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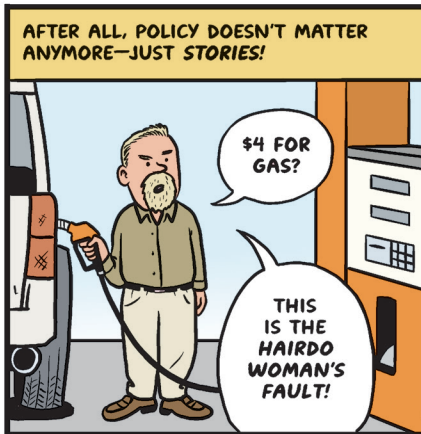
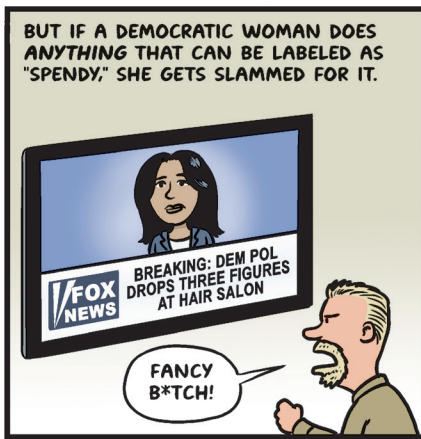
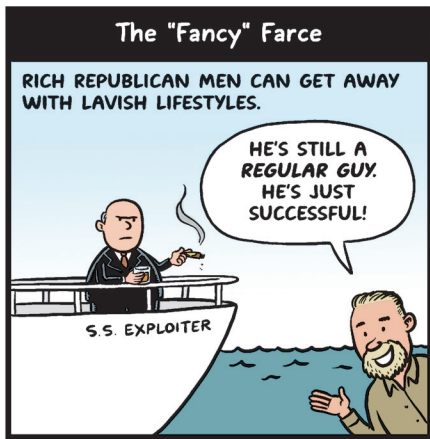
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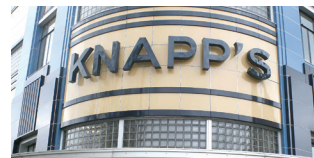
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**Cover
Art**

Illustration by Rachel Harper

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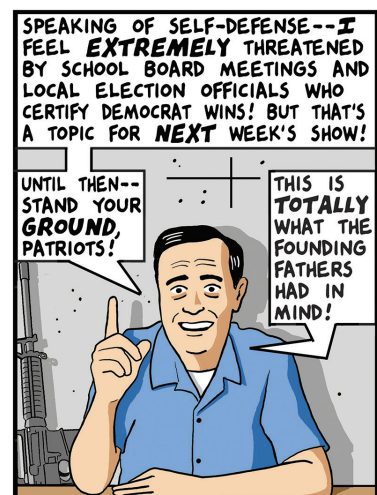
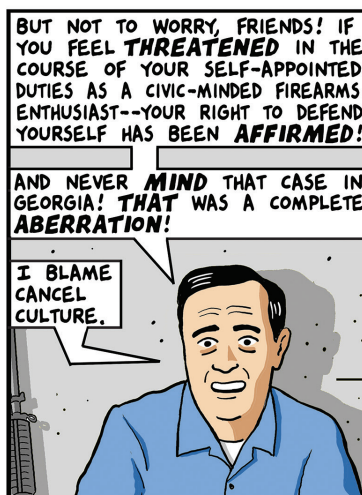
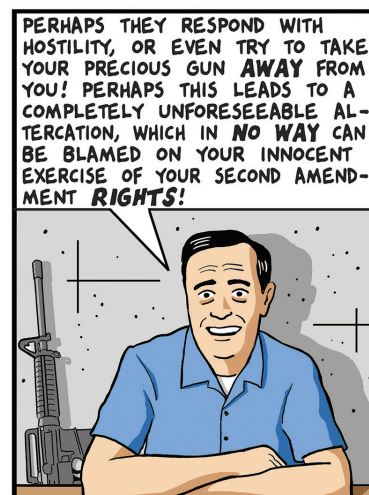
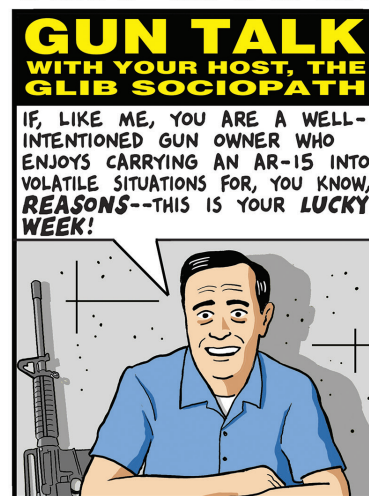
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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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PULSE

NEWS & OPINION

Four nonprofit groups apply for gun violence prevention cash

Advance Peace program on track to launch in Lansing in February

Four local nonprofit organizations think they have what it takes to help curb record-setting levels of gun violence and homicides tracked over the last two years in Lansing. And Ingham County plans to give one of them more than \$250,000 early next year to hit the streets and get to work.

A request for proposals reissued by the county in mid-October sought to recruit one local community-based nonprofit organization that can work directly on the frontlines to help interrupt a retaliatory cycle of gun violence in the Capital City through a program called Advance Peace.

Applications were due back to the county last month. Four groups applied: The Village Lansing, People Ready Activating Youth or PRAY, Eastside Community Action Center and Peckham Inc.

The Advance Peace program was introduced to the City Council late last year by its founder, Eastern High School graduate DeVone Boggan, as a way to work directly with at-risk teenagers and interrupt cyclical gun violence in Lansing. At the end of last year, the city's homicide rates had climbed to their highest level in decades — with at least 21 reported in 2020. And the violence has only gotten worse this year with 23 homicides and 71 shootings so far in 2021.

The nonprofit picked for the job will hire up to six people and recruit a 25-person cohort of the city's most potentially lethal residents into an 18-month mentorship program by early next year. The model also employs former felons known as “neighborhood change agents” who build bonds with suspected troublemakers and encourage them to participate in the program — which includes travel and educational opportunities, counseling and monthly stipends of up to \$1,000.

County officials plan to conduct private interviews with each organization next week and send a recommenda-



Boggan

tion to the Board of Commissioners for a final selection by late January. From there, county officials expect to fund the program and have it running before the end of February — a four-month delay from initial plans that had called for the program to launch in mid-October.

The latest plan now calls for awarding up to \$279,500 to one of the four groups that applied, with an opportunity to renew the agreement for two more years. The cash is part of a regional pool of about \$535,000 in gun violence prevention funds from both the county and the city of Lansing, including \$240,000 from the city and \$160,000 from the county in this year's budget.

Deputy County Controller Teri Morton said each organization will be scored next week based on their experience with gun violence prevention, as well as whether they appeared to adequately understand the Advance Peace model with a “tangible implementation plan” for the program.

But despite Advance Peace's heavy focus on “community-driven” strategies, next week's interviews will be closed off to the public — and presumably to county commissioners too. Morton didn't respond to questions about why those vendor interviews were made private.

— KYLE KAMINSKI

Which organizations applied?



The Village Lansing

Bid: \$279,500 — including \$225,000 for six employees

The Village Lansing was one of two nonprofit groups that put in a bid during the county's first round of applications. It was formed in 2019 by Erica Lynn and her husband, Michael Lynn Jr., and works to reduce gun violence among middle and high school students (and ages 18-25) by “welcoming them to a safe environment and supporting their needs,” according to its application.

The nonprofit reportedly held “fellowship” events across Lansing in the wake of a deadly 2019 shooting, provided one-on-one mentorship programs at Everett High School and employed “real-time conflict resolution” that led to a decrease in tardiness, truancy and tensions between students, according to its application. Last August, The Village also opened a “resource center” in the Logan Square Shopping Plaza, which hosted a widely attended vaccine clinic this year and has also served as a welcoming space for families impacted by gun violence to congregate.

The Village also claims to be the only organization in Lansing that is “actively standing in the gap with those affected by gun violence” by providing direct mentorship opportunities and emotional and educational empowerment by building connections to community resources.

Lynn Jr. said he's “uniquely equipped” to reach at-risk teenagers that law enforcement cannot, citing numerous “ceasefire agreements” that he helped coordinate between would-be criminals. According to its application, the group has already been work-

ing closely with 10 to 15 people ages of 17-25 — many of them “influential” to gun violence — to de-escalate neighborhood tensions.

County officials had initially planned to award the contract to the Village in September, but the agreement was abruptly pulled from the Commission's agenda without public explanation.

Lynn Jr. is a former firefighter who is suing the city of Lansing and Mayor Andy Schor for alleged racial discrimination. He's a former co-leader of the local Black Lives Matter chapter and has been one of the mayor's most vocal critics on his talk show, “Merica 20 to Life.” Lynn Jr. has also accused Schor of meddling behind the scenes in September to dissuade county officials from approving the initial contract for the Village — a claim that Schor has repeatedly denied.



People Ready Activating Youth (P.R.A.Y.)

Bid: \$279,500 — including \$232,000 for nine employees

People Ready Activating Youth bills itself as a “united group of men and women, working to empower and activate the next generation into their God given identity, talents and futures.” In addition to its acronym “P.R.A.Y.,” the word “God” also appears several times in its application.

The group — founded and managed by lifetime Lansing resident Terrance Cooper — formed in 2015 and gained its 501(c)3 nonprofit status late last year. It works closely with other local organizations like Turning Point of Lansing, The Work Prep and Mt. Hope Church Missions to “provide mentor-

Peace

from page 5

ship, resources and a strong understanding of God's love to every child regardless of their social classification, race, gender or family history," its application states.

Cooper touted past experiences working at Everett High School to mediate conflicts between students, as well as organizing athletic programs and a camp at the Gier Community Center. He said P.R.A.Y. also raised \$2,500 for families that were displaced in a recent apartment fire and brought together more than 400 Greater Lansing kids last summer for a basketball camp.

The group's agenda for Advance Peace included recruiting a passionate team of community members who can connect with high-risk teenagers to build an "ecosystem of love, trust and support" under a unified goal of "peace and safety." Among its key plans: Build a presence in local schools to monitor and prevent gun violence; provide therapy and life coaching to teenagers and host public "Lansing Unity Events" to help bring the community together.

P.R.A.Y. also listed plans to use the county funding to rent out a downtown office space for a "control center." It would also feature a café stocked with snacks and drinks, as well as a "fellowship" area for kids to congregate and discuss community matters.

Schor and Everett High School Principal Benjamin Botwinski wrote letters of support for P.R.A.Y.



*Eastside Community Action Center
(470)*

*Bid: \$265,000 — including \$210,000
for six employees*

The Eastside Community Action Center — a Lansing-based nonprofit formed in 2007 and headquartered on Dakin Street — was the only application to include a bid that was lower than the county's maximum allowance; its plan would lead to a savings of \$14,500 in the first year.

Led by licensed social worker Stan Parker, ECAC bills itself as "a hub for charitable and educational activities" designed to help "answer the needs of vulnerable children and adults." Its website describes its purpose as providing "social, educational and spiritual assistance to children and adults, with particular attention given to those who are vulnerable or at-risk."

Its application also noted that more than 28,000 families, children and older adults have been assisted by the organization to date, including through community-based programs to help former inmates adjust to life outside of prison, support for survivors of domestic violence, as well as counseling for those dealing with divorce and substance abuse. It also operates "Teen Life," a project complete with "rap sessions" that provides counseling as an "alternative to street life."

Among its Advance Peace plans: work with gang members, leaders of several organizations that are "involved with conflicts that lead to gun violence," school staff and law enforcement to target a specific cohort of "active shooters" with daily contacts that involve study regimens, relationships with mentors, mental health support, career development and travel opportunities.

ECAC also wants to incorporate a physical fitness regime for program participants that includes boxing and basketball, as well as access to a 24/7 hotline for "damaged males aged 12-16."

The application also included specific plans to "work closely" with the Lansing Police Department to de-escalate violence. Edward Forrest, a former Lansing Police captain and local minister, serves on ECAC's board alongside retired educators and other Lansing residents.



Peckham Inc.

*Bid: \$279,500 — including \$225,000
for six employees*

Peckham is a "vocational rehabilitation organization" that provides job training opportunities for people with significant disabilities and other barriers to employment — providing those with physical, cognitive, behavioral

and socio-economic challenges a platform to learn new skills, participate in the workforce and "enjoy the rewards of their success," according to its website.

The company formed in 1976 and since 1987 has used revenue from government contracts and manufacturing operations to support a "human services-focused" business model that includes "comprehensive, trauma-informed and evidence-based services" across the state of Michigan.

Among its programs: "The Youth Career Academy," an alternative education program for at-risk and court-involved teenagers who have been unsuccessful in traditional settings; "Right Turn," a career development program for young adults in communities with high poverty and crime rates; and "ROOTS," an array of services that prepare former inmates for employment.

Peckham wants to expand the "person-centered" model within its existing Prevention and Reentry Services Department to launch Advance Peace next year, largely by tracking territorial disputes and gang violence and then

building more relationships (and having daily check-ins) with those who are at risk of engaging in gun violence in Lansing — disrupting violence before it starts by "changing mindsets and behaviors" and through "data collection and monitoring."

Letters of support attached to Peckham's application to the county were signed by 30th Circuit Court Deputy Administrator Scott Leroy, 7th Circuit Court Administrator Rhona Ihm, Lansing Police Captain Robert Backus and Ingham County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Darin Southworth.

Peckham officials noted in their application that the company is currently being sued for two "baseless" allegations of having violated the Fair Labor Standard Act. Details were not listed. The application also estimates total project costs of \$318,000 — above the county cap of \$279,500, meaning the company is prepared to absorb a \$38,500 loss to launch the program.

EXHIBIT A

NOTICE OF INTENT TO ISSUE WATER SYSTEM REVENUE BONDS TO THE ELECTORS RESIDING WITHIN THE EAST LANSING-MERIDIAN WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Board of Trustees of the East Lansing-Meridian Water and Sewer Authority (the "Authority") intends to issue bonds in an amount of not to exceed \$12,900,000 (the "Bonds"). The Bonds may be issued in one or more series.

The bonds shall be issued for the purpose of defraying the cost to design, purchase, acquire, install and construct improvements to the Authority's water system, including but not limited to improvements to the Authority's water plant and facilities including but not limited to the replacement of water mains and installation of new water mains; improvements to the backwash reclaim system; improvements to the lagoon disposal facilities; as well as all work, and equipment necessary and incidental to these improvements and such other water treatment plant improvements and improvements to other water system facilities the Authority shall determine to make and to pay the costs of issuing the bonds and capitalized interest, if any.

The bonds of this issue shall mature within the maximum terms permitted by law with interest on the unpaid balance at a rate not to exceed the maximum rate permitted by law payable over not more than forty (40) years from the date of issuance of the Bonds. The bonds shall be issued pursuant to Act 94, Public Acts of Michigan, 1933, as amended.

SOURCE OF PAYMENT

The principal of and interest on the bonds shall be payable from the net revenues derived from the operation of the Water System.

RIGHT OF REFERENDUM

The bonds will be issued, without submitting such a question to a vote of the electors, unless within 45 days after the date of publication of this notice a petition requesting a referendum upon such question, signed by not less than 10% or 15,000 of the registered electors residing within the boundaries of the Authority, whichever is the lesser, shall have been filed with the undersigned Secretary. In the event that such a petition is filed, the bonds will not be issued unless and until the issuance thereof shall have been approved by the vote of a majority of the electors within the Authority qualified to vote and voting thereon at a general or special election.

This Notice is published pursuant to the requirements of Section 33 of Act 94 of the Public Acts of Michigan of 1933, as amended.

Charles Peterson, Board Secretary

CP#21-256

Few expected another COVID-19 surge. Why is it happening?

To cope, Sparrow Hospital halts elective surgeries

Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail said she is “troubled” and “perplexed” by a recent increase in COVID-19 cases across Ingham County — a statistic that also bears out state-wide.

Last week, Ingham County tracked a case positivity rate of 15.9%, down slightly from a peak of 17.7% in early November. That percentage — which indicates the proportion of tests that have come back positive for the virus — has nearly doubled from a 9% rate tracked in late October, putting the county into what federal health officials labeled as a “high” level of transmission.

And despite local and state-wide vaccination rates higher than 60%, a total of more than 1.44 million cases have been reported statewide with more than 25,000 deaths — including at least 35,000 cases and 482



Vail

deaths reported in Ingham County. Another 159 people were still hospitalized with the virus late last week, including 31 patients reported in intensive care units.

Vail also said that local hospital systems were reporting up to 90% occupancy rates this week, pushing Sparrow Hospital in Lansing to halt all elective surgeries to deal with the caseloads.

“I didn’t expect there to be a surge this time around,” she said. “I figured with the vaccine we’d be OK.”

And with cases on the rise even with more than half of the population having been fully vaccinated, Vail is also tracking another trend: More misinformation online, particularly about breakthrough cases and continued doubts over the efficacy of the vaccine.

A frequent question: Why are caseloads up with so many fully vaccinated people out there?

The latest increase in cases and hospitalizations is concentrated primarily in networks of people who have not gotten vaccinated, Vail told City Pulse this week.

Statewide, fully vaccinated individuals have represented about 25% of all

cases of COVID-19. Since January, when vaccines became available, the fully vaccinated represent only 1.7% of the cases tracked statewide, 0.04 % of hospitalizations and 0.02% of COVID-19 deaths statewide.

That leaves 75% of the cases tracked to date in Michigan impacting only unvaccinated patients. But with that much virus circulating in the community, everyone is at a higher risk, Vail added.

Looking at recent data, Vail has come to some understanding of why the virus is surging again.

The key issue, she said, is that unvaccinated people tend to be in the same social networks. That means if infected people mingle with their network, they are more likely to transmit the virus. The most prevalent variant circulating in the community right now is the Delta variant, she said. And that is significantly more infectious than the original strain of the virus.

“Makes sense, right? We all tend to want to be around people who think like we do,” she said.

Also compromising the public health response is the inability or simple unwillingness of some people who test positive to isolate themselves. In this category, she noted that there are two

types of people: those who simply refuse to isolate, and those who economically cannot isolate.

“For those who can’t be isolated because they’ll lose their job or cause the business to be short-handed, that’s a really tough call,” Vail said. “What do you do in that situation?”

County health officials issue warning letters for people who have tested positive for COVID-19, ordering them to isolate themselves. Those warning letters are the first step in possible legal action under the state’s Public Health Act. Under a provision of the law, health officials can petition a court to impose isolation and treatment on people deemed “health threats to others.”

Vail said her team has continued to reach out to those with positive tests, as well as those who have been identified as close contacts. But that work is becoming more and more frustrating.

“Because we are seeing more people who were not vaccinated becoming infected or identified as close contacts, we’re seeing a bit more hostility when we reach people,” she said. “There’s a lot of reasons for it, but it’s hard on the staff.”

She said the backlash to contact tracing efforts has added stress on her staff and is leading to burnout across the

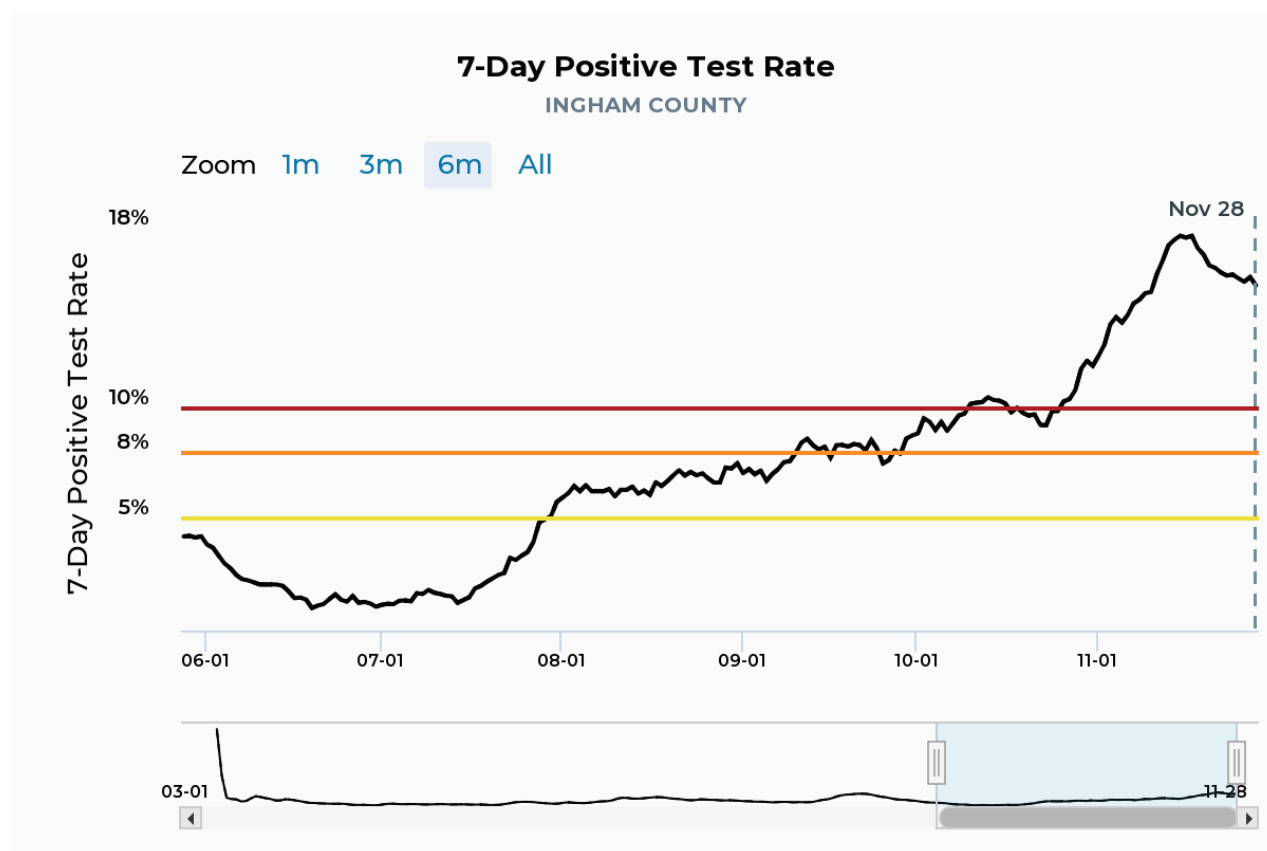
healthcare industry, including in public health. That, in turn, could lead to even more pressure on healthcare providers as their colleagues leave the profession, she said.

Statewide, emergency room visits climbed from 7.3% to 9.3% over the last two weeks. And while battling vaccine hesitancy and hostility with potential exposures to the virus are top on her mind, Vail is also bracing for the sweep of a new variant of concern: the Omicron variant.

“We are at the very beginning of understanding this variant,” Vail said. “This is the starting point for the science. There’s a hypothesis out there, and now we’re going to check it. We’ve had other variants we were initially very worried about, but when the science was done, we realized we didn’t have to worry. We just have to keep following the science and see where it leads.”

In the meantime, Vail is offering some familiar reminders for residents to wear masks while indoors, practice social distancing, get vaccinated, heed recommendations to quarantine for those identified as close contacts of a positive case and to isolate for those who test positive.

— TODD HEYWOOD



Credit: MI Safe Start Map

Michigan schools are failing students with dyslexia, advocates say

By **NICHOLAS SIMON**
Capital News Service

Deon Butler of Detroit told lawmakers at a recent hearing that public schools failed him. Butler, who is dyslexic, said his memories of school are traumatic.

"I would always be the first to raise my hand until I started getting picked on for not knowing how to read," Butler said. "In middle school, I remember the teacher asking me to read out loud and I watched the whole class laughing at me as I struggled.

"After a while, I stopped sitting in the front of the class and started making my way to the back."

He looked for ways to get kicked out of class and, after being called stupid so many times, he started acting stupid, Butler said.

Michigan schools fail to identify students such as Butler with dyslexia and fail to provide them with services they need to succeed, critics say.

The widespread genetic and often hereditary disability makes it harder to read or interpret new words and symbols. It has no impact on intelligence.

Senate lawmakers are weighing legislation to mandate dyslexia screenings for every student from kindergarten to grade 3. It would require teachers to get training in dyslexia.

Failing to address dyslexia is a major contributor to the school-to-prison pipeline, according to research.

Texas found that nearly half of its inmates were dyslexic.

Nationally, 70% of incarcerated people can't read past a fourth-grade level.

Michigan mandates that incoming inmates be screened for dyslexia, but it doesn't require screening of young children in schools.

But doing so could have a huge impact on children because early detection is key to treating dyslexia, said Marsha Chance, a board member of the Michigan Dyslexia Institute in Lansing.

"The research is very clear that dyslexic children need early identification and remediation," Chance said.

"If you give them the proper type of education they need, you can almost undo the disorder," she said. "It reduces the impact of the dyslexia greatly on the student because the brain gets better

wired to learn reading."

But these programs have not been happening for Michigan kids, she said.

"I can only speculate that it's because schools don't know how to deal with it," Chance said.

To qualify for special education, students must be at least two years behind academically, Chance said. "The goal in dyslexia education is to never let that student get two years behind."

Many school districts refer questions about dyslexia programs to special education departments.

Tutoring for dyslexia is an extra workload that frustrates students like Asher Suter, 12. He told lawmakers he spends an extra four hours a week on schoolwork.

"There were nights when my dad had to put a cold compress on my head because I was getting migraines because the tutoring after a full day of school was really overwhelming," Asher said. "Those feelings are no fun."

Although dyslexia education is hard to find or expensive, not addressing the



problem can lead to worse hardships and missed opportunities.

Butler said that he was thankful that sports came easy to him because he earned a football scholarship. But after being signed by the Detroit Lions he was cut from training camp because he had difficulty reading the playbook.

Now, he is learning reading strategies motivated by a desire to read to his newborn daughter.

"Today I'm 29 years old, and I've found a tutor that's helping me realize that if taught the right way, I can learn to read well," Butler said.

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We provide free one-on-one instruction in reading and writing for children struggling in school and adults. CALC's services range from GED/high school completion including services for those under 18 seeking their high school equivalency! We also have English Second Language and Citizenship classes as well as reading assessment services. Make an appointment at (517) 485-4949!

Looking for a way to help in the community? We offer free Volunteer tutor training to those interesting in helping our neighbors with their literacy issues. Please see our website for more details and to sign up! Our next class will be December 7th, from 6:30pm to 8:30pm via Zoom (www.thereadingpeople.org).

We are struggling to offer all free services to so many in the area. Any donations would be welcomed and appreciated.

We are accepting good quality book donations as well as caps and gowns for our GED program graduation and copy paper. Thank you for considering helping in any way that you are able!!

Please call for further information
(517) 485-4949

www.thereadingpeople.org



REWIND

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LAST 7 DAYS

By KYLE KAMINSKI



Sosebee



Matson

Schor set to pick next police chief

The search for the next chief of the Lansing Police Department is down to two candidates. And with Mayor Andy Schor having already conducted his final interviews, a permanent successor to former Police Chief Daryl Green could be announced any time. The finalists — Interim Lansing Police Chief Ellery Sosebee and Jason Matson, a captain at the Bakersfield Police Department in Bakersfield, California — spent about 90 minutes at a virtual public forum to explain why they should be picked to become the Capital City's next top cop. *Read more at [lansingcitypulse.com](https://www.lansingcitypulse.com).*

Deputies search for driver in crash

Local authorities are on the lookout for the driver of a red van or utility truck that was reportedly involved in a two-car crash at about 10 p.m. Wednesday (Nov. 24) on southbound US-127 near Covert Road. The crash landed one driver — a 26-year-old Horton man — in the hospital with “serious” injuries. The other vehicle left the scene. Those with any information about the crash have been asked to contact the Ingham County Sheriff's Department at 517-676-8202.

Frances Park lands state grant cash

A grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for \$150,000 was awarded to the city of Lansing to make various accessibility improvements and shade structure upgrades at Frances Park. The state's “Recreation Passport” grant program started in 2010 with the goal of boosting traffic to local parks and has since awarded more than \$14.6 million statewide to date.



Sparrow faces unfair labor complaint

The Michigan Nurses Association filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board that claims the hospital repeatedly violated federal law by abandoning legal processes, interrogating staff about union activity and refusing to share financial information with the union amid ongoing collective bargaining negotiations, reports the Lansing State Journal. A union representing 2,200 employees there voted last month to authorize a strike if necessary. Meanwhile, the hospital has reportedly paused elective surgeries amid rising COVID-19 cases.

Lansing loses community icons

Longtime community activist Dayle Benjamin, who died Nov. 20, was remembered in a moment of silence at a Lansing City Council meeting on Monday. City Councilwoman Carol Wood labeled him as a tireless advocate for some of the city's most vulnerable residents, who also always ensured that local first responders on duty for the holidays had a meal to eat.

The City Council also paid its respects to Don Rakowski, the father of Old Town businessman Bradly Rakowski and father-in-law of City Clerk Chris Swope, who died on Thanksgiving Day.

Graduation rates climb at MSU

The latest graduation rate posted by Michigan State University report 82.1% last year — up from 81.3% in 2019 and the seventh straight year that those rates have increased, according to reports in the Lansing State Journal. Notably, graduation rates among students identifying as two or more races climbed the most, by 3% to 77% in the latest reports.

Council blasts state voter petition

The Lansing City Council unanimously passed a resolution to oppose the Secure MI Vote ballot initiative, a petition being circulated to amend Michigan's election law that threatens to bolster costs for elections and shutter polling locations — including churches that have been used for generations of local voters in Lansing. City Clerk Chris Swope told the Council that the proposal would “hurt” local voters and could lead to an increase in identity theft among voters.



Lansing settles lawsuit with ex-cop

Former Lansing Police Department officer Charles Funk received \$21,000 in a settlement agreement last month following a lengthy lawsuit against the city in which he alleged that he was retaliated against for raising concerns about white officers wrongfully arresting Black men, reports the Lansing State Journal. Funk reportedly raised concerns about racism and wrongful arrests to his superiors but, as a result, was rejected for a promotion and repeatedly disciplined.

Free HIV testing for World AIDS Day

In recognition of World AIDS Day, the Ingham County Health Department is offering free, walk-in, finger-prick HIV tests from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. today Forest Community Health Center, 2316 S. Cedar St. in Lansing. Data shows that about 450 people were known to be living with HIV last year in Ingham County. Testing is the only way for people to know their status and take the necessary steps to stop the spread of HIV. Research shows that an early diagnosis can lead to better medical outcomes. Medications are available that have been shown to be up to 99% effective in preventing transmission. Testing appointments are also available on weekdays all year round at low or no cost. Call 517-887-4424 for more information.

SORE OF THE WEEK



2019



2021

2206 W. Jolly Road, Lansing

This eyesore is a rerun of sorts. A reader called our attention to this “really terrible” southside property back in March 2019. And after more than two years, it's finally on the city's radar too.

The City Council voted Monday to set a final public hearing this month, giving the absent homeowners one last chance to explain to the city why it shouldn't be bulldozed to the ground.

The dilapidated home was deemed “unsafe and dangerous” by the city and red-tagged in 2016. In September, the city's Demolition Board ordered it be repaired or demolished by late October.

Boards have covered home's doorways and the windows for years. The siding has mostly peeled off the garage. Awnings have caved in. Gutters have fallen. Landscaping is nonexistent.

And since it's still standing there in total disrepair this week, city officials are turning up the heat.

Unless the owners step up to the plate this month, the city will likely have authority to tear down the home — and then bill the property owners for the work — by as early as next spring. The City Council is expected to have a final vote on the matter in December or January, then triggering a final 60-day window in which repairs must be made or the home can be demolished.

The residential-looking building at the corner of Jolly and Pleasant Grove roads is listed as commercial office space in Ingham County records, owned by a company named “Jones, Thomas & Robbyne.” A phone number spray painted on the front of the home leads to a generic voicemail. Multiple messages left there in 2019 — and again this week — were not returned. Still, taxes are mostly paid — except for about \$300 owed from winter taxes in 2014 and 2017.

— KYLE KAMINSKI

“Eyesore of the Week” is our look at some of the seedier properties in Lansing. It rotates with Eye Candy of the Week and Eye for Design. Have a suggestion? Email eye@lansingcitypulse.com or call it in at 517-999-6715.

COVID infinitum

For reasons that aren't entirely clear, Michigan has now skyrocketed to the top of the worst states in the nation for new COVID-19 cases. Considering the shocking fact that more Michiganders are hospitalized due to COVID than at any previous point in the pandemic, we aren't the only ones to observe that what we are now doing to contain COVID-19 just isn't working. Hospital intensive care units across the state are maxing out — again. The situation is so dire that U.S. military medical teams have been called in to provide emergency support to hospitals in Detroit and Grand Rapids.

Of course, the vast majority of the hospitalized are unvaccinated. Powered by an unrelenting intransigence that leaves Michigan's fully vaccinated rate stuck in the mid-50s, we have to wonder if and when our long global nightmare will end. Our guess is never. Thanks to the persuasive idiocy of right-wing reactionaries, universal vaccination appears to be little more than a pipe dream. Ergo, the coronavirus will always be with us. And, as predicted in the earliest days of the pandemic, scary new variants will inevitably arise, driving a cycle of sickness and death that, in the absence of meaningful action, could carry on indefinitely.

Our nation's complete failure to stymie the coronavirus is a storyline worthy of an epic Hollywood disaster flick, wherein a never-ending global pandemic with increasingly dangerous viral variants eventually overwhelms humankind's capacity to fight back through vaccines and public health mandates, leading to the near-collapse of civilization. The title of the film will be "Omicron," of course, and one of the lead roles will be played by none other than Michigan Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey, whose self-proclaimed natural immunity to the coronavirus will end up saving the world.

Seriously, though, what's next? The path of least resistance is to continue what we're doing now, which is to allow people to make their own choices in the name of personal freedom and individual autonomy. Sadly, as COVID-related deaths continue to mount, there is no evidence to suggest that the result will be anything other than a permanent pandemic that ebbs and flows for years on end.

The other path is compulsion — using the coercive power of government to more or less force people into making the right choice. President Biden's vaccination mandate for federal employees and private sector companies with more than 100 employees suggests



The CP Edit

Opinion

he and his advisers have concluded we're not getting out of this mess through voluntary compliance. We hope the predictable legal challenges to the president's vaccination mandate are quickly dismissed and that our political and business leaders at every level get the message that there is still only one way out of this mess: universal vaccination.

As for us, we're tempted to just give up on trying to persuade the unvaccinated to change their minds. Let them catch COVID-19. Let them deal with the consequences. Maybe they will live and maybe they will die. Maybe they will pass it on to a vulnerable relative who spends their final hours on a ventilator. Maybe they will learn and maybe they won't.

Honestly, we are struggling with caring about people with so little regard for their own health, for that of their loved ones, and for the well-being of their community. The problem with the Darwinian approach is that we have finite capacity in our healthcare system to deal with these idiots. For the fourth time in the past 21 months, our state's limited hospital resources are being exhausted by people who can't bring themselves to get the vaccine but apparently have no problem dragging their sorry asses to the hospital when they get sick.

Think it doesn't matter to you? Think again. Sparrow Health System just announced a moratorium on elective surgeries due to the strain on their resources. That hip replacement you were hoping to get to ease your daily pain? You're going to have to wait a while. Need to go to the emergency room? Prepare for a long, long wait. Need to get admitted for a serious health condition? You're going to have to wait in the hallway.

They won't be able to find you a bed because they are all occupied by the unvaccinated.

And where, we ask, is our state's political leadership? Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has scurried into her bunker and closed the hatch behind her, evidently fearing a 2022 electoral backlash if she imposes any more public health mandates. Predictably, the Michigan Legislature, which has yet to show a shred of leadership at any point in the pandemic, is dead silent. It seems that folks like Sen. Shirkey, who had to shut down his own tool-and-die company for more than a week due to a COVID outbreak, and Speaker of

the House Jason Wentworth are just fine with the pandemic spiraling out of control once again, straining our medical resources and exhausting frontline healthcare workers.

State lawmakers on both sides of the aisle appear to have not a scintilla of interest in doing anything to stem the tide. As for the Republicans who control both legislative chambers, they already won the battles that matter to them — stripping Whitmer of most of her emergency powers, for example — so what else needs to be done except standing back and watching the carnage play out?

What will it take to open their eyes? Frankly, we're fresh out of answers, but we urge those of you who care enough to take action to light up your lawmaker's phone line and fill up their email inbox with urgent pleas for the reinstatement of basic statewide public health mandates like masking while indoors, limitations on group gatherings and compulsory vaccination for all public employees.

Apology

City Pulse apologizes for its use of "Svengali" in the editorial "Unmasking Mayor Schor" last week. Svengali was a manipulative 19th century literary character, and that is the characterization that the editorial intended to convey. Unfortunately, the writer and editor who prepared the story were unaware that Svengali is also seen as an antisemitic stereotype. We regret offending readers by its use, which was not intended to convey antisemitism. We should have been aware of the latter interpretation.

Have something to say about a local issue or an item that appeared in our pages? Now you have two ways to sound off:

1.) Write a letter to the editor.

• E-mail: letters@lansingcitypulse.com • Snail mail: City Pulse, 1905 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48912 • Fax: (517) 371-5800 • At lansingcitypulse.com

2.) Write a guest column. Contact Berl Schwartz for more information: publisher@lansingcitypulse.com or (517) 999-5061. (Please include your name, address and telephone number so we can reach you. Keep letters to 250 words or fewer. City Pulse reserves the right to edit letters and columns.)

Trump wants a new Legislature — but to do what exactly?

Which prominent political figure recently kicked off a press release about the state's Republican-led House and Senate with the following quote?

"Michigan needs a new legislature."

- A. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer
 - B. Michigan Democratic Party Chairwoman Lavora Barnes
 - C. President Joe Biden
 - D. Former President Donald Trump
- I'll give you a hint. The next line of the press release reads, "The cowards there now are too spinless to investigate election fraud."

Ah. Yes, the answer is the only Republican on the list.

OPINION

Donald Trump, the one person who has made it a mission to replace a Republican-led Michigan Legislature with ... another Republican Legislature, I suppose. This next one would theoretically be willing to repeat whatever he says, do what he asks without question.

That's what happens to Republican leaders who don't operate under Trump's imagined set of facts, I guess. These days, Republicans who refuse to paper over Trump's unsubstantiated election fraud claims with the "America First" rah-rah-rah are Republicans in Name Only (RINOs).

Here in Michigan, the Legislature refused to dive into Trump's endless circular arguments. Passing nine election reform bills that Whitmer vetoed wasn't good enough.

The Senate embraced a report that basically concluded it found no evidence of widespread election fraud. Trump wants them all out.

"They refuse to conduct a Forensic Audit," wrote Trump, neglecting the fact that Arizona's "forensic audit" turned up next to nothing.

To date, Trump has backed seven state legislative candidates and it's presumed more are coming. That's on top of secretary of state, attorney general and two congressional endorsees.

The irony of Trump counting on the nearly exact "rigged election" system of 2022 to make changes to the "rigged election" system of 2020 shouldn't be lost on anyone, but let's push that aside.

Will Trump give any of his endorsees a dime from his Save America PAC? Or does he believe his name alone is a golden ticket?

We'll find out a year from now, at the latest, when final campaign finance reports are in.

In the meantime, the best Trump



KYLE MELINN

POLITICS

can hope for is the political pressure he's putting on senators like Ed McBroom, who authored the "Nothing To See Here" report, and Lana Theis, who supported it in committee, will change minds.

The odds of Trump having enough winning candidates to populate most of the House and Senate are long. The odds of these winning candidates being able to do anything about the 2020 election results aren't long. They're nonexistent.

First, with the new redistricting commission maps, it's a coin flip whether House and Senate Republicans can even have a majority in one chamber, let alone both.

In the House alone, Trump will need at least 29 Republicans within a Republican majority state House to pick his endorsee, Rep. Matt Maddock, for speaker. Considering Maddock is starting with not many more than his own vote for Republican leader, it's safe to say Maddock has a long road.

Also, none of the current Senate leader contenders for next session are talking about forensic audits. That will need to change for Trump's scheme to work.

Let's assume the most improbably scenario, though. The Republicans win a 56-54 majority in the House with Maddock elected as speaker and Trump Republicans lead a 20-18 majority with ... let's just say ... Mike Detmer as Senate majority leader.

And let's say Garrett Soldano or Ryan D. Kelley unseats Whitmer to sign whatever bill they pass.

The soonest they could order a forensic audit of the 2020 election is January 2023 — and, guess what? It would be useless.

Under federal law, local clerks are allowed to start destroying ballots 22 months after an election to make room for the next flood of general election ballots. My math has that as September 2022.

By the time Nov. 8, 2022, ballots are counted, 2020 ballots will be shredded recycling.

If that's the case, why does Michigan need a new Legislature, exactly? To call for an audit of an election where the evidence is gone?

Other Republicans are beginning to ask the same questions.

(Email Kyle Melinn of the Capitol news service MIRS at melinnkyle@gmail.com. His column appears weekly.)



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CITY OF EAST LANSING NOTICE OF INTENT TO REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS

REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

On or about Friday, December 10, 2021, the City of East Lansing will submit a request to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the release of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (Pub. L. 93-383), as amended, to undertake the following projects:

Housing Rehabilitation and Improvement Program, \$100,000 for the purpose of assisting low-moderate income homeowners residing in the City of East Lansing with code violation corrections, weatherization and lead-based paint interim controls or abatement. The total program cost will be \$100,000 with repairs of up to \$24,999 per household. The organization will be allowed to utilize carryover funds. An estimated four households will be assisted in program year 2021, in the form of a partially forgivable deferred loan. This activity is subject to 24 CFR 58.35(a).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any individual, group, or agency disagreeing with this determination or wishing to comment on the project may submit written comments to the City of East Lansing Planning, Building, and Development Department, 410 Abbot Road, East Lansing, MI 48823, or via email at mapostle@cityofeastlansing.com. All comments received by 5PM Thursday, December 9, 2021, will be considered by the City of East Lansing prior to authorizing submission of a request for release of funds.

RELEASE OF FUNDS

The City of East Lansing certifies to HUD that George Lahanas in his capacity as City Manager consents to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. HUD's approval of the certification satisfies its responsibilities under NEPA and related laws and authorities and allows the City of East Lansing to use Program funds.

OBJECTIONS TO RELEASE OF FUNDS

HUD will consider objections to its release of funds and the City of East Lansing's certification received by Monday, December 27, 2021, or a period of fifteen days from its receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if they are on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Certifying Officer or other officer of the City of East Lansing approved by HUD; (b) the City of East Lansing has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 58; (c) the grant recipient or other participants in the project have committed funds or incurred costs not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of a release of funds by HUD; or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality (e) the City of East Lansing has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 55. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the required procedures (24 CFR Part 58 or 24 CFR Part 55) and shall be emailed to CPD_COVID-19OEE-DET@hud.gov. Potential objectors should contact HUD to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

Date: December 1, 2021
George Lahanas, City Manager
City of East Lansing
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ARTS & CULTURE

ART • BOOKS • FILM • MUSIC

Delia Kropp and LGBTQ+ representation in film

By SKYLER ASHLEY

Delia Kropp walks home through the north end of Chicago on a chilled November day nearby the ivy-wrapped baseball stadium Wrigley Field and reflects on a long, accomplished acting career that encompasses leading MSU's official theater student group, acting onstage as a theater pupil in England and performing with celebrated, but now defunct, Lansing company BoarsHead Theater.

Since moving from Lansing to Chicago long ago, she's more than made her mark in theater. Now, she's making waves in film and helping spark important conversations about LGBTQ+ representation in an infamously white-washed industry.

Her film debut in "Landlocked," which was released this year to the international film festival circuit, sees her in a complex role. The film is centered on Nick, played by Dustin Gooch, a struggling chef who finds it difficult to cope with the loss of his mother. At his wife's behest, Nick seeks out Briana, played by Kropp, his surviving, estranged parent who has since come out as transgender. To find closure in death and hopefully heal their strained relationship, the pair hit the road on a journey to scatter Nick's mother's ashes onto the rolling ocean waters off the Georgia coast.

Kropp was connected with the film's director, Tim Hall, in 2018 after he reached

out to a talent agent, serendipitously a friend of Kropp's, in search of an actress that could play a trans character in his latest production. He was given Kropp's information and the ball quickly got rolling for her film debut.

"He reached out to me and gave me a monologue he had written. He said, 'Memorize that, put it on your phone via video — I'll take a look at it.' It was only two or three months before I heard back," Kropp said.

As a theater actress, the process of preparing for her first film shoot saw Kropp in new territory, but with some welcome familiarities. Before arriving in Atlanta to begin production, Kropp spent months conversing with Hall and other cast members — going over fine details such as the familial history and interplay between their characters.

"On set, the big adjustment was the hurry-up-and-wait aspect," Kropp said. "The big priorities are the location and the lighting; the acting is somewhere further down the list. But that means when it's time to shoot, you've got to be good. Some of the scenes in 'Landlocked' are the first take."

The headaches caused by the whirling technology on a professional film set notwithstanding, Kropp was right at home with her creative assignment of bringing the character of Briana to life on the silver screen for audiences. The talent she developed

through her immense theater experience proved invaluable. Kropp was easy to direct and managed to get through the production phase of "Landlocked" while rarely requiring more than three takes to wrap a scene.

"Your training as an actor for a large role like this is to have a good grip on the whole story. You don't treat it as a scene at a time," Kropp said. "If you shoot out-of-sequence; it's 10 o'clock at night and you're wondering, 'Where



Dustin Gooch (left) and Delia Kropp in "Landlocked."

Courtesy

are we in the story?' You've already done that work ahead of time. You know where you are."

But Kropp's distinct advantage as an actress on the set of "Landlocked" was her deeply intimate connection with her character's backstory. Kropp admits that her own real life story is not too far off from that of the fictional Briana's.

Like Briana, Kropp, 64, came out as trans later in her life, though she does not have any children. During her transition, Kropp maintained a quiet professional hiatus and did not appear onstage for an entire decade — eventually returning to live theater in 2015. For Kropp, coming out as trans at an older age meant facing more baggage to leave behind in search of an identity that truly suited her.

"For people who transition later in life, it can be a longer process and sometimes a more difficult one. However poorly your previous gender role suited you in life, it's still the one you're familiar with and other people identify you with. You have to transition out of one established identity into another," Kropp said.

Kropp said she found it difficult to transition in the early-'00s. Finding therapeutic help, medical assistance and other forms of support was more challenging, as the resources were even less commonplace and societally accepted as they are today. Ultimately,

the struggles faced by Kropp are shared by her character Briana, who also had to come out as trans in face of a hostile response.

"You want to bring as much of yourself and your own story to the role as much as you possibly can. That's pretty much what I did," Kropp said.

In addition to her work as an actress, Kropp also prides herself on the work she's done as an advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. She regularly acts as a consultant on LGBTQ+ issues and has given extensive talks on topics such as gender identity and trans inclusion in entertainment industry talent agencies — including theater, film and television. Inclusion has become an increasingly important talking point, as productions that feature LGBTQ+ characters portrayed by straight actors have been lightning rods for controversy and can generate enough widespread public criticism to hurt the financial bottom line. Kropp believes the enhanced focus on inclusion in recent years is a positive mark of progress.

"For me, it's representation and authenticity. We deserve to be included at the table; we deserve to be in the public's eye. We're a part of this world. If you're playing a transgender role, authenticity is critical. There are nuances that no amount of interviewing or having coffee with a trans person can substitute," Kropp said.

To learn more about
Delia Kropp, visit
therealdelia.com

To check out
"Landlocked," visit
Facebook.com/landlockedfilm

Lansing Art Gallery will move to Knapp's Building

Completion of two-story new home is expected early next year

By LAWRENCE COSENTINO

The prospect of displaying works of art inside a gigantic work of art proved irresistible to the Lansing Art Gallery.

The gallery informed its members it is moving from its digs in the basement of 119 N. Washington Square into the first and second floors of a spectacular downtown Art Deco landmark, the Knapp's Building, for at least a year.

Gallery director Barb Whitney hopes the move will be complete in January 2022 and the gallery will open for community programming and special events "by early 2022."

The gallery will occupy a two-story space along Washtenaw Street between South Capitol Avenue and South Washington Square.

"This space continues our tradition of being the heart of downtown Lansing," Whitney said. "When we did a survey in 2015, we heard that our community would like to see us above ground, with natural light and dedicated parking and a stronger street presence."

Whitney declined to specify the terms of the deal with Knapp's owners, the George F. Eyde Co., except to say, "This special opportunity is for at least one year, thanks to the generosity of the George F. Eyde Family, LLC."

In November, the space was home to "Lansing On My Mind," an exhibit of Lansing-themed art by Detroit-based artist Timothy Orikri.

"Timothy has prepped everyone for the idea that art could be in that space," Whitney said.

Whitney said the gallery has been looking for a new home for several years. She and her staff made the most of its current location, squeezing a small gift shop and a partitioned-off classroom next to gallery and office space. Until the Downtown YMCA moved out of the floor above the gallery last year, art lovers were regularly treated to the banging of weights and chugging of elliptical trainers overhead.

Happy as she is for the gallery to see the light of day, Whitney said the Knapp's location is envisioned as a "short term solution."



The old Knapp's Department Store will be the new, two-story home of the Lansing Art Gallery.

"We're still keeping all of our options open," Whitney said. She and her staff are working with Mayor Andy Schor's Arts and Culture Commission to keep the Lansing Art Gallery in consideration for a permanent home in a future downtown performing arts center.

The gallery is also exploring "collaborative opportunities for partnership and other forever-home type solutions," Whitney said.

The Lansing Art Gallery's ties with the Eyde family, owners of the Knapp's Center, go back many years.

In 2014, the Eyde Co. completed a spectacular renovation of the former department store, a nationally significant showcase of Streamline Moderne architecture.

"We admire the work they did renovating the Knapp's Building," Whitney said. "It's a landmark piece of architecture and we'll be thrilled to inhabit it."

It's the latest of several changes of venue for the gallery since it began in 1965 as the Lansing Community Art

Gallery, housed in the former Lansing Business University at 124 W. Ionia St.

In 1967, the gallery moved to Michigan Avenue, above Jim's Tiffany Restaurant. In 1975, the gallery moved to the makeshift yet plucky Lansing Center for the Arts, a refurbished and repainted former Plymouth dealership at 425 S. Grand Ave.

In 2004, the gallery moved into the swank former Liebermann's Department Store building, the only storefront in the United States designed by George Nelson. In 2010, to accommodate a growing roster of educational programs, the gallery moved to its current location.

Whitney credited Downtown Lansing Inc. and its director, Cathleen Edgerly, with helping the gallery to take its "next step." Edgerly helped connect artist Timothy Orikri with the Eyde Co. and set up Orikri's current exhibit at the Knapp's Center.

"It's excellent news that despite the pandemic, an institution like ours

could not only survive, but thrive, with more visibility, above ground," Whitney said.

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How an Italian sculptor shaped the aesthetic of Lansing

By **BILL CASTANIER**

Look up! You might just notice an ornamental architectural fixture crafted by noted sculptor Corrado Parducci, who completed 13 installations in the Lansing area during the '30s, '50s and '60s in Lansing. Parducci's work can be

Dale A. Carlson author event

Thursday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.
Robin Theatre
REO Town
1105 S. Washington Ave.,
Lansing
TheRobinTheatre.com

seen at Michigan Bell, on the campus of Michigan State University, the Capitol Area District Library downtown main branch, several

churches and Michigan National Bank Tower (Boji).

The Historical Society of Greater Lansing is hosting Dale A. Carlson, photographer and architectural historian, for a Dec. 9 program at the Robin Theatre in REO Town. Carlson will discuss Lansing's Parducci installations and his work statewide, including notable work in Detroit at the Guardian Building, the Buhl and the Penobscot.

Carlson is also the author of

"Corrado Parducci: A Field Guide to Detroit's Architectural Sculpture." The book will be for sale at the event for \$20.

The author studied art, journalism and graphic design at four Michigan colleges — including Michigan State University — and has an associate's degree in photographic technology from Oakland Community College. He also serves on the City of Berkley's Historical Committee, and is working on a field guide on the work of the notable architect Albert Kahn, which will be published soon.

Carlson, who spends a lot of time in New Orleans is working on a book on stained glass in the Big Easy.

In addition to his work on the Boji Tower, Parducci, who immigrated to the United States in 1904, completed the well-known installations at Sexton High School, including "Punch and Judy." His work can also be seen at six Lansing churches: Central United Methodist, Grace Lutheran, Pilgrim Congregational, St. Paul's Episcopal, First Baptist Church



Bill Castanier/City Pulse

Corrado Parducci's sculptures can be seen at Sexton High School.

(Christ Community) and Christ United Methodist.

Parducci worked in a variety of

styles, including Aztec, but is best remembered for his Greco-Deco ornamental style. He completed installations on more than 600 structures across the United States throughout his career.

Prior to the Parducci program, which is free, the historical society will hold an election of officers and trustees beginning at 6:30 p.m.

(The writer is the president of the Historical Society of Greater Lansing and a regular contributor to City Pulse.)

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Ex-convict's pot brand kicks back \$250K to marijuana felons

Cannabis sales help Redemption Foundation give cash to prisoners

By **KYLE KAMINSKI**

Ryan Basore launched Redemption Cannabis last March for an obvious reason: redemption.

The first kind of redemption is personal. Basore — who was arrested and charged with marijuana-related crimes alongside six others known as the “Okeanos 7” in 2010 — was released from prison in 2015. Now six years later, he’s running a multi-million-dollar cannabis brand with dozens of dank products lining the shelves at nearly 100 dispensaries statewide.

The other kind of redemption is for others. In addition to forming partnerships with some of the best cultivators in the state, Basore is also focused on raising awareness, funds and other resources for about 1,200 people still serving time in Michigan’s prisons for pot-related charges.

“Don’t get me wrong. I’m living my dream job. I love selling and marketing marijuana, but the Redemption Foundation also gives me this opportunity — this vehicle to create change,” Basore explained. “There is still a lot of work that needs to be done to right the wrongs of prohibition.”

In addition to being the president of Redemption Cannabis, the Redemption Foundation and the Great Lakes Expungement Network, Basore is the co-founder of the Michigan Association of Compassion Centers, the original Lansing Cannabis Association and Can-



Courtesy

Ryan Basore (middle) poses with top executives Erica Lambert (left) and Chris Silva.



Lansterdam in Review: The Redemption Foundation

nabis Patients United.

He was also among the first to grow and sell medical marijuana in Greater Lansing, at Capital City Caregivers. Since his release from prison in 2015, he has remained at the forefront of the industry, having also served as the former business development director for the Michigan Cannabis Industry Association.

And it’s been a banner year for fighting the residual war on drugs in Michigan. Since the Redemption Foundation launched last year, it has cultivated partnerships and doled out almost \$250,000 on services for those still imprisoned for cannabis-related charges and their families.

Among those charitable efforts this year was \$60,000 in free legal care for those with cannabis convictions, as well

as a program that provides direct support to families and children of those incarcerated for marijuana-related crimes. Redemption also partnered with the Last Prisoner Project and the Michigan Cannabis Caucus to launch the Michigan Cannabis Freedom Coalition, a network dedicated to freeing cannabis prisoners and supporting them after release.

Basore said that work helped lead to the early release of about a dozen people this year who were sentenced for marijuana-related crimes — including Michael Thompson, a Flint man who had served about 25 years behind bars after he sold pot to an undercover informant in 1994. Next month will mark the one-year anniversary of his commutation from Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

For those still in prison, Basore said Redemption also regularly deposits them commissary cash.

The launch of the Great Lakes Expungement Network — which Basore also leads — has helped more than 400 people have pot-related criminal charges scrubbed from their records. An ongoing partnership with Sons and Daughters United is also providing more than two dozen Michigan children and their families with gas cards, groceries, holiday meals, toys and more.

“Giving Michiganders access to free expungement assistance and representation from experienced attorneys gives them a chance at a better job, access to safe and adequate housing and greater opportunities for their families,” he said. “Lengthy prison sentences can make the holidays even more difficult to manage. We understand how hard the holidays

can be. That’s why we take it one step further. In addition to providing families with essentials and holiday cheer, we also provide them with travel expenses and resources to help them stay connected to their incarcerated loved ones, both during the holiday season and all year long.”

Last week, Redemption partnered with Pharmhouse Wellness to give away 100 turkeys as part of its aptly named “Felons Feeding Families” program. And next month, Basore also plans to send another 15 families impacted by cannabis prohibition on a \$1,000 holiday shopping spree.

“Getting swarmed by cops and sent to prison over marijuana really changed me, as a person, forever,” Basore added. “It led to me making a decision a long time ago that I would help out anyone else who has gone through the same thing — all over a plant that should’ve been legal.”

Redemption was approved as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization last month, meaning that it can also now collect tax-deductible donations. Visit theredemptionfoundation.org for more details.

Kyle Kaminski is City Pulse’s managing editor and a cannabis enthusiast who has been smoking marijuana just about every day for the last decade. Editor & Publisher Magazine has also labeled him as “arguably, the state’s authority on everything you need to know about cannabis.” Have a suggestion for a cannabis product? Email kyle@lansing-citypulse.com.

Foster Community Center adds a new computer lab

By **SKYLER ASHLEY**

The Capital Area District Library Foster branch, located at the Foster Community Center in Lansing’s east side neighborhood, is getting some sweet new digs. A new computer lab is now available at the library, and it will be utilized to provide STEAM-based education programs for kids and offer access to a number of important services for adults and seniors that require an Internet connection.

The section of the community center where the new lab is located was previously being used by ITEC-Lansing, an organization that helps jumpstarts students in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) education programs. With ITEC going defunct as a nonprofit in 2019 and leaving its space

in the building vacant, CADL sought to prevent this important resource from going to waste by renovating the space and bringing in computers to further much of the same learning goals for local children as ITEC.

“We already knew a lot of that programming and our missions were similar. It’s kind of a continuation of what ITEC was offering in that space,” CADL executive director Scott Duimstra said.

The new computer lab was actually slated to open up to the public in 2020, but was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic. The delay gave CADL extra time to give the space a fresh coat of paint and bring in new desks and computer equipment, including new laptops.

“There are two classrooms. One will have desktop computers and laptops,

and the other is kind of an open classroom environment,” Duimstra said. “Right now, we have a drop-in classes where somebody can come in and use the computers and we have after-school STEAM activities for kids.”

Starting in early-2022, the Foster Computer Lab will host numerous themed activities that will cater to younger students. These include nights where kids can meet up to play the popular computer game Minecraft, evenings where escape room games will be set up in the library and, of course, several educational technology programs.

For adults, the Foster Computer Lab will be offering multiple drop-in sessions where people can come use the computers to take care of their online needs, as well receive instructions on how to use



Foster Library Computer Lab

200 N. Foster Ave.,
Lansing
Open use: Tuesday,
1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
STEAM activities
Thursday, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.
CADL.org/about/our-locations/foster

different important computer programs. The lab will be collecting feedback from the public as it decides what instructive computer-based classes to schedule for the public.

“I see the Foster Computer Lab as a continuation of ITEC’s work: STEAM-focused programs, not only for the east side of Lansing, but all of Lansing as well. This is open to pretty much everybody in our service area. This classroom will allow us to have creative programs outside of the technology focus as well,” Duimstra said.

Even more Greater Lansing *Holiday* Events

Holiday festivities in Greater Lansing are well under way. Here is several more fun ways coming up in the next few weeks to get real holiday and jolly.

Dec. 1

Suits and the City Holiday Gala La Fille Gallery

336 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Suits and the City is collaborating with La Fille Gallery for a celebration with delicious food and beverages.

Dec. 3-5

Holiday Nights of Lights Frances Park

2701 Moores River Dr., Lansing,
6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Frances Park is hosting a drive-through Christmas light display.

Dec. 4

MSU Winter Arts & Craft Show MSU Union

49 Abbot Road, East Lansing
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Find a holiday gift for your special someone at an artisan arts and craft market hosted at the MSU Union.

Dec. 4

East Lansing Winter Glow Downtown East Lansing

2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
East Lansing's winter tradition continues in 2021 with horse-pulled carriage rides, ice-carving, visits with Santa Claus and all other sorts of yuletide activities for all ages.

Dec. 4

Holiday Market Extravaganza Meridian Mall

1982 W. Grand River Road,
Okemos
10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The Meridian Mall will be transformed into the North Pole's shopping center as different vendors gather to put on a holiday marketplace selling a variety of artisan crafted gifts.

Dec. 4

Black Santa Meet and Greet 1141 N. Pine St., Lansing

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Willow Tree Family Center is continuing its annual tradition of bringing Black Santa Claus to Lansing to help children of all ethnicities feel represented this holiday season. There will be lots of activities for children and parents to enjoy.

Dec. 5

Hope for the Holidays at Lansing Brewing Co.

518 E. Shiawassee St., Lansing
4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Lansing Brewing Co. is hosting a party where attendees will make their own custom holiday planter, with proceeds benefitting the American Cancer Society.

Dec. 5

How-to Holiday Festival Lansing Center

333 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing
1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

How-to Holiday is annual winter celebration that goes over the finer aspects of the holiday season. How do you wrap a gift perfectly? How do you pick out the right gift? If you're looking to master the stress that Christmastime can bring, this is the place.

Favorite Things

Jacob Weston and his T-shirt collection

Jacob Weston is a graphic designer and a musician. When not performing in bands holding down vocal or guitar duties, he's helping to design merchandise and album artwork. His favorite thing is the collection of band T-shirts he's gathered over the years.



Over the years, going to shows, I would always pick up shirts to support bands. I've just been hoarding them since I was 13-14. I've got stuff from local bands that don't exist anymore and stuff from my favorite bands of all time.

One that stands out to me is from a band called Stretch Armstrong's 2000 tour. One of my friends picked it up and gave it to me. That band was kind of an introductory for me to hardcore music, and that kind of launched me into the direction I went in life.

I've got stuff I designed for friend's bands. Shirts and stuff is what transitioned me into doing graphic design like I do now. I've also got shirts from bands I've toured with, like Under Anchor. I have a First Step shirt that I love so much that I rebought it in a different size. It's very youth crew, which speaks to me.

I've got a handful of red ones, like this Verse one from the "From Anger and Rage" tour. I've got an olive green Down to Nothing shirt, and a royal blue Bad Seed tank top, which is actually one of the more valuable shirts that I have. I love looking through all of my shirts and remembering, "This is dope, and I remember when I was

super into this band." I also found my old Set Your Goals shirt, which was at the beginning of the big cartoon, all-over print. It's something I would never wear these days, but I was so into it back in high school.

Fashion is a big part of self-expression. It can be co-opted by people, like the Joy Division shirt. But that doesn't really bother me too much. I feel like it's a way of saying, "This is what I'm into." It can be a way of connecting and meeting people. You can make friendships, and I think that's huge. And I think design really matters, especially with how you present yourself.

In a pandemic, how can you support artists? You can't go to shows, and streaming doesn't compare to buying merchandise. Buying shirts is a way to support bands you care about and way for them to earn revenue.

Recording costs money, and it takes a lot of work and effort to put stuff together. I'm going to continue to buy shirts and support those I care about, probably forever.

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

Now enrolling for spring.
Classes begin January 10.



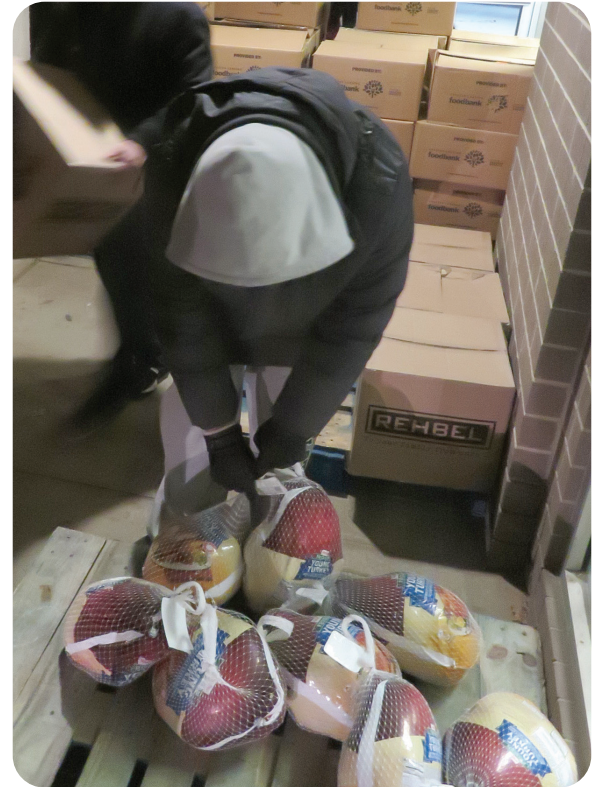
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LANSING COMMUNITY COLLEGE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION/EMPLOYER.



CELEBRATING

GREATER LANSING'S NONPROFITS



Lawrence Cosentino/City Pulse

Volunteers at the LMTS Community Center in south Lansing distributed more than 500 turkey dinners the Monday before Thanksgiving.

Pushing for a better day

Nonprofits pivot from panic to persistence

By LAWRENCE COSENTINO

On the Monday before Thanksgiving 2021, just after dusk, an epic crescent of headlights glimmered in the parking lot at Logan Square, at the corner of Holmes Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in south Lansing.

Dozens of volunteers and friends of LTMS Community Outreach Services scrambled to load more than 500 frozen turkeys, boxed with stuffing, cranberries and other side dishes, into the maws of hatchbacks and trunks.

Horns honked and people yelled “Whooooo!” A man got out of his car and danced, bucking the discipline of the line. Volunteers waved “THANK YOU” signs and yelled “Happy Thanksgiving!” to each car as it exited the lot.

A few blocks away, a slow train rolled across the south side of town. A hopper car was painted with the words “Better days don’t exist.”

There’s plenty of cause for despair, but there’s a better day in front of our faces: the work of Michigan’s 50,000-plus nonprofits, more than 4,000 in Ingham County alone, ranging in size from small, volunteer-led bands like LTMS to well-oiled organizations with 500 employees or

more. As the COVID pandemic rolls like slow freight into its second year, many of these nonprofits are near exhaustion and walking on thin financial ice, just as many of their clients are. Staffs are short-handed, resources are finite and the need is great, but a strong surge of community support, government help and the will to bring a better day into existence keeps them going.

The great tap-out

Cindy Hales, director of community investment at the nonprofit Community Foundation, said she felt “a sense of desperation” among nonprofits in 2020. As 2021 comes to a close, Hales said they are still holding it together, and, in some cases, flourishing.

Widespread predictions that up to 25 percent of nonprofits wouldn’t make it through the pandemic didn’t come true. “Here in the region, we aren’t aware of anyone who closed their doors due to COVID,” Hales said.

She hears a lot of stories from hundreds of area nonprofits as the Community Foundation connects them with sources of funding or helps them with direct grants.

After a brief early pandemic panic, nonprofits got better than ever at communicating their needs to donors and to the public. Out of neces-



Last year, the federal government offered a special \$300 a person deduction to all single filers and married couples for charitable donations, even if they take the standard deduction. The special deduction remains in place this year and has even been enhanced, although a change may make it less attractive.

This year, married couples may deduct \$600. But the break is no longer “above the line,” reducing its value.

Before 2020, givers had to itemize their taxes in order to deduct charitable gifts. That meant they could not also take the standard deduction. Thanks to the CARES Act, however, any taxpayer could deduct up to \$300 and still claim the standard deduction.

The bottom line: If you give a \$300 cash gift to public nonprofits by Dec. 31, or \$600 if a married couple, you’ll likely save on taxes even if you claim the standard deduction.

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ensuring our neighbors have a home for the holidays

Let us take you to a quiet neighborhood not far from you to tell you some stories about how our neighbors see their challenges through. So grab your spectacles and a hot cup of brew. We hope you enjoy these short stories curated just for you.

There were two vacant lots that were given little thought. The grass grew as tall as bamboo, and garbage was thrown there too. The neighbors were tired of the unsightly view; it was long overdue for someone to care about the issue. Partners came together, the neighborhood too, they drew up plans and hired a construction crew. Up sprouted two new homes, one green and one blue, and now these two vacant lots have been renewed. Two aspiring homeowners realized their dreams come true. They were welcomed to the neighborhood when they debuted.

Just a few houses down lived a veteran who struggled with stairs. Getting in and out of his home was turning much too challenging to bear. A group of faithful Toolmen came as quick as a hare and made the necessary accessibility repairs. Now our neighbor can come and go without using the stairs, allowing him to freely visit his grandchildren for whom he deeply loves and cares.

Now we take you to an elderly couple who were so blue. Their cantankerous furnace was causing issues. With money so tight and bills coming due, they wondered, "how could we afford something brand new?" The next they knew, out of the blue, a two-person crew came to the rescue. With their brand new furnace, energy efficient too, they now live comfortably in their home without heating issues.

If all these stories seem too good to be true, let us tell you it isn't a fairytale or hullabaloo. A small nonprofit full of caring people like you are dedicated to helping our neighbors see their challenges through. You see, home is essential. It's a part of everything we do, from housing counseling, building affordable homes, and offering a community tool lending library too!

From all of us at Capital Area Housing Partnership, with much gratitude, we wish you Happy Holidays, and a heartfelt thank you! Join our impact by donating whatever you can do. We need your support to do more in 2022.



Here is how your generous contributions are transforming possibilities for people in our community:

5,068 families impacted by the pandemic are no longer at risk of losing their homes. That amounts to over **\$22.5 million** in relief delivered across our community;

736 households served by our HUD-certified housing counseling team, helping families navigate financial hardships and secure a safe, affordable place to call home;

\$5.3 million invested in developing **5 quality, affordable homes** in Lansing for aspiring homeowners and **32 apartments** preserved for our most vulnerable community members;

Over 40 accessibility ramps were built by our dedicated Tuesday Toolmen volunteers to help our neighbors get in and out of their homes safely;

300+ tools borrowed by our neighbors - equipping them to maintain their homes and keep our neighborhoods beautiful.

Over 6,600 families and individuals served by Capital Area Housing Partnership who are proud to call mid-Michigan home.



CAPITAL AREA
HOUSING
PARTNERSHIP

I want to support Capital Area Housing Partnership!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Card type: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express

Card #: _____ Exp: ____/____/____ CVV: ____

Signature: _____

Amount: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other: _____

To donate, please visit
capitalareahousing.org/donate
or complete this slip and mail to:
Capital Area Housing Partnership
600 W. Maple Street, Suite D
Lansing, MI 48906



CELEBRATING GREATER LANSING'S NONPROFITS

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sity, they picked up a lot of tricks, from inventive, donor-friendly virtual fundraising to car-based turkey distribution.

The result, against all odds, was a “pretty banner year” for nonprofits, Hales said.

Meghan Martin, the director of the Greater Lansing Arts Council, said she has not heard of any nonprofits going under in the arts and culture sector, either.

“Donors really responded to the need and stepped up,” Hales said.

It's a good thing they did, because the need for non-profits is “greater than ever,” according to Brian Philson, the CEO of Highfields, a

social service agency that provides counseling and educational services to a 13-county swath of mid-Michigan.

Philson has a name for 2021: “The great tap-out.”

“People are tapping out, saying ‘I can’t do this anymore,’” Philson said.

Hales is hearing the same thing from hundreds of nonprofits. “They’re exhausted,” she declared. “It’s difficult to operate at these levels for 18 or 20 months, and it’s definitely putting a strain on people to continue to be optimistic, to continue to provide great services and programming.”

Kelley Kuhn, vice president of the Michigan Nonprofit Association, is hearing the same thing from member organizations.

“For many nonprofits, demand for crucial services is still going up, especially for nonprofits that supply basic needs, and revenue numbers

have not come back to pre-pandemic levels,” Kuhn said.

The Greater Lansing Food Bank has distributed 20 percent more food in the past 12 months than it did in the previous 12 months, according to CEO Michelle Lantz. She attributed the surge to a rise in food insecure households, owing to the pandemic, along with an aggressive policy of outreach to underserved communities.

The Tri-County Office on Aging distributed 30 percent more meals in 2020 than in 2019, relying primarily on funds from the CARES act and Ingham County’s elder millage, according to executive director Marion Owen.

In the spring of 2020, with the pandemic looming, the agency stockpiled 50,000 refrigerated and frozen meals. An army of some 1,600

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Too many suits: LMTS Outreach meets real needs

By LAWRENCE COSENTINO

The needs of nonprofits reflect the times. The LMTS Outreach Center at the corner of Holmes Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is home to a food pantry and a Career Clothes Closet where job seekers can find lightly used clothes for interviews and new jobs.

There’s just one problem, according to LMTS volunteer coordinator Joy Gleason.

“Too many suits,” Gleason said. “People have this idea that career clothes mean suits, but those aren’t the kind of jobs are clients are dressing for.”

What the center really needs is “lightly used” black pants, for fast food jobs; sturdy jeans, for construction

jobs; and scrubs, for home health aides and other health care workers.

In a flush labor market, LMTS and other service nonprofits are helping people with limited resources make the first scary, and sometimes costly, jump to a steady job. But they’re not leaving it there.

The center’s next step is a newly launched entrepreneurial networking group.

“It’s our first foray into encouraging people with creativity to go beyond an hourly wage,” Gleason said. “The Chamber of Commerce networking group is intimidating to many people.”

LTMS Outreach began in 1998 as a single room in the Tabernacle of David Church and now helps thousands of tri-county residents get housing, food,



Courtesy photo

LMTS Outreach holds a Community Feed the fourth Saturday of every month at the Tabernacle of David Church, 2645 W. Holmes Road.

utility assistance and a range of vital services, with headquarters in an office suite at 1122 W. Holmes Road.

The ever-changing roster of volunteers includes community members, MSU students and participants in training programs run by Michigan Works! In addition to the food pantry, the Career Clothes Closet and the annual distribution of hundreds of

Thanksgiving turkey dinners, LTMS sponsors Fresh Food Fridays from noon to 2 p.m. at its office suite, hosts a “community feeding” the fourth Saturday of every month at the Tabernacle of David Church at 2645 W. Holmes Rd. and distributes Christmas gift cards for families in need each year.

'Tis the Season of Giving

adventhouse
MINISTRIES

In 35 years, Advent House Ministries has:

- Run Lansing’s only Weekend Day Shelter.
- With volunteers and staff, made more than 28,000 meals/year for 30 years: that’s 840,000 meals.
- Never stopped helping during the 2020 lock down, when the Weekend Day Shelter staff and volunteers flipped our service model and delivered meals to individuals and families in need.
- Over the past 15 years, helped 175 households annually with our Supportive Housing Programs.
- Annually for the past 3 years, helped 100 families with school age children, providing basic needs, referrals, and access to social services with our Shared Housing Intervention Program.
- Helped over 50 people each year get themselves from street homelessness to housing through our PATH Street Outreach Program.
- In the past two years, served the community at large as an Eviction Diversion and COVID Emergency Rental Assistance agency and helped almost 3,000 households with rent and utility payments. Working with community partners, we ensured that federal funding got to the tenants and landlords that needed it to get past COVID and back to stability.
- Worked to team with volunteers, local businesses, and other nonprofit organizations in the Tri-County area to make all this happen.

Help us build a community of hope for those who struggle with poverty and homelessness. We believe help and hope are a group effort!

743 N. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Lansing, MI 48915
517-485-4722 www.adventhouse.com



Do you know ALICE?

Capital Area United Way fights for

ALICE - Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

ALICE families have income but not enough to create a safety net for themselves. When an unexpected crisis or expense occurs, ALICE families are easily shoved into the cycle of poverty. The last 19 months have been a brutal and unrelenting time for ALICE.

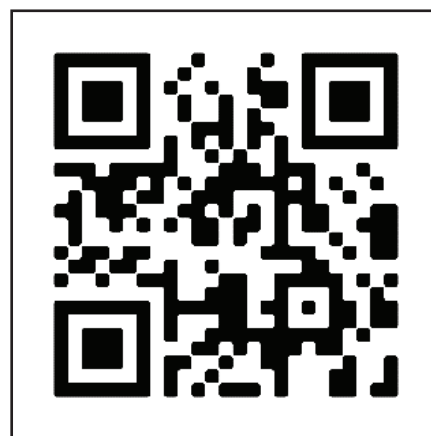
United Way has created a report detailing the specific effects that COVID-19 has had on working families. You can find the full report at: www.micauw.org/ALICE but here are some important points:

- ❖ There have been two groups of ALICE during COVID: Essential workers have been employed the entire time, usually on-site and often with insufficient protective equipment and pay. Non-essential workers, especially in food service and hospitality industries, have been largely unemployed. In both cases, ALICE has shouldered the greatest burdens of COVID-19.
- ❖ Black and Hispanic ALICE workers are facing even higher rates of unemployment and economic hardship than before the pandemic.
- ❖ ALICE seniors have a much greater chance of getting COVID and dying from it and are also much more likely to suffer from isolation and loneliness. Half of all American seniors fall under the ALICE income threshold.

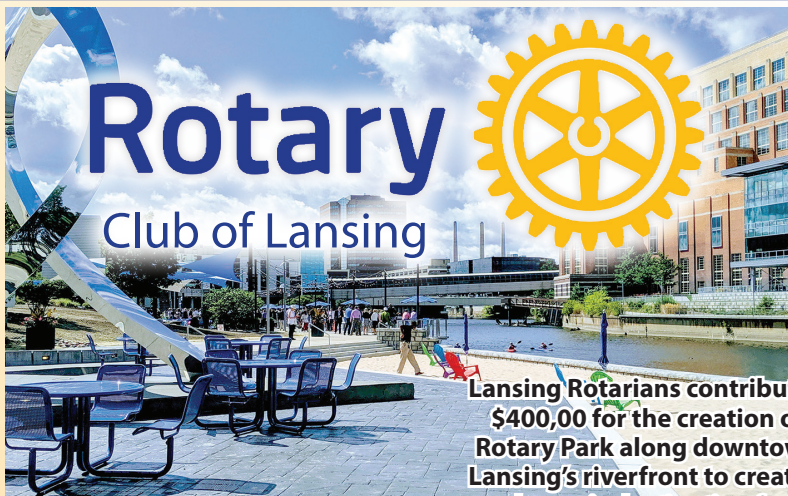
The truth is that ALICE never recovered from the 2008 financial crisis. Now this. With your help, Capital Area United Way is building programs which target the needs of ALICE families. These programs are proactive, collaborative, and effective and they have already helped thousands of tri-county households since the onset of the pandemic. COVID-19 has severely damaged the American middle class. We are doing something about it. You can help.



Capital Area United Way
Clinton | Eaton | Ingham



To learn more and to get involved, visit: www.micauw.org/ALICE



Lansing Rotarians contributed \$400,00 for the creation of Rotary Park along downtown Lansing's riverfront to create a dynamic destination for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Lansing Rotary has donated \$180,000 to local charities over the last 3 years to help our community. We are one of the largest supporters of local charities and our members are leaders in this community and focused on making a difference.

We work with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and national governments toward our top goal of eradicating polio worldwide.

Here are the grants for the past three years for local non-profits:

- 2019 - \$60,000
- 2020 - \$80,000
- 2021 - \$40,000

Our 2021 Holiday Donation to the Gardner International Magnet School of \$12,533 allowed for the purchase of outdoor playground equipment for students with disabilities.



A grant of \$250,000 was awarded to Impression 5 Science Center. This grant helped create a two-story water exhibit aimed at helping children and families explore all of the wonders of our most precious natural resource.

Providing clean drinking water is a global goal of Rotary International and this local hands-on exhibit called "Flow" highlights the importance of water in a fun and immersive way.

lansingrotary.org

Rotary is the world's premier international humanitarian service organization. We are a diverse global network of community, business, and professional leaders who address relevant social causes to change lives and build goodwill and peace at home and abroad.

The 4 Way Test

of the things we think, say, or do:

- Is it the Truth?
- Is it Fair to all concerned?
- Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
- Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Object of Rotary

The object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and in particular to encourage and foster:

1. The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service.
2. High ethical standards in business and profession; the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society.
3. The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life.
4. The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

CELEBRATING GREATER LANSING'S NONPROFITS



Lawrence Cosentino/City Pulse

The Greater Lansing Food Bank moved into a new warehouse and office headquarters in Bath Township in April, just in time to meet spiking demand for its services during the pandemic.

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volunteers distributed a week's worth of meals at a time at homes and designated drop-off spots.

"We didn't miss a beat," Owen said.

For nonprofits serving the homeless, the pandemic roiled up a complex storm of challenges. Social distancing shrank the number of available beds in the emergency shelter system. Shelters were also hit by added costs of cleaning equipment and lost staff members to safety concerns.

Along with physical needs like food and shelter, a host of mental health issues, both familiar and pandemic-specific, have bubbled up in the past year and a half.

"At all levels, children and families are experiencing significantly more stress, anxiety and mental health issues," Brian Philson of Highfields reported. "Is my kid in school today or is it virtual? If it's virtual, what about child care? Should I quit my risky job or stick it out? Maybe it's the loss of a loved one, uncertainty about the future. They're trying to find ways to cope, to minimize the stress, and some of these ways are unhealthy."

5,000 salami sandwiches

Turmoil in the labor market is wreaking havoc with nonprofits, just as it is in the private sector.

Besides spending more on recruitment, agencies are hard-pressed to increase staff and make pay and benefits more competitive.

"The challenge in hiring and retaining staff is tremendous," Highfields' Philson said. "We have more open positions today than we've had in my 16 years at the agency." Highfields normally has about 260 staff members, spread over 13 Michigan counties, but the staff is down to 210 this year.

In many cases, paid staff had to take up the slack for a dearth of volunteers, especially at the height of the pandemic.

Eric Hufnagel, director of the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness, wonders how long nonprofits will withstand the double whammy of rising costs and increased demand for ser-



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CELEBRATING GREATER LANSING'S NONPROFITS

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vices. The coalition is a statewide nonprofit that works with 650 local organizations.

"It's not easy work to begin with, but complicated with the risks of COVID, it's harder to recruit," Hufnagel said.

Many nonprofits have tapped into operating funds to keep going.

"A lot of agencies had to put money out of pocket for technology to adapt to the pandemic, and even for PPE and cleaning supplies," Hufnagel said. "Their reserves shrunk, and if you've ever worked in nonprofit, you'd know those are kind of sacred dollars that are hard to make up by getting a grant, as you can with programs."

Because of these multiple stressors, many nonprofits are walking on thin ice, much like the clients they serve.

"A lot of people fall into homelessness because they are paycheck to paycheck," Hufnagel said. "All it takes is one emergency room visit, or the transmission goes out on your car, and then you lose your job, and so on."

Similarly, Hufnagel fears that many "tapped out" nonprofits are one more bad year, or bad month, away from disaster.

"They can weather the storm now, but they face a serious risk in the future," he said.

A big federal or state grant, like the eviction protection funds that went to the states under the CARES act, does not always help the balance sheets of a beleaguered nonprofit.

Picture a pile of 5,000 salami sandwiches plunked on the doorstep of a local food bank. Mustering the staff and resources needed to distribute the sandwiches before the expiration date of the salami — and many legislative grants have such dates — often puts more financial pressure on the nonprofit charged with handling the windfall, not less.

In 2020 and 2021, politics complicated the picture for many area nonprofits dealing with homelessness. Federal funding through the 2020 CARES Act made it possible to set up an eviction diversion program in every county in Michigan, according to Hufnagel. From July to December 2020, landlords recouped the vast majority of arrears, up to 90 percent, from tenants who got



Courtesy photo

After pivoting to online counseling during the pandemic, staffers at Small Talk Children's Advocacy Center in Lansing found that some children felt more comfortable with Zoom sessions than sitting in a strange room.

behind on their rent, in exchange for agreeing not to evict them.

But in early 2021, a second round of eviction diversion funds got caught in a partisan wringer.

"It became a political issue," Hufnagel said. "One

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CELEBRATING GREATER LANSING'S NONPROFITS

Persistence

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party used it as leverage against the governor and we had a gap of three months where those funds were not released."

When the Legislature finally released the funds in late March, local agencies had to scramble to handle applications and administer the program. The salami was perishable: The feds required that 65 percent of the money to be spent by Oct. 31.

"Agencies had to gear up fast, and that required capacity building," Hufnagel said. "We got a very late start. The Legislature dragged its feet for three months, and that put us at risk of not hitting that number."

It was no simple matter to quickly process the applications and get the word out to tenants and landlords that these funds are available, and inform them how to apply.

"It just made things much more complicated and put much more pressure on communities," Hufnagel said.

'Helicopter money'

News of federal initiatives like the eviction diversion program help to create public perception that "a lot of money is floating down from the federal government to help nonprofits," Hales said.

"There are a lot of competitive grant programs, but it isn't free flowing money, and it's not going to last forever," Hales said.

When nonprofit heads huddle with Hufnagel, they tell him the same thing.

"Most people don't think about this, but when an agency receives a grant, it is typically used for a new expenditure," Hufnagel said. "That may have no connection to the reality of your occupancy cost, staff cost, technology and utility cost, and so on."

Keeping the lights on is not as dramatic as feeding the hungry or housing the homeless. Hales agreed that it's "difficult for organizations to communicate the importance of operating dollars."

Highfields' Philson has seen how "helicopter money coming in from nowhere" can stretch a nonprofit's limits. Over the summer, a local school district asked Highfields for help setting up after-school counseling and educational programs, using CARES funding. Philson's team wanted the programs up and running by September, but "the great tap-out" made it impossible to round up a staff that fast.

"Teachers in this district would normally work all day, stay three hours extra and earn some extra cash," Philson said. "Now no one is interested in doing extra work." The programs launched in December, three months later than planned.

A different bottleneck is complicating operations at the Greater Lansing Food Bank, where volunteers are back "in full force," Lantz said. With safety protocols in place, hundreds of masked and socially distanced volunteers are packing mountains of macaroni, canned food and other goods into boxes, bags and school backpack kits at the Food Bank's spacious new warehouse at 5600 Food Court Drive in Bath Township. ("We were able to name the road," Lantz said.) Others are helping with mobile food distribution, food packing and community garden projects.

However, the nationwide shortage of truck drivers is causing an urgent staffing issue. Donations from retailers, who are in short supply of many items, are down. A large shipment of food from the USDA, a major Food Bank donor, has been bumped from January to June 2022.

"We're facing the same food shortage everyone is," Lantz said. "We can't always buy what we need and get it out in a timely manner. That's where people doing food drives in their communities on our behalf would be very helpful."

(The Food Bank offers guidance for holding a virtual food drive, with food wish lists, templates for social media posts and suggestions for tie-in events like tributes, 5K runs, graduations or birthdays; check out the website or call (517) 853-7800 to get started.)

'I can do this'

The Lansing Area AIDS Network, or LAAN, is a case story in the myriad ways, both tangible and intangible, the pandemic has put pressure on nonprofits.

For two years running, LAAN hasn't been able to do its biggest fundraiser, the Red Ribbon Gala, or participate in the AIDS Walk, which has drawn hundreds of participants in years past.

The virtual Summer Splash raised just over \$8,400, only 56 percent of LAAN's \$15,000 goal.

Because many clients are immunocompromised, in-person services are still being held to a minimum, and that takes a toll on morale.

"We've used to having volunteers here, at the front desk, in the food pantry, making up condom



Lawrence Gosentino/City Pulse

After a year and a half of virtual shows and staged outdoor readings, Riverwalk Theatre is back in 2021-2022 with five staged shows, down from the usual 12.

packets," executive director Kristina Schmidgall said.

Everyone, staff and clients, misses the old days, when LAAN opened up the food pantry a few times a month and clients and staff spent hours chatting and sharing experiences while picking up groceries.

"They got to be with people who understood them, who won't judge them or give them strange looks, a place where they could be themselves," Schmidgall said. "We're hoping at some point we can go back to that, but nobody wants to be the hot spot. Many of our clients are dealing with medical conditions and it just puts people at too great a risk."

Most ominously, as of this fall, LAAN only has one volunteer in its crucial prevention department, which handles HIV testing. How many do they need? "I don't know that we'd even cap it," Schmidgall said. "As many as we could train."

She recommends prevention work as "very rewarding," and she ought to know.

"When I volunteered doing HIV testing, people would come in really upset, in a panic — 'Oh my God, I'm going to die next week,'" she recalled. "Helping them calm down and explaining that it's going to be OK, and they're not going to have to do it alone — they walked out saying, 'I can do this.'"

Schmidgall is not comfortable drawing too many parallels between AIDS and COVID, except

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to condemn the practice of shaming people for getting sick, no matter what the disease.

"The question should not be 'How did you get it?' or 'What were you doing?' but 'Are you getting what you need?'"

Serving together

The pandemic has wrought plenty of devastation, but it has also pushed nonprofits into closer collaboration than ever.

Cheery white and green trucks from the Greater Lansing Food Bank have been seen at dozens of local pandemic relief events all over town. CEO Michelle Lantz is on the phone with her fellow nonprofit heads daily to see how the Food Bank can pitch in.

"A lot of walls were broken down and bridges were built in the pandemic to serve our community members together," Lantz said. "We've known all along that there was great value in that, but sometimes it takes a crisis like this to actually push it forward faster."

The Lansing Board of Water and Light brought a virtual round table of area nonprofits together when the utility hosted financial pandemic relief fairs Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 to help customers who are behind on their utility bills. Among the participating nonprofits were the Capital Area Housing Partnerships, Cristo Rey Community Center, Holy Cross Services, Advent House, the Tri-County Office on Aging, and seven others. The coalition, dubbed "Keeping On Together," plans another round of relief in early 2022.

Human needs such as food, shelter and physical and mental health are tightly interwoven. No less is required of the agencies that strive to meet those needs.

During the pandemic, Cindy Hales of the Community Foundation has seen an "increased openness and interest in collaboration and integration of services among nonprofits." "More and more nonprofits are having conversations with each other and thinking about how they can collaborate, sometimes out of necessity, but also out of an understanding that an issue like housing doesn't exist in a bubble,"

Hales said. "They're working together more than ever to address community issues and that's very encouraging."

Hufnagel doesn't miss a chance to repeat his mantra: "Homelessness is complicated." He works daily with agencies that work on the "front end" of homelessness, by helping people get and keep jobs, catch up on their utility bills, keep food on the table and get an education.

"There is an affordable housing crisis," Hales agreed. "But the issue of housing opens up all of the social factors we have to think about. What puts people in those situations? Health care, education, mental health — all those things feed together."

Creative adaptation

Despite all the challenges facing area nonprofits, the search for a better day goes on.

As the pandemic rolls into 2022, nonprofits are adapting to extreme pressures in creative ways, developing programs and technology that will serve them beyond the current crisis.

Last week's big turkey dinner distribution at LMTS Outreach is a case in point. Volunteer coordinator Joy Gleason reported that all 500-plus turkey dinners were distributed, in a more or less orderly fashion, in about 90 minutes, in spite of that guy who got out of his car and danced. She expects LMTS to do it this way from now on.

"The drive-through distributions were a product of the pandemic, but they actually are so much more efficient than now it's sort of becoming a norm for large scale distribution," Gleason said. "It's something absolutely no one would have thought of without the pandemic."

In 2020, LMTS temporarily closed its food pantry and delivered food packages to seniors and people in need. The Community Foundation helped the nonprofit buy a van.

"They discovered a range of people for whom it was a burden to come to the pantry, because they were sick, lacked transportation, or they were students who couldn't make it to the pantry," Hales of the Community Foundation said. "They've pivoted to making food delivery a part of what they do, not as a short-term solution, but permanently."

In 2020 and 2021, federal and state bans on eviction helped keep homelessness down, with the help of a creative

and unprecedented housing solution.

"The moratoriums served their purpose very well," Hufnagel said. "The number of people who went into homelessness in Michigan actually fell in 2020."

At the height of the pandemic, however, cramped rows of shelter beds were untenable.

"We had to find creative ways to find emergency housing," Hufnagel said. "We placed people in temporary housing in hotels and motels." It was the height of lockdown, when hotels and motels were empty.

"I've never seen anything like it," Hufnagel said. "It was a win-win."

Kelley Kuhn of the Michigan Nonprofit Association has seen a lot of creative adaptation in the past year and a half. Virtual fundraising events are drawing in donors who can't make it to in-person events, including seniors and people with medical conditions, along with Lansing-area expatriates and well-wishers from around the country.

"Some nonprofits who thought it was a temporary opportunity are looking into ways to make it permanent," Kuhn said. "They've gotten more comfortable in that virtual space, and they're even charging, and people are buying virtual tickets and participating in activities on those platforms."

Small Talk Children's Advocacy Center, a nonprofit that supports children and families affected by sexual assault in Ingham and Eaton counties, switched to online counseling sessions during the pandemic. The center recently resumed some in-person sessions, but not before learning an unexpected lesson: Some children felt more

comfortable, and engaged more, sitting in their rooms, talking with a counselor via Zoom, than going to a counseling room in a strange facility.

The Community Foundation helped Forster Woods, an adult day care center in Williamston, get iPads and other technology so family members could check in on clients in lieu of in-person visits.

"As we start to come out of this — I hope — that same technology will allow people who are out of town, or family members who don't live here, to stay connected with Grandma, or whoever, in ways they couldn't do before," Hales said.

Most arts nonprofits have little interest in going virtual. For them, the return to live events, even if it is hedged with lingering COVID caution, is cause for pure celebration.

But the pandemic also spawned hundreds of online concerts, plays, poetry readings and other events that stretched their boundaries of local arts organizations and reached people live concerts couldn't have reached.

Inventive chamber concerts and solo "basement" shout-outs from top players opened up new avenues of expression for the Lansing Symphony Orchestra.

"The idea of going back to the way it was is not so interesting, even if it were possible," LSO executive director Courtney Millbrook said. "If this is our chance to reimagine things, let's take it. We see people doing that in their careers, their relationships, their personal lives, and this is a good time for organizations to do that, too."



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CELEBRATING GREATER LANSING'S NONPROFITS

Four legs and a tale: Animal Placement Bureau helps 'pandemic puppies' find a home

By LAWRENCE COSENTINO

Animal shelters and adoption centers everywhere are grappling with a wave of “pandemic puppies” — dogs drafted into service as companions for humans in the isolation of 2020. After a year and a half of constant companionship, the pups are a bit older, struggling with separation and, in many cases, given up for adoption as their human caregivers leave the house, get tired of them and go on with their lives.

In 21 years of pet adoption work, Lisa Wallace, president of the Lansing-based Animal Placement Bureau, hasn't seen anything like it.

“What I'm hearing from rescue partners in other states, and we're just starting to see here, is — what happens when people return to work? Pandemic puppies have not been taught to be alone.”

Wallace, 54, has been volunteering at a lot of nonprofits since she was 12 years old, starting in a nursing home.

“APB has the most dedicated volunteers I've seen in all that time, but you can only stretch things and juggle things so far,” she said.

The bureau is in great need of foster humans, both short and long term — especially if they're open to nurturing a troubled pet.

“We've always been willing to help dogs with medical needs and behavioral challenges, but that is now the predominant type of dog we're being asked to take right now, rather than just a fraction,” Wallace said. “The dogs we're being asked to help right now are dogs that need more help.”

Citing “skyrocketing rates of behavioral problems,” the Scientific American warned of “a generation of dogs whose acquisition during the pandemic is an unfolding welfare crisis.”

“People who are unemployed or underemployed because of the pandemic — those are the ones who just break my heart,” Wallace said. “They don't want to give up their pets and they're waiting until the last humanly



Lawrence Cosentino/City Pulse

Dogs scanned the lobby of the south Lansing Soldan's for incoming foster people at the Animal Placement Bureau's monthly in-person adoption event Sunday.

possible minute to say, ‘OK, I can't do this anymore.’”

The bureau also handles dogs with severe medical problems. A recent newcomer needed Level 4 surgery, for kidney stones.

“Our adoption fee is \$250, so we have to do quite a bit of adoptions and quite a bit of fundraising to make up for some of the more significant cases we've had,” Wallace said. “We're not going to stop. We're still fundraising, still placing dogs wherever we can.”

The Animal Placement Bureau has been around almost 40 years. It started as the Animal Protection Bureau, fostering dogs, cats and horses, but now only handles dogs. (Cat rescues split off into another group and horse placement led to too many lawsuits.)

The foster-care-based, all-volunteer bureau isn't saddled with the expense of a physical facility and employees, but event-based fundraising came to a virtual halt in 2020 and early 2021.

“Financial donations are the most important thing, but we also need things like dog food, dog treats, supplies like paper towels,” Wallace said.

The bureau resumed its in-person adoption events late this summer, but a hiatus of 18 months took a toll.

“After all this time, people don't know where to find us,” Wallace said.

In-person adoption events are held at the Okemos Soldan's on the second Sunday of the month and in south Lansing on the fourth Sunday.

CELEBRATING GREATER LANSING'S NONPROFITS

City Pulse's special nonprofit contributors

By **CHELSEA PHILLIPS**

Each year, the holiday season highlights areas of need within the community. Organizations offer help not only during these especially difficult times, but throughout the whole year as well. These seven organizations are local nonprofits that provide a variety of resources ranging from food and housing to education and financial services. These nonprofits were also kind enough to support this year's annual nonprofit issue through their advertising.

Advent House Ministries

743 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Lansing
517-485-4722

Adventhouse.com

Advent House Ministries is an organization dedicated toward lending a helping hand to the homeless. This nonprofit has been fighting against urban poverty in Lansing for more than 30 years.

Services provided by Advent House include free meals, shelter and housing opportunities and education programs. Advent House aims to help assist homeless people with the ultimate goal being attaining self-sufficiency.

Allen Neighborhood Center

1611 E. Kalamazoo St., Lansing
517-367-2468

allenneighborhoodcenter.org

Serving Lansing's east-side community, the center has programs assisting with food, housing and healthcare coverage. Each Monday, its food pantry distributes food to those in need. On Wednesday afternoons, it offers a year round farmers market. It also helps residents enroll in healthcare plans and provide connections to handyman services and subsidized housing.



Capital Area Housing Partnership

600 W. Maple St., Suite D, Lansing
517-332-4663

capitalareahousing.org

Serving the Mid-Michigan region, this organization offers workshops, classes, counseling

and assistance for renters, homebuyers and homeowners. It offers additional relief through the Pandemic Assistance Program. It also houses a tool lending library and each week volunteers build accessibility ramps and safety devices for senior and disabled citizens.



**CAPITAL AREA
HOUSING
PARTNERSHIP**

Capital Area Literacy Coalition
1028 E. Saginaw St., Lansing
517-485-4949

thereadingpeople.org

Assisting children, teens and adults of the Greater Lansing community, this organization helps individuals with reading, writing and speaking English. Volunteers are trained to tutor in basic reading, English as a second language, or GED preparation. Individuals complete an evaluation to identify specific needs before being paired with a tutor.



Capital Area United Way

330 Marshall St., Suite 203, Lansing
517-203-5000

micauw.org

Supporting the tri-county area, this organization focuses on three main areas of need: education, health and financial stability. It offers more than 30 programs and creates new programs or partners with existing organizations when there are unfulfilled needs. Running the local 211 help line, it provides access to thousands of services.



Junior Achievement of Mid Michigan

600 W. St. Joseph St., Suite 2G, Lansing
517-371-5437

juniorachievement.org

Also serving the tri-county area, this organization helps K-12 students learn the skills needed to be successful in a global economy. It offers in-person and virtual program options for participating school districts. Each



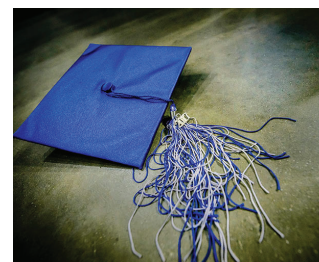
**Junior
Achievement**
of Mid Michigan

grade-level program aims to create financial success by focusing on how to earn, spend and save money.

Lansing Community College Foundation

309 N. Washington Square, Lansing
517-483-1985
lcc.edu/foundation

Offering academic scholarships, this foundation helps remove financial barriers to higher education. The foundation helps with over \$425,000 each year. Interested students must apply for eligibility and hold a minimum grade point average. Scholarships are available to students new and returning, full-time and part-time and those inside or outside of the district.



Northwest Initiative

510 W. Ottawa St., 2nd Floor, Lansing
517-999-2894
NWLansing.org

Northwest Initiative is a nonprofit organization that operates out of the First Presbyterian Church on Ottawa Street. Northwest Initiative's major operation is food distribution; it often holds food drives in Lansing neighborhoods where people can come and collect several different food items to bring back home. Northwest Initiative also has its own mobile farmers market, which drives across Lansing and hands out fresh fruit and produce.



Rotary Club of Lansing

12417 W. Grand River Hwy., Eagle
517-374-8989
lansingrotary.org

Providing services to the tri-county area and internationally, the club works toward impacting communities through service projects and grants. Globally, the organization is focused on securing clean water resources. Locally, it has helped fund a water exhibit at Impression 5 Science Center and Rotary Park on Lansing's riverfront.



CELEBRATING GREATER LANSING'S NONPROFITS

Welcome to Lansing: Refugee Development Center shines in a crisis

By LAWRENCE COSENTINO

Is there such a thing as pent-up love? Politics and the pandemic reduced the flow of refugees to greater Lansing to a trickle by 2020, but that has changed dramatically in recent weeks. The response in Lansing has floored Erika Brown Binion, executive director of the Refugee Development Center. The center is asking for, and getting, generous help welcoming about 300 refugees from Afghanistan to greater Lansing.

"The doors are back open," Brown Binion said. "We're back to a long tradition of bipartisan support for accepting refugees, because it's the right thing to do and we've always been a welcoming country. We have a lot of people on the ground here, willing to do the work."

The center was already busy helping Lansing's refugee community get through the pandemic, while meeting the same challenges all nonprofits faced.

"We had to pivot, just like everyone else," Brown Binion said. "We shifted to a lot of crisis intervention for families who needed much more navigation of systems, and language support was critical."

Although the flow of refugees to Lansing all but stopped in 2020 during the pandemic, the center was still deeply engaged in supporting a broad range of refugees from previous years navigate life in Lansing.

"They were essential workers. We had two parents going off to work and kids trying to do virtual schooling at home," Brown Binion said. "We had to shift to a lot more case management and help people with food, housing and utility needs, Internet payments, not having access to devices to live in a virtual world — all of those pieces some of us have

had to experience in our own families but maybe take for granted."

The evacuation of Afghanistan had a dramatic effect on refugee numbers in October and November. The U.S. has evacuated about 65,000 people from Afghanistan, according to Brown Binion. Lansing has resettled about 133 already. In all, Michigan is set to welcome about 1,600 Afghan refugees, and Lansing will welcome about 300.

The goal is to get them all settled before the end of February.

St. Vincent Catholic Charities handles the initial resettlement of refugees in Lansing, welcoming them at the airport, finding them a place to live and arranging medical appointments. The Refugee Development Center works in tandem with St. Vincent within days of a refugee's arrival, but its services become crucial over the longer term, after the initial resettlement period has lapsed.

"After 90 days, resettlement work is over and people are supposed to be on their own, but we all know that takes much longer," Brown Binion said. "That's why we exist."

The day we talked, Brown Binion had just helped five families enroll their kids in school, four days after they arrived in Lansing.

"We're doing a lot of welcoming work, enrolling in schools, enrolling in English classes, doing home visits, delivering welcome kits, getting people on their feet and able to live here in this community," Brown Binion said.

To help the center meet this new influx, it has established a Welcome Home Fund that will help the families in myriad ways, from tutoring in English to long-term housing costs.

Newly arrived families are added daily to the virtual giving tree on



Courtesy photo

Refugee Development Center intern Jack Gasper, a senior at MSU, answers questions about high school.

the center's Facebook page, where donors can find out what each family wishes for the most, from blankets to a skateboard.

There is a volunteer waiting list, with many virtual volunteer opportunities. When the center recently moved to an in-person system of delivering veggie boxes to clients, every volunteer shift filled up within a day or two.

"It speaks to how welcoming Lansing is," Brown Binion said.

The center has added three full-time staffers in the past year. The widespread shortage of employees, inside and outside of the nonprofit sector, is not a problem. Workplace flexibility and a culture of dedication help keep the staff from burning out.

"We take great care in how we approach each workers' needs," Brown Binion said. Most members

of her staff were volunteers at first. "That passion has helped people stick around during this really tough time," she said. "We also spend a lot of time talking about self-care, and our own health and safety first, in order to be able to help the families we work with."

The center has come a long way since it started 20 years ago with one staff member and a handful of volunteers. In 2021, the paid staff is well over 20 and volunteers number over 300.

"It's a pretty sweet place to be and I'm pretty proud of it," Brown Binion said. "We're grateful to live in this community that is so welcoming. When you see someone who might be from another place, give them a friendly smile. Come join us at the RDC and you can see a whole world right here in your backyard."

You lessen crime by eliminating poverty. You lessen crime with universal healthcare, public housing, strong unions, high wages, universal childcare, and free college. You reduce violence by creating happy, healthy communities that aren't fighting over material resources.

In the wealthiest country in the world, we'd rather fund war (abroad and within) than to invest in social safety nets that would benefit everyone in every way.

It's not that we can't afford it, it's that we've been conditioned to think that way.

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Jonesin' Crossword

By Matt Jones

"All Rise"—it happens because it's scientific.

by Matt Jones

Across

1 Polish-born author Sholem

5 Abrupt sound at the beginning?

10 Serpentine warning

14 Cut back

15 Make a court statement

16 "Inner" prefix

17 Pentagon figure?

18 High school divisions

19 Conflict of characters, in Greek drama

20 Run-down

22 24-hr. bank amenity

23 Some Crockpot meals

24 "Sesame Street" character who mainly tweets numbers on Twitter

26 "Muy ____!"

27 Prefix meaning "ear" or "gold"

28 Stop temporarily

32 Sea near Palm Springs

35 Time changers (abbr.)

36 Level of a stadium

37 Smart ____

38 "Alter ____" (Fox singing competition show)

39 When you may have to be out of an AirBnB

40 Neighbor of Nevada

41 Bowen Yang's show, for short

42 British insurance syndicate

43 Early Beatles hit

45 "La mer" contents

46 "30 for 30" cable channel

47 Upscale hotel offering

52 Met dos

54 Track placement

55 React like a superfan

56 Apple on a desktop

57 Influential industry person

59 "What have ____ to show for it?"

60 Initiation procedure

61 California mission founder Junipero

62 "____ Kleine Nachtmusik"

63 Stag or doe

64 "No Logo" author Naomi

65 Person with a vision

Down

1 Secluded

2 Comedian Silverman

3 Largest of the Greek Islands

4 Exposes academic dishonesty, after the temperature conversion?

5 Observe covertly

6 Just-washed

7 Home of Shakespeare, after the temperature conversion?

8 Pleasant outside

9 YouTube interruptors

10 Old cereal slogan, after the temperature conversion?

11 Know-how

12 Store securely

13 People with Roman numerals after their names, usually

21 Concerned query

23 Snifter sample

25 "Ode on a Grecian ____"

26 "Butter" group

29 Response on the stand

30 Tournament placement

31 Seashore fliers

32 "Better Call ____" (AMC drama series)

33 Part of a sax ensemble

34 Stick around, then go

38 Tight position?

39 Feeling of dissatisfaction

41 China's Sun Yat-____

42 "____ the Right One In" (2008 movie)

44 Ottawa VIPs

48 Pong platform

49 ____ Boogie ("The Nightmare Before Christmas" villain)

50 Frontiersman who crossed the Appalachians

51 Head into

52 Brace (oneself)

53 Friend, in France

54 Jessica of "7th Heaven"

57 Rebuking noise that sounds even more pretentious with an "I" sound

58 "I'll Be Your Mirror" photographer Goldin

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Answers on page 35

SUDOKU

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

Advanced

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 35

Free Will Astrology

By Rob Breznsky

December 1-7, 2021

ARIES (March 21–April 19): It's a favorable time to get excited about your long-range future—and to entertain possibilities that have previously been on the edges of your awareness. I'd love to see you open your heart to the sweet dark feelings you've been sensing, and open your mind to the disruptive but nourishing ideas you need, and open your gut to the rumbling hunches that are available. Be brave, Aries! Strike up conversations with the unexpected, the unknown, and the undiscovered.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20): A Tumblr blogger named Evan (lotad.tumblr.com) addressed a potential love interest. "Do you like sleeping, because so do I," he wrote. "We should do it together sometime." You might want to extend a similar invitation, Taurus. Now is a ripe time for you to interweave your subconscious mind with the subconscious mind of an ally you trust. The two of you could generate extraordinary healing energy for each other as you lie together, dozing in the darkness. Other recommended activities: meditating together; fantasizing together; singing together; making spiritual love together. (PS: If you have no such human ally, sleep and meditate with a beloved animal or imaginary friend.)

GEMINI (May 21–June 20): Gemini author Chuck Klosterman writes, "It's far easier to write why something is terrible than why it's good." That seems to be true for many writers. However, my life's work is in part a rebellion against doing what's easy. I don't want to chronically focus on what's bad and sick and desolate. Instead, I aspire to devote more of my energy to doing what Klosterman implies is hard, which is to write sincerely (but not naively) about the many things that are good and redemptive and uplifting. In light of your current astrological omens, Gemini, I urge you to adopt my perspective for your own use in the next three weeks. Keep in mind what philosopher Robert Anton Wilson said: "An optimistic mindset finds dozens of possible solutions for every problem that the pessimist regards as incurable."

CANCER (June 21–July 22): An organization in Turkey decided to construct a new building to house its workers. The Saruhanbey Knowledge, Culture, and Education Foundation chose a plot in the city of Manisa. But there was a problem. A three-centuries-old pine tree stood on the land. Local authorities would not permit it to be cut down. So architects designed a building with spaces and holes that fully accommodated the tree. I recommend you regard this marvel as a source of personal inspiration in the coming weeks and months. How could you work gracefully with nature as you craft your future masterpiece or labor of love? How might you work around limitations to create useful, unusual beauty?

LEO (July 23–Aug. 22): Author Melissa Broder wrote a preposterous essay in which she ruminated, "Is fake love better than real love? Real love is responsibility, compromise, selflessness, being present, and all that shit. Fake love is magic, excitement, false hope, infatuation, and getting high off the potential that another person is going to save you from yourself." I will propose, Leo, that you bypass such ridiculous thinking about love in the coming weeks and months. Here's why: There's a strong chance that the real love at play in your life will feature magic and excitement, even as it requires responsibility, compromise, selflessness, and being present.

VIRGO (Aug. 23–Sept. 22): Virgo author Andre Dubus III describes times when "I feel stupid, insensitive, mediocre, talentless and vulnerable—like I'm about to cry any second—and wrong." That sounds dreadful, right? But it's not dreadful for him. Just the opposite. "I've found that when that happens," he concludes, "it usually means I'm writing pretty well, pretty deeply, pretty rawly." I trust you will entertain a comparable state sometime soon, Virgo. Even if you're not a writer, the bounty and fertility that emerge from this immersion in vulnerability will invigorate you beyond what you can imagine.

LIBRA (Sept. 23–Oct. 22): The problem with putting two and two together is that sometimes you get four, and sometimes you get 22." Author Dashiell Hammett said that, and now I'm passing it on to you—just in time for a phase of your cycle when putting two and two together will probably not bring four, but rather 22 or some other irregularity. I'm hoping that since I've given you a heads-up, it won't be a problem. On the contrary. You will be prepared and will adjust faster than anyone else—thereby generating a dose of exotic good fortune.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23–Nov. 21): In her poem "Is/Not," Scorpio poet Margaret Atwood tells a lover; "You are not my doctor, you are not my cure, nobody has that power; you are merely a fellow traveler." I applaud her for stating an axiom I'm fond of, which is that no one, not even the person who loves you best, can ever be totally responsible for fixing everything wrong in your life. However, I do think Atwood goes too far. On some occasions, certain people can indeed provide us with a measure of healing. And we must be receptive to that possibility. We shouldn't be so pathologically self-sufficient that we close ourselves off from tender help. One more thing: Just because that help may be imperfect doesn't mean it's useless and should be rejected.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22–Dec. 21): "All my days I have longed equally to travel the right road and to take my own errant path," wrote Norwegian-Danish novelist Sigrid Undset. I think she succeeded in doing both. She won a Nobel Prize for Literature. Her trilogy about a 14th-century Norwegian woman was translated into 80 languages. I conclude that for her—as well as for you in the coming weeks and months—traveling the right road and taking your own errant path will be the same thing.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22–Jan. 19): Capricorn author Susan Sontag unleashed a bizarre boast, writing, "One of the healthiest things about me—my capacity to survive, to bounce back, to prosper—is intimately connected with my biggest neurotic liability: my facility in disconnecting from my feelings." Everything about her statement makes me scream NO! I mean, I believe this coping mechanism worked for her; I don't begrudge her that. But as a student of psychology and spirituality, I know that disconnecting from feelings is, for most of us, the worst possible strategy if we want to be healthy and sane. And I will advise you to do the opposite of Sontag in the coming weeks. December is Stay Intimately Connected with Your Feelings Month.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20–Feb. 18): In some small towns in the Philippines, people can be punished and fined for gossiping. Some locals have become reluctant to exchange tales about the sneaky, sexy, highly entertaining things their neighbors are doing. They complain that their freedom of speech has been curtailed. If you lived in one of those towns, I'd advise you to break the law in the coming weeks. In my astrological opinion, dynamic gossip should be one of your assets. Staying well-informed about the human comedy will be key for your ability to thrive.

PISCES (Feb. 19–March 20): "Originality consists in thinking for yourself, and not in thinking unlike other people," wrote Piscean author James Fitzjames Stephen (1829–1894). Another way to say it: Being rebellious is not inherently creative. If you primarily define yourself by rejecting and reacting against someone's ideas, you are being controlled by those ideas. Please keep this in mind, dear Pisces. I want you to take full advantage of your astrological potential during the next 12 months, which is to be absolutely original. Your perceptions and insights will be unusually lucid if you protect yourself from both groupthink and a compulsive repudiation of groupthink.

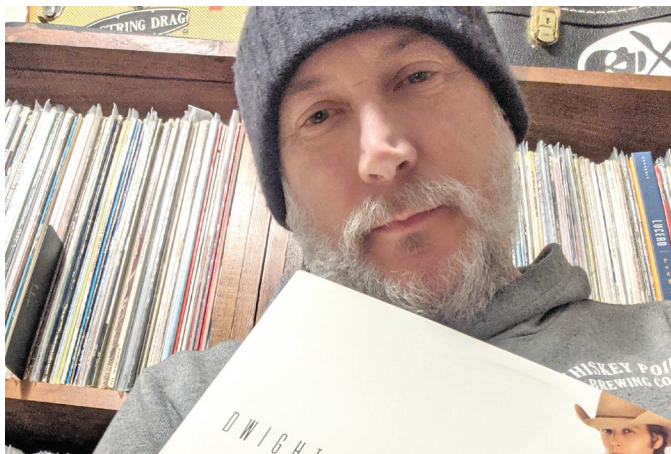
Go to [RealAstrology.com](#) to check out Rob Breznsky's EXPANDED WEEKLY AUDIO HOROSCOPES and DAILY TEXT MESSAGE HOROSCOPES. The audio horoscopes are also available by phone at 1-877-873-4888 or 1-900-950-7700.

TURN IT DOWN!

Loud dispatches from Lansing's music scene

BY RICH TUPICA

**LIFE CHANGING ALBUMS: JEFFERY GOWER ON
'HILLBILLY DELUXE' LP BY DWIGHT YOAKAM**



Jen Sygit discovered Tim O'Brien & Darrell Scott's "Real Time" the year it was released, 2005. (Courtesy photos)

The Stick Arounds' guitarist-vocalist dishes on a crucial country album

With a shared appreciation for classic power-pop bands like Elvis Costello, Big Star, Sloan and Teenage Fanclub, the members of The Stick Arounds have issued three full-length albums and a handful of hook-filled singles since its genesis a decade ago.

On each release, the band sonically explores various other catchy guitar-driven sounds, think of The Byrds or The Knack. Back in 2019, the prolific outfit released one brand new single for each month of the year — each soaked with dynamic vocal harmonies and pounding backbeats. Then, in April of this year, the band unveiled its latest collection of tracks, the "Waiting for the Click" EP, a Phonophore Records and GTG Records co-release.

The band's guitarist and vocalist, Jeffery Gower, recently dished on an album that helped shaped him: Dwight Yoakam's 1987 "Hillbilly Deluxe" LP. Issued by Reprise Records, Gower found the wistful, bittersweet "Bakersfield Sound"-style country record soon after its release — when he was just 18 years old. Here's what Gower recalls about that crucial discovery.

What led you to this amazing Dwight LP?

The song "Little Ways" was a radio hit at the time. My dad always had the

radio on in the garage or the truck, so I heard it frequently. "Guitars, Cadillacs" was an earlier hit, but didn't see as much radio play from what I recall.

Were you a fan right away, or was it a grower album?

It had an immediate impact on me. I mean, I was used to listening to country all the time, and I enjoyed it most of the time, but it was not something I typically did around my friends. And I rarely talked about music with my dad until this record came out. Of course, he immediately compared it to Buck Owens, which is the correct conclusion, though I wasn't quite into Buck at that time.

What aspects of the album touch you the most and why?

It's Dwight Yoakam, so the vocals are top-notch. He has such a pure, clean and natural voice. His depth of control is otherworldly. It sure doesn't hurt to have Pete Anderson as your guitar-slinger, one of the greats with a Telecaster. But I'm a song guy. Writing and arranging are what I look for first, and Dwight does these with talent equal to his vocals.

How would you describe this album to someone who has never heard it before?

This album has obvious traditional country sounds within, chord structure,

stories, vocals, fiddle, but the production and playing were definitely modern at the time. Country had better production in the '80s than rock and pop, so I feel this album has more staying power for long-term listening. It doesn't sound as dated. But I digress. Absolute torch-and-twang with a beer chaser.

In what ways has this album directly affected your life, or musical style?

In my teens, I was a rocker. Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, R.E.M., The Cult, Metallica, and all that. Country was my dad's music, and I enjoyed it, but again, I didn't listen to it outside of home. "Hillbilly Deluxe" made me realize that country could also be cool and sexy. It shaped how I approached listening to country albums afterward. It definitely helped when it came time for me to start writing my own country songs. Even now when writing I think to myself, "Is this how Dwight would do it?"

Looking back, do you perceive the record, or Dwight himself, any differently these days?

I think Dwight is an artist who has retained his talent career-long. While some of the newer albums lack the energy and "cool factor" of the earlier stuff, the songs are still great. "Buenas Noches from a Lonely Room" (1988) is

where he really became cemented as a writer/arranger for me. Then, 1993's "This Time" might just be the greatest country album of all time, and that's where I'd recommend the uninitiated start. I love his late '90s stuff, like "A Long Way Home" (1998) a whole bunch, as well. Also, he's also a hell of an actor.

As for your own music, what have you been concentrating on these days?

I have several irons in the fire. My long-time band, The Stick Arounds, is always writing and recording. We've had a busy autumn with live shows in and out of state. I'm working on a country album with Isaac Vander Schuur. That project was interrupted by the pandemic and I'm slow getting back to it, but it's going to be great and will feature some Lansing heavy-hitters playing with me. Very recently I've been writing new material in the alt-country vein and talking with some friends about a new band. Pretty ambitious for an aging hack!

Next show:

The Stick Arounds

Horrock's Beer Garden
7420 W Saginaw Hwy, Lansing
5 p.m.-9 p.m.

FREE
stickaroundsmusic.com

OUT on the TOWN

Events & Happenings in Lansing This Week

Events must be entered through the calendar at 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.

LIVE + LOCAL

Green Door

2005 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing

Soulstice

Friday, Dec. 3

Gina Garner & The All Night Long Band

Saturday, Dec. 4

Lansing Brewing Co.

518 E. Shiawassee St., Lansing

Tipsy Terrariums

Sunday, Dec. 5, 4-6 p.m.

Urban Beat

1213 Turner Rd., Lansing

Browngirl Productions Presents Dreamland

Thursday, Dec. 2, 7 p.m.

Robin Theatre

1105 S. Washington Ave., Lansing

Laurel Premo

Wednesday, Dec. 1, 7:30 p.m.



Holiday Fun at Horrocks

7420 W. Saginaw Hwy., Lansing

Dec. 3, Friday, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Dec. 12, Sunday, noon to 4 p.m.

Dec. 18, Saturday, noon to 4 p.m.

Shophorrocks.com

Horrocks is turning its little corner of Lansing into the North Pole on Friday with a cavalcade of Christmas fun. There's a smorgasbord of events radiating with holiday

cheer for you to choose from, including a winter petting zoo with actual reindeer (just don't tell Santa Claus) and live holiday musical performances. To top it all off, there will be sea-

sonal drinks and snacks. After all, what would any Christmas party be without all the fresh hot chocolate you can drink? This event is ideal for families with young children.

Wednesday, December 1

Allen Farmers Market - 3-6 p.m. 2100 E Michigan Avenue, Lansing.

Book on Every Bed - Children's Book Drive - Drop off 10 a.m.-9 p.m. through Dec. 13. Grand Ledge Area District Library, 131 E Jefferson St, Grand Ledge. gladl.org

Holiday Tree Lighting - 6:30-7:30 p.m. Veterans Memorial Gardens, 2074 N Aurelius Rd., Holt. delhitownship.com.

Laurel Premo at The Robin - 7:30 p.m. The Robin Theatre, 1105 S Washington Ave, Lansing. www.facebook.com.

Light and Shadow - Michigan Landscapes by Brandt MacLean - 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saper Galleries and Custom Framing, 433 Albert Ave, East Lansing. 517-351-0815.

Michigan Made | Holiday Art Exhibition - through Dec. 23. 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center, 119 N. Washington Sq., Lansing. lansingartgallery.org.

Michigan Young Birders Network Virtual Meeting - via Zoom. 7-8 p.m. Michigan Audubon, 2310 Science Parkway, # 200, Okemos. michiganaudubon.org.

Threads of Wisdom: Stewardship - In-person or on Zoom. 6:30-7:30 p.m. Weavers of the Web, 809 Center St., Suite 7, Lansing. weaversoftheweb.org

Thursday, December 2

The B & I Bar - DLJ - 6:30 p.m. B & I Bar, 5247 Old Lansing Rd, Lansing.

Browngirl Productions Presents Dreamland - Join us for a showcase of visual arts through painting, poetry, and short feature films. 7-11 p.m. UrbanBeat, 1213 Turner St. Old Town, Lansing. urbanbeatevents.com.

Capital Area Audubon Society - Learn about Capital Area Audubon's East Lansing Christmas Bird Count. 7-8:30 p.m. Zoom, capitalareaaudubon.org.

Stitch 'N Bitch - Bring your yarn or thread for an evening of fiber arts and chit-chat. 5-8 p.m. Keys To Manifestation, 809 Center #7, Lansing. 517-974-5540.

Together We Will Improvise - A light-hearted evening of improvisation. 7:30 p.m. Studio 60 at MSU Auditorium, 542 Auditorium Rd, East Lansing.

Friday, December 3

Clayworks Holiday Sale - Dec. 3, 2-8 p.m. Dec. 4, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Clayworks Studio, 13121 Wacousta Rd., Grand Ledge.

Dinosaur Safari - 9:45 a.m. Impression 5 Science Center, 200 Museum Dr, Lansing. 517-485-8116. impression5.org.

Peanut Barrel - Dan Dan returns for another performance. 8 p.m. The Peanut Barrel, 521 E Grand River Rd, East Lansing.

Pre-Parade Party - Get a kit to decorate a gingerbread house and see the train display while you wait for parade. 5-7 p.m. Grand Ledge Area District Library, 131 E Jefferson St, Grand Ledge. gladl.org

Sound an Echo: Sara Pajunen and Rachael Kilgour - 7:30-10 p.m. University United Methodist Church, 1120 S. Harrison, East Lansing. tenpoundfiddle.org.

Spartan Upcycle Fridays: Wintery Paper Wreaths - 12-6 p.m. MSU Broad Art Lab, 565 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing.

St Johns Peppermint Parade Featuring St Nicholas - 6:30-7:30 p.m. Downtown. downtownstjohnsmi.com.

Together We Will Improvise - A light-hearted evening of improvisation. 8 p.m. Studio 60 at MSU Auditorium, 542 Auditorium Rd, East Lansing.

Winter Take-Home Crafts @ GLADL - 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Grand Ledge Area District Library, 131 E Jefferson St, Grand Ledge. gladl.org

Saturday, December 4

14th Annual Scrooge Scramble 5K Run/Walk - 1232 Turner St. 9 a.m.-12 p.m. Lansing. iloveoldtown.org.

9th Annual Phil Denny & Friends Christmas Collective - 7:30-9 p.m. Studio 414, 414 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing.

Clayworks Holiday Sale - December 4, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. at Clayworks Studio, 13121 Wacousta Road, Grand Ledge.

Curators Tour - Join us for our last Saturday tour this fall! 2-3 p.m. Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, 547 E Circle Dr, East Lansing. 517-884-4800.

Dinosaur Safari - 9:45 a.m. Impression 5 Science Center, 200 Museum Dr, Lansing. 517-485-8116. impression5.org.

Family Day: Place - First Saturday means Family Day at the MSU Broad Art Museum! 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, 547 E Circle Dr, East Lansing.

Jolly Holiday Market - Artists; baked goods; toys; woodworking; jewelry and more. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. REO Town Marketplace, 1027 S Washington St, Lansing. reotownmarketplace.com.

Mason Orchestral Society Concert - 7-9 p.m. Martin Luther High School, 2001 E Grand River, Lansing. masonorchestras.org.

Michigan Made | Holiday Art Exhibition - 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center, 119 N. Washington Sq., Lansing. 917-833-9963. lansingartgallery.org.

Events

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Papermaking Workshop: The Unexpected + Rejected - Rethink unwanted items! 1-4 p.m. Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, 547 E Circle Dr, East Lansing. 517-884-4800. broadmuseum.msu.edu.

South Lansing Holiday Market - Shop local for the best holiday gifts. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. South Lansing Community Development Association, 800 W. Barnes Ave, Lansing. 517-374-5700.

St. Johns Holiday Market - 12-5 p.m. Downtown St Johns. downtownstjohnsmi.com.

Toastmasters Meeting - via Zoom. 9:30-11:45 a.m. MSU Federal Credit Union, 4825 E Mt Hope Rd, East Lansing. 517-505-1449. 5799. toastmastersclubs.org.

Together We Will Improvise - A light-hearted evening of improvisation. 8 p.m. Studio 60 at MSU Auditorium, 542 Auditorium Rd, East Lansing.

Williamston Pop Up Art & Craft Sale - 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Keller's Plaza, 107 S. Putnam, Williamston.

Winter Glow - 2-5 p.m. Downtown East Lansing, East Lansing. cityofeastlansing.com.

Winterfest - parade & activities - see laingsburgbusiness.org website for more information 3-9 p.m. Laingsburg.

Sunday, December 5

Annual How-to-Holiday! - Try your hand at making a variety of unique custom gifts. 1-5 p.m. Lansing Makers Network, 2730 Alpha Access St., Lansing. 517-234-4566.

Colliding Galaxies and Monster Black Holes - 1-3 p.m. The Facility for Rare Isotope Beams, 640 S Shaw Lane, East Lansing. 517-908-7573.

Delta Community Choir Presents: Seasons of Love Live Concert - benefitting "Canines for Change" 4-5:30 p.m. Grand Ledge High School Auditorium, 820 Spring St., Grand Ledge.

The Element of Surprise - 3 p.m. Lansing. lansingsymphony.org.

Jolly Holiday Market -Unique holiday shopping. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. REO Town Marketplace, 1027 S Washington, Lansing. reotownmarketplace.com.

Lap Swim For Charity - donate 10 non perishable items for our local food bank! 8 a.m.-12 p.m. Mason Aquatic Center, 1001 S. Barnes St., Mason. www.masonk12.net.

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Together We Will Improvise - A light-hearted evening of improvisation. 2 p.m. Studio 60 at MSU Auditorium, 542 Auditorium Rd, East Lansing.

Monday, December 6

Comedy Night - 9-11:30 p.m. Crunchy's, 254 W Grand River Ave, East Lansing. 517-351-2506. crunchyseastlansing.com.

Jump Into Reading - Join Ms. Anna at the Playground of Dreams (Pavilion 2) for stories, songs, and activities. 11-11:30 a.m. Playground of Dreams, 100 Howe Dr., Eaton Rapids. eradl.org.

Tuesday, December 7

Board Game Meet Up - Ages 18 & up. 6:30 - 10:30 p.m. Spare Time Bowling Alley, 3101 E Grand River, Lansing.

Family Storytime - for 1-6 year olds. 11-11:30 a.m. Grand Ledge Area District Library, 131 E Jefferson St.

Sporcle Live! Trivia - 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Crunchy's, 254 W Grand River Ave, East Lansing. crunchyseastlansing.com.

Winter Wildlife Holiday Tree Craft - Learn what animals do to adapt in the winter and create crafts for a Holiday Wildlife tree. 6-7:30 p.m. Grand Ledge Area District Library, 131 E. Jefferson St., Grand Ledge. gladl.org



Thank you, Lansing!

We're so excited to have been voted Top of the Town! We inside the firm know about the great things we're doing (and working towards), but we'd be lying if we said we didn't crave the external validation too. So thank you!

And be sure to keep your eyes peeled for what we've got coming next. We love being top of the town, but we're aspiring to be top of the entire state as we work towards shaping a better justice system for every Michigander.

-Coontz Law



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CityPULSE

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FOOD & DRINK

DINING OUT IN GREATER LANSING

Pomegranate season's greetings

By ARI LeVAUX

As holiday talk builds to a festive pitch, and the cold darkness moves to embrace you, don't sleep on pomegranate season. It's on, and ready to sneak back into your life.

With a fresh pomegranate in your palm, you have magic at your fingertips. Wave your hand and food becomes more beautiful, more delicious and more exciting. Toss those juicy rubies on salad, soup, steak, linguine al fungi, Brazilian black bean soup, granola and yogurt. The flavor added by these fleshy seed packages, called arils, matches the color: sharp and sweet.

Those arils don't just make a pizzazz-y garnish, they can be used as the substance of a meal, as one would use rice or pasta. A plate of fried arils with eggs on top, for example, or a bowl of arils and salad. So can a bowl of plain arils, which looks like a bowl full of jewels and tastes like an unparalleled luxury.

Thus, the fall harvest is a time to rejoice in pomegranate country, a wide swath across the Old World and South Asia, from the Black Sea to the Bay of Bengal. In ancient orchards, the bright red orbs dangle brightly from these sacred trees like Christmas tree ornaments.

To the uninitiated, it won't be obvious how to extract the arils. Indeed there are many ways, and



David Hagerman

Fresh pomegranate salad.

some are messier than others. Treating those globes like softball-sized piñatas might not seem like the cleanest option, but it turns out if you slice them in half and tap gently enough, the seeds rush out like Black Friday shoppers storming the gates of Walmart.



The technique comes from Turkey, where the Middle East meets Asia, and where one fall day a food writer named Robyn Eckhardt sat down with a group of women, 100 kilos of fresh pomegranates and some pieces of plastic pipe. They spent the day liberating the arils inside.

Here is Eckhardt's technique, as she recently emailed from Italy:

"Gently squeeze one pomegranate half, cut side down, over a wide deep bowl to loosen the seeds. Place it cut side down in your non-dominant hand. Spread your fingers to create a 'sieve' through which the seeds can fall. With the handle of a wooden spoon or spatula, tap the pomegranate all over; dislodged seeds will fall, with the juices, into the bowl (the bits of bitter white membrane will remain in your hand).

Continue tapping, turning the pomegranate in your hand, until most of the seeds are dislodged. If any white membrane has fallen into the bowl, pick it out. Strain the seeds from the juice; you can reserve the juice for another use."

See Pomegranate, Page 37

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FOOD & DRINK

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Pomegranate

from page 36

The first time I tried this method, my open hand was powerless to stop the flow of arils, as if a floodgate had opened. But at least I had a bowl to catch them.

That day, Eckhardt and her friends were preparing nar eksisi, or Turkish pomegranate molasses. When made with 100% pomegranate juice and no additives, she says, it has as delicate and eye-opening a flavor as a fine balsamic. Among brands that an American could easily order online, Eckhardt's favorite is Mymoune, produced by a women's agricultural cooperative in Lebanon, followed by Cortas.

Pure pomegranate syrup is worth paying good money for. It keeps forever and is versatile far beyond salad dressings: as a chicken wing glaze, a mixer, a sweetener for your morning oatmeal. If you can't get the good stuff, you might want to skip it.

There is a recipe in Eckhardt's book, "Istanbul & Beyond: Exploring the Diverse Cuisines of Turkey," that calls for both the arils and the syrup. Sun-dried tomato and pomegranate salad comes from a restaurant in Antakya owned by her friend Shiraz Demir, a pomegranate and olive farmer.

"The dish perfectly embodies Antakya's location, with the Mediterranean climate represented in the tomatoes, olive oil and pomegranate, and the Levantine western

Asian influences in the fresh herbs and chilies. It would usually be served as part of a meze tapas-like spread or for breakfast with other dishes."

The salad is an exciting ride, with many strong personalities balancing one another in spectacular fashion. Each bite is a different little drama, with spice, fat, herbs and salty chunks of cheese, all splashed with tangy pomegranate juice. It will brighten any table, any time of year.

Sun Dried Tomato and Pomegranate Salad

Eckhardt lays out this salad in a layered, eye-catching way, as it would appear as part of a spread. For simplicity, I prefer to mix the ingredients in a bowl. She was gracious enough to let me make a few minor tweaks, which I've made as parenthetical suggestions. The salad is forgiving, and you can alter the proportions widely to suit your taste.

Serves 6 to 8 as a meze or 4 as a side dish

20 sun-dried tomatoes

1 medium pomegranate cut in half horizontally

1 hot green chili, such as jalapeno or Anaheim, sliced. In winter I prefer chili flakes, such as Aleppo

1/4 cup fresh mint or flat-leaf parsley, or a combination, chopped finely

1/4 cup crumbled lightly salty white cheese, such as Bulgarian feta

1/4 cup fruity olive oil

1 tablespoon pomegranate molasses If you can get the pure stuff. Otherwise use lemon juice

Soak the sun-dried tomatoes in

warm water until soft and pliable, 10 to 20 minutes.

While the tomatoes are soaking, seed the pomegranate.

Drain the sun-dried tomatoes and pat dry, then slice (or cut with kitchen scissors) into 1/4-inch-wide strips.

Arrange the tomato strips on a small plate and top with pepper slices (or chili flakes). Sprinkle over the mint or parsley, and then the cheese and pomegranate seeds. Drizzle over the olive oil and pomegranate molasses and serve immediately.

(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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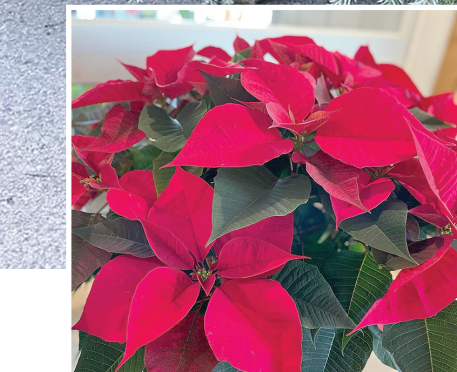
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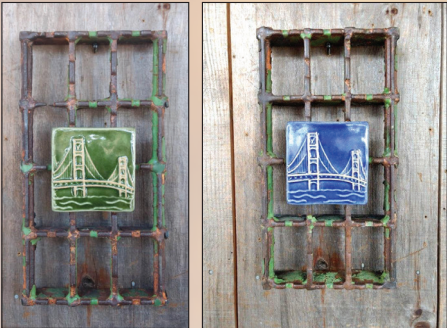
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