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December 16 - 22, 2020

**CityPULSE**

[www.lansingcitypulse.com](http://www.lansingcitypulse.com)

A newspaper for the rest of us

FREE

LIGHTS AND  
POETRY FOR  
A DARK YEAR

See page 15

‘THE LIGHT INFUSES  
OUR WORDS AND OPENS OUR HEARTS.  
NOW, WE TOO, ARE LIGHT.’  
-RUELAIN STOKES

**ABOOD**

L A W F I R M 1 9 5 6



# 'Giving can do good, and be good for your taxes'

By **BERL SCHWARTZ**

*(The writer is the editor and publisher of City Pulse.)*

The headline above caught my attention last month in The New York Times. Like I am sure many people, I was unaware that every taxpayer can receive a \$300 deduction on their 2020 taxes for donating to charity.

That is true even if you do not itemize, which is usually not the case. As the story explains, Congress included the special deduction in the CARES Act for pandemic relief last March.

It's a nice break for taxpayers, especially because every taxpayer can take it, even those who take the standard deduction – which is most of us. The vast majority of us benefit from taking the standard deduction rather than itemizing. But changes in the tax code three years ago that made the standard deduction more beneficial overall for filers hurt charities because contributions couldn't be included. Now, for this year at least, everyone can get up to a \$300 reduction in their adjusted gross income. That's an "important number," the Times' story explains, "because it determines your eligibility for tax credits and other deductions."

OPINION



BERL SCHWARTZ

The limit is \$300 total for the year, not \$300 per charity. How much that will benefit you will depend on your overall circumstances.

Besides benefitting you, of course, it will benefit qualified charities. They must be 501(c)3s, and you must give in cash (including checks and credit cards), not in-kind.

We happen to have a 501(c)3 right here for your consideration: the City Pulse Fund for Community Journalism.

The IRS approved the Fund last January. Since then, we have raised nearly \$50,000 mostly in small donations. The average donation from about 500 gifts has been \$52.18. That's after taking out of the equation a \$20,000 gift from the estate of one donor, the Realtor Jim Noble.

If you're a regular reader of City Pulse, you'll notice some stories carry a postscript that they were paid for by the Fund. Your contributions have allowed us to expand our coverage even in a financially challenging year.

If you gave to the Fund, you should have received a receipt. Hold onto it in case the IRS has a (very unlikely) question. (If you cannot find it, please contact Suzi Smith at (517) 999-6704 or suzi@lansingcitypulse.com for another.)

It's unclear if a couple filing jointly can take

\$600. Some say yes, others say no. Worth a try?

And it's unknown if Congress will carry this over to 2021 when/if it gets around to extending the CARES Act.

If you choose to give \$300, you can split it up however you wish. We at City Pulse hope you'll give to us — but more important this year is to give. It's a tough year for many charities: demand is up and support is down ... because demand is up. Accept my thank you in advance if you give to our Fund.

To do so, you may send a check to City Pulse Fund, 1905 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing 48912. Or stick in a note with how much you're giving and include your credit card info: Name, billing address, card number, expiration date and 3- or 4-digit code. You can also pay by credit card at [lansingcitypulse.com/donation](https://lansingcitypulse.com/donation). Or call Suzi Smith at (517) 999-6704. However you donate, we will send you a receipt.

If you don't care about the tax break, then please give directly to City Pulse. Gifts to the Fund may be used in a limited way, such as for content. Gifts directly to City Pulse can literally help pay the rent, or any other expenses. Again, contributions to City Pulse are not deductible.

However you give, thank you. And happy holidays.



a 501(c)3 nonprofit approved by the Internal Revenue Service.

## DONATIONS ARE EASY!

**Cash donations made this year to a 501(c)(3) are eligible for up to a \$300 deduction when you file your taxes next spring!**

**This expires after Dec. 31, so please act now.**

**• No itemizing required! •**

Love your brother and yourself.  
Regardless of fear

Love your brother and yourself  
Regardless of politics

Love your brother and yourself  
Regardless of media

Love your brother and yourself.  
Regardless of data, facts, science

Love your brother and yourself.  
Regardless of all we see or hear

Let Love Guide Us Always

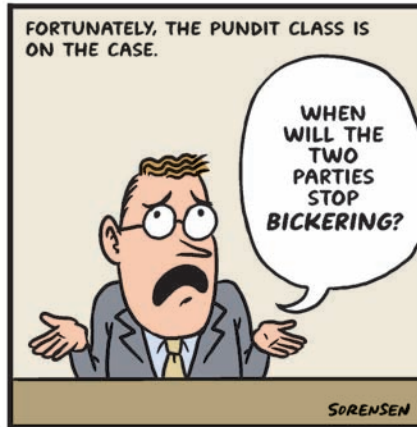
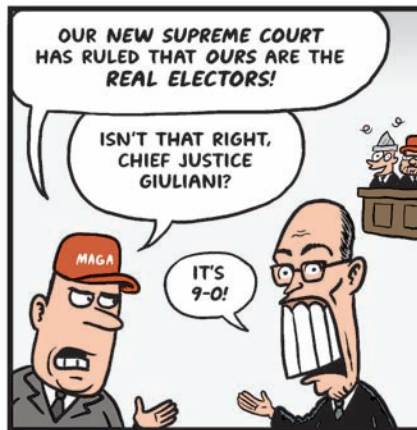
Anonymous  
Please share.



# CityPULSE

**VOL. 20  
ISSUE 19**

(517) 371-5600 • Fax: (517) 999-6061 • 1905 E. Michigan Ave. • Lansing, MI 48912 • www.lansingcitypulse.com



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We wish you a Star Wars Christmas and a happy New Year

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Local musicians come together with a new holiday song

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Flash in the Pan: Kamut Pasta

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**Cover  
Art**

Photo by Rob Sumbler

**ADVERTISING INQUIRIES:** (517) 999-5061  
or email [citypulse@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:citypulse@lansingcitypulse.com)  
**CLASSIFIEDS:** (517) 999-6704

**EDITOR AND PUBLISHER • Berl Schwartz**  
[publisher@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:publisher@lansingcitypulse.com) • (517) 999-5061

**MANAGING EDITOR • Kyle Kaminski**  
[kyle@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:kyle@lansingcitypulse.com) • (517) 999-6710

**ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR • Skyler Ashley**  
[skyler@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:skyler@lansingcitypulse.com) • (517) 999-5068

**EVENTS EDITOR/OFFICE MANAGER • Suzi Smith**  
[suzi@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:suzi@lansingcitypulse.com) • (517) 999-6704

**PRODUCTION • Abby Sumbler**  
[production@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:production@lansingcitypulse.com)  
(517) 999-5066

**STAFF WRITER • Lawrence Cosentino**  
[lawrence@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:lawrence@lansingcitypulse.com) • (517) 999-5065

**SALES EXECUTIVE**  
**Lee Purdy •** [lee@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:lee@lansingcitypulse.com) • (517) 999-5064

**SALES ASSISTANT**  
**Earlisha Scott •** [earlisha@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:earlisha@lansingcitypulse.com)

**Contributors:** Andy Balaskovitz, Justin Bilicki, Sean Bradley, Capital News Service, Bill Castanier, Ryan Claytor, Mary C. Cusack, Tom Helma, Gabrielle Lawrence Johnson, Terry Link, Kyle Melinn, Mark Nixon, Dawn Parker, Dennis Preston, Carrie Sampson, Nevin Speerbrecker, Rich Tupica, Ute Von Der Heyden, David Winkelstern, Paul Wozniak

**Delivery drivers:** Dave Fisher, Gavin Smith, Jack Sova  
**Interns:** Matthew Stine • [stinem47@gmail.com](mailto:stinem47@gmail.com)

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*on the*  
**AIR**

**NOW AT 10:00 A.M.  
SUNDAYS** on

**WDBM**  
**IMPACT**  
88.9FM

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

**LIFE IN THE STUPIDVERSE**  
NOBODY SAID THIS WOULD BE EASY

**A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE**  
JOE BIDEN WANTS TO FORCE US ALL TO WEAR MASKS--LIKE A TYRANT!

DONALD TRUMP SHOULD DECLARE MARTIAL LAW AND NULLIFY THE ELECTION--LIKE A FREEDOM-LOVING PATRIOT!

IT'S WHAT THE FOUNDING FATHERS WOULD HAVE WANTED!



**AMERICANS, LISTENING TO EACH OTHER RESPECTFULLY**

ACCORDING TO MY INTERNET SOURCES, SPACE PEOPLE FROM THE PLANET VORGON HAVE THE ABILITY TO SHAPE-SHIFT INTO BALLOTS FOR JOE BIDEN, THROWING THE ELECTION!

I'M SURE YOU ARE OPEN TO REASON! SO I HAVE SPENT HOURS LOGICALLY DEBUNKING THAT RUMOR, STARTING WITH THE THEORETICAL PHYSICS OF SHAPE-SHIFTING--

LOL! GET A LOAD OF THE EGGHEAD LIBTARD!



**LAND OF OPPORTUNITY**

AFTER LYING TO THE COUNTRY AND ENABLING EVERY AWFUL THING TRUMP HAS DONE FOR YEARS, I'M READY TO MOVE ON TO MY NEXT PROJECT--

--MY SCINTILLATING MEMOIR FOR WHICH I AM RECEIVING A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR ADVANCE!

IS THIS A GREAT COUNTRY OR WHAT?



**IT'S JUST THAT SIMPLE**

OKAY, SURE, I IGNORED EVERY BASIC PRECAUTION AND CAUGHT THE VIRUS. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

YOU JUST GET YOUR FRIEND THE PRESIDENT TO AUTHORIZE THE SUPER-EXCLUSIVE TREATMENT RESERVED FOR TOP-LEVEL INSIDERS--AND YOU'RE FINE!

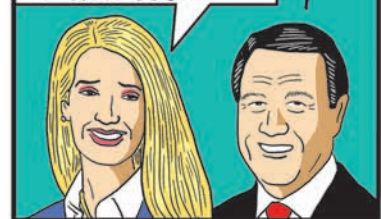
YOU PEOPLE ARE SUCH A BUNCH OF WHINERS!



**THREADING THE NEEDLE**

SENATOR LOEFFLER AND I TOTALLY SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF OUR GREAT PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP TO DELEGITIMIZE OUR CROOKED, UNTRUSTWORTHY ELECTION SYSTEM!

ALSO FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, FORGET THAT CRAP AND VOTE FOR SENATOR PERDUE AND MYSELF IN THE RUNOFFS!



**THE WIDENING GYRE**

REPUBLICANS AT EVERY LEVEL HAVE MADE COUNTLESS ATTEMPTS TO OVERTURN THE ELECTION--BECAUSE THEY DON'T LIKE THE RESULTS!

FORTUNATELY, THEY HAVE BEEN UN-SUCCESSFUL! SO FAR.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL! I'M SURE THIS WILL NEVER BE A PROBLEM IN AMERICAN POLITICS AGAIN!



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## PULSE

## NEWS &amp; OPINION

## COVID consequences

As if the death, despair and financial ruin wrought by COVID-19 isn't enough to make 2020 the worst year in modern history, a sharp increase in homicides in the city of Lansing is adding to the community's misery, especially for the families of those who lost their lives to criminal acts of violence. Our hearts break for the victims, especially when they are innocent children caught in a deadly dispute between adults. Sadly, homicide in Lansing is at its highest level in three decades. Similar trends are happening in cities across the nation. We have to ask: Who and what is to blame and how can this tide of deadly violence be stemmed?

Certainly COVID-induced isolation and financial stress is taking a heavy toll, especially on those who live at the margins of poverty. But we wonder, too, if police disengagement from the community is also an important factor. We understand the need to protect police officers from the coronavirus in order to maintain adequate force levels on city streets. Minimizing interactions with the public is one way to do it. Early on in the pandemic, Mayor Andy Schor and Police Chief Daryl Green announced that the Lansing Police Department would no longer respond to property crimes and other minor incidents. In the wake of George Floyd's despicable murder at the hands of Minneapolis police and national protests calling for police reform, Schor and Green also announced that LPD would no longer conduct traffic stops for minor offenses in order to minimize systemic discrimination against people of color.

Although well intended, these measures may have inadvertently signaled to the criminally inclined that they could do whatever they want without consequence. Add to the mix the ready availability of illegal firearms, a rising tide of anger, and the hopelessness that goes hand-in-hand with the lack of economic opportunity, and you have a surefire recipe for increasing violence.

What's the solution? Some observers invoke the well-known but widely disparaged "broken window" theory of policing, which posits that when one broken window goes unrepaired, it leads to more broken windows, more petty offenses and ultimately more serious crimes like aggravated assault and murder. According to the theory, the extent



## The CP Edit

### Opinion

to which a community tolerates illicit behavior that degrades the quality of life in neighborhoods correlates to higher levels of crime. The theory gained national notoriety 20 years ago when it was implemented in New York City by then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani and controversial Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, who operationalized the idea with heavy-handed "stop and frisk" tactics that primarily targeted young Black men. Subsequent reductions in the city's crime rate were hailed as proof of the theory's validity, but credible academic research has since demonstrated that the more likely cause was an improving economy.

This research and similar studies reaffirm for us that the basic tenets of crime control remain the same: solving the challenges of poverty, improving access to mental health treatment, getting illegal guns off the street, and community-based policing that builds strong, trust-based relationships between citizens and police, which drives collabor-

orative efforts to make neighborhoods safer. All of these factors have suffered over the course of the pandemic. The good news is that sooner rather than later, Lansing police officers will receive the COVID-19 vaccine, which should enable them to ramp up their interactions with the public without fear of being infected with the coronavirus. A more visible and engaged police presence on city streets should also help diffuse the notion that there are no consequences for criminal behavior and reassure Lansing residents that the police are doing their jobs.

Lansing's murder spike may well correct itself as our community inches toward the economic rebound and loosening of government restrictions that should stem from widespread vaccination against COVID-19. In the meantime, we are encouraged by the city's consideration of

initiatives like Ingham County's Advance Peace program, which aims to end urban gun violence and strengthen the resolve of engaged citizens to take back their city from the criminal element. At about \$1.5 million over the next three years, the program is quite costly — a tall order at a time when the city budget is already strained to the breaking point due to the pandemic. City leaders will have to consider the merits of this investment compared to enhanced support for existing programs like the city's Financial Empowerment Center, which also helps to ameliorate some of the underlying causes of violent crime. Although the city's pandemic crime wave has taken much of the steam out of the "defund police" movement in Lansing, we continue to believe that its core objectives — increasing funding for social and mental health services — should also continue to be a priority for city leaders.

Reducing violent crime is everyone's business, not just our elected officials. If we all do our part, neighbor by neighbor and block by block, we can turn the tables on this unfortunate situation and work together to make Lansing a safer and stronger community.

Send letters to the editor to [letters@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:letters@lansingcitypulse.com).

Please limit them to 250 words



CITY OF LANSING  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

**Z-5-2020, Northeast corner of E. Miller Road & Orchard Court  
Rezoning from "F" Commercial to "DM-3" Residential**

The Lansing City Council will hold a public hearing on Monday, January 11, 2021 at 7:00 p.m., via ZOOM Conferencing, Meeting ID 824 7315 3790, to consider Z-5-2020, a request by Raymundo Garcia to rezone the vacant .541 acre property located at northeast corner of E. Miller Road and Orchard Court from "F" Commercial district to "DM-3" Residential district. The purpose of the rezoning is to permit the use of the property for multiple family residential use.

Due to COVID -19, the public hearing may be held electronically in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, as amended in an effort to protect the health and safety of the public. Members of the public wishing to participate in the meeting may do so by logging into or calling into the meetings using the website <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82473153790> or by phone number 312-626-6799 using meeting ID: 824 7315 3790.

For more information, please call 517-483-4177. If you are interested in this matter, please attend the public hearing or send a representative. Written comments will be accepted between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on City business days if received before 5 p.m., on the day of the Public Hearing at the City Clerk's Office, Ninth Floor, City Hall, 124 West Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48933 or email [city.clerk@lansingmi.gov](mailto:city.clerk@lansingmi.gov).

**Chris Swope, Lansing City Clerk, MMC/CMMC**  
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**CP#20-308**

CITY OF LANSING  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

**Z-6-2020, 2420, 2432, 2442, 2506 N. Grand River Avenue  
Rezoning from "F" Commercial, "J" Parking, "A" Residential, "D-1" Professional Office  
and "G-2" Wholesale to "H" Light Industrial**

The Lansing City Council will hold a public hearing on Monday, January 11, 2021 at 7:00 p.m., via ZOOM Conferencing, Meeting ID 824 7315 3790, to consider Z-6-2020, a request by Grand River Development, LLC to rezone the properties at 2420, 2432, 2442, 2506 N. Grand River Avenue from "F" Commercial, "J" Parking, "A" Residential, "D-1" Professional Office and "G-2" Wholesale districts to "H" Light Industrial district. The purpose of the rezoning is to eliminate an inconsistent zoning pattern along the north side of the 2400 and 2500 blocks of N. Grand River Avenue.

Due to COVID -19, the public hearing may be held electronically in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, as amended in an effort to protect the health and safety of the public. Members of the public wishing to participate in the meeting may do so by logging into or calling into the meetings using the website <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82473153790> or by phone number 312-626-6799 using meeting ID: 824 7315 3790.

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**CP#20-309**

CITY OF LANSING  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

**SLU-4-2020, 900 Southland Avenue, Suite 910  
Special Land Use Permit – Church**

The Lansing City Council will hold a public hearing on Monday, January 11, 2021 at 7:00 p.m., via ZOOM Conferencing, Meeting ID 824 7315 3790, to consider SLU-3-2020, a request by Soulwinners Ministries International for a special land permit to utilize 900 Southland Avenue, Suite 910 for a church.

Due to COVID -19, the public hearing may be held electronically in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, as amended in an effort to protect the health and safety of the public. Members of the public wishing to participate in the meeting may do so by logging into or calling into the meetings using the website <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82473153790> or by phone number 312-626-6799 using meeting ID: 824 7315 3790.

For more information, please call 517-483-4177. If you are interested in this matter, please attend the public hearing or send a representative. Written comments will be accepted between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on City business days if received before 5 p.m., on the day of the Public Hearing at the City Clerk's Office, Ninth Floor, City Hall, 124 West Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48933 or email [city.clerk@lansingmi.gov](mailto:city.clerk@lansingmi.gov).

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**CP#20-310**

# GOP shoulders responsibility to prove elections aren't fake

With no other live sports to watch Saturday morning, I tuned into the replay of the 2016 Ohio State-Michigan football game.

That's the J.T. Barrett/bad spot game. The one where the Michigan defense appeared to stop the Ohio State quarterback short of the 15-yard line on 4th down in double overtime, a play which would have given No. 3 Michigan a 27-24 win.

The refs saw it differently. The Buckeyes were given the first down. Curtis Samuel scored the game-winning touchdown on the next play.

Michigan fans felt screwed. The Wolverines outplayed Ohio State (and that's my analysis as a Michigan State fan). Absent a couple interceptions, Ohio State would have lost by double digits.

However, Michigan lost, and that's the point of this week's column.

The University of Michigan didn't allege widespread fraud. They didn't break away from the Big Ten. They didn't create their own college football conference.

They grumbled and moaned and made excuses (as Michigan fans are good at) until they let it go and ... then kept losing to Ohio State year after year.

But let's not talk about that.

Let's talk about the Republican Party. They are led by a president who, as recently as this week, questioned the error rate of Michigan's voting machines. Six weeks after Election Day results showed him losing to Biden, he continues to push a belief he didn't lose "legitimately."

Basically, we have "fake" elections. Sound familiar? President Donald Trump doesn't like press coverage? It's "fake news." He doesn't like the result of the election? Same thing.

I'm not going to blow up Trump over this. Republicans need to do address this.

According to last week's Quinnipiac survey, 77% of Republicans believe there was widespread fraud in the election and 70% believe Joe Biden's win was not legitimate.

That's not good. Having 77% of Republicans think Joe Biden's energy

POLITICS



policy is built is the underpinning of a democratic republic. Having 77% think the election isn't valid erodes the underpinnings of the democratic republic.

If we don't have faith in how we elect our own leaders, what do we have? What's the solution? Trump using the military to take over the government? Hey, it happens in other countries.

We got yahoos running around concocting unsettling fantasies of tying up Governor Whitmer and setting her adrift out in Lake Michigan. We had Rep. Gary Eisen publicly question whether a protest of the Electoral College vote could be done peacefully.

House Speaker Lee Chatfield and Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey are coming around to addressing this issue. On the issue of using the state House to switch around Michigan's electors Chatfield said he would not do it out of fear "we'd lose our country forever. This truly would bring mutually assured destruction for every future election."

Shirkey said while "numerous claims" of fraud have been unearthed, those claims have been found to be "incorrect or incapable of being proven."

Other Republican leaders need to join them.

Most voters don't have the time, energy and ability to flyspeck Rudy Giuliani's white binder of alleged fraud and crosscheck that with information provided by Detroit elections adviser Chris Thomas and other elections officials.

All they know is that they love Trump. Their universe of family and friends love Trump, too. Trump is saying there's fraud. Republican poll watchers at the TCF Center in Detroit saw some fishy stuff. They're willing to attest to it in an affidavit. How could Trump lose when everyone they know voted Trump? Fraud it must be.

Losing elections is part of democracy. Sometimes your person wins. Sometimes they do not.

Laying waste to the entire election process isn't a political argument. It's destructive. It's also being a sore loser. Nobody likes those. Like Michigan's football team in 2016, it's time to move on.

*(Kyle Melinn of the Capitol news service MIRS is at [melinnky@gmail.com](mailto:melinnky@gmail.com).)*



# REWIND

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LAST 7 DAYS



By KYLE KAMINSKI



## Another pot shop opens in Lansing

The Botanical Co. became Lansing's newest medical and recreational provisioning center when it opened Tuesday near the Capital Region International Airport at 3535 Capitol City Blvd. Door prizes and giveaways will be available this month to celebrate its grand opening.

## Report: Granholm to run Energy Department

Former Michigan Jennifer Granholm may be headed to Washington. The two-term governor is President-elect Joseph R. Biden's choice to run the Energy Department, USA Today reported Tuesday. Meanwhile, Michigan cast all of 16 of its electoral votes for Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris Monday in the Senate chamber of the Michigan State Capitol building as a small contingent of Trump supporters protested outside. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear a lawsuit filed last week by Texas that sought to invalidate the results of the election in Michigan, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, further eroding any viable path forward for President Donald Trump to contest the election. Now it's up to Congress to ratify the Electoral College decision.



Granholm

## Blowback continues over retiree health benefits

Dozens of former city of Lansing employees lashed out against Lansing Mayor Andy Schor at a City Council meeting this week as they prepare for upcoming benefits changes expected to take effect Jan. 1. About 1,300 employees are slated to have their benefits changed to mirror that of current employees, equating to additional out-of-pocket expenses and higher copays for office visits and prescription drugs. While the move is also expected to cut down the city's ballooning unfunded liabilities by about \$8 million annually, many have criticized Schor for welching on his campaign promise to never solve budget problems on the backs of retirees.

## Spadafore to remain Council president

Lansing City Council President Peter Spadafore expressed interest last week in another year as president, largely to maintain some semblance of "consistency" after a turbulent year, he said. And it doesn't appear that anyone else on the Council is actively interested in the job anyway. Vice President Adam Hussain said it would be "wise" to support another year under Spadafore. The Council is expected to elect its next president and vice president on Jan. 4.



Spadafore

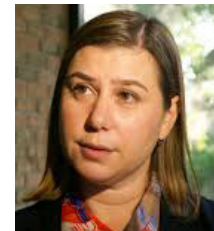
## Charges dropped in 2011 murder case

A Detroit man won't face a second trial for a nearly decade-old murder after his charges were reportedly dismissed by the Ingham County Prosecutor's Office last week. Herbert

Alford, 47, was released on bond earlier this year after more than 1,700 days behind bars after a rental car receipt served as an alibi that his attorneys said exonerated him in the 2011 murder of Michael Abrams, reports the Lansing State Journal. Until last week, he had been set to face a jury trial.

## Slotkin raises concern about Biden's Pentagon pick

U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin reportedly raised concerns last week about President-elect Joe Biden's pick to head the Pentagon, retired Gen. Lloyd Austin. Slotkin, a former acting assistant defense secretary, said she had concerns about selecting a recently retired general rather than someone with a longer history as a civilian, reports the Detroit Free Press. Traditionally, that top Pentagon role has gone to a civilian under the belief that a military insider could lack the necessary independence to oversee military personnel. Slotkin said she has a "deep respect" for Austin — who would be the first Black defense secretary — but that his appointment "just feels off."



Slotkin

## Lansing to clear 'Back 40' homeless camp

City officials eventually plan to clear a homeless encampment off North Larch Street following concerns about health, including trash, unsupervised fires and human waste, reports the Lansing State Journal. The city hasn't set a deadline for clearing the camp but has reportedly advised those staying there to relocate "as soon as possible" to shelters or other housing. Clearing the camp during the pandemic goes against guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that caution against breaking up camps without offering alternatives.

## Lugnuts to partner with Oakland Athletics

As part of the reorganization of Minor League Baseball entering the 2021 season, the Lansing Lugnuts was invited last week to become the new High-A Midwest League affiliate of the Oakland Athletics. The Lugnuts previously served as the Low-A affiliate for the Toronto Blue Jays from 2005 to 2019. Lugnuts owner Tom Dickson considers it a "promotion," MLive reports. The A's, meanwhile, have named Scott Steinmann, who has managed in the minors going back to 2005, to manage the Lugnuts.



## 1913 Touraine Ave., East Lansing

Right now in a galaxy not so far away ... an annual intergalactic rendezvous is once again unfolding in Jon Wilson's front yard in East Lansing. Stormtroopers are circling around the Christmas tree. Chewbacca and his family are gathered nearby. Darth Vader is overlooking it all.

Wilson's yard has developed into something of a neighborhood oddity over the last five years as dozens of inflatable Star Wars figures (and other oddities) crop up outside his home every holiday season. This year, Wilson installed his 35th yard decoration.

"It started when I found Darth Vader on clearance for \$10," he said. "It just exploded from there."

New to Wilson's display this year are Captain Phasma, Grogu from The Mandalorian series and a 12-foot Chewbacca — the latest member of a fictional wookiee clan that now lives in his yard.

"I saw the first movie as a 12-year-old kid in the theaters," Wilson said. "It's actually pretty amazing. So many people seem to be walking by now just to look at the display. Kids love it."

Wilson said his masterpiece spikes his monthly electric bill by about \$50, but it's worth the price for the community amusement. Last week, a neighbor even pitched in to help cover the costs.

More difficult to pull off: About 30 hours of assembly over about three days, Wilson explained.

"This year, my wife even pitched in to help put it all together," Wilson said. "She's not really a Star Wars fan, so she wasn't always into the whole thing. This year, she came right out to help."

— KYLE KAMINSKI

"Eye Candy of the Week" is our look at some of the nicer properties in Lansing. It rotates with Eyesore of the Week and Eye for Design. If you have a suggestion, please e-mail [eye@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:eye@lansingcitypulse.com) or call Berl Schwartz at 999-5061.



# Health officials struggle with enforcement of epidemic orders

## Royal Scot flouts health orders despite liquor license suspension

The holiday spirit was in full swing over the weekend at Royal Scot Golf & Bowl.

The bowling alley lanes were running. There was laughter and mirth. Attendees chomped on food served up in plastic trays while slurping from white styrofoam cups.

Other than seeing the occasional face mask, one could be forgiven for forgetting about the pandemic inside the alley.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department Officer Marcus Cheatham has not forgotten about it. He's just limited on what he can do about Royal Scot, 4722 W Grand River Ave., just inside Clinton County.

He said he is trying to strike a balance between cracking down on businesses that are "actively spreading disease" during a pandemic and weighing the financial concerns that drive those businesses to ignore state health orders.

"People think I can just go in and chain their doors shut," he said. "I can't."

Cheatham said he has been struggling in recent weeks to garner compliance from Royal Scot, among others. Since last month, it has been warned, issued cease-and-desist orders from state and county officials and had its liquor licenses suspended.

Still, the building has been alive with activity. City Pulse recorded video on Friday and Saturday that shows ongoing violations of the epidemic orders that Royal Scot has already been accused of violating. The only order it appeared to follow this weekend was its liquor license suspension.

The footage was just days after Michigan reached the grim milestone of 10,000 COVID-19 deaths and the nation moved closer to 300,000 deaths — a mark it hit by Monday afternoon.

Staff eventually asked two City Pulse reporters to leave the building on Saturday afternoon while crowds with Stand Up Michigan's "Refuse to Obey" tour circled in on the bowling alley.

A spokeswoman for the Michigan Liquor Control Commission identified Todd and Adam Kwiecien as owners of Mr. K Enterprises LLC, which is doing business as Royal Scot. A man who identified himself as "Mr. Kwiecien" declined to comment on the scene on Saturday.



Todd Heywood/City Pulse

Crowds were spotted gathering at Royal Scot on Friday and Saturday, in direct violation of local and state health orders that are designed to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Attorney David Kallman, which represents Royal Scot, also didn't return calls this week.

Cheatham recognizes that Royal Scot has continued to flout public health orders, ultimately contributing to the "tragic" spread of COVID-19 in Clinton County. He also tried to reframe the debate with some additional empathy for businesses struggling to survive amid the pandemic.

"We've faced such intense hostility from a portion of the population that it has been difficult to do anything meaningful to stop COVID from spreading," Cheatham explained last week in an email to City Pulse. "The places we are talking about are not just businesses struggling to survive, who we want to help. These places are actively spreading disease to other people."

State records show that Mr. K Enterprises received a Payroll Protection Plan loan of between \$350,000 and \$1 million on April 15, allowing the business to retain 93 jobs. Those records also show that the business had between \$1.68 million and \$4.8 million in payroll expenses last year.

On Tuesday, Todd Kwiecien, rep-

resented by Kallman, agreed to settle a complaint brought against it by the Liquor Control Commission on Dec. 4. The agreement extends a 45-day suspension of its liquor license and includes \$1,500 in fines related to violations of state orders.

That suspension could begin this week, but the business still stands defiant of cease-and-desist orders from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, which closed its indoor dining on Dec. 1 and then ordered the business to cease all food operations on Dec. 7.

Failure to comply with either order is a misdemeanor punishable by 90 days in jail and fines of up to \$2,500. Royal Scot requested a hearing related to those orders. It hasn't been scheduled.

The Michigan Public Health Act empowers Cheatham to shutter businesses and other locations that are deemed a threat to public health. The pandemic, however, has blurred the boundaries.

With political pushback against governmental actions to slow the spread of the disease, Cheatham finds himself walking a tightrope between enforcing the laws and protecting his staff from

harassment and, potentially, violence should those efforts meet continued pushback.

"To go forward with a local order, we need the support of a judge, of law enforcement and we all need to be willing to risk having our lives disrupted and families threatened," Cheatham added.

Renee Canady, CEO of Michigan Public Health Institute, contends that public health officials — like Cheatham — still have an ethical and legal obligation to take action against a business that is "actively spreading disease," regardless of any fear of retribution for enforcing those rules.

Clinton County Sheriff Lawrence Jerue said on Monday that his office, in consultation with the Clinton County Prosecutor's Office, was waiting to take action against Royal Scot while the state agencies — including MLCC, MDARD and MDHHS — follow-through with their "civil remedies."

"It's very fluid and seems to change from order to order," Jerue said of the state mandates. "We'd certainly proceed with criminal violations if that is tested through the court."

— TODD HEYWOOD



# HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO YOU!



The image shows the exterior of the Lansing Gardens store, a red building with large windows and a sign that reads "LANSING GARDENS". A red "OPEN" sign is visible in the window. To the right, a large display of Christmas trees is shown, with a striped awning and string lights above them. A red ribbon graphic curves across the middle of the image, framing the main title.

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# As homicides rise, public interest in defunding recedes

## Police lean on tried tactics as City Council eyes proactive reforms

Marlene Moore's grown son was walking his family's dog near the Old Oakland neighborhood, on Lansing's near west side, last Wednesday when he saw a 27-year-old woman get shot just a few blocks from his home.

"It really shook him up," Moore said. "I don't feel safe here."

Moore has lived in Lansing since the 1950s. And gun violence — though familiar to Moore and her family — has never crept this close to her front door. "Too close for comfort," she explained.

Officers found the woman with a gunshot wound that was not life-threatening. But all too often this year, those rising reports of gun violence have had fatal consequences in Lansing.

"Maybe more patrolling the neighborhood?" Moore suggested. "It's hard. It's a tough situation."

About three hours before that shooting last week, Police Chief Daryl Green was preparing his remarks for a virtual "call to action" meeting to address a growing homicide rate in Lansing. Twenty killings have been tracked so far in 2020, the highest annual total in three decades.

Six cases remain unsolved. About half were reported on the southern side of the city.

But as homicide reports continue to rise locally, efforts to chip away funding from the Lansing Police Department are losing steam. Elected officials are still focused on public safety reforms, but many residents are now calling for more cops to help tackle more crime. And it's creating a conundrum without a simple solution, City Council President Peter Spadafore said.

"It's a paradoxical situation," he said. "There's this notion that more police won't prevent a shooting, only investigate it. There's also this call for more social services. And at the same time, the short-term reaction is to immediately increase police presence. Maybe it can be both."

Green pointed to an increase in stolen firearms to help explain the rising homicide rate, but Lansing is far from alone in its battle against violent crime. Detroit, Saginaw, New York City, Minneapolis, Chicago and Houston are all tracking more homicides this year.

With a few weeks left in 2020, Lansing is reporting about twice as many homi-

## Lansing residents offer mixed reactions on police response

*City Pulse asked: Are increased police patrols a good short-term solution to curbing the gun violence tracked this year? How should the spike in homicides be addressed in Lansing?*

### You answered:

"More police is good. The more presence the better. Encourage people to get their concealed pistol license and learn basic self defense. Security cameras. Businesses with consistent issues should hire security to deter."

— James Wilson

"It's doubtful that police 'presence' is going to curb the homicide crime rate. I think that COVID-19 is wreaking havoc on people's minds and an increase in mental illness is happening. People cooped up in their homes with nowhere to go and financial pressures are outnigh along with an increase in substance abuse."

— Terry Chapman

"More cameras everywhere."

— Pamela Nelson

"A stronger police presence would not make me feel safer. A community center where my young siblings could go after school would make me feel safer. A non-police crisis team — social workers, mental health experts, de-escalation experts — on call 24/7 would make me feel safer. A stronger police presence is a scare tactic and a misuse of funds."

— Sam Stiles

"Start programs to help get people good honest work. When you have something to lose, you think a second longer about making a bad decision."

— Bryan Behovitz

"I would like to see police on bikes in the parks and cemeteries."

— Jayne Van Kirk

"Bring back community policing. Build a bond with your neighbors. Increased sensitivity and increased de-escalation training would help."

— Josie Vargas

"An increased police presence would probably only serve to intimidate innocent people"

— Katy Joe Dee

"We don't need more cops. Tensions are at an all-time high, and the coppers happen to be one of the catalysts at the center of that tension. You won't diffuse this building tension between law enforcement and communities by putting more police on the streets."

— Searcy James

"If your goal is to punish those that commit gun crimes faster, then the answer is to add police. If your goal is to prevent these crimes from happening, then the answer is providing better access to community education, mental health care and drug rehabilitation programs."

— Randy Holmes

"Increasing patrols is a generic solution to the lumping these homicides together. I don't think increasing patrols is going to solve anything. It doesn't make me feel safer."

— Larry Stegman

"More police. I don't want to 'feel' safe. I want to 'be' safe."

— Natalie Mooney

"More police patrols along with ongoing reform in policing methods."

— Ann Schu

— KYLE KAMINSKI

cides as 2019. New York City's homicide rate is up at least 38%. Minneapolis also reports at least 78 homicides this year — up more than 60% from the 48 reported last year. It's not at all a local anomaly.

"Many violent offenders are using stolen firearms, and LPD cannot advocate enough for people to properly secure

their firearms," Green explained, noting that at least 140 illegal guns have been seized this year through the city's Violent Crime Initiative. "This is a clear indication that offenders are carrying more guns as the homicide rate increases."

Green was also quick to mention that 2020 has been far from a "normal" year

for law enforcement. The coronavirus pandemic has reduced contact between citizens and police. And officers have struggled to regain community trust after an inmate was killed by officers in the city's lock-up and several local cops beat up a man on Baker Street.

"I think we're doing all that we can," Mayor Andy Schor told City Pulse.

"This is a national issue that's happening everywhere. People everywhere are getting more gun violence in their neighborhoods, and it's extremely concerning. We're preempted by the state on gun laws, so we're working with increased patrols and building a positive relationship within communities and neighborhoods. That's crucial so neighbors are comfortable reporting issues."

Reports show that homicides have increased by as much as 36% this year in at least 21 major cities. National experts have since posited a few theories to explain the increase:

Like Green suggested, the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown the city of Lansing into a tailspin. Thousands of residents have either been put out of a job or have worked from home for months — the "perfect storm," Green said, for unchecked mental health issues to become dangerous.

Isolation also breeds depression, anxiety and idle hands that could lead to more criminal behavior. The economic toll from the pandemic could also be creating a sense of desperation. And with record firearm sales nationwide this year, more guns could be creating more violence.

"This year has not been a normal year for anyone in the field of social services — mental health, teachers and especially law enforcement," Green theorized. "It's an unpredictable environment."

George Floyd's death in Minneapolis and subsequent Black Lives Matter protests have also added to a growing sense of distrust of police officers. That social tension could also equate to an increased reliance on street justice to resolve interpersonal disputes, Vox reported this year.

Schor thinks most of the homicides locally have been in retaliation for other criminal behavior. Rumors have circulated over an increase in gang activity, but police officials have said there's no evidence to corroborate that theory.

"It's important to remember that we're living in unprecedented times," added Councilman Brian Jackson. "This year's



# Police

from page 10

homicide rates shouldn't necessarily be considered part of the usual pattern for Lansing."

In response to the rising number of shootings and homicides, local cops have stayed focused on familiar techniques. That means ramping up patrols in "hotspots" on the city's south side, Green said. More badges. More guns. More police visibility in the city.

Uniformed officers have also been knocking doors, trying to convince residents and business owners to snitch about recent crimes and to register their surveillance cameras with the Police Department. Anonymous tips are welcomed. Building community relationships can be critical.

"The police and community must collaborate to send a clear message that violence in our communities will not be tolerated," Green said during last Wednesday's community meeting.

The city's Violent Crime Initiative, a regional partnership of LPD, Michigan State Police, the Ingham County Sheriff's Department and other agencies, is also focused on keeping illegal firearms off city streets while investigations continue.

"It's the historical approach to policing hotspots," said Council Vice President Adam Hussain. "Historically, has that shown to work in the short term? Yes. But it can't only be about active patrols. It also has to be about building meaningful relationships in these neighborhoods."

Councilman Brandon Betz and the local chapter of Black Lives Matter, among others, have repeatedly called for reducing the Police Department budget and increasing spending on social services and programs designed to mitigate crime before it can begin.

Resolutions calling for a 50% police budget cut over five years have twice failed to pass through the City Council. Green has voiced strong opposition to police divestment. And Schor doesn't plan to cut the budget in his next proposal.

Even officials in Minneapolis, the hotbed of recent social unrest, fell short of their initial plans to dismantle their department, instead cutting only \$8 million from the \$179 million police budget this month.

So, how do increased patrols align with conceptual police divestment? Perhaps they don't.

Dozens of local residents — including Schor — told City Pulse they don't see a viable path toward safety through budget cuts at the Police Department. There's value in more community engagement and social services, Schor said, but it doesn't always provide a sense of security.

And training for officers or hiring more social workers to the force requires cash, Schor said.

"We have to have enough policing presence to have safety and security, but they also have to be doing it right. People want police. They just want them to act appropriately. There are extremes on both sides of these conversations. They all have rights to their opinions."

The rising homicide rate in Lansing almost ensures that its Police Department won't see a budget reduction next year, Schor told City Pulse this week. Budget cuts would likely equate to service reductions or fewer patrols, he said. And that's not a risk he's willing to let Lansing take.

"For me, this is a matter of keeping people safe and secure in their homes and in their neighborhoods. I firmly believe that people should expect a response when they dial 911," Schor said. "Operational cuts, right now, I think would only cause problems in terms of resident safety."

Betz still believes that "radical intervention" is the best way to curb gun violence in Lansing, though he's quickly realizing the political infeasibility of slashing the Police Department budget.

With Schor still controlling the city's purse strings and the inability for Betz to garner enough votes to set the budget on a different trajectory next year, he's turning his attention toward other reforms. Instead of how much cops can spend, he's focusing on how that cash is to be spent.

Mirroring recent reforms in East Lansing, Betz voiced interest this week in amending portions of city ordinances — like its disorderly conduct laws — to alter police enforcement in Lansing. Perhaps some crimes can be wiped from the books and reduce police interactions, he said.

"It's really depressing that the only way people can feel safe in society is by sending more armed cops to the streets," Betz said. "Too many people are stuck in that way of thinking and it's going to take some more work to push those reforms forward. It'll require constant attention."

Councilwoman Patricia Spitzley also said that police divestment has lost momentum in Lansing.

"There's still a role for police.

Reimagined public safety is needed now more than ever, but it's still a multifaceted approach, and I don't think cutting the police department budget is the way," Spitzley said this week. "We need to think of this as a holistic approach to making reforms."

Enter Advance Peace — a "promising" step forward in that holistic approach, Spitzley said.

The California-based nonprofit is geared toward stopping urban crime before it begins. And for about \$1.9 million over three years, Advance Peace could bring its programming to Lansing.

Founder and Eastern High School graduate DeVone Boggan outlined the concept to several positive reviews from the City Council this week. The Council's committee on intergovernmental relations is set to explore ways to secure funding and perhaps launch a program early next year.

The concept: Advance Peace would pair about 25 residents who are most likely to get involved with gun violence with local mentors who, in turn, can connect them with social services and job opportunities over an 18-month period. Those recruited into the "fellowship" also earn monthly stipends of up to \$1,000 for their involvement in the program, if they keep their noses clean.

Boggan described would-be participants as among the "most lethal individuals in the city."

"Every day for an 18-month-plus period, they'll be engaged and given attention unlike they've ever had in the past," Boggan explained. "We want to make sure that these individuals know what is out there for them. It's hard to dream about something you don't even know exists."

Boggan said Advance Peace programming works to end cyclical and retaliatory

gun violence in urban neighborhoods by providing resources directly to those most affected by local crime, often young Black men who could otherwise become involved in that criminal activity themselves.

Richmond, California, experienced an 82% reduction in deadly shootings after the program was launched there in 2019, Boggan said. When it launched in Sacramento, California, the city experienced a 24-month period without a single youth homicide, according to Advance Peace.

"This program works," Spitzley added. "We're looking at crushing crime and gun violence."

Several Ingham County officials, including Prosecutor Carol Siemon, also touted the program's efficacy this week and urged City Council members to quickly find funding for the program. Reports show Advance Peace needs at least \$500,000 to launch in the first year and requires a three-year commitment — enough for at least two cohorts of 25 people in Greater Lansing. Early cost projections also suggest those costs could be reduced for Lansing through grants and additional funding that could be provided through Ingham County Board of Commissioners.

Under that model, Lansing's projected costs would be about \$890,000 over three years.

"It can be both. When people see crime, they expect a response in order to feel safe," Schor said. "Our police officers do a good job of responding, but you also need appropriate community policing to help build relationships in these neighborhoods where we're seeing issues."

— KYLE KAMINSKI

SEAN BRADLEY contributed to this report.

## CITY OF LANSING NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING Z-4-2020, 220 N. Pennsylvania Avenue Rezoning from "C" Residential to "DM-4" Residential

The Lansing City Council will hold a public hearing on Monday, January 11, 2021 at 7:00 p.m., via ZOOM Conferencing, Meeting ID 824 7315 3790, to consider Z-4-2020, a request by Edward W. Sparrow Hospital Association to rezone the property located at 220 N. Pennsylvania Avenue from "C" Residential district to "DM-4" Residential district. The purpose of the rezoning is to permit the use of the property for expansion of the Sparrow hospital facilities.

Due to COVID -19, the public hearing may be held electronically in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, as amended in an effort to protect the health and safety of the public. Members of the public wishing to participate in the meeting may do so by logging into or calling into the meetings using the website <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82473153790> or by phone number 312-626-6799 using meeting ID: 824 7315 3790.

For more information, please call 517-483-4177. If you are interested in this matter, please attend the public hearing or send a representative. Written comments will be accepted between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on City business days if received before 5 p.m., on the day of the Public Hearing at the City Clerk's Office, Ninth Floor, City Hall, 124 West Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48933 or email [city.clerk@lansingmi.gov](mailto:city.clerk@lansingmi.gov).

Chris Swope, Lansing City Clerk, MMC/CMMC  
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CP#20-312



# First COVID-19 vaccines depart Capital Regional International Airport

At least 34 deaths tracked across Greater Lansing over the last week

Frontline healthcare workers at two Michigan hospitals were the first in the state to receive their COVID-19 vaccines this week after they were federally approved and sent out for distribution.

The nation's first batch of coronavirus vaccines reportedly arrived at the Capital Regional International Airport on Sunday morning, shortly after leaving Pfizer's manufacturing facility in Portage. Those initial doses were set to be distributed across Michigan and all 50 states, with the top priority given to frontline health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities.

After that, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services plans to expand vaccinations to essential workers and those who are at high-risk of contracting COVID-19.

Sparrow Health System in Lansing was preparing to administer its share of the vaccine to dozens of its workers this week, but the number of doses expected to arrive was far from enough to cover all high-priority employees, according to reports in the Lansing State Journal.

The Michigan National Guard will also staff about 50 COVID-19 "vaccination and testing teams" that will report to four hospitals as early as this week to help out with ongoing distribution efforts.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has also created the bipartisan Protect Michigan

Commission within the Department of Health and Human Services, a mass vaccination campaign to raise awareness of the safety and efficacy of the recently approved COVID-19 vaccine across the state of Michigan.

**In related news ...**

The East Lansing City Council has approved an expedited approval process and temporary elimination of fees for the creation or expansion of outdoor seating or local restaurants. Restaurants adjoining any plaza, parking lot or other public space can apply for a temporary permit that allows them to temporarily create or expand outdoor seating through March 2021.

As the pandemic rages on in Greater Lansing, Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail is urging residents to also be cautious of the flu season with vaccinations, hand washing and other steps.

"We need to do everything we can to lessen the spread of the flu and prevent flu-related hospitalizations so as not to overwhelm the region's healthcare system," Vail said this week.

Michigan State University received \$2.1 million in grant funding last week to test for coronavirus in wastewater, which has the potential to be an early warning system for COVID-19. More than 100 wastewater sites will be monitored for the virus to assist with preventative measures.

Small businesses that have been disproportionately impacted by the

CORONAVIRUS IN MICHIGAN					
BY THE NUMBERS...					
MICHIGAN					
	12/01/20	12/08/20	WEEKLY CHANGE		
CASES	410,295	442,715	^8%		
DEATHS	10,138	10,935	^8%		
GREATER LANSING			EATON CO.		
	12/01/20	12/08/20	WEEKLY CHANGE	12/01/20	12/08/20
CASES	16,629	18,078	^9%	CASES	3,526
DEATHS	219	253	^16%	DEATHS	59
INGHAM CO.			CLINTON CO.		
	12/01/20	12/08/20	WEEKLY CHANGE	12/01/20	12/08/20
CASES	10,105	10,984	^9%	CASES	2,998
DEATHS	131	153	^17%	DEATHS	29

COVID-19 virus can apply for grants of up to \$15,000 through the Pure Michigan Small Business Relief Initiative. About \$600,000 is set for businesses across Eaton, Clinton and Ingham counties. Those grants will be awarded on a "first-in" basis to businesses at michiganbusiness.org/relief.

Essential workers interested in applying for Michigan's "Future for Frontliners" program that offers tuition-free college must apply in the next two weeks to be considered eligible for assistance. The program is designed to offer certain frontline workers the

option of free college tuition toward an associate degree or industry-recognized certificate at community college.

Whitmer joined a bipartisan coalition of governors from Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin on Tuesday urging residents to wear masks and practice social distancing as the holiday season approaches. "Until the vaccine is available to everyone and until we eradicate this virus once and for all, we must continue working to protect one another," she said.

— KYLE KAMINSKI

CITY OF LANSING  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

**Zoning Ordinance Amendment**  
**Expansion of the W. Saginaw Overlay District**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Lansing will hold a public hearing at 7:00 p.m. during the City Council Meeting, via ZOOM Conferencing, Meeting ID 824 7315 3790, on Monday, January 11, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. to consider a request by RE Fund Lansing 1, LLC to amend Chapter 1279, Appendix D of the City of Lansing Zoning Ordinance to expand the W. Saginaw Street Overlay District by including the area bounded by W. Oakland Avenue to the north, W. Saginaw Street to the south, Westmoreland Avenue to the west and N. M.L. King Jr. Blvd. to the east, with the exception of the property at 743 N. M.L. King Jr. Blvd and an 80' x 377' strip of land along the west line of the site. The purpose of the rezoning is to allow the property to be redeveloped for commercial and multiple family residential use.

Due to COVID -19, the public hearing may be held electronically in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, as amended in an effort to protect the health and safety of the public. Members of the public wishing to participate in the meeting may do so by logging into or calling into the meetings using the website <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82473153790> or by phone number 312-626-6799 using meeting ID: 824 7315 3790.

For more information, please call 517-483-4177. If you are interested in this matter, please attend the public hearing or send a representative. Written comments will be accepted between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on City business days if received before 5 p.m., on the day of the Public Hearing at the City Clerk's Office, Ninth Floor, City Hall, 124 West Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48933 or email [city.clerk@lansingmi.gov](mailto:city.clerk@lansingmi.gov).

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# Accident Fund faces state probe over workplace safety

## MIOsha issues COVID-19 guidance after employee complaints

The parking garage attached to the Accident Fund Insurance Co. of America headquarters is an oddity.

While many businesses in downtown Lansing are closed and much of the city remains stuck in a pandemic-induced lockdown, the Accident Fund's employee ramp is still keeping busy. Dozens of cars lined the lower level every day last week. Hundreds are still coming in to work.

And now state officials are looking into whether the company — one of the largest employers in Lansing — may be running afoul of state orders designed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and whether it's truly necessary for nearly 200 of its employees to report to work every day.

"We're averaging a new COVID-19 case there every single day," one Accident Fund employee told City Pulse under the condition he could remain anonymous. "Sometimes there are two or three cases reported in a day. They've moved us around and spaced us apart,

but I'd still say that 75% of the people coming into the building everyday should not be required to come in."

A company spokesman said that about 60% of Accident Fund's workforce in Lansing has been allowed to work from home during the pandemic. The other 40% — estimated to be at least 178 employees — are still required to commute to the office in order to maintain their employment.

Company officials declined to provide a precise employee total to City Pulse this week, but records from the Lansing Economic Area Partnership showed it employed 447 people last year.

When Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's executive orders differentiated between "critical infrastructure workers," the insurance salespeople at Accident Fund were deemed as essential. Still, the company sent home 60% of its staff and enacted a series of safety protocols for the others.

Temperature screenings, masks and social distancing are now common inside the building.

The latest epidemic orders from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, however, don't make the same distinction for essential services. Those simply state that all work



Kyle Kaminski/City Pulse

Cars line the Accident Fund Insurance Co. of America's employee parking ramp on Grand Avenue on Tuesday.

should be done from home unless it is "strictly necessary" for an employee to be in the office.

That strict requirement for in-person work is a carve-out for food service or auto assembly workers, or other jobs involving protected data that cannot be accessed remotely. It shouldn't be construed as permitting in-person work only because remote options are inconvenient or costly.

And therein lies the problem for several Accident Fund employees: The company has refused to explain why some of its employees must come to work while others can work from home. And at least one employee suspects the inconsistent practices may be out of line with current state law.

"A number of colleagues both in my department and across the company are fed up," he said.

Emails obtained by City Pulse show that the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration received an employee complaint last month of "alleged hazards" at its Grand Avenue headquarters — namely unnecessarily requiring its employees to report to work.

State officials, at the time, deemed the Accident Fund to be "medium or lower exposure risk" and opted against a physical inspection, according to the email. Still, they provided a list of suggestions and "steps you need to take if the allegations are true, so you can prevent your employees from contracting coronavirus and are in compliance with our regulations."

"If the exposure situation changes or the agency receives additional complaints that employees are at risk, the

agency reserves the right to conduct an inspection in the future," according to one of the emails sent from MIOsha to company officials at the Accident Fund on Nov. 30.

A state spokesperson confirmed this week that another complaint had been received against the Accident Fund headquarters in Lansing but declined to provide any additional information, except to note that officials are still "processing those complaints as quickly as possible."


Prior to the pandemic, MIOsha received an average of 200 monthly complaints and tracked a response time of about five days. Since March, the agency has fielded 11,000 complaints — including 2,800 in November. The backlog is leading to some processing delays, officials said.

Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail said the recent complaints against the company fall outside of her authority. Companies can have several reasons for determining which employees must report to work. And the Health Department isn't prepared to evaluate them, she said.


"That's MIOsha," Vail said. "Not my call to second guess their workflow and processes."

In the meantime, company officials there have declined to comment on the allegations, except to note that the Accident Fund has instituted "safeguards" that meet or exceed recommended guidelines from local, state and federal health authorities. The company will also "maintain and adjust" those practices as necessary to "ensure the continued health and safety" of its staff.

— KYLE KAMINSKI



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Skyler Ashley/City Pulse

The 58-foot state Christmas tree glows on the Capitol grounds. This year's tree was grown right here in Delta Township in the backyard of a local family's home.

# Keeping the lights on

Local poets lend us their breath in a dark year

By LAWRENCE COSENTINO

**B**right lights are everywhere. Snow or no snow, it's mid-December and that's the protocol.

How do we keep the lights on inside our heads in the darkest of years?

This week, we asked a bouquet of Lansing area poets to reflect on the past year. Their insight, artistry, honesty and wit are on vivid display in the following pages.

Never mind making sense of 2020. There's little hope for that. We just wanted to be touched.

To help keep the lights on in the shortest days of the year, we fanned out and took photos of holiday lights from all sides of greater Lansing that gave us particular delight.

Lansing's gifted poetry community gave us shadows along with the light, a chiaroscuro of mourning and hope for a year like no other.

Sometimes it was hard to tell the difference.

"I am learning how to know someone only by their eyes," poet Rosalie Petrouske observes.

Chances are, you won't know how much you thirsted for the juice in these poems until you start reading them. We may not be able to gather and hug and talk, let alone listen to music or attend theater, but poetry can thrill us with sudden human contact. It can sweep us to the heights and ground us in the basics.

"Breathe deeply," poet Ruelaine Stokes reminds us. "That is a blessing. Breathe out. That too is a blessing. Keep breathing and listen to the sound of your breath greeting the air."

Unencumbered by distancing, masks, or fear, we wander freely into strangers' living rooms and gardens, heads and hearts, and find they are not strangers at all.

Cindy Hunter Morgan vacuums her floor and

finds "old words" in the dust: "suitcase, hug, hello." Memories rescue her from a silence so long and boring even the ghosts have left. She recalls the sound of her own voice, ordering dessert, "the way people used to turn their knees in a theater to let me find my seat."

Cruz Villarreal takes comfort in his garden, where "social distance doesn't matter," but envies a bee that spends his day coupling with the stigma and pistils of blossoms "soon to be fruit."

"I know the craziness will pass," Villarreal writes. "Yet I pine." He wears a mask and shops early in the morning, biding his time, waiting for the day when he can pat his neighbor on the back.

There's a lot more to discover in the following pages. We hope you relish the warm touch of these generous, gifted souls as much as we did.





Lawrence Cosentino/City Pulse

A wreath dresses up a storefront doorway on Washington Avenue in REO Town.

## Uncovered

I am kind, I think.  
I smile and say hello to strangers,  
give my sprayed-down-with-Clorox  
shopping cart to an older woman,  
who looks distressed.  
It is the only clean one left.  
Every time I enter a store,  
there are mines in the aisles  
waiting to go off if I step  
on the wrong checkered floor square,  
my heart filled with shrapnel.

The man behind me pulls cans of corn  
from the top shelf,  
coughs  
and does not cover his mouth.  
He doesn't wear a mask.

Sometimes with the face coverings,  
I don't even recognize a neighbor.  
We mumble in surprise —  
I am learning how to know  
someone only by their eyes.

I feel normal though  
when I walk outside,  
my cheeks brushed with wind.  
The catalpa is blooming  
and sweetly scents night air.  
I sit in the playground behind  
my silent church,  
its stained glass aglow with sunset.  
I straddle a stone dolphin,  
a memorial to a child who died  
in an accident long ago,  
and I just breathe  
and breathe,  
and breathe,  
uncovered.  
— **Rosalie Sanara Petrouske**

## I Pine

I know the craziness will pass,  
and that it's all just a moment in time  
and all I need do is bide my time inside.

Yet, I pine for the feel of soil under my feet,  
between my fingers and under my nails,  
and I wash my hands,  
not because I fear the microbial menace I cannot see  
until it is too late,  
because I do.

I long for the isolation of my little garden  
but not the separation from my friends.

In my garden, social distance doesn't matter  
unless it is to give a wide birth  
to a friendly bee  
who I envy the way it spends its time  
caressing the stigma and pistils of blossoms  
soon to be fruit.

I pine for a warm embrace  
as I video chat with my children  
and am one sad story away from a river of tears  
as I worry if we will be the next tale of grief.

My son, in a mask, does a doorway visit  
to drop off masks he has crafted for our use

He says,  
"Use them so others feel safe when you and mom need to shop".  
We are the Tuesday morning shoppers between seven and eight,  
the time allotted for the elderly to shop,  
a sign of the times.  
Wishing it would all go away,  
and once again I can pat my neighbor on the back  
or sit across from friends and chat.

— **Cruz Villarreal**



Skylar Ashley/City Pulse

Two pine trees adorned with shining string lights pierce the black sky on Moores River Drive.

## Untitled fragment I

Morning skids through your dream on corrugated tires, morning  
rain at first you don't recognize as rain because it sounds like padded  
feet if rain had feet would they wear slippers or Mary Janes or the mask  
your face makes watching your face warily on the Zoom screen  
or the mask you wear over the mask  
of your face stumbling

— **Lauren Russell**



# Smell Memory

Originally Published in Mycelium Volume 1 (2020)

Laying with you, remembering  
being a child inhaling pool water,  
trying to place a smell memory.  
You are afraid of bugs and rain  
and maybe me sometimes.  
I hear crows (which is another lie.)  
I dance, I scream, I go online for hours  
but where will I go, love, if you do die this time?  
You are a tin-foil-lined microwave, I know.  
But I don't want to be a crow perched  
on barely-exposed bones  
again, crying about how the sun feels so real  
on my black feathers. I want to raise chickens with you  
and love them. I want to breath underwater  
searching for memories of our mothers together.  
That aching lovely scent of water burning lungs.

— Jay Artemis Hull

# Prayer

*Love, how inelegantly  
we leave. How insistent we are to return in one form  
or another*

—Michael Prior

Each day, a whirr of white  
wings. I look up.  
Sleek neck, sleek  
body—perfect against the pale  
sky. A swan, heading some-  
where,  
heading sky-  
where, pond-where, homeward,  
the whirr of her wings  
the only sound in the silent grey.  
Each day, I look up:  
the best—the only—thing  
I can do.

—Laura Apol



Skyler Ashley/City Pulse

Stacks of Christmas presents form a jubilant light display in the front yard of an East Lansing home.



Lawrence Cosentino/City Pulse

The Accident Fund Insurance Co. of America, formerly the Ottawa Street Power Station, on Grand Avenue, sends beams of holiday cheer into the downtown gloom.

# In Memoriam: Christmas Greetings

Suspended in the space outside a snow-framed window,  
grief floats above the sandy snowscape to comfort me.  
On my couch trapped in the gravity of loss, I flip  
calendar pages that once again counted down  
another year without you.

Again, we will not share the lights of our Christmas tree  
nor sample cookies I bake for Christmas Day.  
I won't catch you stealing deviled eggs  
from the trays I plan to take to parties.  
And I know, even if that is all I'd want for Christmas,  
I cannot bring you back

So as you funnel down to that emptiness above the snow  
and evaporate into the stars, look my way as you go.  
Feel the pull of my love suspended in that inaccessible blankness  
where once we touched, where I still embrace  
what bridged us, and in the brightness of that light  
wish me "Merry Christmas" once again.

From *Reading Lessons*, Finishing Line Press, 2019

— Mary Fox





Abby Sumbler/City Pulse

A Lansing home’s elaborate Christmas decorations tell passersby to believe in hope.

This Family

I used to watch the families on tv  
Praying to god they could be me  
Why does their life looks so easy  
And every problem ends so cheesy  
Then I start to wonder like Stevie  
What would I get the fam  
If the money ain't a thang  
The holidays would bang  
So I'll keep making jams  
till I can make it change

We don't let the special moments go and jus slip through the clock  
Cause we know the presents  
Ain't the things hiding in the box  
I used to be sad  
Cause we didn't get a lot  
Until I learned  
That you gotta love what you got

We don't have your picture perfect  
Cookie Cutter  
No it's not your usual  
But this families beautiful  
We don't have your picture perfect  
Cookie Cutter  
No it's not your usual  
But this families beautiful

We would exchange gifts  
If our funds say would could  
But the best gift  
Was seeing everyone healthy and free  
good  
I would honestly take all these gifts back  
If I could have a few people back  
My baby niece starting to walk and she teething  
That helps. Me take solace in the season

We don't let the special moments go and jus slip through the clock  
Cause we know the presents  
Ain't the things hiding in the box  
I used to be sad  
Cause we didn't get a lot  
Until I learned  
That you gotta love what you got

We don't have your picture perfect  
Cookie Cutter  
No it's not your usual  
But this families beautiful  
We don't have your picture perfect  
Cookie Cutter  
No it's not your usual  
But this families beautiful

— James Gardin

RETREAT

Even the old ghosts have left me, wary  
of the virus or bored of long silence.  
At night I can't hear anything outside  
my own body. I've started sleeping  
with my hand on my heart, though  
I pretend it isn't mine. Twice  
in August I woke to the quiet of snow,  
but it was only bees in the anemone.  
For a while I forgot to vacuum.  
A month passed and still I couldn't grasp  
the origin and accumulation of dust.  
I didn't think it was time to clean,  
was accustomed to a different schedule:  
a chore in proximity to a visitor.  
Now I vacuum the usual fragments –  
lost skin cells, pastry crumbs, flour –  
but sometimes something else catches  
in the long tube of the vacuum  
and I pull out old words: *suitcase*,  
*hug*, *hello*, which I dust off  
and display on the fireplace mantle.  
What I remember saves me: a morning  
my son rubbed my mother's shoulders,  
the way people used to turn their knees  
in a theater to let me find my seat,  
how to say *I'd like to see the dessert menu*  
in English, the sound of my own voice  
saying it.

— Cindy Hunter Morgan



Kyle Kaminski/City Pulse

Candy canes and snowmen help this Lansing house twinkle bright red like Rudolph the Reindeer’s famous nose.





Skyler Ashley/City Pulse

Trees wrapped with shimmering lights illuminate the midnight air in East Lansing’s White Hills neighborhood.

## Each morning so far

Each morning I get in the car and find  
The center convex-prism rear-view mirror  
Turned up to day position for my spouse:  
That is, set to night vision for my height.  
I see a flattened world in tones of grey,  
But clear enough, I think. It’s good enough.

And yet each day I pull the mirror down.  
Sunlight pours in, forever a surprise.  
Each day, I think, the world hands me the choice  
Of Plato’s cave. Give thanks! each day, so far,  
I’ve turned away from shadows to the light.

— Cheryl Caesar

## Christmas Cactus

Last year a cousin gave me  
A cutting from my grandmother’s plant,  
A small green spindle in a plastic pot of dirt,  
handed to me at the yearly reunion.

I have returned to the Midwest,  
to be with family  
that Covid 19 is keeping me from seeing,  
as though I am still thousands of miles away,  
a voice on the phone.  
Next year, I say, next year.

My small green cutting  
is only now growing roots  
catching the sun  
of late afternoon.  
It came from that massive plant,  
so long ago, full of red blooms at the Christmas party,  
joining into the festivity of  
a hundred adults and children squeezed on to benches  
and long wooden tables filling my grandparent’s garage.  
I sat shoulder to shoulder,  
cousin to cousin to aunt to uncle,  
sharing pots of baked beans and sauerkraut,  
strong coffee and apple cider,  
as the magenta and blue winter sky  
spilled into the land.

— Maureen Hart

## A Blessing

We stand under a cathedral of sky, fashioning  
a blessing for one another, a blessing of clouds  
pierced by shafts of light. The light infuses  
our words and opens our hearts.

Now, we too, are light.

The shafts of light hold up the sky. The sky  
will not fall on our heads. The sky will remain  
the sky, will send us gifts of rain and snow,  
will feed the fields, will become flowers.

Breathe deeply. That is a blessing.  
Breathe out. That too is a blessing.  
Keep breathing and listen to the sound  
of your breath greeting the air.

We are the children of the Earth, and the Earth  
gives power to those of us who understand  
and respect her nature. Respect her nature.  
Use her gifts wisely.

— Ruelaine Stokes



# ARTS & CULTURE

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## Lansing restaurants work around indoor ban

By SKYLER ASHLEY

Faced with capacity limits and bans on indoor-dining altogether, Michigan's restaurants have taken quite the toll during the pandemic. Forced to innovate, many have rearranged their business model to focus on takeout and delivery.

To skirt limits on indoor dining, many restaurateurs are investing in heat lamps, igloos and other devices to keep their guests warm enough to dine outdoors in Michigan's cold climate. In a testament to the advancements of heating technology or Michigander's ability to brave the cold, it seems to be working.

The English Inn in Eaton Rapids adopted the concept early on. Customers are able to dine in what's essentially a miniature greenhouse. The English Inn began trying the concept out a couple months ago, but now temperatures are much more fearsome. With winter in full effect, owner Erik Nelson said customers maintain that the greenhouse huts, which have received some upgrades, are still up to snuff.

"As soon as temperatures dipped below 40 degrees, I realized I needed to do something more. I purchased additional 1,500 watt heaters for each unit," Nelson said. "I had to get creative with extension cords, but they're toasty now."

Nelson said the little greenhouses and their heaters were a worthy investment in combatting the lost revenue from coronavirus restrictions. Peanut Barrel owners Joe and Jennifer Bell have also purchased an array of heaters.

"We run a row of propane-fueled heaters down to the center of the patio so they will keep our customers warm," Joe Bell said. "The response has been really good, maybe not so much when there's snow, but we've had a lot of business on the weekends. People like it."

The Bells debuted the heat lamps in September, but they have since taken an additional step by passing out blankets, which are regularly sanitized, so customers can keep their legs comfy as well. Though the Bells believe it's not possible to provide total comfort, the heaters and blankets do more than enough to "take the edge off."

"Because they can't do indoor dining, people are willing to take the extra mile to have a cocktail or a burger outdoors," Jennifer Bell said. "We just wish we had more seats. Everyone in the business is trying to stay alive and afloat."

The People's Kitchen, which is temporarily closed due to an employee testing positive for COVID-19, has outfitted its outdoor patio for the winter with large heaters and plastic shielding. General manager Jessica Kirkpatrick also suggests bringing a lap blanket.



Courtesy

One of English Inn's heated booths.

"Everybody has been coming out and really enjoying it since we've opened it up," Kirkpatrick said. "We've quite a few full Saturday and Sundays where we had to turn people away and have them wait."

While the Michigan Restaurant and Lodging Association has released statements railing against the indoor dining ban, Nelson, Kirkpatrick and the Bells said it's just an unfortunate but necessary part of combatting the pandemic.

"I reluctantly support the shutdown. We as restaurateurs need to be able to lean into it and do everything we can

do to be creative and generate revenue," Nelson said.

"We have employees that will struggle to provide Christmas for their families, because business simply isn't there. Even with the heaters, it can be hard for people to eat outside," Kirkpatrick said. "But we understand that COVID is a real thing and we don't want people coming in and catching it."

"Like everybody else in the restaurant business, we look forward to when it ends," Joe Bell said.

The current ban on indoor dining is set to expire on Sunday (Dec. 20). Fortunately, for the many restaurants that have been hit especially hard by the coronavirus restrictions, there is some relief on the way.

Applications for grants worth up to \$15,000 each are now available, thanks to \$10 million in funding the Michigan Economic Development Corp. has available due to the state's Small Business Relief Initiative and the federal CARES Act. To receive a grant, potential recipients must meet several criteria, such as having fewer than 50 employees. Applications are submitted online at [MichiganBusiness.org/About-MEDC/COVID19/Relief](https://MichiganBusiness.org/About-MEDC/COVID19/Relief).

"I hope guests realize that independent restaurants really need their support right now," Nelson said.

## Michigan brewpub chain opens East Lansing location

By SKYLER ASHLEY

After suffering delays from construction and the pandemic, Jolly Pumpkin Café & Brewery has finally found some footing in East Lansing. It's another part of the Center City District project to come to fruition, along with Target and Barrio Tacos.

Jolly Pumpkin, which specializes in sour craft beers and gourmet pub food, is one of many brewing entities underneath the Michigan-based brewing conglomerate Northern United Brewing Co. It has locations all around Michigan, but Northern United Brewing's CEO, Tony Grant, has reason to be especially invested



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in East Lansing, after all, he played football for the Spartans.

Originally scheduled to open its doors in the fall of 2019, it was pushed back due to the construction of the Center City District development and then halted once again to mid-October due to the coronavirus pandemic. Jolly Pumpkin marketing manager Megan Worden said MSU

students and East Lansing townies have been welcoming after their long wait.

"We wanted to open a Jolly Pumpkin in East Lansing for quite some time. Grant always had his sights set on East Lansing, he's obviously a big MSU fan. We just needed the right location," Worden said. "We actually opened without our license. Luckily, that only lasted a week. That was an interesting start."

Despite it being a "crazy time" to open a restaurant, Worden said Jolly Pumpkin East Lansing had one of the most successful launches out of any of the brewpub's many Michigan

locations. "We were ecstatic," Worden said.

Right now, due to current coronavirus safety restrictions, Jolly Pumpkin is limited to delivery and carry-out. Despite the limitations, Jolly Pumpkin still offers its entire menu of beer and spirits. Specials include a date night package, which features two pizzas and a six-pack of Sparta beer from North Peak Brewing Co.

When Jolly Pumpkin reopens for indoor dining, Worden said customers should expect a fun, sports bar atmosphere geared toward the MSU game day crowd. "We will always feature the games," Worden said.



# Lansing musicians join for much-needed holiday positivity

By COLE TUNNINGLEY

When Tom Heideman strummed the chords to “Singing Peace (A Christmas Song)” for the first time, he didn’t know what he planned to do with it. Recording a new song during a pandemic seemed like an impossibility. But when he looked out upon a world filled with negativity and pain, Heideman decided that he couldn’t keep the song to himself. It needed to be shared with the world.

“It was just an idea I had kicking around on the guitar,” Heideman said. “I was wondering if I could even attempt to record the thing. We’re going through a lot of unprecedented stuff here.”

Heideman pointed out that we haven’t experienced a pandemic like this since the 1918 flu pandemic.

While he typically only performs with his wife, Heideman felt that “Singing Peace” would benefit from having a “big, bright sound.” To make his vision for the song come to fruition, he enlisted over a dozen other musicians from the Lansing area.

“The mere fact that more musicians are involved means that the song will sound bigger,” Heideman said. “Plus, I thought, ‘The more musicians I get, the more people will hear it.’ So, I started calling around to some musicians I

Listen to “Singing Peace (A Christmas Song)” by Tom Heideman & Friends on Apple Music, Spotify, Pandora, YouTube and Amazon.

knew.”

Tom Heideman & Friends — the name of this hastily assembled group — includes members from local bands Tell Yo Mama, Smooth Daddy and Mighty Medicine. Recording with such a large crew turned out to be difficult in the era of COVID-19. They had to practice social distancing in the studio and forgo full band rehearsals.

“The album was recorded at Troubadour Recording Studios [in Lansing]. Only a few people were allowed in the studio at a time,” Heideman said. “But we made it work.”

The band had to keep in touch — and exchange recordings — over email. This was the first time Heideman recorded a song without the opportunity to prac-



Courtesy

Tom Heideman, writer of “Singing Peace (A Christmas Song),” performing live.

tice the tune as a full band. He said that he’s more used to doing things the old-fashioned way.

“I used to just go into their living rooms and play the song on the guitar for them. Or record it on a tape to give to them. I know that’s old-school,” laughed Heideman. “But so much of this was done digitally. I sent everyone a demo that I recorded on my home laptop.”

The music video for “Singing Peace” — available on Heideman’s YouTube channel — gives you an inside look at their recording process. It mixes footage from studio sessions with self-shot vid-

eos of the musicians singing and playing their instruments at home in front of Christmas decorations.

Heideman & Friends won’t make a profit off of “Singing Peace.” Instead, all proceeds from purchases of the song are going to the Greater Lansing Food Bank.

“I just wanted to get something positive out there because 2020 has been such a terrible year for everyone. I wanted to do whatever I could do — in my own small way — to make the holidays more fun,” explained Heideman. “And if the food bank gets a little money out of it, even better.”



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# True cannabis reform requires more than federal MORE Act

Legislation would create uneven playing field for cannabis convicts

By KYLE KAMINSKI

Recent federal legislation to decriminalize marijuana and expunge nonviolent, weed-related convictions is being hailed as a nationwide victory for the cannabis normalization movement.

And while it may represent some big strides toward reform, it still leaves more to be desired.

The Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act, which passed the House this month by a vote of 228-164, aims to permanently erase marijuana from the list of federally controlled substances, formally and finally decriminalizing the plant across the entire country.

Entrepreneurs have labeled the legislation as a lucrative opportunity to expand interstate marijuana operations.

The bill carries provisions that would allow for the automatic expungement of certain pot-related criminal convictions. It would also authorize a 5% sales tax on marijuana that would, in turn, help fund grant programs for low-income communities of color — those most disproportionately affected by decades of criminalization within an overtly harmless (and lucrative) illicit market.

The bill, for now, appears doomed in the Republican-controlled Senate. Majority Leader (and decaying crypt keeper) Mitch McConnell has reportedly derided the legislation as a superficial distraction from COVID-19 relief. But even if the MORE Act somehow finds its way into law, it still leaves room for major reforms.

A clause in the legislation, as passed by the House, makes it illegal for those convicted of a cannabis-related felony to join the newly legalized industry. The justification: Those former criminals would be “not likely” to comply within a fully regulated market, according to the bill.

It's entirely mind boggling how legislation designed to right the wrongs of decades of unfair cannabis criminalization could actually punish those who helped to build the industry. Even more surprising? Most marijuana reform groups appear to have overlooked this issue.



**Lansterdam in Review:  
House Resolution  
3884 (2019)**

“A lot of national groups seem to be taking victory laps over this legislation either without addressing this issue or without recognizing the problem,” said Ryan Basore, founder of Redemption Cannabis Co. and former director of business development for the Michigan Cannabis Industry Association. “It may be an oversight, but that just needs to be removed.”

Basore spent time in federal prison on a marijuana conviction. The language in the bill could theoretically prevent him from staying involved in the federally licensed cannabis market.

Steven Hawkins, executive director at the Marijuana Policy Project, called it “unacceptable.”

“Not only does this requirement violate both the spirit and intent of this historic legislation, it is strongly at odds with many of the provisions contained in MORE Act itself, including the expungement of records and efforts to remove barriers from past convictions,” he explained.

The Marijuana Policy Project still supports the legislation but is asking for immediate changes.

“At this point, it just seems like a huge oversight,” Basore added. “We’re being told that it will be taken out — that is if it stands a chance in the Senate. There’s a lot of uncertainty.”

If it passes, the MORES Act would also hand states the power and incentives to enact their own specific reforms on the newly legalized industry. Fifteen states have already voted to legalize recreational marijuana. At least 36 states have authorized some form of medical marijuana.

A recent Gallup poll also shows that 68% of Americans support federal marijuana legalization.

*Kyle Kaminski is a City Pulse staff writer and cannabis enthusiast who has been smoking marijuana just about every day for the last decade. Most weeks, Kaminski samples some of the best cannabis products available in Greater Lansing, gets real high and writes about them. On occasion, he also shares his opinion on various issues that are facing the cannabis industry.*

## *Favorite Things* Marshall Kelly and the Rider-Waite tarot deck

*Marshall Kelly, who uses they/them pronouns, is a Lansing-based musician and artist. With their identical twin Ezra, they form a music group known as Nonbinary. Kelly is also well known for serving unique cocktails at The Avenue Café. Kelly's favorite thing is their personal deck of tarot cards.*

I bought this deck at Triple Goddess Bookstore on Michigan Avenue. I first got into Avenue by watching my friends do it. I was never skeptical of it. I was always believed it, and so I went and bought my own deck. I actually purchased this with my twin, Ezra; it's technically both of ours. The deck is the traditional Rider-Waite tarot deck — it's the one you typically see in movies.

When people are picking out a deck, they usually pick one that they think is pretty. My deck is the most basic tarot deck you can find, and I like the idea of it being traditional. It's obvious what it is. It's the same reason why I like traditional tattoos.

What makes this deck special to me, though, is that I believe it never lies to me.

It tells me the truth, even when I don't want it to. One time, I was on probation and I was waiting on the judge to tell me if I could move to California. I was pulling one card every day, so I could get a straightforward answer as to what would eventually happen with the court — if I was going to find out if I could go or not.

I woke up one day, after having this dream where I received a call from the court telling me I could go. Then I pulled the High Priest-



ess, which is a card that tells you to trust your psychic intuition. I called my mom, and I was like, “Listen, I know this is crazy, but I pulled this tarot card and I think

I'm going to get to move to California today.” My probation officer called me two hours later and told me I was free to move. It was wild.

Tarot decks are basically fortune-telling cards. You shuffle the deck and each card has a different meaning. For me,

it tells me how it is. Once I pull a card, I know I can't turn back. I know what the answer is for whatever it is I am concerned about, whether it's money, mental health or relationship issues. I use it as an anxiety reliever. I know what my luck will be; I know what my fortune will be.

*Interview edited and condensed by Skyler Ashley. If you have a suggestion for Favorite Things, please email Skyler@Lansingcitypulse.com*





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# Local creatives unite for 'The Social Gap Experiment'

By **BILL CASTANIER**

A common misconception is that writers work in seclusion, toiling away in an unheated garret, quietly turning out 5,000 words a day. That isn't really true. In fact, writers can be gregarious social beings and the pandemic shut the door on most of their face-to-face social interactions.

Local writer Melissa F. Kaelin concluded a different response was needed, and she decided to experiment with social media to connect with other writers and creatives while social distancing.

The result was the Social Gap Experiment, which started with a series of live interviews on Facebook with

authors.

It soon morphed into a project to create a literary and arts anthology by calling for submissions online. Kaelin served as the editor and publisher.

"Amazingly, we received 42 submissions, and my goal was to accept everyone's work," she said. "The goal was simple: How can we get poets and fiction writers published?"

The result is a 121-page anthology aptly named "The Social Gap Experiment," which features the work of published and unpublished writers accompanied by original art and photography. Local artist Sarah Andrews' cover art is quite spectacular.

The anthology is dedicated to Lansing writer Dwayne Sorter, who died unexpectedly this past year. A piece of his flash fiction, "Primal Man," is included in the anthology.

Kaelin said when she arrived in Lansing two years ago to work in media communications at Michigan State University, she was inspired by Sorter's readings at local events.

Although the request for submissions didn't require a theme, what emerged, according to Kaelin, were stories and poetry that focused on "loneliness and

Poetry  
Nonfiction  
Short Stories  
Hip Hop  
Comics  
Artwork  
Photography  
Humor  
Fantasy  
Satire  
Realism  
Pandemic  
Grief  
Hope  
Support



## SOCIAL GAP EXPERIMENT

A Creative Anthology

asked the writers and artists to explain why they were inspired to submit their writing. Artist Donald Tredinnick said, "I became interested in the project when I heard that proceeds would be going to charity." Tredinnick, who owns Frozen Hiker Photography in Savage, Minnesota, had his photograph "Wigwam Hotel" published in the anthology.

"Especially during this pandemic, donations across the board are down as many people are struggling due to lost jobs, reduced wages, and general uncertainty. This is a great way for the arts community to give back," he said.

The Social Gap Experiment anthology features many talented authors and artists who create poetry, fiction, non-fiction, art and photography. All proceeds from book sales will be donated to support those who have lost wages or faced other hardships in the global pandemic according to Kaelin. Additional donations may be made online at: [www.GoFundMe.com/social-gap-experiment](http://www.GoFundMe.com/social-gap-experiment)

Author Sarah Murphy Smith, a Lansing playwright who contributed the poem "Mama" to the anthology, said, "I believe we as the human family need each other and must find new ways to stay connected in this fragile world." Murphy Smith's poem speaks to the tragic death of George Floyd.

"I am excited to participate in this project because creativity and literacy are antidotes to hate, suffering, exclusion and social injustice," said Melissa Grunow, who writes fiction and nonfiction in East Peoria, Illinois. "I decided to submit a short story, 'Mona,' to this collection because it has an underlying theme of hope and confronts unexpected hardships and change."

Grunow's short story is a touching look at how a young woman and her friend Rachel approach the news of a surprise pregnancy.

Since moving to Michigan in 2018, Kaelin has become active in many writing groups and performance events including the Poetry Room, Fiction 440, the Artist's Umbrella, the Lansing Poetry Club and the REO Town Reading Series.

"There are many talented creators who perform their work on stage and at the mic. I have a great appreciation for the talent in Michigan's capital city and in mid-Michigan," she said. "This was a great pandemic project, and for me it was a challenge in personal growth."

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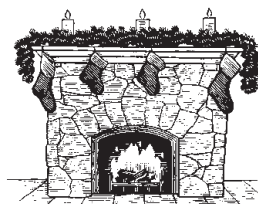
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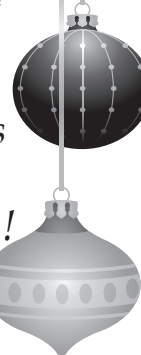


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### Jonesin' Crossword

By Matt Jones

**"Shell Game"--- maybe that's why it's green.**

by Matt Jones

**Across**

1 "Breaking Bad" sidekick

6 Written test format

11 Some mainframe computers

15 Follow, as an impulse

16 Pleas

18 QUESTION, PART 1

20 Cry bitterly

21 Blows away

22 \_\_\_ St. Soul (U.K. R&B/soul group)

23 Controversial ride-sharing app

25 Fall back, as a tide

26 ASPCA part

29 QUESTION, PART 2

34 "Forrest Gump" actor Gary

35 "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for \_\_\_" (1985 best-seller)

36 "Laugh-In" comedian Johnson

37 Like many indie films

38 "Buon giorno," in Brisbane

39 Go over the limit

40 Green Day, e.g.

41 "Sorry if \_\_\_ you down"

42 NBA team formerly from Minneapolis

43 QUESTION, PART 3

46 Charlemagne's realm, for short

47 Device program

48 Cranberry sources

49 Greek letter after zeta

50 "Battlefield Earth" author Hubbard

52 Director Van Sant

55 ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10		11	12	13	14
15						16					17				
18					19										
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55	56	57				58					59	60			
61											62				
63					64						65				

61 Closest to the ground, stature-wise

62 Otherworldly

63 Mgr.'s helper

64 Creator of Yertle the Turtle

65 Laundry cycle

Down

1 Movie score with a famous two-note motif

2 Bounce back

3 Aimless attempt

4 Imbiber

5 Grind to a halt

6 Milne's mopey donkey

7 Flaky precipitation

8 Comedians Gilliam and Goldsmith, for two

9 Rainbow shape

10 "While that might be true ..."

11 "\_\_\_ be here soon"

12 Took the bait

13 "I really don't care"

14 157.5 degrees from N

17 It's a likely story

19 "You \_\_\_ one"

23 Sleep aid brand

24 Like a shopping mall on Black Friday, ordinarily

25 Online selling site

26 Wall, for one

27 Playful aquatic animals

28 Dated term for college students

29 Site for reflection?

30 Prompt

31 Corvair investigator Ralph

32 "They went \_\_\_-way"

33 Actress Lauren of 2020's "The Wrong Missy"

34 Louis Armstrong's nickname

38 Unidentifiable cafeteria food

39 Did some karaoke

41 Repercussions

42 "Ghost Town" actress Tea

44 Irritate

45 Fastening bars shaped like letters

49 Louisiana, to Louis

50 In \_\_\_ of (replacing)

51 Monica Geller's brother

52 Jack-o'-lantern look

53 College team from Salt Lake City

54 "Auld Lang \_\_\_"

55 "Don't text and drive" ad, for short

56 Acuity measures that don't really matter

57 Questionable, in "Among Us," slangily

58 Hustle, quaintly

59 High-jump hurdle

60 Peyton's sibling

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Answers Page 28

### SUDOKU

2								
	6	9	7	2		4		
4		1	9		3	6		
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		4		7				
	1					3	8	
	4	8				5		2
	9					8	4	
				4	2		9	7

### Beginner

## TO PLAY

Fill in the grid so that every row, column, and outlined 3-by-3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 exactly once. No guessing is required. The solution is unique.

Answers on page 28

### Free Will Astrology

By Rob Brezсны

December 16-22, 2020

**ARIES (March 21–April 19):** Temporary gods are deities who come alive and become available for particular functions, and are not otherwise necessary or called upon. For instance, in ancient Greece, the god Myiagros showed up when humans made sacrifices to the goddess Athena. His task was to shoo away flies. I encourage you to invent or invoke such a spirit for the work you have ahead of you. And what's that work? 1. To translate your recent discoveries into practical plans. 2. To channel your new-found freedom into strategies that will ensure freedom will last. 3. To infuse the details of daily life with the big visions you've harvested recently. What will you name your temporary god?

**TAURUS (April 20–May 20):** Author Virginia Woolf said that we don't wholly experience the unique feelings that arise in any particular moment. They take a while to completely settle in, unfold, and expand. From her perspective, then, we rarely "have complete emotions about the present, only about the past." With that as your starting point, Taurus, I invite you to take a journey through the last 11 months and thoroughly evolve all the emotions that weren't entirely ripe when they originally appeared. Now is an excellent time to deepen your experience of what has already happened; to fully bloom the seeds that have been planted.

**GEMINI (May 21–June 20):** "Wonder is a bulky emotion," writes author Diane Ackerman. "When you let it fill your heart and mind, there isn't room for anxiety, distress, or anything else." I'd love for you to use her observation as a prescription in 2021, Gemini. According to my understanding of the coming year's astrological portents, you will have more natural access to wonder and amazement and awe than you've had in a long time. And it would make me happy to see you rouse those primal emotions with vigor—so much so that you drive away at least some of the flabby emotions like anxiety, which are often more neurotic than real.

**CANCER (June 21–July 22):** I'll use the words of Cancerian painter Frida Kahlo to tell you the kind of intimate ally you deserve. If for some inexplicable reason you have not enjoyed a relationship like this before now, I urge you to make 2021 the year that you finally do. And if you HAVE indeed been lucky in this regard, I bet you'll be even luckier in 2021. Here's Frida: "You deserve a lover who wants you disheveled . . . who makes you feel safe . . . who wants to dance with you . . . who never gets tired of studying your expressions . . . who listens when you sing, who supports you when you feel shame and respects your freedom . . . who takes away the lies and brings you hope."

**LEO (July 23–Aug. 22):** In 2019, singer Ariana Grande got Japanese characters tattooed on her palm. She believed them to be a translation of the English phrase "7 Rings," which was the title of a song she had released. But knowledgeable observers later informed her that the tattoo's real meaning was "small charcoal grill." She arranged to have alterations made, but the new version was worse: "Japanese barbecue grill finger." I offer you this story for two reasons, Leo. First, I applaud the creativity and innovative spirit that have been flowing through you. Second, I want to make sure that you keep them on the right track—that they continue to express what you want them to express. With proper planning and discernment, they will.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23–Sept. 22):** While sleeping, most of us have over a thousand dreams every year. Many are hard to remember and not worth remembering. But a beloved few can be life-changers. They have the potential to trigger epiphanies that transform our destinies for the better. In my astrological opinion, you are now in a phase when such dreams are more likely than usual. That's why I invite you to keep a recorder or a pen and notebook by your bed so as to capture them. For inspiration, read this testimony from Jasper Johns, whom some call America's

"foremost living artist": "One night I dreamed that I painted a large American flag, and the next morning I got up and I went out and bought the materials to begin it." Painting flags ultimately became one of Johns' specialties.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23–Oct. 22):** I composed a prayer that's in alignment with your current astrological omens. If it feels right, say it daily for the next ten days. Here it is: "Dear Higher Self, Guardian Angel, and Future Me: Please show me how to find or create the key to the part of my own heart that's locked up. Reveal the secret to dissolving any inhibitions that interfere with my ability to feel all I need to feel. Make it possible for me to get brilliant insights into truths that will enable me to lift my intimate alliances to the next level."

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23–Nov. 21):** Author Herman Hesse observed, "Whoever wants music instead of noise, joy instead of pleasure, soul instead of gold, creative work instead of business, passion instead of foolery, finds no home in this trivial world." I hope you will prove him wrong in 2021, Scorpio. According to my reading of astrological omens, the rhythms of life will be in alignment with yours if you do indeed make bold attempts to favor music over noise, joy over pleasure, soul over gold, creative work over business, passion over foolery. Moreover, I think this will be your perfect formula for success—a strategy that will guarantee you'll feel at home in the world more than ever before.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22–Dec. 21):** According to researcher Nick Watts and his documentary film "The Human Footprint", the average person speaks more than 13 million words in a lifetime, or about 4,300 per day. But I suspect and hope that your output will increase in 2021. I think you'll have more to say than usual—more truths to articulate, more observations to express, more experiences to describe. So please raise your daily quota of self-expression to account for your expanded capacity to share your intelligence with the world.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22–Jan. 19):** "Our thinking should have a vigorous fragrance, like a wheat field on a summer's night," wrote philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. I encourage you to adopt that joyful mandate as your own. It's a perfect time to throw out stale opinions and moldy ideas as you make room for an aromatic array of fresh, spicy notions. To add to your bliss, get rid of musty old feelings and decaying dreams and stinky judgments. That brave cleansing will make room for the arrival of crisp insights that smell really good.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20–Feb. 18):** Have you heard the term "catastrophize"? It refers to when people experience a small setback or minor problem but interpret it as being a major misfortune. It's very important that you not engage in catastrophizing during the coming weeks. I urge you to prevent your imagination from jumping to awful conclusions that aren't warranted. Use deep breathing and logical thinking to coax yourself into responding calmly. Bonus tip: In my view, the small "setback" you experience could lead to an unexpected opportunity—especially if you resist the temptation to catastrophize.

**PISCES (Feb. 19–March 20):** My Buddhist friend Marcia says the ultimate goal of her meditation practice is to know that the material world is an illusion and that there is no such thing "I" or "you," no past or future. There is only the quality-less ground of being. My Sufi friend Roanne, on the other hand, is a devotee of the poet Rumi. The ultimate goal of her meditation practice is to be in intimate contact, in tender loving communion, with the Divine Friend, the personal face of the Cosmic Intelligence. Given your astrological omens, Pisces, I'd say you're in a prime position to experience the raw truth of both Marcia's and Roanne's ideals. The coming days could bring you amazing spiritual breakthroughs!

Go to [RealAstrology.com](#) to check out Rob Brezсны's EXPANDED WEEKLY AUDIO HOROSCOPES and DAILY TEXT MESSAGE HOROSCOPES. The audio horoscopes are also available by phone at 1-877-873-4888 or 1-900-950-7700.

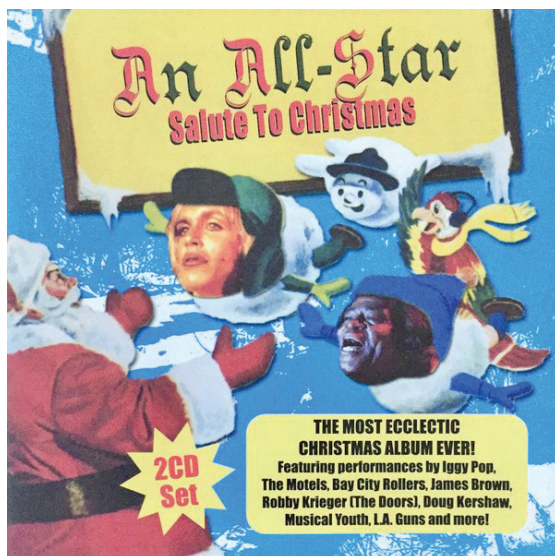


# TURN IT DOWN!

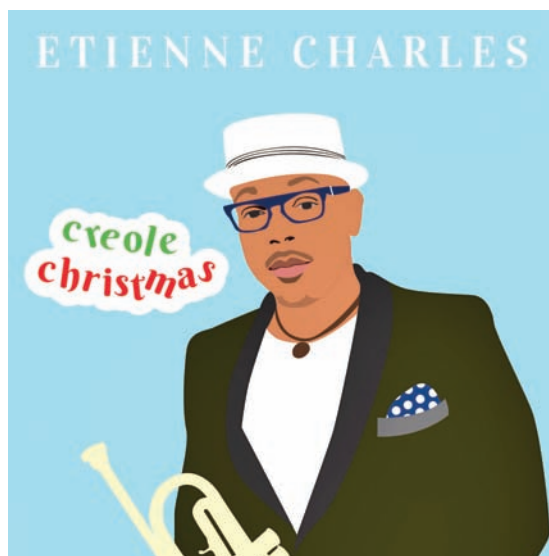
Loud dispatches from Lansing's music scene

BY RICH TUPICA

## MICHIGAN-MADE CHRISTMAS MIX VOL. 2



"An All Star Salute to Christmas" (2009).



Etienne Charles' "Creole Christmas" LP (2015).



"A Christmas Eve Get-Together With Goober & The Peas" EP (1992).

## Lansing-based musicians and music buffs suggest more top-notch, locally-sourced holiday tracks

### Ariel Rogers (Journalist, musician)

#### SONG: Iggy Pop "White Christmas"

Nothing gets me more in the mood for the holiday season than Iggy Pop's cover of "White Christmas" on 2009's "An All Star Salute to Christmas" compilation. His gravelly crooning paired with the slow, dissonant piano and industrial sounding percussion gives the Irving Berlin classic a more somber tone, which I enjoy as a Scrooge. My favorite part is Pop's half-hearted "Ho Ho Ho" at the beginning.

Pop released a groovy, psychedelic version of the song in 2013 on Cleopatra Records' "Psych-Out Christmas" compilation. He also recorded a rendition of "The Little Drummer Boy" with Michael Legrand back in 2011.

Pop, aka "The Godfather of Punk," is best known for his wild self-destructive onstage antics—like cutting himself with glass and smearing himself and the crowd with peanut butter, which makes his affinity for Christmas covers even more amusing. I can't help but wonder if he wears festive holiday sweaters.

### Joel Kuiper (Drummer, Scary Women, The Stick Arounds)

#### SONG: trash180 "Carol of the Bells"

Lansing has such a rich musical history. To the casual observer, the formerly named Biddle City may appear to be just another sleepy midwestern rustbelt relic, but when one peels back the layers, there are many tales to tell. Over the past two decades, many of those stories have involved trash180, aka Jason Lantrip.

Jason grew up in the area, playing in a number of bands including Six With Violet before he helped found one of the seminal space rock bands, Calliope. In the 2000s, Jason also ran a basement studio in his house, located directly behind the Speedway on the corner of Michigan and Clemens. It was torn down a decade or so ago — its name: trash180. Oodles of local bands took advantage of this great space and its talented producer/engineer during its heyday.

In 2004, the hit TV show "Veronica Mars," starring Michigan native Kristen Bell, put out a call for music for a Christmas-themed episode. Under the trash180 moniker, Jason submitted his amazing take on the haunting holiday classic "Carol of the Bells." Lantrip said he wanted to make the song a bit "spookier," and his adventurous version achieves just that. However, in a bittersweet (but cool) outcome, the great Ann Arbor band Starling Electric, friends of Jason's, had their song chosen for the hit show.

### Jordyn Davis (Bassist, composer, singer-songwriter)

#### SONG: Etienne Charles "This Christmas" (ft. Mykal Kilgore)

(LINK <https://etienncharles.bandcamp.com/album/creole-christmas>)

One of my favorite songs to revisit during the holiday season is the timeless classic "This Christmas," originally written and performed by Donny Hathaway. The particular arrangement of this song that has a special place in my heart

was recorded in 2015 by Michigan State University Jazz Studies faculty member Etienne Charles on his jazzy holiday record "Creole Christmas." A few years back, I had the opportunity to perform it in East Lansing with him as a member of MSU Jazz Orchestra II. While this isn't technically a "Michigan song," the arrangement and professor Charles' record really helped me find the joy and beauty in both performing and recording holiday music.

### Steve Butts (Local music buff)

#### SONG: "A Christmas Eve Get-Together With Goober & The Peas" EP

Goober & The Peas are now likely most remembered for being a band that featured Jack "Doc Gillis" White as a member before he was a world-famous rock star. That's a shame, because Goober's raucous cowpunk and humorous take on the most morbid and gothic overtones of country music were always very entertaining. The Detroit band's 1992 three-song Christmas EP (now a rarity) presents brilliant holiday tunes, with tongue planted firmly in cheek.

First, there is a cover of The Royal Guardsmen's 1967 "Snoopy's Christmas," a blatant cash-in of an earlier Guardsmen "Snoopy" hit. That's the thing about good Christmas music — most of it is a blatant and transparent cash grab, appealing to our most treacly seasonal sentiments. Goober hit the money shot by convincing Tigers radio announcer Ernie Harwell to contribute the voice of "The Red Baron"

on this holiday classic.

Next, is the twisted "My Love for Her," a dark song of lost holiday love that reveals a morbid and unhealthy fixation on what once was but will likely never happen again. The EP closes with "Tell the Lord What Santa Has Done," a metaphysical song confronting the sacred and secular aspects of the meaning of Christmas. It lampoons, yet also seems strangely earnest about, the "War on Christmas" and our ever-changing cultural values.

### Steve Butts

#### SONG: Detroit Junior "Christmas Day"

We often reach a relatively stress-free moment in time, which offers an overwhelming climactic joy as a result. That's what I thought about when I heard Detroit Junior's "Christmas Day."

Junior has finally reached a point where all of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season is over. Junior, a Detroit-to-Chicago bluesman, best known for playing behind top blues stars, offers a loose take here on the urbane soul of Ray Charles, but with a bit more Mississippi grit. While holiday music is often wistful and full of nostalgic longing, Junior's 1961 track playfully suggests we surrender to the moment — as tomorrow is never guaranteed.





# OUT ON THE TOWN

Events must be entered through the calendar at [lansingcitypulse.com](http://lansingcitypulse.com). Deadline is 5 p.m. Wednesdays for the following week's issue. Charges may apply for paid events to appear in print. If you need assistance, please call Suzi at (517) 999-6704.

## Wednesday, December 16

**3-D Workshop: Winter Clay Luminaries** - Light up the darkest time of the year by designing a hand-built luminary. 7-10 p.m. via zoom. Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum. Register at [broadmuseum.msu.edu](http://broadmuseum.msu.edu).

**Special Collections Look Club:** Our theme this week is Exploration!. 2-2:45 p.m. MSU Libraries, East Lansing. [bookings.lib.msu.edu](http://bookings.lib.msu.edu).

**Wheel of the Year:** Yule - What is the meaning and symbolism of Yule? Virtual. 6:30-7:30 p.m. Weavers of the Web, ATC, 517-657-5800. [weaversoftheweb.org](http://weaversoftheweb.org).

## Thursday, December 17

**Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual)** - 6-7 p.m. [facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing](http://facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing)  
**Studio (in)Process at Home** - 9 p.m. 565 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing. 517-884-4800. [broadmuseum.msu.edu](http://broadmuseum.msu.edu).

## Friday, December 18

**Flash Sale Fridays** - Michigan Audubon is featuring discounted items in our online store. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. [michiganaudubon.org](http://michiganaudubon.org).  
**National Diabetes Prevention Program** - preventing type 2 diabetes. [canr.msu.edu](http://canr.msu.edu)  
**Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual)** - 7:30-8:30 p.m. [facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing](http://facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing)

**Virtual Preschool Family Storytime** - 11 a.m. Grand Ledge Area District Library. Go to [gladl.org](http://gladl.org)

## Saturday, December 19

**Amazing Paleontology** - 1 p.m. Impression 5 Science Center, 200 Museum Dr, Lansing. 517-485-8116. [impression5.org](http://impression5.org).

**Drive-Through Mobile Food Distribution** - of free, fresh and non-perishable food items to Lansing residents. 9-11 a.m. Lansing Catholic Central, 501 Marshall St. [lansingmi.gov](http://lansingmi.gov).

**Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual)** - 10:30-11:30 [facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing](http://facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing)

**Yule with Weavers of the Web** - 2-4 p.m. at WonchPark, 4555 Okemos Rd., Okemos. go to [weaversoftheweb.org](http://weaversoftheweb.org) for details.

## Monday, December 21

**Burcham Hills Festival of Lights** - Drive-thru features 13,500 lights, live music, free hot chocolate and a Santa experience! Reserve your spot at 517-827-1072. 2700 Burcham Hills Dr., East Lansing enter on Park Lake Rd. [burchamhills.com](http://burchamhills.com)

**Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual)** - 6-7 p.m. [facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing](http://facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing)

**Sunsational Science** - 9 a.m. Impression 5 Science Center, 200 Museum Dr, Lansing. 517-485-8116. [impression5.org](http://impression5.org).

## CROSSWORD SOLUTION

From Pg. 26

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**Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual)** - 6-7 p.m. [facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing](http://facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing)

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From Pg. 26

2	3	5	4	8	6	7	1	9
8	6	9	7	2	1	4	5	3
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7	4	8	6	1	9	5	3	2
1	9	2	5	3	7	8	4	6
3	5	6	8	4	2	1	9	7

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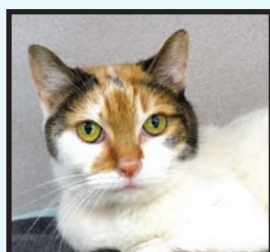
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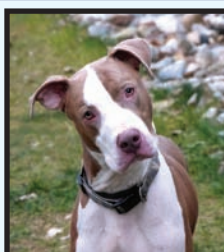
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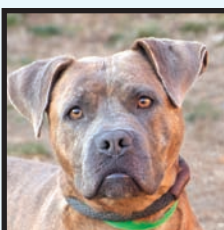
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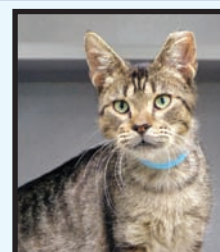
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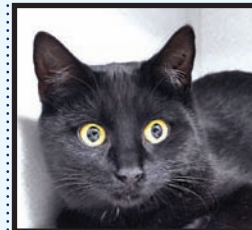
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Rodica's cats**



# FOOD & DRINK

## DINING OUT IN GREATER LANSING

### Kamut Pasta

By **ARI LeVAUX**

A group of newly acquainted food writers wandered up the cobbled roads of a Roman hill, presumably toward a Michelin-starred restaurant, in April of 2016. Our loose parade extended half a block, whatever that means in Rome. Atop the hill was an architecture firm, in the penthouse of which awaited an 8-course dinner. Our fearless leader, absorbed in conversation, kept a good clip, and the folks at the back were getting steadily left behind. I paused for a moment in the middle, by a chalkboard in front of a little bistro. It read, “Kamut Pasta.”

We made it to the metal and glass building, to my mild surprise, and took an elevator to the top. I sat at the end of a long table with Maureen Fant, an American food writer, and her Roman husband.

I mentioned having seen a sign for Kamut pasta. Fant winced, as if I’d said “cockroach” pasta. “There’s no such thing,” she stated. “I don’t doubt that you can make noodles out of that grain, but it won’t be pasta.”

“Well, I’m from Montana,” I tried to drawl. “We grow a lot of Kamut there. Most of it gets sold to Italy.”

“Montana?” perked up her husband, who wore jeans.

Fant, who had recently co-authored the award winning, “Sauces & Shapes: Cooking Pasta the Italian Way,” was less impressed.

“If it’s pasta, it’s made with grano duro,” she finished. Grano duro is Italian for durum wheat.

Fant segued into a general discussion on what distinguishes great pasta, including the important point that it be dried slowly, rather than kiln dried. If it’s good pasta it will say so on the package, she asserted.

The meal continued, every course arriving with its own glass of wine, each of which brought a new crescendo of conversation, as we ogled the menu and told the food writer equivalent of fish stories. I was showing elk photos on my phone to Fant’s husband, who ogled the mountains beneath their feet as much as the animals themselves, while I ate more than my share of spare rib gnocchi.

As I washed down the last succulent



piece with a gulp of Chianti, I reiterated that Kamut pasta is an actual thing, finishing my story about the signboard outside the little bistro. “But we wouldn’t be eating in any of those places,” Fant said.

In one of the lulls between courses, I got my phone back and pulled up a story about Montana farmer Bob Quinn, whose father was given a pint jar of large-grained wheat by an airman friend named “Sparky” Sparks, stationed at Ft. Benton, who had acquired the grain at a bazaar in Egypt.

It was khorosan wheat, a primitive form of grano duro. The elder and younger Quinns first grew it for fun, but quickly realized it was special. Khorosan wheat has high protein content, is delicious, and didn’t seem to bother people with wheat-related food sensitivities. They named it Kamut, after the ancient Egyptian word for wheat, and began growing it commercially. They also licensed the name: free to anyone who grows true khorosan wheat and adheres to organic farming practices.

Kamut and durum wheat may be the same species, but khorosan is an older subspecies, and perhaps a direct ancestor of grano duro. Khorosan wheat grains are much larger, which is fun. And being grano duro, it makes great pasta. Before long, Quinn was selling most of his Kamut to Italy.

By the time I was up to speed, we were drinking dessert wine and using long forks to spin cookies around a vat of cotton candy fondue, at which point debates on topics like wheat genetics or the true meaning of pasta were off the table. My secret plan to stop at the little bistro with the Kamut pasta for some quick take-out en-route back to the hotel was foiled when our fearless leader took a wrong turn. Fant and Roman husband, alas, were long gone — not staying at the hotel, they had



driven to the restaurant in their car. We regrouped at a bar and eventually found our way home. But when in Rome, alas, I never did get to sample that Roman Kamut.

Upon my return to Montana, I began testing what I’d learned, and what I thought I knew, about pasta. I became an avid reader of labels. And sure enough, some brands advertised the meritoriously slow rate at which their pasta dries. Over a period of months I conducted trials, and the slowly dried noodles I tried were consistently superior to the ones that made no such claim. Air-dried pasta is not merely re-hydrated and heated when cooked, but resurrected into living, supple pasta flesh.

Meanwhile, I’d found a box of Eden brand Kamut fusilli, and eagerly brought it home. Alas, it was a caricature of Fant’s doomsday prediction. The grainy noodles were impossible to cook al dente. They went from completely crunchy to starchy and soggy in an instant. Not pasta, in other words.

I consulted the label. Not only were they dried in cold air, but were made with whole grain Kamut, not white semolina. Even I know you don’t do that.

Happily, pasta made from Kamut semolina does exist. Monograno Felicetti, which I found at igourmet.com, bills its pasta as “slow-dried in the fresh air of the high Dolomite Mountains.” Moreover, it contains “... unmistakable hints of pine and macadamia nuts with subtle nuances of edible flowers.”

The Kamut pasta held its own against the best slow-dried noodles that I’d brought home from Rome, or found during my research since then. It’s very forgiving pasta, and perfectly chewy when cooked al dente. I’m not sure I tasted any macadamia nuts, but the flavor was so rich and satisfying that it needed little more than some minced garlic, tossed into the pasta with olive oil while the noodles were piping hot. With cheese and red sauce, and some ground elk, perhaps, it’s worth a galaxy of Michelin stars. That kind of simple recipe made with quality pasta, paired with a chalice of aged vindication, never

does get old.

*Flash in the Pan* is food writer Ari LeVaux’s weekly recipe column. It runs in about 100 newspapers nationwide, nourishing food sections large and small with complete protein for the belly brain.

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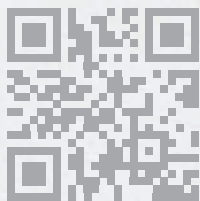
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