications will be sent electronically to schools or by clicking Apply Now or Scanning the QR Code.

**APPLY NOW**



# Latino Banner

LIDER EN LA  
DIVERSIDAD

VAMOS ADELANTE

## Bay City delays vote on immigration resolutions as mayor shifts focus to city manager search

BY MB STAFF

BAY CITY, Mich. — Bay City commissioners delayed action on immigration-related resolutions after a packed City Commission meeting drew large crowds, public demonstrations and hours of debate, leaving the measures to be revised before returning for another vote.

The discussion centered on three resolutions introduced by Commissioner Christopher Runberg. WCMU's summary of the Feb. 16 meeting states the proposals addressed local police detentions without judicial warrants, use of masks and use of city resources for federal immigration enforcement.

Residents filled Bay City Hall and gathered outside before the meeting as supporters and opponents of the measures demonstrated. WCMU and WNEM both described a crowded public response and strong opinions on both sides of the issue.

The meeting ended without a vote, and commissioners directed that the proposals be revised.

In a statement issued afterward, Mayor Christopher Girard said he opposed the resolutions and called the debate symbolic.

"My position remains the same," Girard wrote. "Bay City should not become collateral damage in a symbolic national political fight. Our responsibility is first and foremost to the people who live here, work here, raise families here and invest here."

Girard also said the proposed



BAY CITY MAYOR CHRISTOPHER GIRARD

resolutions would not change city laws or policies and would not change federal authority, then urged the commission to refocus on hiring Bay City's next city manager as Dana Muscott prepares to retire in March.

"That decision will shape Bay City's direction for years to come," Girard wrote. "Strong executive leadership affects economic development, infrastructure investment, public safety coordination, fiscal management

and the overall stability of our organization."

WNEM reported Feb. 27 that Girard planned to introduce a separate resolution affirming community safety, equal treatment and compliance with immigration law, with a commission vote scheduled for Monday, March 2. WNEM said the proposed language states immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility while local police will continue complying with state

and federal law.

For Bay City's Latino residents and other immigrant families, the debate has elevated concerns about public trust, policing and how local government addresses immigration-related issues in a city setting where federal authority and local policy often overlap in public discussion more than in direct legal control. That tension was visible in the turnout and extended public comment at the Feb. 16 meeting.

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 12 PM - 3 PM



# Hoyt Park to host Cinco de Mayo Classic softball tournament May 2-3 in Saginaw

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — A two-day softball tournament with a Cinco de Mayo theme is scheduled for May 2-3 at Hoyt Park in Saginaw.

The Hoyt Park Cinco de Mayo Classic will feature men’s slow-pitch and co-ed divisions, according to event information on a promotional flyer.

Tournament organizers list a \$350 per team entry fee and say the event will include six fields available for non-stop play, pool play followed by bracket play, and a three-game guarantee.

The flyer also promotes a “premier playing experience,” listing diamond dust infields, 300-foot fences, game balls provided, and ASA-certified umpires.

Organizers said the tournament schedule will be available on SportsEngine.

The event is being promoted with the tagline: “Play Ball. Fiesta Hard. Repeat.”

**HOYT PARK**

**CINCO DE MAYO CLASSIC**

*Play Ball. Fiesta Hard. Repeat.*

**TOURNAMENT FORMAT**

- 6 Fields Available — Non-Stop Play
- Pool Play ♦ Bracket Play
- ♦ 3 Game Guarantee
- ♦ Schedule Available on SportsEngine

**ENTRY FEE**

- ♦ \$350 Per Team

**DIVISIONS**

- ♦ Men’s Slow-Pitch
- ♦ Co-Ed

**PREMIER PLAYING EXPERIENCE**

- Diamond Dust Infields
- 300 ft Fences
- Game Balls Provided
- ASA Certified Umpires

**\$350 PER TEAM**

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HOYT PARK CINCO DE MAYO CLASSIC (COURTESY PHOTO)

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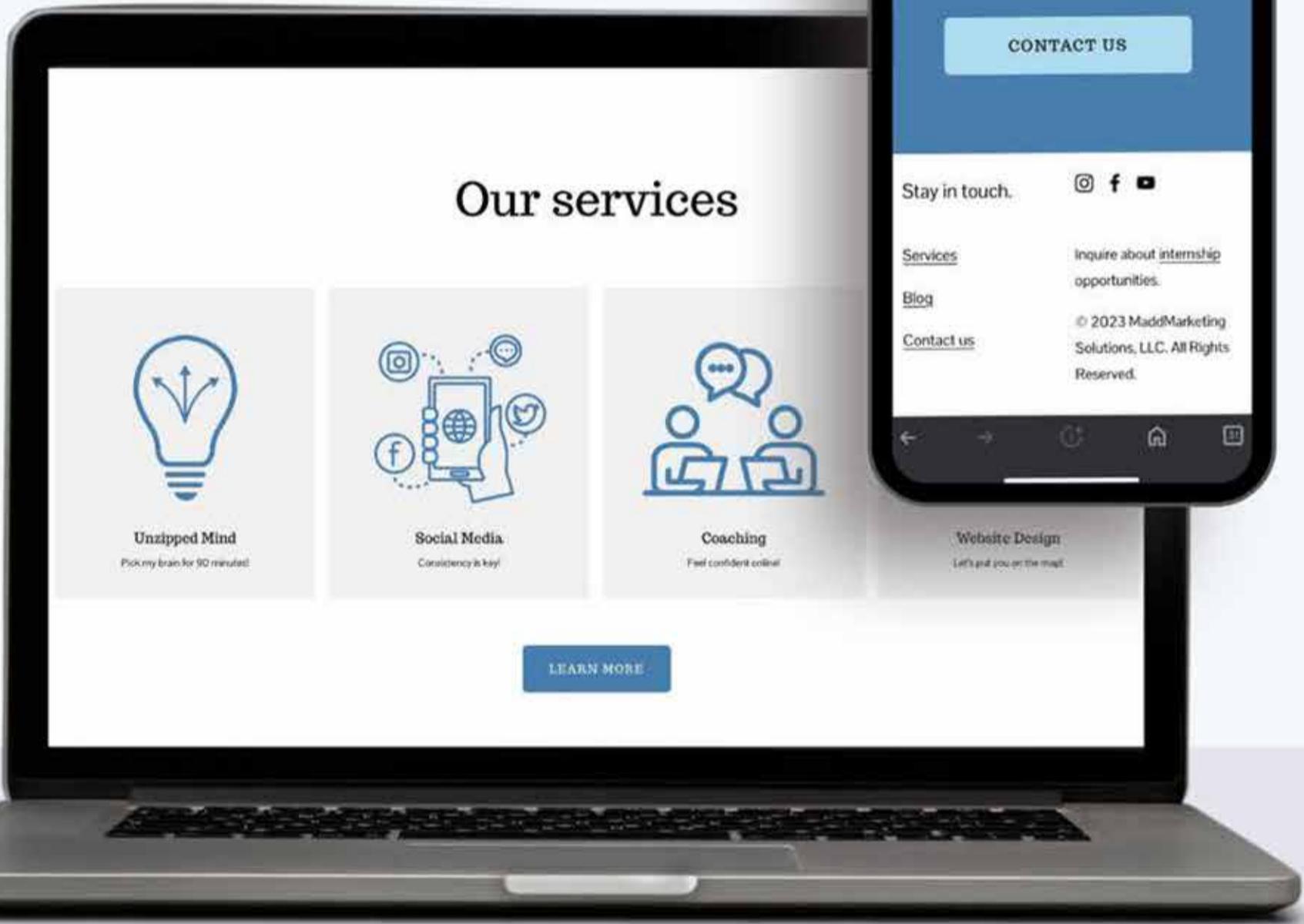
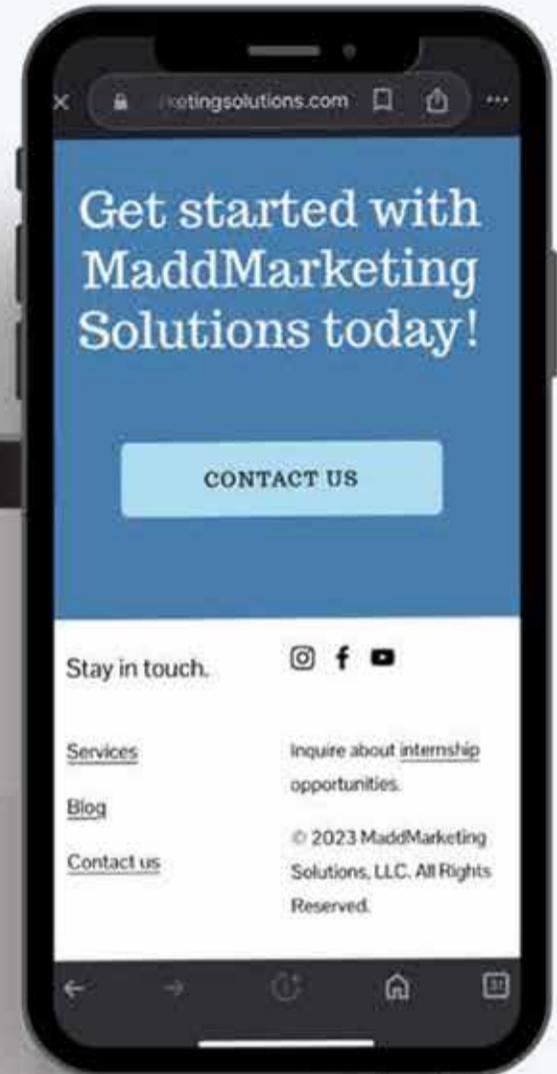
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## COMMUNITY

# McDonald Rivet announces \$700,000 for Saginaw H.E.L.P. program



CONGRESSWOMAN KRISTEN MCDONALD RIVET PICTURED WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM HELP, THE SAGINAW POLICE DEPARTMENT AND THOMPSON MIDDLE SCHOOL. (COURTESY PHOTO)

## BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — U.S. Rep. Kristen McDonald Rivet, D-Bay City, announced \$700,000 in new federal funding for Saginaw's HELP Community Violence Intervention Program during an event at Thompson Middle School, directing new support to a local effort focused on youth mentorship, engagement and violence prevention.

The funding is tied to Saginaw's H.E.L.P. Community Violence Intervention Program, which works with young people through relationship-building, mentoring and skills development. The program is designed to address the effects of violence

on youth and connect students with support both during and outside school hours.

HELP stands for Healing. Love. Engagement. Presence.

Students, educators and community leaders attended the announcement at Thompson Middle School, where local leaders highlighted the role the program plays in supporting young people beyond the classroom. The funding is expected to expand programming centered on mentorship, personal development and intervention services.

"I think we're at a moment where we can ask ourselves are we going to shrug our shoulders and walk away from our children and let them gut it out

on their own or are we going to double down on things like help that make differences both in the right now and down the road," McDonald Rivet said.

The funding amount also appears in McDonald Rivet's federal community project funding disclosure materials, which list the HELP Community Violence Intervention Program at \$700,000 and name the City of Saginaw as the project sponsor.

The project description outlines a broad use of funds aimed at improving community relations and expanding intervention services. Those uses include youth engagement, mentorship, skills-development training for at-risk individuals and support-

ive services for law enforcement.

At the school event, Thompson Middle School Principal Jason LaPorte described the program as a consistent presence for students when school is not in session.

"When we are not with them, HELP is," LaPorte said. "On Saturdays, they pick students up, bring them in, and feed them. It's an extension of what we do."

The announcement places additional attention on community violence intervention work in Saginaw, where schools, community organizations and local leaders have continued building partnerships focused on prevention, student support and long-term neighborhood stability.

## COMMUNITY



# Celebrating WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## Dr. Bettye Washington Greene built a lasting legacy in Midland as a pioneer in chemistry

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — Dr. Bettye Washington Greene, a pioneering chemist whose work in Midland helped break barriers in American industry, remains one of the Great Lakes Bay Region's most significant scientific figures.

When Greene joined Dow Chemical Co. in Midland in 1965, she became the first Black American female Ph.D. chemist hired in the chemical industry, according to the American Chemical Society. Her hiring marked a major milestone in both science and workplace equity at a time when women — and especially Black women — remained sharply underrepresented in industrial research roles.

Greene worked as a research scientist at Dow in Midland and built a career focused on polymer, latex and colloid chemistry. The American Chemical Society credits her research with contributing to innovations used in pharmaceuticals, cosmetics,

paints, coatings and catalysts. ACS also notes that she earned three patents during her career.

Her scientific path also reflected a broader pattern of excellence. ACS identifies Greene as a Ph.D. chemist whose career helped open doors for future generations of scientists of color entering industrial and corporate research.

Greene retired from Dow in 1990 after decades of research and innovation. She died in 1995 at age 60. ACS and related chemistry publications continue to highlight her career as a landmark example of Black women's contributions to science and manufacturing.

Her legacy received renewed national recognition when the American Chemical Society honored her achievements with a National Historic Chemical Landmark designation. ACS announced the honor in 2023 and described Greene as a pioneer whose Midland-based work had lasting impact across multiple industries.

For Midland and the broader Great Lakes Bay Region, Greene's story connects local industry to national history. Her career at Dow places Midland at the cen-

ter of a barrier-breaking chapter in American chemistry, and her work continues to stand as a model of scientific innovation, perseverance and leadership.



DR. BETTYE WASHINGTON GREENE

## COMMUNITY

# Theodore Roethke Poetry & Arts Festival returns March 20-25 with free events across Saginaw



LATASHA N. NEVADA DIGGS (COURTESY PHOTO)

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Poetry readings, music performances and community arts events will take place across Saginaw March 20-25 as Saginaw Valley State University hosts the Theodore Roethke Poetry & Arts Festival, a triennial celebration honoring the city's Pulitzer Prize-winning poet.

The festival centers on the Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Prize ceremony, which will honor LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs, winner of the 2025 Roethke Memorial Prize for Poetry. But organizers say the weeklong

schedule is designed to extend beyond campus through partnerships with local businesses and organizations.

"We're delighted to host the Triennial Festival with a full range of activities celebrating the arts in our area and promoting the work of Theodore Roethke, Saginaw's native son," said Carlos Ramet, associate dean of SVSU's College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences and coordinator and co-chair of the 2026 festival.

All listed events are free and open to the public.

The festival opens Friday, March 20, with a poetry slam from 6:30-9 p.m. in the Whitaker Lecture Theatre, Brown

Hall 106, on SVSU's campus. The slam is open to adults, college students and high school students, with prizes awarded to the top three finishers. The evening also will include live music from the SVSU Jazz Combo and refreshments.

Events continue Saturday, March 21, at the Theodore Roethke Home Museum, 1805 Gratiot in Saginaw, where guided tours of the Roethke House will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Organizers said the tours will take attendees through the poet's childhood home. Later that afternoon, from 2-3:30 p.m., the River Junction Poets will read original work and discuss Ro-

ethke's influence on the region's longest-standing poetry group.

On Sunday, March 22, Oracle Brewing, 122 N. Michigan Ave. in Saginaw, will host "The Ted (Roethke) Talk and Brew" from 6-8 p.m. Local author Jeff Vande Zande is scheduled to present "Theodore Roethke and the Making of an American Poet." Three craft beers inspired by Roethke's poems will be available for purchase.

A musical tribute is scheduled for Monday, March 23, at 7:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 121 S. Harrison in Saginaw. The concert will feature soloist and Saginaw native Emily Marvosh, an original composition by Michigan resident Collin Whitfield, and performances by the SVSU Cardinal Singers. Organizers said the concert is supported by a Saginaw Community Foundation grant.

The festival's signature event, the Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Prize ceremony, will be held Tuesday, March 24, at 7 p.m. in SVSU's Rhea Miller Recital Hall. The national prize has been awarded since 1968. Diggs will read selections from her award-winning collection, *Village*, and sign books after the ceremony.

The Theodore Roethke Poetry & Arts Festival highlights the life and legacy of one of Michigan's best-known poets. Roethke won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1954 and is widely recognized for work exploring nature, identity and personal experience.

More information about the festival and events is available at SVSU's Roethke festival webpage. Organizers also listed Ramet as a contact for questions.

COMMUNITY

# DSRC to hold 22<sup>nd</sup> annual auction fundraiser in Bay City on April 10

BY MB STAFF

BAY CITY, Mich. — Disability Services Resource Center will host its 22nd annual auction fundraiser April 10 at the Double-Tree by Hilton Bay City – Riverfront, with proceeds supporting programs for Bay County residents with disabilities, according to a media release issued Feb. 27.

This year's event theme is "Happy 250th Birthday America!" and will feature live and silent auctions, table trivia, music by Hidalgo Entertainment and a

three-meat buffet dinner. Tickets are \$80 per person or \$600 for a table of eight.

DSRC said registration is required by March 27 and that no onsite registrations will be accepted. Attendees can register online, while those unable to attend may donate through the organization's website or by text donation link.

The nonprofit also recognized event sponsors in multiple categories, including Landaal Packaging Systems, Glastender Inc., Thrivent Financial, Frankenmuth Credit Union and Dou-

bleTree by Hilton Bay City – Riverfront, among others.

DSRC, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Bay City, said it provides five primary programs for Bay County residents who are temporarily or permanently disabled: adaptive sports, accessible ramp building, camp sponsorships and summer special needs enrichment programs, disability awareness training, and equipment sup-

port that includes durable medical equipment and personal care items.

The organization's office is located at 1820 N. Trumbull Drive in Bay City.



**Saginaw Promise**

- ▶ Since 2012, Saginaw Promise has provided over **\$1,405,747** in scholarships.
- ▶ **Big News!!!--Saginaw Promise has amended its Development Plan to broaden scholarship funding options, to fund "costs of attendance",** in addition to tuition/mandatory fees, funding can now be applied to housing, books, supplies, meal programs, transportation etc. **More support for scholars and greater impact for Saginaw!**
- ▶ **Return on Investment:** (Source: 2024 National Clearinghouse Report) Saginaw Promise Scholar persistence and attainment...

| National Student Clearinghouse Report (2024)  |     |
|---|-----|
| Saginaw Promise Scholars attainment--2012-2024.                                     |     |
| *Persistence of Saginaw Promise Scholars to second year of postsecondary education: | 49% |
| Program Certificates:   | 13  |
| Associate degrees:  | 56  |
| Bachelor's degrees:   | 152 |
| Master's degrees:   | 33  |
| Doctoral Candidates:  | 3   |
| Juris Doctor:   | 1   |
| *Additional Degrees earned but report did not specify degree level:                 | 65  |

**Total Number of program certificates and degrees earned: 323.**

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## COMMUNITY



# Celebrating WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## Wilmer Jones Ham-McZee's legacy endures in Saginaw through public service and civic leadership

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Wilmer Jones Ham-McZee, a longtime Saginaw public servant and educator, remains one of the city's most significant civic leaders through a record that spans local government, public schools and community service.

Ham-McZee made local history when she became Saginaw's first woman mayor and first African American woman mayor, serving from 2001 to 2005 after previously serving on the Saginaw City Council. Saginaw mayoral records list her term beginning Nov. 12, 2001.

Her public service in city government began before the mayor's office. Local and regional coverage and community records identify her as having joined the Saginaw City Council in 1994, where she served before becoming mayor and later mayor pro tem.

Ham-McZee's career also included decades in education. NAACP Saginaw Branch his-

torical materials identify her as a graduate of Saginaw Public Schools, Delta College and Saginaw Valley State University, and note that she worked as a teacher with Saginaw Public Schools from 1980 to 2007.

Her civic involvement extended well beyond elected office. NAACP Saginaw Branch materials list service on a wide range of boards and organizations, including the Boys & Girls Club, MBS International Airport-related leadership roles, pension boards, the Downtown Development Authority and Habitat for Humanity.

Ham-McZee was also identified as founder of the Saginaw Soul Festival in NAACP historical materials, adding arts and cultural leadership to a public-service résumé that already included education and city government.

Her legacy drew renewed public attention after her death in September 2025, when community members and local news coverage reflected on her role in

Saginaw history and her long-term impact on the city. WNEM coverage described her as Saginaw's first woman mayor and noted her years of municipal service.

For Saginaw and the broader Great Lakes Bay Region,

Ham-McZee's legacy is rooted in barrier-breaking leadership and institution-building — from classrooms and council chambers to mayoral leadership and community organizations that continue to shape civic life.



WILMER JONES HAM-MCZEE

## COMMUNITY

## More than a cup of coffee



BRANDI HOLIDAY HAYES

BY MIKE THOMPSON

SAGINAW, Mich. — An event March 14 will honor Al Holiday, who was Saginaw County's first black chairman of the Board of Commissioners, a crowning achievement of his civic leadership.

Signature Eight O' Eight is inviting shoppers and sellers alike to a bazaar sale from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 808 North Michigan, home of Black Brew Cafe.



AL HOLIDAY

The owner and hostess is his daughter, Brandi Holiday Hayes, and the name of her company is Daddy's Girl Investments. Her father passed away in 2013, which means he was part of the ribbon-cutting back when his daughter opened her Styles of Character Salon across the street, a short mile from the courthouse corridors where he once roamed.

Al Holiday in 1989 not only was the first county chair of color, but he only was age 35 when he took the gavel, also among the youngest ever. As a child, Brandi would overhear the political shop talk.

"I was more interested in becoming an entrepreneur," Brandi says, adding that "the political side" from her dad's involvement at the courthouse, has influenced her to do good for her community at the same time.

Linda McClain Holiday Veasley explains that her daughter's first informal enterprise was as a teenage basement beautician among her peers and young adults, doing "fairly well for herself." This led to work in local salons during her young adult years, where she gained experience and built her finances to open her own salon.

Brandi's husband of 19 years, Quincy Hayes, is a real estate professional, and she realizes the challenges to open a multi-purpose retail/office mix are more complex than operating a single-purpose enterprise. That's why she is taking the chance, going back to looking across the street and making the 808 building deal

during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when we did not know when or how we might ever get back near normal.

Her intent on March 14 is to unveil a plaque in her father's honor and to showcase the six office spaces that connect to the Black Brew storefront. With monthly rents starting at \$350, her goal is to make business startups more affordable, especially for young Saginawians who may follow her footsteps. Her A-list for potential recruits ranges from artists to attorneys, and if you give her any almost any alphabet letter, she will match it with an idea for an enterprise. In the past, Brandi's approach and outlook would have been described as a small business "incubator," as reflected through an upstairs conference area with a 55-person capacity.

After bad weather for the January grand opening, Brandi says Black Brew business has picked up. She is co-owner with a friend, Tanya Howard, in effect a tenant in her own building. She challenges coffee mavens who currently favor Starbucks or Tim Hortons to sample the Black Brew options, seen online. For that matter, the breakfast sandwiches are a definite creative contrast to the typical fast-food sausage and egg. And at some point this spring she aims to add



BLACK BREW CAFE CAPPUCCINO FRAPPE'

a Holiday family recipe for Louisiana seafood gumbo.

Quincy (Saginaw High) and Brandi (Arthur Hill) began dating as teens during the late 1990s and have stayed together, with each offering feedback on occasion for one another's ventures, without trying to take over the show. Their family includes four children, two still school age.

Operations are weekdays, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Phone (989) 270-1324. The email address is [unity@signature808.com](mailto:unity@signature808.com). Vendor registration for the March 14 Bazaar Sale is \$50 with info at a separate number, (989) 233-4448, or at [signature808.com](http://signature808.com).

For a Riverfront Saginaw feature on Facebook during the Eight O' Eight startup, [click here](#).

For a Saginaw News report, [click here](#).



SIGNATURE EIGHT O' EIGHT, 808 NORTH MICHIGAN (PHOTO CREDIT / RIVERFRONT SAGINAW)

# Duperon CEO Tammy Bernier named CAN Council's 2026 Child Advocate of the Year

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Tammy Bernier, chief executive officer and co-owner of Saginaw-based Duperon Corporation, has been named the CAN Council's 2026 Suzanne Greenberg Child Advocate of the Year, recognizing her longtime work in child welfare, prevention and family support in the Great Lakes Bay Region and across Michigan.

The Child Abuse & Neglect Council, known as CAN Council, serves families in Arenac, Bay, Huron and Saginaw counties through education, intervention and advocacy programs offered at no cost. Its services include a Children's Advocacy Center, a Court Appointed Special Advocates program, child abuse prevention education and a Rolling Family Resource Center that brings support directly into neighborhoods.

Bernier served on the CAN Council Great Lakes Bay Region Board and was appointed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to the board of Children Trust Michigan, where she served on the executive committee and chaired the resource development and strategy committees.

Her work has included advancing prevention-focused programs, strengthening community partnerships, increasing public awareness and securing resources aimed at protecting children from abuse and neglect while supporting families across Michigan. Her advocacy also extends to PartnerShift, Underground Railroad and the Career Technical Education Center.

"It is an honor to work alongside Tammy as we work to build a future where the innocence of childhood is preserved, where families are strengthened and



DUPERON CEO TAMMY BERNIER (COURTESY PHOTO)

where every child knows they are loved, valued and worthy of protection," Heather Fisher, president and CEO of the CAN Council, said. "On behalf of the CAN Council, I thank you for all you have done for families and children in our region and at the state level. You are a true force for good!"

Bernier also reflected on the recognition.

"There is nothing so powerful and magnetic as being with amazing people to make a difference. The privilege to walk beside so many who do feeds my soul," Bernier said.

Duperon, headquartered in Saginaw, designs and manufactures patented liquid/solids separation technology for water, wastewater and industrial applications. Under Bernier's lead-

ership, the company has built a culture that emphasizes personal growth, service and community impact, including volunteerism and programs benefiting children and families.

Bernier also works as a speaker and consultant, sharing insight on leadership, organizational culture and performance, personal development and business management.

## COMMUNITY



# Celebrating WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## Deborah Stephens broke barriers as Saginaw's first female firefighter

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Deborah Stephens holds a lasting place in Saginaw history as the first woman to serve as a firefighter in the Saginaw Fire Department, a milestone that helped open the door for women in one of the city's most male-dominated public safety fields.

Stephens' role was publicly recognized during a 2011 Saginaw Fire Department ceremony marking another department first — the promotion of Ona Lee Hoard to captain. Coverage of that event identified Stephens as Saginaw's first female firefighter and highlighted the significance of women advancing in the department.

At the ceremony, Stephens described the resistance she faced when she entered the department.

"I remember starting 21 years ago," Stephens said.

"There were officers and firefighters who didn't want me to be there," she said. "It was more of boys' club."

Her comments reflected the barriers many women faced entering

fire service in earlier decades, when frontline firefighting positions were still overwhelmingly held by men. Stephens' presence in the department marked a shift in who could serve in a highly visible emergency response role in Saginaw.

The same 2011 coverage showed how that change was beginning to broaden within the department, with leaders encouraging more women to apply as Hoard moved into a command role. Stephens' earlier breakthrough provided a foundation for that progress.

The Saginaw fire department's mission is protecting life and property through fire suppression, rescue and prevention services. Stephens' legacy is part of that broader local history — not only as a firefighter, but as a trailblazer who helped reshape the department's path for future generations.

For Saginaw and the Great Lakes Bay Region, Stephens remains part of a larger story of women breaking barriers in public service and changing long-standing institutions from within.



DEBORAH STEPHENS

## COMMUNITY

# American Medical Association President Bobby Mukkamala to keynote annual meeting in Flint



DR. BOBBY MUKKAMALA (COURTESY PHOTO)

## BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. — The Flint & Genesee Group will host its 2026 Annual Meeting on Wednesday, March 25, featuring a program focused on partnership and regional progress and a keynote address from Dr. Bobby Mukkamala, president of the American Medical Association.

This year's theme, "Partnering with Purpose," will highlight how collaboration can help Flint and Genesee County navigate new opportunities and changing conditions while advancing shared community goals.

The public event is scheduled for 3 to 4:30 p.m. at the FIM Capitol Theatre in downtown Flint, with doors opening at 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 and are available through the Flint & Genesee Group website. The Group has promoted the annual meeting and Mukkamala's keynote in its recent event announcements. ([flintandgenesee.org](http://flintandgenesee.org))

Mukkamala, a Flint physician, is a board-certified otolaryngologist-head and neck surgeon and currently serves as AMA president for the 2025-26 term, according to the American Medical Association. (American Medical Association)

A longtime member of the Flint medical community, Mukkamala returned to the city after completing medical training at Loyola University Medical Center in Chicago in 2000. He now shares an office with his wife, Dr. Nita Kulkarni, an obstetrician-

gynecologist, and has remained active in local and regional civic efforts.

His leadership experience also includes service with the Michigan State Medical Society, where he has served on the board of directors since 2011 and previously held roles as board chair and president. He is also a past president of the Genesee County Medical Society and continues to serve on its board. In addition, he serves as a trustee of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and as a board member of the Foundation for Flint, which works to expand access to early childhood education.

"In both business and medicine, Dr. Bobby has been a great partner to the Flint & Genesee community over the years," Tim

Herman, CEO of the Flint & Genesee Group, said. "We're excited to have him with us at this year's annual meeting, and I know our attendees will walk away energized about what's ahead."

Before the keynote, the Flint & Genesee Group plans to highlight progress from the past year as it works toward its long-term economic vision of positioning Genesee County as a top-five Michigan community by 2040 in jobs, talent, livability and equity.

The organization also plans to spotlight achievements across its four divisions: the Flint & Genesee Chamber, Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance, Flint & Genesee Education & Talent, and Explore Flint & Genesee.

## COMMUNITY



# Celebrating WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## In Saginaw, Women of Colors has spent decades building a legacy of mentorship and community care

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Long before “women’s empowerment” became a common phrase in public life, a group of women in Saginaw came together with a simple but ambitious goal: strengthen their community by strengthening the people in it.

That work became Women of Colors, a Saginaw nonprofit that has grown into a lasting local force in mentorship, youth development, family support and community advocacy. Evelyn McGovern is recognized as a co-founder of the organization, part of the leadership that helped establish its early direction and community mission.

As communities across the Great Lakes Bay Region observe Women’s History Month, the organization’s story stands as a local example of women building institutions that outlast any single event or generation. In Saginaw, Women of Colors has spent more than three decades creating space for support, leader-

ship and opportunity for women, youth and families.

Founded in 1993, the group emerged from a belief that community challenges such as crime, blight and poverty demanded a shared response across lines of race, age and socioeconomic background. That founding vision still shapes its work today.

What began as community outreach and support has expanded into a broad network of programs focused on education, health, recovery and economic development. The organization’s work now includes youth mentoring and leadership development, health advocacy, substance use prevention and family-centered community programming.

Its long-term impact can also be seen in educational support for local students. The Women of Colors Scholarship, offered through the Saginaw Community Foundation, supports Saginaw County students pursu-

ing college or career and technical education.

That scholarship connection reflects a larger pattern in the organization’s history: Women of Colors has not only responded to immediate needs, but also invested in long-range outcomes — helping young people move from support and mentorship into education and career pathways.

Over the years, the group has built its presence through collaboration with local partners and community organizations across Saginaw and the broader Great Lakes Bay Region. Its programs have centered on a practical kind

of empowerment, rooted in relationships, consistency and community trust.

For Women’s History Month, Women of Colors offers a story that is both local and deeply enduring — women organizing, mentoring and leading in ways that continue to shape Saginaw. In a region where many community institutions are sustained by long-term service, the organization’s legacy stands as a reminder that history is not only made by individuals, but also by the groups that keep showing up for their neighbors.



WOMEN OF COLORS

# Saginaw Community Foundation seeks volunteer reviewers for scholarship applications



WOMEN REVIEWING APPLICATIONS (FILE PHOTO)

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Saginaw Community Foundation is seeking community volunteers to help review and score scholarship applications for students across the Great Lakes Bay Region and beyond as it prepares to award more than 255 scholarships.

Volunteer review begins in mid-March and is completed entirely online. Reviewers score applications in 10 areas, including leadership, volunteer service, extracurricular activities and essays, using provided guidelines. The foundation's scholarship pages also describe an online re-

view process in which community volunteers score students across multiple categories.

The sign-up deadline for volunteer reviewers is Monday, March 9, through the foundation's reviewer page. The call for volunteers was posted in a Saginaw County Chamber member-news announcement and has also been promoted on the foundation's social channels.

"The review process can be completed in just a couple of hours," Chamika Ford, scholarship program officer at Saginaw Community Foundation, said. "Volunteers will review applications entirely online from home whenever it is convenient. We

allow volunteers about two weeks to complete the entire process."

To maintain fairness, each student application is reviewed by five volunteers and the scores are averaged. That same five-reviewer process is described in the foundation's scholarship FAQs and scholarship information pages.

"Volunteers come back year after year to help us review the applications," Ford said. "They love learning about the amazing youth we have in our community and knowing they played a part in helping them earn scholarships."

The foundation reported record scholarship numbers in 2025, awarding 987 scholar-

ships to 553 high school, college and nontraditional students for a total of \$1,744,800.

Saginaw Community Foundation, founded in 1984, serves Saginaw County through grant-making, scholarships and donor-supported community initiatives. Its website lists scholarship opportunities for high school seniors, undergraduate and graduate students, nontraditional students and career and technical education students.

Residents interested in serving as scholarship reviewers can sign up at the foundation's volunteer reviewer page at [saginaw-foundation.org/reviewer](https://saginaw-foundation.org/reviewer).

# POLITICS

## Saginaw City Council receives Riverfront Park project update at Feb. 23 meeting



SAGINAW RIVERFRONT PARK ENGINEERING AND LANDSCAPE RENDERINGS (COURTESY PHOTO)

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Saginaw City Council received an updated briefing on the city’s Riverfront Park project during its Feb. 23 meeting, with city officials posting two project presentations as part of the council’s management update materials.

The City of Saginaw’s Management Update Presentations page lists two Riverfront Park entries for Feb. 23: “Engineering and Landscape Update for Riverfront Park” and “SCAPE Landscape Riverfront Park Update.” The city also linked separate video presentations tied to the update.

The Riverfront Park project is one of the city’s major public-space redevelopment efforts along the Saginaw River. A city project notice describes the site as a 5.5-acre future waterfront destination and community park

intended to serve as a gateway to the river.

The Feb. 23 meeting itself appears in the city’s posted council video archive, and search listings for the meeting identify the Riverfront Park update as part of that agenda.

Saginaw has continued to use

council management updates to brief elected officials and the public on project planning, engineering and design progress for major city initiatives, including riverfront redevelopment. The city’s management update page includes Riverfront Park presentations from 2024, 2025 and 2026.

The latest presentation keeps the Riverfront Park project in active public view as city leaders continue planning improvements along the river corridor, a long-term redevelopment priority tied to recreation, downtown connectivity and public access to the waterfront.



SAGINAW RIVERFRONT PARK ENGINEERING AND LANDSCAPE RENDERINGS (COURTESY PHOTO)

## Flint mayor proposes \$1 million plan to offset water, sewer rate increase through 2028



FLINT WATER TOWER

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. — Flint Mayor Sheldon Neeley is proposing a \$1 million addition to the city's Water Stabilization Fund to help shield residents from a newly approved water and sewer rate increase through 2028. Spectrum News reported the proposal Feb. 27 after a Flint news conference with Neeley and City Council President Candice Mushatt.

The proposal follows a 5.8% water rate increase approved by the Great Lakes Water Authority for Flint, part of broader increases affecting multiple communities in southeast Michigan. GLWA said the increases are tied to capital needs and inflation-related factors.

Flint previously created the Water Stabilization Fund using



FLINT MAYOR SHELDON NEELEY AND FLINT CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT CANDICE MUSHATT

\$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act money approved by the City Council to blunt an earlier increase. Neeley's new proposal would build on that fund as the city faces another round of high-

er costs.

"We cannot continue to sustain it," Neeley said. "And it really seems that they have not heard the pleas of a community."

Neeley also emphasized the

affordability pressure on households, saying water access remains a core issue for residents.

"At a time where families are struggling, at a time when families are going through so many variables as it relates to income for families, the commodity of water is very important," Neeley said. "This administration believes that water is a human right."

Flint's contract with GLWA runs through 2047, making long-term rate management a continuing issue for city officials and residents.

The proposal adds to a recurring local-government debate in Flint over how to balance utility costs, household affordability and long-term infrastructure obligations.

## HEALTH

# Whitmer's final State of the State spotlights health care costs, medical debt and mental health parity

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer used her final State of the State address to press for lower health care costs, new protections against medical debt and continued investment in mental health, making health affordability a central theme of her closing-year agenda.

Whitmer delivered the speech Feb. 25 before a joint session of the Michigan Legislature and identified health care affordability as one of her top priorities for 2026, alongside literacy and housing. Her office framed the address around “kitchen-table issues” as lawmakers begin budget negotiations in a divided state government.

“We are building a Michigan for all by delivering on the kitchen-table issues that make a real difference in people’s lives,” Whitmer said. She urged lawmakers to work together to “protect access to quality, affordable health care” in 2026.

The health policy section of the speech focused heavily on medical debt. Whitmer said more than half a million Michiganders have been sick and unable to afford medical bills, and she pointed to the state’s earlier medical debt relief effort as a starting point rather than a final step. In the speech transcript, she said Michigan wiped out medical debt for 210,000 people last year and called for additional action this year.

Whitmer proposed four policy steps: capping interest rates on medical debt, preventing medical debt from appearing on credit reports, requiring hospitals to create financial assistance programs



MICHIGAN GOVERNOR GRETCHEN WHITMER SPEAKS DURING HER EIGHTH AND FINAL STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026.

for patients, and banning liens or foreclosures on homes tied to medical debt.

“In Michigan, we believe that being sick or getting hurt shouldn’t also mean going broke,” Whitmer said. “In 2026, we can help more Michiganders reduce medical debt.”

Whitmer also tied her health agenda to concerns about federal policy changes, warning in the speech that cuts affecting Medicaid and Affordable Care Act coverage would increase pressure on families, hospitals and the broader health system. She called on Congress to renew ACA subsidies

and said Michigan should continue working to protect affordability and access at the state level.

On Medicaid, Whitmer said her executive budget recommendation includes a “significant investment” to stabilize funding and help protect coverage for eligible residents. She urged lawmakers to carry that approach through the budget process.

Mental health was not a standalone section of the speech, but Whitmer highlighted it as part of Michigan’s recent health and education policy changes. In the address, she pointed to a state law requiring mental health

coverage to be treated equally to physical health coverage, and she described Michigan as the first state to enact that requirement. She also cited expanded mental health resources for students as part of broader investments in schools.

The speech now sets up a policy debate over what parts of Whitmer’s health affordability agenda can advance this year, particularly medical debt protections and Medicaid stabilization funding, as lawmakers work toward a budget deadline later this spring.

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HEALTH

# MDHHS updates measles dashboard as U.S. cases top 1,100 in 2026

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services updated its measles information page this week as confirmed U.S. measles cases climbed above 1,100 in 2026, underscoring continuing public health concerns tied to outbreaks across multiple states.

On the state's measles updates page, MDHHS posted that 1,136 confirmed measles cases had been reported in the United States in 2026 as of Feb. 26, with 1,130 cases across 28 jurisdictions and another six cases among in-



CHILD WITH MEASLES (FILE PHOTO)

ternational visitors.

MDHHS also said 10 new outbreaks had been reported in 2026 and that about

90% of confirmed cases were outbreak-associated.

The Michigan page includes case and outbreak tracking in-

formation, vaccine guidance and links to CDC resources, along with public health information on measles symptoms, transmission and prevention.

MDHHS noted on the same page that a previously reported Ingham County measles case was later removed from the total after additional testing showed the positive result reflected vaccine strain detection rather than a measles infection.

The department's measles page also directs Michigan residents to information about MMR vaccination and travel-related measles prevention as part of its public health outreach



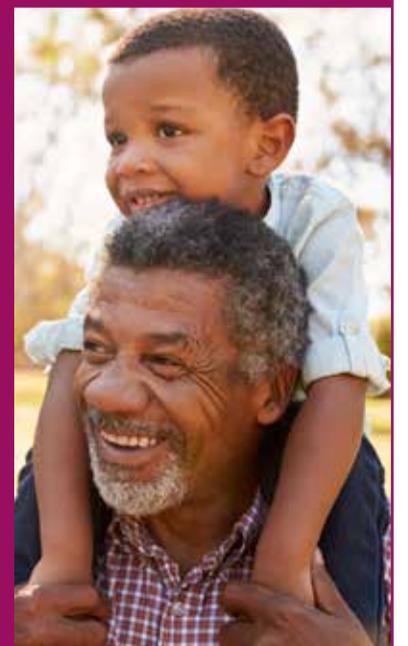
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# EDUCATION

## SVSU Board grants tenure to seven faculty, approves honorary degree for Ontario premier Doug Ford



FROM TOP LEFT, MARGOT ALVEY, EMILY LAROCQUE, KEVIN LORENTZ, ASHLEY SANDERS, JOANNE WEST, AND COLIN WOOD. (COURTESY PHOTO)

**BY MB STAFF**

UNIVERSITY CENTER, Mich. — The Saginaw Valley State University Board of Control granted tenure to seven faculty members during its regular meeting Monday, Feb. 16, with the appointments taking effect July 1.

Those receiving tenure are

Margot Alvey in medical laboratory science, Emily LaRocque in nursing, Kevin Lorentz in political science, Joshua Mike in mathematical science, Ashley Sanders in social work, JoAnne West in teacher education, and Colin Wood in music.

The board also approved an honorary degree for Doug Ford, premier of Ontario, in recognition of efforts to strengthen part-

nerships between Michigan and the Canadian province. Ford is scheduled to serve as SVSU's commencement speaker in May.

In other action, the board accepted the federal awards audit for the 2024-25 fiscal year, performed by Andrews Hooper Pavlik PLC.

Board members also authorized the university president or vice president for Adminis-

tration and Business Affairs to proceed with property acquisition for SVSU's planned facility in Saginaw's medical diamond district.

The board additionally appointed a nominating committee for the election of board officers in May and approved its meeting schedule for the 2026-27 academic year.

## EDUCATION

## 2026 Bond proposal in Saginaw Township Community Schools



SAGINAW TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (FILE PHOTO)



BY CRAIG DOUGLAS

I might be the classic “no voter.”

I pay property taxes in Saginaw Township. I am a senior citizen (74 years old), and I have retired from fulltime employment. From a distance I could be labeled as a “no voter” on the SCTS 2026 Bond Proposal. Imagine my profile: Senior citizen, fixed income, no kids in school. A “no voter,” right?

**Just the opposite: I am an enthusiastic “YES” vote on the 2026 SCTS bond issue!**

Here’s why.

1st, I know the buildings are old. I did my student teaching at Douglas MacArthur High School under the supervision of David Garn back in the Winter semester 1974. At that time, MacArthur and Eisenhower were newer buildings. They featured “open classrooms” and other cutting-edge designs.

**Friends, that was 52 years ago.**

Over time, many changes have occurred. MacArthur HS is the home of White Pine Middle School, and Eisenhower HS has been Heritage HS since 1988. Teachers have done a wonderful job of staying “current” with instruction in outdated classrooms.

The time has come to address critical instructional, safety, and security needs in the district. I respect the fact that the school board and administration are

addressing all buildings in the district; therefore, all students regardless of grade levels will benefit from the bond proposal.

2nd, this is the third attempt at a SCTS bond proposal. The first two were defeated by significant amounts for various reasons. The 2026 proposal is paired down to address the most critical needs in each building. For example, at Westdale Elementary the bond will renovate bathrooms and establish a more secure entrance. An additional 2,900 square feet of classroom space will support instruction.

Other buildings will receive similar upgrades with the passage of the bond. Bond proceeds can only be used construction categories listed in the ballot language. This includes installing instructional technology for teachers and improving driveways and parking for parents. Bond moneys cannot be used for salaries or other operational costs.

Finally, I am supportive because it is a clear benefit to me as a resident. The cost of the bond will be one mill.

(\$6.67 each month is my cost. Cost varies by property values and can be easily calculated.)

For one mill of additional tax (**ONE mill!!!**), the community school system will address critical needs.

This not only the “right thing” to do for kids and their teachers, but it is the “smart thing” to do now at today’s prices. If we wait much longer, how much higher will the price tag be? Will it be two mills? Three mills? It is impossible to know.

But this is what I do know: The schools need updates, and all residents will benefit. Therefore, **I am an enthusiastic “yes” supporter!**

Don’t take my word for it. For more information, visit the web at STCS.ORG.



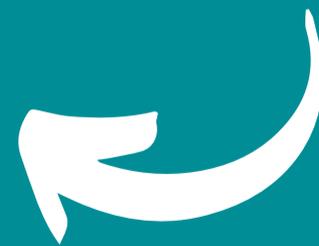
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## EDUCATION

# Four Delta College employees earn national League Excellence Award honors for 2025-26

BY MB STAFF

UNIVERSITY CENTER, Mich. — Four Delta College employees have been selected for the 2025-26 League Excellence Award, a national honor that recognizes innovation in learning, teaching, professional development and student success.

The recipients are Toni Clegg, professor of accounting; Laura Dull, professor of history; Michael Faleski, professor of physics; and Michele Pratt, manager of Library Programs and Academic Services. Delta College announced the awards Feb. 24, and the honorees also appear on the League for Innovation in the Community College's 2025-26 awards list.

The awards are presented by the League for Innovation in the Community College, an international nonprofit focused on cultivating innovation in community college education. Delta College is one of the League's original organizing members and continues to serve on its board of directors as a founding member.

The four Delta honorees are scheduled to receive their awards at the 2026 Innovations Conference in March. The conference brings together community college educators and leaders to share programs and ideas related to teaching, leadership and institutional advancement. Delta President Dr. Michael Gavin is also scheduled to attend as a Sunday keynote speaker, according to Delta's announcement.

Clegg, who began her Delta career in 2006, is recognized for leadership in program and institutional assessment and for work tied to improving student learning, teaching practices and re-accréditation efforts.

Dull began at Delta in 1998 as an adjunct instructor and be-



(TOP LEFT) TONI CLEGG, LAURA DULL, (BOTTOM LEFT) MICHAEL FALESKI AND MICHELE PRATT (COURTESY OF DELTA COLLEGE)

came full-time in 2001. Her work has included helping create the Humanities Learning Center, serving on its advisory board, and advancing Delta's Open Educational Resources efforts and general education pathway development.

"I am excited to see the work of our OER Committee recognized, particularly the work of my colleague, Michele Pratt, who brought this movement to Delta and who provides the muscle behind making it happen for faculty," Dull said. "There are so many who have put their time and passion into this project for the good of our students. It is truly heartwarming."

Faleski, who began his Delta

career in 2003, is recognized for classroom teaching and long-term student impact, including the foundation he helps students build for transfer success at four-year universities.

"In the classroom, I strive to use multiple representations as a way to help students understand why I get so excited by physics," Faleski said. "As we say in class quite often, there are many ways to pet a cat."

Pratt joined Delta in 2014 and has focused on student access and academic support through library services and technology expansion. Her work has included helping lead Delta's Open Educational Resources initiative and serving as co-chair of the OER

Committee. Delta College credits the program with saving students more than \$4 million in textbook costs since launching in 2016.

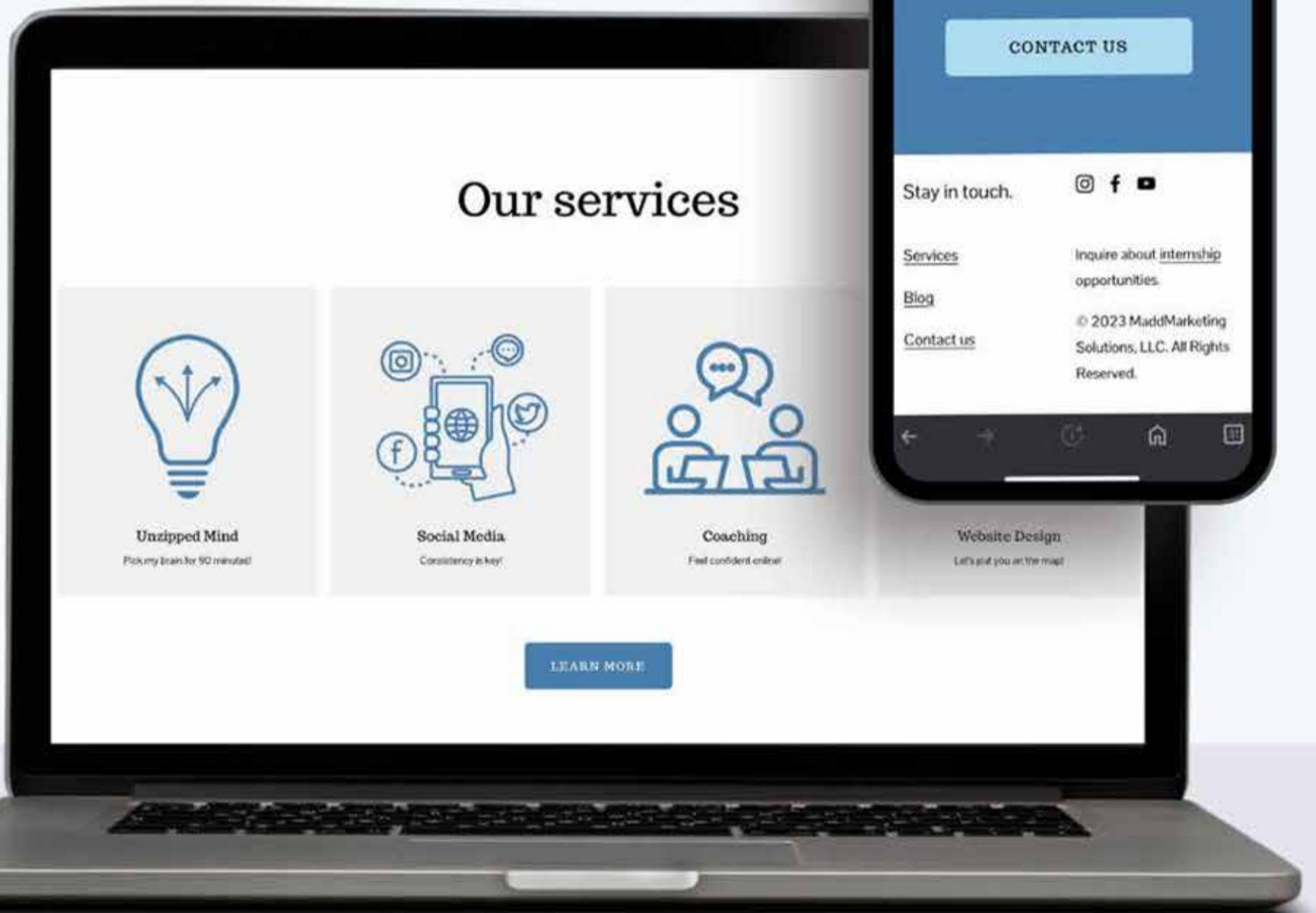
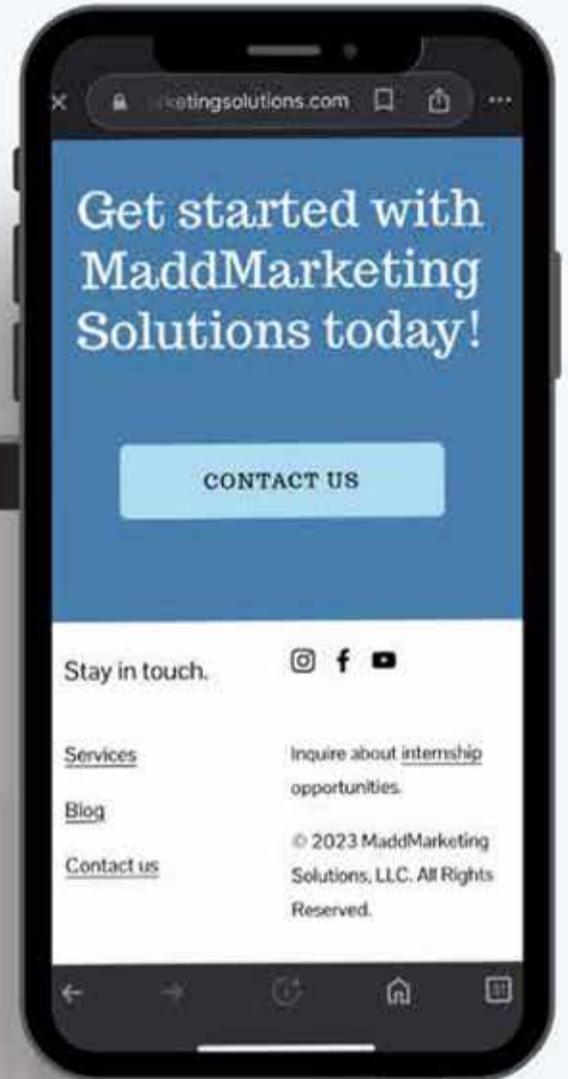
"I am very proud to be a part of launching and maintaining such a high-impact, high-savings resource for our students," Pratt said. "It's very much a team effort. The committee is instrumental in ensuring this program continues to be successful."

The recognition adds another national honor for Delta College faculty and staff and highlights work connected to student success across disciplines including accounting, history, physics and library academic services.



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| 3 People       | \$53,300 | \$106,600      | 7 People       | \$97,300  | \$194,600      |
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*\*Administration for Children and Families: Children's Learning and Development Benefits from High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Summary of Evidence*



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## BUSINESS + FINANCE

# Covenant HealthCare to build \$25 million orthopedic facility in Saginaw Township



RENDERING OF COVENANT HEALTHCARE'S NEW ORTHOPEDIC FACILITY IN SAGINAW TOWNSHIP (COURTESY PHOTO)

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW TWP., Mich. — Covenant HealthCare plans to break ground April 8 on a new \$25 million orthopedic facility in Saginaw Township, a major

healthcare construction project aimed at expanding outpatient bone, joint and sports medicine services in the Great Lakes Bay Region.

The new Covenant HealthCare Orthopedics facility will be built on the west side of the

Mackinaw Campus, next to the Covenant Cancer Care Center and accessible from Tittabawassee Road. Construction is expected to be completed with an anticipated opening in summer 2027.

Covenant said the 25,700-square-foot facility will

bring outpatient orthopedic services together in one location and will include 44 exam rooms, four X-ray rooms, four procedural rooms, two casting rooms, and dedicated space for Mary Free Bed at Covenant HealthCare Orthotics & Prosthetics, along with administrative and support services.

The building also will include Covenant HealthCare OrthoExpress, an orthopedic-focused urgent care center for walk-in treatment of acute bone, joint and muscle injuries.

Covenant said the site will house a multidisciplinary team that includes 10 orthopedic surgeons, two podiatrists, a sports medicine physician, four physician assistants, three nurse practitioners, and orthotics and prosthetics professionals.

The project represents one of the larger healthcare-related capital investments recently announced in the Saginaw area and expands specialty care infrastructure in the region.



RENDERING OF COVENANT HEALTHCARE'S NEW ORTHOPEDIC FACILITY IN SAGINAW TOWNSHIP (COURTESY PHOTO)

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## BUSINESS + FINANCE

## DuPont subsidiary plans \$20 million Midland expansion tied to EV materials

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — DDP Specialty Electronic Materials US, LLC, a DuPont subsidiary, plans a \$20 million expansion in Midland that is expected to create at least 22 new jobs, adding advanced manufacturing capacity tied to electric-vehicle materials.

The project includes a 6,000-square-foot addition to the company's existing Midland facility for a new production process serving the global EV industry, according to a Jan. 28 Michigan Economic Development Corporation announcement. The expansion is planned



DUPONT LOGO (FILE PHOTO)

to add truck docks, warehouse space and a five-story manufacturing space.

MEDC said the Midland project is part of a broader state

announcement covering Midland and St. Clair counties, with the two projects totaling \$44.5 million in capital investment and 104 jobs.

The Midland expansion is supported by a \$200,000 Michigan Business Development Program grant approved by the Michigan Strategic Fund, and local support includes anticipated tax abatement action in Midland.

Regional coverage in Midland also identifies the project as an EV battery materials-related expansion and notes starting wages at \$30 per hour plus benefits for the new positions.

The investment adds to Midland's role in advanced materials manufacturing and reinforces the area's position in Michigan's EV and industrial supply chain economy.

## Black River Coffee Co. plans mid-March opening in Midland's southeast side

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — Black River Coffee Co. is preparing to open a new café in Midland in mid-March, adding another locally owned coffee business to the city's retail and food-service market.

The shop is planned for 420 Waldo Road, Suite 7, in Midland's southeast area. Midland Daily News preview coverage identifies the business as a project led by Scott and Ali Huntoon and says the café is expect-

ed to open after final construction, staff training and menu testing are completed.

The café is expected to offer coffee drinks along with breakfast and lunch items. The owners said the concept is aimed at serving a busy part of Midland that currently has limited quick, convenient coffee options.

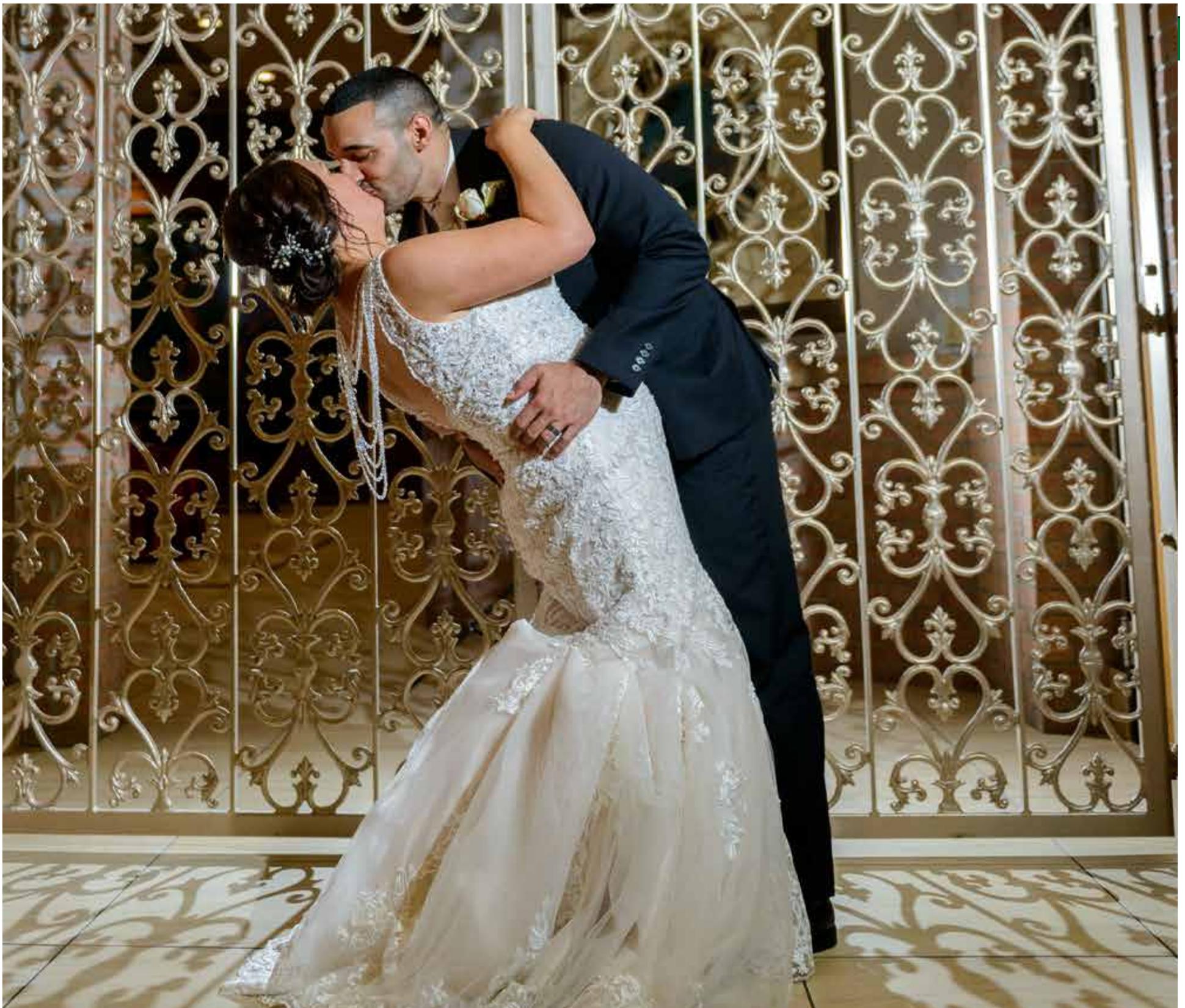
Midland Daily News also reported the business plans a weekday schedule of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and weekend hours of 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The opening would add to continued small-business activity in Midland's food and beverage sector, where several coffee and dessert operators have expanded or launched new locations in recent months.



BLACK RIVER COFFEE CO. OWNERS, SCOTT AND ALI HUNTOON (PHOTO CREDIT / FB BLACK RIVER COFFEE CO)





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## SPORTS

## Saginaw United wins first boys basketball district title; Nouvel beats Sacred Heart for district crown



SAGINAW UNITED DEFEATED HERITAGE ON FRIDAY, FEB. 27, TO SECURE THEIR FIRST BOYS BASKETBALL DISTRICT TITLE. (PHOTO CREDIT: FB/SAGINAW UNITED HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS)

nals on March 10, Semifinals on March 12-13 at Breslin Center in East Lansing, and the Finals on March 14.

Saginaw United's MHSAA school schedule listing shows the Phoenix next playing Rockford in Division 1 Regional 1 on Tuesday, March 3 at 7 p.m. with Saginaw United listed as the host.

Nouvel Catholic Central's next game is a Division 4 Regional 28 matchup against Trinity Christian on Tuesday, March 3 at 5:30 p.m. at Merrill HS Gymnasium, based on the opponent's MHSAA schedule listing.

The two district titles highlighted a strong postseason night for area boys basketball programs, with Saginaw United delivering a landmark moment in Division 1 and Nouvel advancing out of Division 4 with a district championship win.

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Saginaw United captured the first boys basketball district championship in program history Friday night, defeating Heritage 74-64 in the Division 1 district final.

Saginaw Public Schools posted the final score and identified the win as a Division 1 district championship for the Phoenix, who opened as a consolidated program in 2024.

In another Saginaw-area postseason result, Nouvel Catholic Central defeated Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart Academy

55-50 in the Division 4 district championship game. The result appears on MaxPreps' game listing for the Feb. 27 district final at Sacred Heart Academy.

The Nouvel win pushed the Panthers through a key district matchup against a Sacred Heart team that entered the tournament game with a strong season record. MaxPreps lists Nouvel at 16-7 and Sacred Heart at 18-5 following the district final.

Both teams advance from districts to regionals, the next round of the MHSAA state tournament. MHSAA's boys basketball tournament calendar lists Regionals on March 3 and March 5, followed by Quarterfi-



SAGINAW NOUVEL DEFEATED SACRED HEART ACADEMY

## SPORTS

## Midland Soccer Club's Spencer Sandow named MSYSA 2025 Boys' Competitive Coach of the Year



SPENCER SANDOW (COURTESY PHOTO)

### BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — Spencer Sandow of Midland Soccer Club has been named the 2025 Boys' Competitive Coach of the Year by the Michigan State Youth Soccer Association, adding a statewide coaching honor to a résumé that spans youth, high school and col-

lege soccer in the Great Lakes Bay Region.

Sandow is listed as the 2025 Boys' Competitive Coach of the Year on MSYSA's Annual Awards & Hall of Fame page, which also includes the association's 2025 award winners across coaching, volunteer, administrator and referee categories.

The award comes as Sandow continues to coach in Midland and work across multiple levels of the game. Midland-area soccer coverage identifies him with Midland Soccer Club's Fusion program and notes his current work with the Fusion 2009 boys National League team, along with his involvement with the

Michigan Olympic Development Program's 2011 boys group.

Sandow's local coaching impact has extended beyond one age group. Recent Midland coverage also credits him with coaching the Midland Fusion U19 girls team to a USL Youth national championship — the first national title in Midland Soccer Club history.

His background also includes high school success in the region. Central Michigan University's 2024 coaching staff announcement states Sandow led Midland Dow's girls varsity program to two district titles and earned Saginaw Valley League Coach of the Year honors three times before joining CMU's women's soccer staff.

At the club level, CMU's staff biography for Sandow describes a long-term role with Midland Soccer Club, where he has served as a staff coach since 2016 and later took on additional leadership responsibilities as college coordinator and tournament director. He also developed curriculum to help players with college recruiting and organized tournaments that brought hundreds of teams to Midland.

Sandow's recognition also highlights Midland's place in Michigan youth soccer. Midland Soccer Club remains one of the region's most visible soccer organizations, and Sandow's award puts a Great Lakes Bay Region coach among the state's top honorees for 2025.

MSYSA's awards program recognizes contributors from across the state in competitive and recreational coaching, TOP-Soccer, officiating and volunteer leadership. Sandow's selection in the boys competitive category places him among the organization's top statewide coaching honorees for the year.

## SPORTS

## Hemlock Public School District launches high school esports team



STUDENT ESPORTS TEAM (FILE PHOTO)

BY MB STAFF

HEMLOCK, Mich. — Hemlock Public School District has launched a new high school esports team, opening another competitive activity for students and adding a technology-centered program to the district's extracurricular lineup.

The team will be led by head coach Nick Prezzato and will compete in nine esports titles through PlayVS, a national scholastic gaming platform used for structured school-based competition.

The district is framing the program as more than a gaming activity, emphasizing student development in teamwork, communication, strategic thinking, problem-solving, leadership, resilience, time management and

accountability, along with exposure to college and career pathways in STEM and technology fields.

"Esports gives students a place to belong while building skills that translate directly into the classroom and beyond," Prezzato said. "Our goal is to create an environment where students grow as competitors, teammates, and leaders."

Hemlock's announcement aligns with broader trends in school esports programs, which have expanded nationally through organized league platforms and school partnerships. PlayVS describes itself as a major high school esports provider and says its platform supports coached, school-based competition and sanctioned league play with state and association partners.

Hemlock also cited the National Federation of State High School Associations in highlighting the educational value of structured esports. The district included the NFHS statement that esports creates opportunities for students to build teamwork, communication and leadership skills in an inclusive school-connected environment.

Board President Matt Wesener tied the new team to the district's broader approach to student engagement and innovation.

"This program reflects our belief that schools must evolve alongside the interests and talents of our students," Wesener said. "Esports provides another meaningful avenue for students to connect, compete, and develop skills that will serve them long after graduation. We are proud to support innovative program-

ming that prepares students to be life-ready."

Denise Dowdell, the district's director of business operations and human resources, said the program also fits workforce and future-readiness priorities.

"At Hemlock, we are intentional about investing in programs that align with workforce trends and future-ready skills," Dowdell said. "Esports bridges technology, collaboration, and career exploration in a way that resonates with today's students. This is an investment in both engagement and opportunity."

Hemlock's launch adds another student activity option in the Saginaw-area school district and places the Huskies in a growing field of Michigan schools building esports opportunities tied to academics, technology and team competition.

## SPORTS

# Claressa Shields beats Franchon Crews-Dezurn by unanimous decision in Detroit



CLARESSA SHIELDS STAYS UNDEFEATED AFTER DEFEATING LONGTIME RIVAL FRANCHON CREWS-DEZURN BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.

BY MB STAFF

DETROIT — Claressa Shields defeated Franchon Crews-Dezurn by unanimous decision Sunday night at Little Caesars Arena, retaining her undisputed women's heavyweight championship in a rematch between longtime rivals.

All three judges scored the 10-round bout 100-90 for Shields. The win improved Shields, the Flint native and two-time Olympic gold medalist, to 18-0 as a professional. Crews-Dezurn fell to 10-3.

The fight marked another chapter in a rivalry that dates back to their pro debuts in 2016, when Shields also beat Crews-Dezurn.

Shields entered the bout as the undisputed heavyweight champion after becoming the first undisputed women's heavyweight champion in 2025, and Sunday's result kept her atop the division.

The victory adds another major win to Shields' résumé in front of a home-state crowd, extending the Flint boxer's run as one of the most decorated fighters in women's boxing.



CLARESSA SHIELDS STAYS UNDEFEATED AFTER DEFEATING LONGTIME RIVAL FRANCHON CREWS-DEZURN BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.

# FAITH IN FOCUS



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

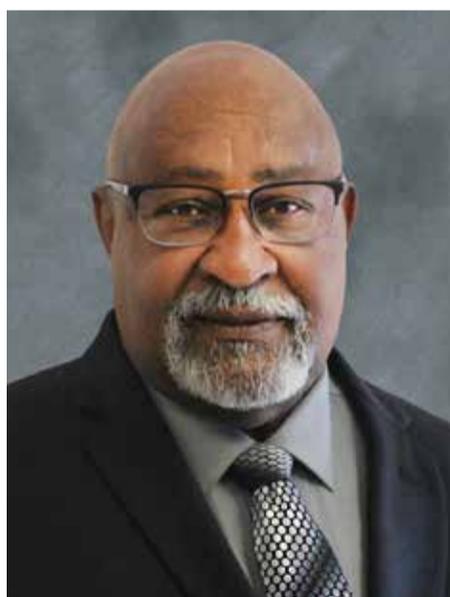
## Ministry Without Walls expands vision with community-focused mission

BY PASTOR JOHN DUNN

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

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

The organization's vision includes several key objectives:



PASTOR JOHN DUNN

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

between the church, volunteers, and community professionals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## FAITH IN FOCUS

## SERMONETTE SERIES

**YOU SHALL LIVE — AND TELL IT**  
**By Faith, Not by Fear***"You shall live and not die, and declare the works of the Lord."**Psalm 118:17*BY MINISTER CAROLYN  
CARTER TOWNSEL

Let's get something straight—this scripture is not poetic fluff or a feel-good refrigerator verse. This is a declaration of resistance. A holy clapback against despair. A bold, unapologetic announcement that death does not get the final word over your life, your purpose, or your story.

The psalmist didn't say you might live or you could survive if conditions improve. No. He said you shall live. That's future tense with authority. That's God-backed certainty. That's heaven signing off on your continuation when hell thought it had a case.

Some of us are reading this while still breathing—but barely. Surviving seasons that tried to silence us. Diagnoses that shook us. Losses that knocked the wind out of our faith. Battles that left scars. But this Word shows up like a defibrillator to the soul and says, Get up. You're not done.

And here's the part we like to shout but sometimes forget to live out:  
"You shall live and not die."

That doesn't just mean physical death. It means you will not die emotionally. You will not die spiritually. You will not die creatively. You will not die in obscurity, bitterness, fear, or silence. Depression doesn't get to bury you. Trauma doesn't get to entomb you. The enemy does not get to write your obituary while you're still breathing.

But wait—there's an assignment attached.

"...but declare the works of the Lord."

In other words: You lived on purpose.  
Your survival comes with a microphone.

You didn't make it through just to look cute and keep quiet. You didn't survive cancer, heart-break, betrayal, addiction, grief, or near-collapse just to sit silently in the back row of life. If you're still here, it's because God expects a testimony. Your healed voice is meant to tell the story. Your restored joy is meant to point back to Him.

This verse reminds us that living is not the finish line—declaring is.

Declare when it didn't make sense.  
Declare when you didn't have the strength.  
Declare when the doctor changed their tone.  
Declare when peace replaced panic.  
Declare when God made a way you couldn't see coming.

This is a season where faith has to get loud. Where silence is no longer an option. Where the church, the community, the family, and the next generation need to hear what God can do when death shows up uninvited—and gets evicted anyway.

So stand tall. Breathe deep. Lift your head.

You are not here by accident.  
You are not alive by luck.  
You shall live—and you will declare.

Beloved, when God keeps you alive, He expects you to tell the truth about it

Blessings to All,  
Carolyn

# Women's History Month: When heaven writes in the margins of history

BY MB STAFF

There are some histories the world records in stone, and there are others God writes in seed.

The first kind is easier to find. It is engraved on plaques, printed in programs, spoken at podiums, archived in photographs. It tells us who held office, who broke barriers, who founded institutions, who stood first where others were told they could never stand.

But the second kind of history — the kind God writes — is often hidden in the daily faithfulness of women.

It is written in hands that cooked and comforted, in knees bent in prayer before sunrise, in voices that spoke life into children who had every reason to give up. It is written in women who led without titles, who carried families without applause, who built communities while the world was still deciding whether their work was “important.”

That is why Women's History Month can be more than a celebration. It can be a kind of holy remembering.

In Scripture, God has always had a way of placing women at the center of turning points.

When Israel needed wisdom, there was Deborah, judging under a palm tree, seeing clearly in a time of confusion. She did not wait for history to invite her in; she stood where God placed her and led. Deborah reminds us that spiritual authority is not noise — it is clarity, courage and obedience.

When a nation was in danger, there was Esther, who carried both fear and calling in the same body. She did not walk into the king's court because she was unafraid. She walked in because purpose was greater than fear. “For such a time as this” has be-



ELDERLY BIBLICAL WOMAN (FILE PHOTO)

come more than a verse — it has become a mirror for generations of women asked to be brave in impossible moments.

When survival itself became the story, there was Ruth, gleaning in fields, carrying grief and loyalty side by side. Ruth's life teaches that faithfulness is not a small thing. In the kingdom of God, faithfulness is often the doorway through which legacy enters. She was not merely surviving a hard season; she was standing in the lineage of redemption and did not yet know it.

When the Savior entered the world, God entrusted that holy assignment to Mary — a young woman whose yes carried eternity. Her obedience was not loud. It was costly. It was tender. It was strong. Scripture does not describe her as famous first, but as favored. That is a different kind of power.

And then there is Priscilla, teaching, discipling, building alongside her husband, showing us that ministry is not a spotlight but a shared fire — passed from life to life, truth to truth.

The Bible does not present women as side notes to the story of God. It presents women as bearers of wisdom, courage, prophecy, nurture, strat-

egy, intercession and endurance. Women in Scripture do not merely decorate the narrative. They move it forward.

That truth still lives.

It lives in the grandmother who became the family's first theologian, teaching Scripture from memory over a kitchen table.

It lives in the mother who stretched a paycheck, stretched a meal, stretched her faith — and still made room to stretch hope over everyone in the house.

It lives in the teacher who sees the child behind the behavior.

It lives in the nurse who carries calm into rooms full of fear.

It lives in the entrepreneur who builds something from almost nothing.

It lives in the pastor, the missionary, the organizer, the mentor, the social worker, the neighbor, the auntie, the friend.

And in places like Saginaw, Bay City, Midland and Flint, it lives in women who have done the sacred work of holding communities together when systems failed, when resources were thin, when grief was heavy, when justice was delayed.

Some women make history by being first. Others make history

by making sure someone else is not last.

That, too, is biblical.

Because the kingdom of God has always been full of women who prepared the way — women who carried oil, women who kept watch, women who wept, women who witnessed, women who stayed.

The Gospels tell us women were present at the cross and at the tomb. They remained in places of pain, and they were among the first entrusted with resurrection news. What a divine pattern: those who stayed through the sorrow were also called to announce the hope. That feels like Women's History Month.

To remember women rightly is not only to list accomplishments. It is to honor presence. To honor labor. To honor spiritual weight. To honor the ways women have reflected the heart of God in ordinary days and impossible seasons.

So this month, we should celebrate the pioneers. We should name the trailblazers. We should teach the children the stories.

But we should also pause for the women whose names may never be printed in a headline and yet are already written where it matters most.

In the Lamb's Book of Life.

In the memory of families.

In the healing of communities.

In the prayers that still stand long after the woman who prayed them has gone home to glory.

Women's History Month, with a biblical lens, becomes more than remembrance.

It becomes thankfulness.

It becomes testimony.

It becomes a declaration that when God builds generations, He often does it through women the world underestimated.

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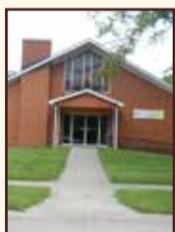
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## FUNDRAISING GOOD TIMES

## Protecting Black Legacy as a Family Unit



BY MEL AND PEARL SHAW

*Black institutions have defined our history, individually, as families, and collectively as a people. We can come together as family units to make sure we preserve and grow our organizations. They have contributed to our growth, stability, jobs; and as families we can combine our resources to help ensure these institutions survive and thrive.*

We can do this as an organized family effort, with all members participating. Don't let geographic distance, age, educational attainment, or financial position be a barrier – everyone can give. The main ingredients to a family legacy giving program are commitment, leadership, and consistency.

As with other cultures, we have a history of combining our resources to support what is important to us as a people. We need to continue and amplify this history to ensure our giving persists into future generations. We need to take advantage of our personal and collective resources to support our historic Black institutions and those that are emerging.

The idea is to bring the family together to identify a nonprofit that is in line with your values, your history, or what you want to establish as a family legacy. Maybe you want to support a local childcare center, your church, an HBCU attended by family members, or a museum focused on Black history or pro-



BLACK FAMILY (FILE PHOTO)

moting Black artists. Maybe it's the NAACP, or a Black-led health clinic. The choices are endless. Hopefully, your commitment will be longstanding.

Here are a few things to consider. Consider an annual financial goal for the family. Agree upon a number of hours each family member will volunteer. Tell everyone you know about the institution you are supporting, why you are doing so, and encourage them to join you. Provide in-kind services based on your experiences and connections. These can include clerical support, social media, marketing, transportation, research, and more. Host an annual fundraising event. Visit the organization you are supporting, attend their events, or ask a representative to attend a family gathering, share an update, and make an appeal for continued support.

Here are more things to con-

sider. Encourage a family member to serve in a leadership role with the organization. Encourage the family to address a long-term project, perhaps with the option of a naming opportunity. As your family grows in size, take time to let new members know about the project. And as families grow in their financial abilities, encourage them to give more. In terms of the business side of your giving, we recommend the following: Create a written pledge with the nonprofit to document your

family's involvement and financial commitment. Do the same within the family. Ask the nonprofit to provide an annual family report on the family's giving and engagement. Gain an understanding of how the family will be acknowledged and recognized by the institution. In terms of your family legacy: create a record of the family's engagement for all to share and keep as part of history. There is always something we can do to protect, promote, and support Black history.



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



# PICS OF THE WEEK

Saginaw Valley State University hosted the 16th annual "A Taste of Soul" luncheon on Thursday, Feb. 26, in the Marketplace at Doan near SVSU's Curtiss Hall.



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# Theodore Roethke

## POETRY AND ARTS FESTIVAL March 20-25, 2026

### EVENTS

#### Poetry Slam

Friday, March 20  
6:30-9:00 p.m.

SVSU, Whittaker Lecture Theatre  
Brown Hall 106

Participate in a poetry slam open to adults, college students and high school students. Prizes will be awarded to the top three winners. Live music by the SVSU Jazz Combo and refreshments will round out the evening.

#### Roethke Home Tours and Poetry Readings

Saturday, March 21

10:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
Theodore Roethke Home Museum  
1805 Gratiot, Saginaw

A guided tour will take attendees through the childhood home of Theodore Roethke. Then, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., the River Junction Poets will read some of their original work and discuss the influence Roethke had on the region's longest-standing poetry group.

#### Ted (Roethke) Talk and Brew

Sunday, March 22

6:00-8:00 p.m.  
Oracle Brewing  
122 N. Michigan Ave., Saginaw

Local writer Jeff Vande Zande will speak on "Theodore Roethke and the Making of an American Poet." Three special craft beers related to Roethke's poems will be available for purchase.

#### Roethke Musical Tribute

Monday, March 23

7:30 p.m.  
First Presbyterian Church  
121 S. Harrison St., Saginaw

This musical tribute to Roethke features acclaimed soloist and Saginaw native Emily Marvosh, an original composition by Michigan resident Collin Whitfield, and the voices of the SVSU student choir Cardinal Singers. Made possible through a Saginaw Community Foundation grant.

## MEMORIAL POETRY PRIZE

TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 7:00 P.M.

RHEA MILLER RECITAL HALL

Join us in honoring LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs, the 2025 winner of the Roethke Memorial Prize Poetry. Diggs was selected for her collection "Village," described by the judges as "a song to survival and persistence." Named for the late Saginaw poet who won the Pulitzer Prize in 1954, this distinguished prize has been awarded since 1968. A poetry reading and book signing will follow the event.



LEARN MORE AT  
[svsu.edu/roethke](https://svsu.edu/roethke)

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