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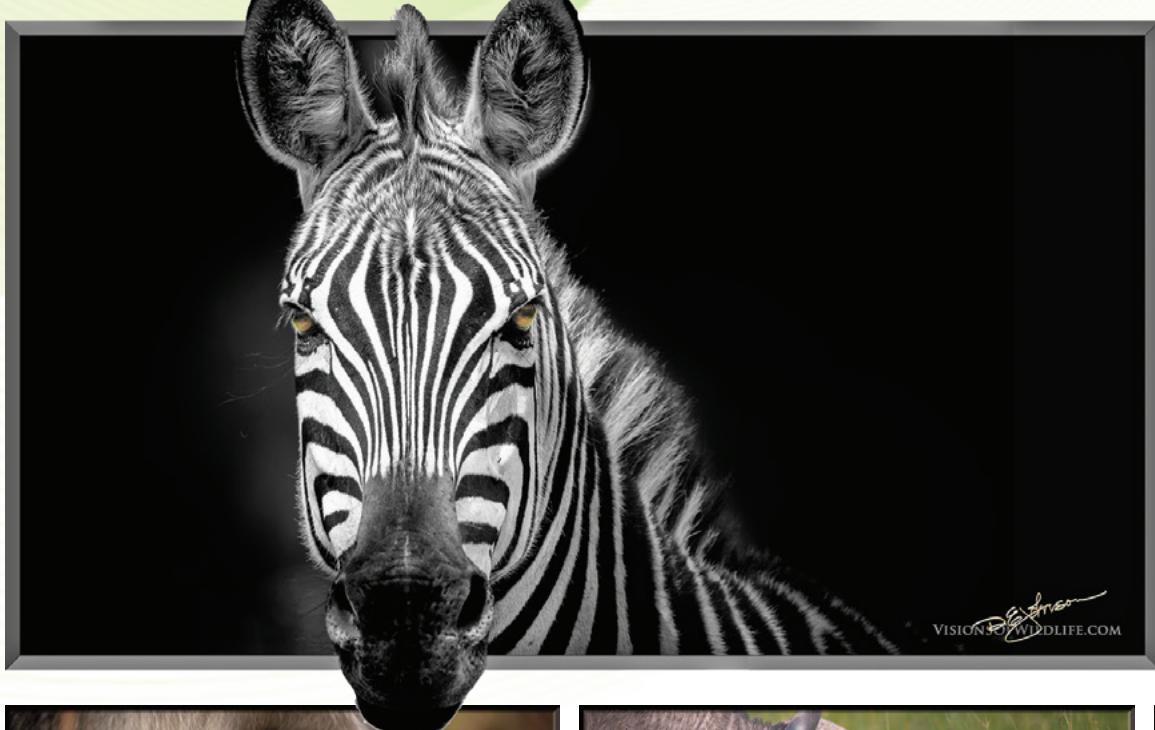
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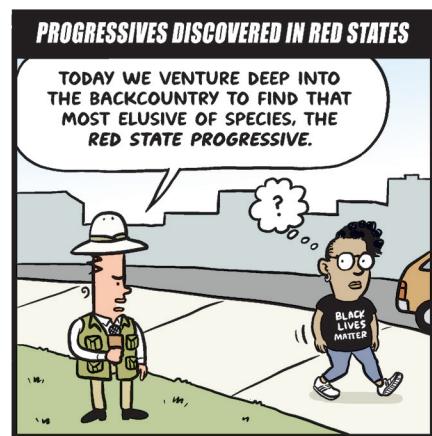
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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

INVISIBLE-HAND-OF-THE-FREE-MARKET MAN HOLDS AN EMERGENCY MEETING WITH GREG ABBOTT AND TED CRUZ!

OH NO! WE DIDN'T WINTERIZE OUR GAS PIPELINES AND POWER EQUIPMENT AFTER THE LAST COLD WEATHER DISASTER--AND NOW HALF THE STATE IS FREEZING TO DEATH!

HMM, YEAH, BUMMER.

BUT THIS IS A DISASTER--IN PUBLIC RELATIONS! YOU HAVE TO GO ON FOX AND BLAME A SCAPEGOAT! I'D SUGGEST THE GREEN NEW DEAL AND RENEWABLE ENERGY!

THAT SOUNDS VERY PLAUSIBLE! WIND TURBINES PROVIDE A FULL TWENTY PERCENT OF OUR POWER!

WHAT COULD I EVEN DO, IF I STAYED? I AM BUT A SIMPLE UNITED STATES SENATOR!

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, WE CAN'T DRAW POWER FROM OTHER STATES BECAUSE OUR GRID IS INDEPENDENT--TO AVOID FEDERAL REGULATIONS!

GOVERNOR, THAT IS A FEATURE, NOT A BUG! SIRI, SHOW ME WARM WEATHER GETAWAYS!

BUT WHY STOP THERE? MAYBE I CAN BLAME CANCEL CULTURE WHILE I'M AT IT! AND B.L.M. AND ANTIFA!

HA HA! WHY NOT? TUCKER CAN FILL IN THE DETAILS! WELL, IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU TWO HAVE THIS UNDER CONTROL--

THIRTY SIX HOURS LATER... LOOK, JUST BLAME IT ALL ON YOUR KIDS AND CATCH THE FIRST STANDBY FLIGHT HOME.

THINK ANYONE WILL BUY IT? UHH, SURE. MAYBE?

AS RICK PERRY SAYS, TEXANS WILL HAPPILY GO WITHOUT POWER IF IT KEEPS THE GOVERNMENT OUT OF THEIR BUSINESS!

YES, WE MUST ALL SACRIFICE FOR THE GREATER GOOD--OF THE COAL AND GAS INDUSTRIES!

OOOH, I COULD SEEK REFUGE FROM THIS HELL-HOLE COUNTRY IN MEXICO!

I SEE NOTHING IRONIC ABOUT THIS WHATSOEVER.

--SO I'M OFF TO SUNNY CANCÚN! ER--ARE YOU SURE THAT'S A GOOD IDEA? WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

THIRTY SIX HOURS LATER... LOOK, JUST BLAME IT ALL ON YOUR KIDS AND CATCH THE FIRST STANDBY FLIGHT HOME.

THINK ANYONE WILL BUY IT? UHH, SURE. MAYBE?

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PULSE

NEWS & OPINION

Cool it or lose it

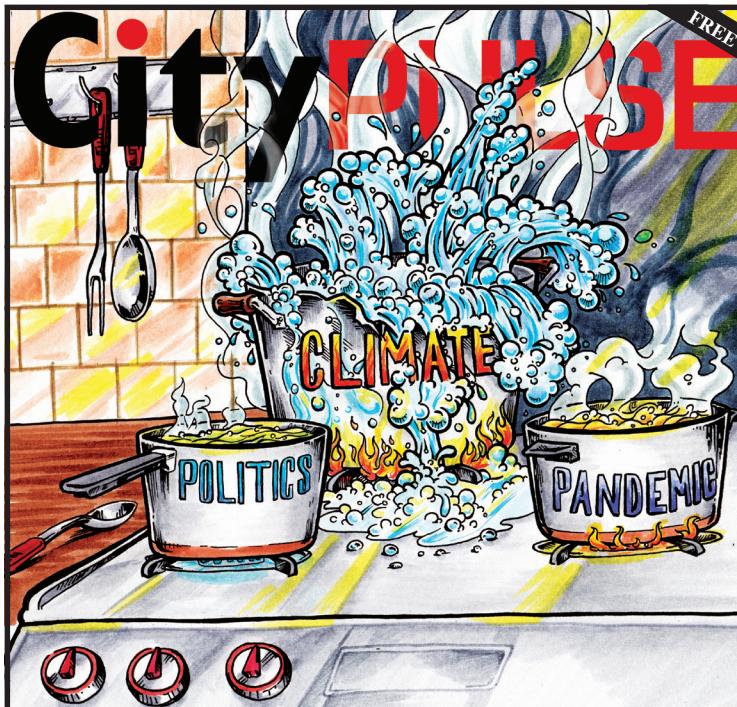
One of the unexpected side effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a dramatic decrease in greenhouse gas emissions, the principal driver of global warming and climate change. Factories operating at lower capacity, fewer motor vehicles on the road and a dramatic reduction in airline travel all contributed to greenhouse gas emissions plummeting 7-to-10% last year, reaching their lowest level in three decades. Of course, the improvement is a temporary phenomenon birthed under extraordinary circumstances. As the global economy gears back up post-pandemic, the downward trend isn't expected to last absent major policy changes by leading nations.

The past year also saw a surge in renewable energy installations, including a record number of wind turbines and solar panels. According to The New York Times, the United States produced roughly as much electricity from renewable sources last year as it did from coal, a milestone that has never been reached before. This is welcome news to those who believe that renewable energy must replace fossil fuels as the primary source of power for the US economy over the long term. The surge in renewables is partly explained by the looming expiration of the federal tax credit for alternative energy projects, which we believe should be renewed and extended.

Automakers, too, are rolling out bold plans to completely electrify their fleets and power their manufacturing facilities with renewable energy over the next 15-30 years. When most motor vehicles on the road are electric, we can expect to see major reductions in carbon emissions from vehicle exhaust.

After four years of climate change denial, we are especially encouraged by President Biden's move to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement. As part of that agreement, the United States pledged that emissions would fall 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. Under the previous administration, the chances of meeting that goal were slim and none. But in the wake of the pandemic, America's industrial emissions are now roughly 21.5 percent below 2005 levels, according to The New York Times.

Global problems require global solutions and cli-



The CP Edit

Opinion

mate change is no exception. Yet it has never been more important to act locally to reduce our community's carbon footprint. Our hometown power company, the Lansing Board of Water and Light, is leading the way, having adopted a long-term energy generation and distribution plan that includes a mix of natural gas and renewable energy.

Despite pushback from environmental stakeholders, BWL opted to build a new natural gas-fired plant to replace the soon-to-be-retired Eckert and Erickson coal-fired power plants. The utility's new, 250-megawatt Delta Energy Park plant will emit 50% less greenhouse gases than a coal facility. We should note that the move toward relying on cheap natural gas is also the byproduct of the fracking boom, which carries serious environmental concerns of its own. Should the Biden Administration decide to get tough on fracking, the cost advantages of natural gas could

dwindle, making renewables even more attractive.

In 2016, as part of its Lansing Energy Tomorrow plan, the BWL pledged to end all use of coal in its power plants and to deliver 40 percent of power from renewable sources and energy efficiency programs by 2030. Under an updated Integrated Resources Plan announced late last year, BWL will now seek to deliver 50 percent of its power from clean energy sources in 2030 and to be a carbon neutral utility by 2040. Completion of the new Delta plant will make BWL the largest utility in Michigan to generate coal-free power by 2025, reducing its overall carbon emissions by 80 percent.

We understand the argument that an all-renewables energy policy isn't practical just yet, especially in an area dominated by heavy industry. Baseload capacity is still needed to meet the demand from GM facilities and even cannabis-growing operations that consume enormous amounts of energy. We appreciate BWL's persistent efforts to diversify its energy portfolio to include solar and wind power and agree with their assertion — for now — that natural gas is the reliable power source Lansing customers expect and demand because it can be turned on quickly to meet spikes in demand or to cover gaps in production from wind or solar.

At the same time, we are firmly in the camp of those who believe we must continue to push for an all-renewable energy future. As large-scale battery storage technology improves, it will become increasingly viable to power energy-intensive enterprises like manufacturing with minimal need for coal or natural gas-fueled backup capacity.

We're especially proud of the efforts this community and region are making to tackle climate change at the local level, especially the nascent Capital Area Sustainability Partnership, a new coalition of cities, townships, businesses, nonprofits, environmentalists and other stakeholders from across the region. With this type of committed community engagement, we have a better chance to save this big blue ball we call home for future generations. Let's get to work.

Send letters to the editor to letters@lansingcitypulse.com.

Please limit them to 250 words

Racial justice requires time, energy and participation

By PATRICIA SPITZLEY
Opinion



(*Patricia Spitzley is an at-large member of the Lansing City Council, reelected in 2019. She also works as the government relations director at RACER Trust, which was created out of the General Motors bankruptcy to redevelop former company assets.*)

Last summer I visited the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, in Montgomery, Alabama. There, I learned more than 4,400 African American men, women and children were hanged, burned alive, shot, drowned and beaten to death by white mobs between 1877 and 1950. It was a stark reminder of our nation's dark history of injustice. Another disturbing fact from my visit? The last "official" designation of a lynching in the United States occurred in 1950.

I say "official" because even in my lifetime there have been several violent actions against African Americans that would be — under many definitions — considered a lynching. As recently as 1988, James Byrd Jr. was murdered by three white supremacists in Jasper, Texas. Byrd was dragged for three miles behind a pickup truck and dumped in front of a black church, where he died.

This is only one example that our nation has yet to reconcile white supremacy and racial hatred among all of our citizens. We have yet to accept the premise that the original sin of slavery continues to impact racial inequity to this day.

Perhaps Bryan Stevenson, the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative and the National Museum for Peace and Justice, summed it up best: "I don't think slavery ended in 1865. I think it evolved." I believe that to move forward as a society, we must acknowledge the sins of the past and the impact they continue to have on present day policies and institutions.

The murder of George Floyd last year once again ripped the bandage off a never-healed wound of racial inequality in this country. But instead of covering it back up, Black, brown and white citizens demanded

accountability and meaningful change from elected officials, private and public institutions and a need for all Americans to reflect on their part in true reform.

We, as elected leaders, have a responsibility to do our part to address these demands and not just fan the flames of inequality and racial injustice. We must step up and acknowledge that there is a pattern of systemic racism in this country that consistently works to the detriment of Black and brown people. We must accept that this situation gives the Caucasian population a privilege not enjoyed by the Black and brown citizens of this great nation and address this systemic racism by developing equitable opportunities for our Black and brown citizens.

Let's be frank: The effects of systemic racism and oppression are deep and often seem unpronounced to non-people of color. It permeates our criminal justice system, our financial and educational system, our housing and job opportunities. It will not be changed overnight.

Meaningful and lasting change is difficult. It requires systematic changes, and these take time to implement. But we must commit to starting now. In Lansing, our administration can start by cleaning their own house. Department heads should be held accountable through performance reviews for implementing diverse hiring practices, identifying city barriers to diversity and equity in the city, and taking immediate steps to remove those barriers.

Last year's election makes me cautiously optimistic about our future. We have elected leaders on both sides of the aisle who claim they are committed to making sure everyone has equal access to the American dream. However, the greatest impact and the best place to start is local.

Real change requires time, energy, and participation by many. We have the power to change OUR community and be a model for the rest of the country. Become a seat at the table by joining a board, a committee, or a commission. Do not accept gratuitous proclamations, and toothless policies that make great sound bites but do little to change the status quo. Vote.

The business case for equity

By TONY WILLIS
Opinion



(Tony Willis is the chief equity development officer at the Lansing Economic Area Partnership. In his role, he also heads up the newly created Department of Equitable Economic Planning.)

The economy works best for all when all can participate. As LEAP continues to lead local economic development efforts, the importance of a truly equitable approach is essential.

Intentional focus on equity means understanding the unique barriers faced by different groups to create targeted solutions to address them, ensuring all members of our community have the support they need to access resources and opportunities for equal economic success.

Attention to barriers faced by historically underrepresented and underserved populations — like people of color — is essential to equitable economic development because these groups have faced systemic barriers to full economic participation.

The economic case for addressing inequity is clear. Since 2000, reports show the U.S. economy lost an estimated \$16 trillion due to discrimination. By addressing the racial wealth gap by 2028 alone, studies show the GDP in the U.S. stands to grow by an estimated \$1.5 trillion — or 6% of its current level. BuiltIn has also aggregated more than 80 statistics outlining the benefits of striving for diverse, inclusive workplaces, from increased innovation to higher revenue.

The data are clear: diversity, equity and inclusion aren't just buzzwords. They're good business.

The Department of Equitable Economic Planning at LEAP has a strategic approach to equitable economic development in Greater Lansing, involving three focus areas: **Enhancing business ownership**

DEEP's programmatic focus will primarily support enhanced business ownership for historically underserved groups by converting businesses classified as DBAs to LLCs, which increases the business's longevity beyond the owner's lifespan, the ability to secure more capital.

Community need

Community collaboration is essential as we build the foundation for DEEP's work. Meeting the needs of disenfranchised communities requires listening to the voices of those who actively encounter systemic barriers to understand how best to dismantle those barriers and empower our communities for success. As a first step, we are helping support and reconstitute business organizations specifically focused on Black and LatinX communities.

Diversity, equity & inclusion

Reflecting on internal policies will help us understand what we're doing well as an organization and how we can improve. There is always room to grow and learn, especially as we invite unheard voices to the conversation.

The starting points for policy include the review of LEAP's diversity, equity and inclusion statement and strategically allocating our discretionary Business Accelerator Fund to support BIPOC and other underrepresented founders, who historically secure less funding.

LEAP's long-term vision is for DEEP to play an instrumental role in helping Greater Lansing be known for its inclusivity and equity. There's value in a human-centered approach for economic development. Going a step further to prioritize equity ensures all people are at the center of our efforts, not just those who have historically been centered.

Diversity, equity and inclusion have long been a priority at LEAP, but events in 2020 like the murder of George Floyd and disparities in COVID-19 response that disadvantaged BIPOC communities brought these issues to the forefront of our collective consciousness.

These events catalyzed a societal inflection point that made tangible solutions more accessible as visibility of historic, systemic inequity was expanded. Simply put, the more buy-in equity programming has from community leaders, the easier it is to get things done and done quickly.

Addressing systemic inequity against specific populations, such as BIPOC, has a tangible benefit for everyone. Solving issues that plague one demographic can always be scaled and applied to other demographics. Centering equity provides a holistic solution to barriers of all types that affect all people, allowing us to build our economy stronger, together.

Literacy extinguishes fiery life situations

By DEDRIA HUMPHRIES BARKER

Patricia Edwards, a new appointee to the Michigan Department of Education PreK-12 Literacy Commission, has written eight books about parents and schools.



Barker

OPINION Her most recent book, "Partnering with Families for Student Success," describes 24 scenarios where students are best served when teachers and parents work together.

I asked Edwards, a Michigan State University College of Education professor, which scenario most reminds her of what is going on during the pandemic. She said the situation where parents/caregivers have a low level of literacy.

"A lot of parents don't want to admit they have this problem," Edwards said.

I imagine African American parents especially suffer with this. Literacy, even in its limited understanding as being able to read and write, has meant freedom throughout American history.

For good reason, much is made about the derring-do of Harriet Tubman, who, under moonlight through the swampy woods, conducted people out of enslavement on the Underground Railroad.

Yet, untold numbers found their freedom through literacy. Enslaved persons who could write their own permission note to move about, i.e. to escape, were free.

The history goes like this: The patroller could stop any person on the road with the call, "State your business." For enslaved people, a written note outstripped spoken word because it meant a powerful person had their back. That spoke volumes beyond the ability to read and write. Just as education was forbidden most enslaved people, schooling was difficult for poor whites to acquire as well.

Frederick Douglass recalled in his autobiography how his mistress, not his mother, was teaching him to read until her husband, not his father, found out and made her stop. Then Douglass went to the Baltimore docks and tricked the white boys his age into teaching him to recognize words. Learning to read was good, but Douglass had to build on that to engage his future.

Illiterate Black people have been swindled out of property because they had to trust in others for a true interpretation of what a document said, or meant. The illiterate person couldn't read it or, without experience with reading more than individual words, couldn't make out the meaning. Mostly, it didn't work out for them, particularly in real estate.

Literacy continues to be of value. Last fall, I was making special parking arrangements connected with my son's wedding at a park in Canton, Michigan. I identified myself as an African American to the office lady, who was very nice. Because she does not work the weekend, she offered to send me an email with her permission. In case park security had a problem with our arrangement, I could show it. "Yes," I said, "We Black people are used to having a note like that."

Michigan's superintendent of public instruction is Michael Rice. A press release documents his comments in early February to state legislators sitting on the Senate Education and Career Readiness Committee, and the House Education Committee. Rice primarily asked for more instruction time beyond the current 180-day minimum required by law. But in an important paragraph at the end he makes a solid pitch for literacy.

"We also need to reduce our elementary class sizes where educators are laying the literacy and math skill foundation that will be necessary for



success as students continue in school."

He continued, "Nothing is more critical to the success of young people in school than literacy skills."

But why is literacy limited to school success?

Because Rice is the state superintendent of public instruction? OK. Because his authority lies in that realm. I get it.

But surely in addressing the Senate Education and Career Readiness

Committee, he could speak to literacy beyond elementary school. The only way to accept short-sightedness is seeing literacy simply as basic skills: spelling, grammatically correct sentences, pronouncing words on the written page, and knowing their definition.

But literacy is so much more. Literary is the ability to make meaning. And to apply that meaning to situations. That is what enslaved people trying to escape did.

Schools are the only place where literacy is taught and encouraged and given space and time to grow and develop. But that's just the start.

Literacy is a general term that has universal application. Doctors' handwriting is often criticized and ridiculed because it can't be read sometimes. But no medical student earns a medical degree because of flowing handwriting. Doctors achieve a medical literacy in codes other than English. They use Latin for pharmacies and numerical codes for insurance companies. They use "Gray's Anatomy." And finally, they practice.

Most Americans will freely and without shame admit to being computer illiterate. They know basic things about a computer, like how to use it for their purposes. A Lansing Community College administrator I worked with called that computer dependence. Literacy makes a person free.

Here's a very bad, terrible, not-good-at-all example of literacy, also in computers. It involves Brandon Betz and Michael Lynn Jr. Both are community leaders in Lansing.

These men got into a beef that started on Facebook and carried over to texting and into self-destruction. Betz political star was on the rise. Now, he faces calls for his resignation from Lansing City Council, including from his political party's executive committee, and he lost his employment as a public policy analyst.

It looked like Lynn, a Lansing Black Lives Matter movement leader, had the social media/texting upper hand. Disposing of political opponents is what politics is all about, but then Lynn got tripped up by his Facebook post. Though on disability leave, he faced misconduct charges from his employer, endured a disciplinary hearing and was terminated (for a matter unrelated to his spat with Betz).

Lynn had a spelling error in his message, Betz contended. But that did not mar Lynn's meaning. On the other hand, Betz spelled all the words correctly in his letter of apology to his City Council colleagues, but they remained unconvinced that he knows how to handle his public position. Disbelieving his public service literacy, they still stripped him of his committee assignments.

Each of these men needed literacy in the combination of social media and texting and the Freedom of Information Act, and the First Amendment. Their level of literacy in that situation proved nonexistent.

Literacy exists in all areas of life, and is useful in school and the world. It is an ongoing proficiency that helps people succeed and be free.

(*Dedria Humphries Barker, a Lansing resident, chairs the Andrew and Mary Jane Humphries Foundation and is the author of "Mother of Orphans: The True and Curious Story of Irish Alice, A Colored Man's Widow." Her opinion column appears on the last Wednesday of every month.*)

To defeat the climate crisis, increase biodiversity, decrease poisons

By NICHOLE BIBER

Opinion



(The writer is an East Lansing resident, indigenous activist, elementary school librarian, MSU alumna with a Ph.D. in English, and the mother of three.)

That our energy supply simply must move past fossil fuel dependency is at last gaining some grudging acceptance, though still facing resistance from the profiteers in poison. So, it is understandable that your cover story climate article (Feb. 17), like other reports on the climate crisis, invariably focused on the face-off between renewables vs. sources that continue our reliance on burning up the atmosphere and harming the water.

Still, for there to be any hope of mitigation and even restoration, we must and hopefully can focus just as much on increasing the biodiversity of plant and animal life. As we look toward the renewal of springtime, individuals and local governments and businesses would all do well to commit some outdoor space and time to establishing pollinator habitats. We must also reject pesticide and herbicide lawn applications that profit from poison every bit as insidiously and knowingly as the fossil fuel industry. These unregulated chemicals are proven to cause cancer in humans and pets, decrease sperm counts, contaminate the water commons, and are responsible for the precipitous plunge in bee and butterfly and bird populations.

In just the past 20 years, monarch butterfly populations have plummeted by 90%. It is unfair and immoral that future generations might never see these cheerful summertime companions just because current generations will not look beyond mowed grass monoculture as the norm and standard of lawncare. Year after year, beekeepers report 50% losses of bee colonies — imagine the alarm if this figure came from the cattle industry. Without a demand for harmful lawn chemicals, there will be no need for a supply of such products. This is in no way a call to destroy jobs, as if the only out-of-doors work that can exist is in the chemical maintenance of over-

Local initiatives and action guidelines:

[cityoffeastlansing.com/1755/
Pollinator-Friendly-Community
pollinators.msu.edu/](http://cityoffeastlansing.com/1755/Pollinator-Friendly-Community)

mown grass monocultures devoid of micro-organic life. The application of these chemicals is done by hourly wage workers whose health is being sacrificed. The few corporate heads raking in the big profits are never the ones to be found in the cloud of noxious fumes. (These health and economic disparities are also deeply entrenched in the business norms of Big Agriculture, which has so ruthlessly devastated generations of family farmers.)

Let us consider our hyperlocal shared spaces an opportunity for redemption, where we can work toward an abundance unrelated to capitalism's all-to-often exploitative and damaging bottom line. Where success is measured by acres of increased biodiversity, by improved water quality, by the creation of small businesses filling a demand for private and public caretaking of pollinator-friendly spaces, and maybe even by a renewed sense of mental well-being and hope as we observe the rebound of some of our fellow Earth species instead of continuing to avert our eyes from loss after loss. Insect life is foundational to the web of life. Not only do we rely on pollinators for every third bit of food we take, but they can also provide our besieged psyches with meditative moments of beauty unmatched by screens.

The theme for Earth Day 2021 is "Restore Our Earth." This optimistic call to action will not be achieved by technology alone, and we have no more time to wait for entrenched corporate power players to do the right thing. City properties and school grounds, county and state parks, places of worship and businesses, neighborhoods and households — all could commit to a transformative increase in pollinator-friendly biodiversity alongside a ban on chemical applications. On a mass scale, this would engender a measurable change before our very eyes, accomplished by the work of our hands, and perhaps awaken us to our own agency in ways that could profoundly heal our hearts and homeland.

Bipartisanship coming soon? The insiders don't see it

As I'm writing this, in five days the \$2-an-hour pandemic-inspired pay bump the governor gave direct-care workers who help those with special needs expires.



- Gov. Whitmer has done all she can to reach out but has been rebuffed — 25.29%

- Republicans have done all they can to reach out but have been rebuffed — 11.26%

- Temporarily strained by the actions of both sides, but will improve in 2021 — 10.99%

Here's another question: "When it comes to the current leadership team (governor and GOP legislative leaders) and how they interact, what impact will their working partnership have on the future of the state and its residents?"

These results are even more disturbing:

- How they work together will diminish and challenge the future of the state and its residents — 72.15%

- How they work together will neither help nor hurt the future of the state and its residents — 19.36%

- How they work together bodes well for the future of the state and its residents — 8.49%

This is coming from people who do state government — in some capacity — for a living.

More than two-thirds of these people gave Whitmer an A or B grade on her handling of the pandemic and Shirkey a D or F grade for his handling of the pandemic.

Still, they don't see the relationship between the two sides getting any better. The governor's use of authority during the pandemic is part of it. The personalities involved is probably a bigger part of it.

But at its core, both sides think they have a winning hand. The governor's popularity remains over 50%. With the campaign money rolling in, Democrats feel confident that whatever legislative lines are drawn by this new commission this year will work to their advantage in the 2022 elections.

The Republicans truly believe history will not look fondly on Whitmer's handling of this pandemic. Too many seniors lost their lives in avoidable nursing home deaths. Too many young adults saw their dreams of stardom evaporate. Too many businesses went under. Too many families went broke.

With both sides' political bases openly encouraging their leaders to not meet, the will to compromise isn't there. It shows.

It makes the results of the survey — sad as they are — hard to dispute.

(Kyle Melinn of the Capitol news service MIRS is at melinnky@gmail.com.)

OPINION

Logistically, something can be done.

The Legislature could pass a bill. The governor could sign it. These workers who start at \$11.44 an hour (with no benefits) would continue to get their additional hazard pay.

Maybe it happens. But here's what's happening at 4 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 23. State Budget Director Dave Massaron sent a letter to the chair of the House and Senate budget committees asking for a meeting. Any time. He's ready to meet. Give the time. Let's talk out a spending bill.

The Legislature's response? We'll let you know.

That's where we are at the state Capitol in 2021. The extreme partisanship from Washington has oozed through Lansing, turning something as seemingly automatic as giving a small lift to people who feed and toilet Great Grandma and Grandpa into a Texas standoff.

Republican Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey bemoaned to the press last month that he's hasn't had but a single one-on-one conversation with Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in about a year. One. That's it.

These are Michigan's highest-elected Republican and Democrat.

Within weeks of that statement, Shirkey was recorded telling a few Hillsdale County Republicans over dinner that he fantasized about challenging the governor to a fistfight on the Capitol lawn.

The odds of another meeting in another 12 months' time? I'll put my buck on no.

So, the pessimism and cynicism seeping from a recent survey by the Capitol news service MIRS of 382 subscribers and insiders shouldn't be a surprise.

Question: "Relations between the Republican-controlled Legislature and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer have been strained for over a year. Which statement do you believe best represents the responsibility for the state of that relationship?"

Here's the results:

- Neither side appears interested in seriously addressing the situation, casting doubts that it can be repaired in 2021 — 52.36%

REWIND

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LAST 7 DAYS



By KYLE KAMINSKI



Nassar requests appeal — again

Former MSU sports doctor Larry Nassar is again seeking to appeal his case to the Michigan Supreme Court after he was repeatedly convicted of sexually assaulting children. Nassar is — again — arguing that he should be resentenced in front of a different judge because Ingham County Circuit Judge Rosemarie Aquilina exhibited an alleged bias during his trial.

Lansing fires BLM leader

The city dismissed Michael Lynn Jr. from the Lansing Fire Department after he shared Police Chief Daryl Green's cell phone number on Facebook. Some — like former Mayor Virg Bernero — have painted the move as "political retribution" for Lynn's criticism of the city. Green said he was forced to change his number after Lynn shared it online, subsequently compromising the "operational efficiency" of the department. Lynn told City Pulse that he thinks the decision will likely lead to more litigation against the city.



Lynn

Meridian Township gears up for recreational pot

The Board of Trustees agreed at a study session to charge forward with plans that could allow up to six recreational marijuana dispensaries to open within the township, possibly this year. The board is expected to consider an ordinance next month.



Michigan a 'C' for gun safety

The Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence scores and ranks each state on the effectiveness of its gun laws. Recommendations for improvement include enacting "extreme risk protection" laws that would take guns out of the hands of people who are a proven risk for committing acts of violence.

Lansing businessman dies

Entrepreneur John Kendrick Sears, 41, of Lansing, was killed in a motorcycle accident in New Mexico. Sears was shaped by his family's business, College Bike Shop. In 2006, he founded his own demolition company, SC Environmental Services. Sears also owned properties in Old Town and REO Town.



Sears

Redevelopment planned for REO Town

REO Ventures will spend \$300,000 to redevelop the old Standard Oil Co. gas station, 1102 S. Washington Ave., into a restaurant with entertainment. The developers have applied for tax incentives in hopes of getting the project started over the summer and finished before fall 2022.

Lawmaker looks to end hair bias

State Rep. Sarah Anthony pushed for progress on legislation known as the CROWN Act. The bill, which stands for "Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair," aims to prevent discrimination by expanding state law to recognize hair as a characteristic of race. It specifies that texture and certain hairstyles — like braids, locs and twists — are historically associated with race and cannot be used as a basis for discrimination.



Anthony

Lansing launches snow plow map

The map refreshes every 15 minutes to show residents where snow plows have been and where they're headed. The status of secondary streets is also listed on the map, which is accessible online at lansingmi.gov/snowmap.



Okemos native on 'JEOPARDY!'

Dr. Natalie Walsh, a naturopathic doctor, appeared on one episode last week. The show is in its 37th season and attracts 24 million average viewers.

5 compete for school superintendent

The Lansing School District's finalists comprise three outsiders and two district administrators: Deputy Superintendent Delsa Chapman and Jessica Benavides, executive director of improvement and innovation.

LCC police chief to retire

Police Chief Bill French announced he is ending his 40-year career in law enforcement. French also moonlighted as a state inspector for athletics, overseeing boxing and wrestling matches and meeting many famous pro wrestlers of the '80s.

Charges issued for threats

Two men are facing criminal charges for making threats against public officials leading up to the November general election. Daniel Thompson, 62, was charged with three misdemeanors and accused of leaving threatening messages for U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow. Thompson also faces charges tied to another threatening call made to U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin and her staff.

CANDY OF THE WEEK



1600 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing

This month's Eye Candy, once upon a time Boynton Photography, was bought and renovated by Joe Gentilozzi Commercial Properties into a private residence. According to property records, the house was built in 1885, as a fairly traditional Foursquare. This style is typified by a boxy design and a broad front porch. It's possible the porch on this house was removed or enclosed at some point. The first-floor addition on the Allen Street side was most likely added in 1986, adding more square footage, and cementing it as a commercial building. The current renovation (above) is what we wish to highlight here, though. The black vertical siding is both eye-catching and modern. Used on the lower level, it has a grounding effect. It is paired with horizontal wood siding on the second story and as an accent on the curved part of the addition. Many of the windows have been replaced, nearly like-for-like, with new Pella windows, giving it a fresh appearance and likely increasing the energy efficiency inside. The house is not part of a historic district, so there are no limitations there. The more commercial-looking plate-glass windows on the front-facing Michigan Avenue side have been reduced in size. It seems that some trim work is left to be done but, overall, this is a nice update to an older property (see below), improving the aesthetics of the corridor between the Capitol and MSU, and enhancing the emerging personality of the east side.

— CARRIE SAMPSON



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

Media denied access to death certificates of COVID victims

State officials are blocking access to death records in Michigan.

And as a result, media outlets — like City Pulse — have been left unable to formally review and create verified lists of Michiganders who have died from the coronavirus.

Lynn Sutfin, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Health and Human Services, summed up the state's perspective in response to an email that sought an explanation:

"Death certificates are not considered public records in the sense they are open to inspection by the public or that the information they contain is freely available to all."

Some vital records, like death certificates, are exempt from the state Freedom of Information Act, explained Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum. Officials could create administrative rules that enable access to the information contained in death certificates — like names and causes of death — but have yet to do so. As it stands, the state requires each certificate be requested by name along with a \$30 fee to receive it.

As a result, City Pulse, among other outlets, have been left to rely on aggregated state reports without any death certificate records to verify the accuracy of the information. Nor can City Pulse and other publications carry out tributes to those victims as the one-year anniversary of Michigan's shutdown approaches next month.

Sutfin said that officials did not have the ability to create an administrative rule to allow an inspection of death records. She said the state has previously allowed limited information to be released to the media, like databases, but it is stripped of any identifying information to prevent identifying those who died.

Under such requests, the agency is required to sign an agreement with the state of Michigan that includes how and what can be published and when the data must be destroyed. Those requests are approved by the state registrar and officials at MDHHS.

Byrum allowed City Pulse to review death records to verify data from the Ingham County Health Department last year. But she said that was allowed under prior legal guidance, instead noting this month that "updated guidance no longer permits that practice."

Communications staff members at Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's office didn't respond to questions this week, includ-

The front page of the CityPULSE newspaper, dated July 1 - 7, 2020, features a large masthead "CityPULSE" in red and black. A "FREE" badge is in the top right corner. Below the masthead, it says "Locally owned" and "www.lansingcitypulse.com • A newspaper for the rest of us". A list of names follows, separated by bullet points:

- CHARLENE ADKINS • ROBERT LEE ALLEN •
- MICHAEL EDWARD DEBROWSKY • NATHANIEL EDWARDS SR. •
- DENA CELESTE ELEM • J WILLIAM I. ELEM •
- NYABENDA ETIYENE • JOHN WILLIAM FILLION • DAVID FORD •
- JO KUN FOREST • JANENNE EVELYN GRINNELL • BOBBIE JEAN HARDY •
- RICHARD LLEWELYN HERSEY • JOANNE IRELAND •
- NATALIE LORRAINE JAMES • MARCELLA JEAN JONES •
- WILLIAM EDWARD KESTER • ARTHUR WILLIAM KOWALK •

- JAMES EDWARD MARABLE • LORI ANN PRICE • SEE PAGE 16
- JESUS "JESSE" M. PEREZ • MILDRED MARY PUCKETT •
- ANDRES LUIS SALAS • JAMES LOUIS SHIER • LORETTA H. TORRES •
- MARSHA ANN VANBUREN • BRIAN LEE VANDERBOS •
- CHARLES EDWARD WHITE • TRACY ANN WHITE •
- VIRGINIA ANN WIGGINS • VIRGINIA ELIZABETH WILBANKS •
- CAROLYN JEAN WORTMAN • JAMES DOMINICK ZUBIENA •
- JEANNE THERESA ZUBIENA •

ing on what (if any) role Whitmer's office played in the clamp down on data.

Mackinac Center for Public Policy's Steve Delie argued that the state was wrongly withholding information in the public interest.

"The data that is being withheld here is the same data that is underlying the state's decisions on COVID," he said. "Regardless of what side of the spectrum you might be on, access to that information is essential to understand government's decisions. It's disappointing to see the government is unwilling to share this information that will help the public understand the pandemic and the policy decisions made as a result of it."

Delie is not alone in questioning the state's refusal to release information.

"This is disappointing," said Lisa McGraw, public affairs manager for the Michigan Press Association. "This is, as one member has expressed, an information tax."

Byrum tracked a 13% increase in deaths in Ingham County last year. In total, 3,471 were reported in 2020 compared to 3,075 in 2019. She also noted it was the "highest increase in some time."

Additional data — including the causes of death — was unavailable without providing the name of the deceased and paying a \$30 fee for each individual death certificate. Ingham County last reported 15,245 coronavirus cases and 278 deaths since March.

Barriers to vital records began with a statewide directive on Jan. 25 from State Registrar Jeff Duncan, who works in the Vital Statistics and Health Statistics division at MDHHS.

Reporters at the Traverse City Record Eagle have also sought similar data from state health officials, including the name, age and county of residence of those who died of COVID-19 in Michigan, said Executive Editor Nate Payne. State officials denied that request, instead offering a database of names, ages and counties of those who died.

When pushed on why the data couldn't also include causes of death — to later be narrowed to COVID-19 deaths — state health officials told the Record Eagle it was being denied access because the paper intended to publish that information, Payne explained.

The Three Rivers Commercial News also sought (and was denied) death certificate details. Publisher

The state is refusing to cooperate with the media on stories on COVID death victims, such as this one last year in City Pulse, which documented each local death by examining death certificates.

— TODD HEYWOOD

Residents urged to register for shots with multiple providers

Whitmer lowers flags to honor 500,000

The Ingham County Health Department is urging residents who are eligible for the coronavirus vaccine to register for their shots with multiple providers, including the Health Department, Sparrow Health System, McLaren Greater Lansing, Rite Aid and Meijer.

About 70,000 people were registered for the vaccine with the Health Department last week, but officials can only accept up to 3,000 new patients each week due to limited supplies allocated to each local provider. To ensure supplies are used, residents should seek vaccines everywhere.

"Unless supply drastically increases, the reality is that it will likely be April or May before everyone who is registered and eligible as of today is vaccinated," Vail said. "I continue to advocate for more vaccine for our community and hope we will start to see increases in supply."



Eligible residents — including frontline workers and those 65 and up — are also encouraged to cancel unwanted appointments after securing a shot from a provider to avoid redundancies. Both doses of the two-dose vaccine must come from the same provider, officials emphasized.

The number for the Health Department's vaccine hotline is 517-887-4623. Additionally, anyone can pre-register for the vaccine through the Meijer pharmacy clinic and Rite Aid pharmacies. Online patient portals are also available online for Sparrow and McLaren in Greater Lansing.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, in accordance with a proclamation from President Joe Biden, ordered flags lowered this week to honor the 500,000 people who have died from COVID-19 nationwide. The staggering death toll has led to a one-year decrease in overall life expectancy in the U.S. Black Americans were hit

harder than white people, who lost 2.7 years compared to 0.8 years.

State data released this week shows that 42% of those who have received vaccines are white while just 4% are Black. The bulk of vaccinations (about 44%) didn't include information about race. A new direct entry tool now allows providers to enter additional demographics into the state's tracking system. Residents are also urged to fill out race data questions when they get their vaccine in order to better direct the state's strategy to address and target any inequities.

In related news...

A total of 50 small businesses in the city of Lansing were awarded Small Business Survival grants from the state of Michigan last week — sharing from a pot of \$3 million in the form of \$15,000 grants for a total of 194 businesses across Clinton, Eaton and Ingham Counties.

The Michigan High School Athletic Association pushed the start date for spring sports this week back to March 22. Competitions can begin as early as March 26, according to state guidance.

Because COVID-19 primarily is spread through respiratory droplets in the air, the Lansing School District is in the process of installing \$1.5 million in new HVAC systems in each building this week before some in-person classes resume next month, reports the Lansing State Journal.

Results from the daily testing of prisoners and staff at the Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility in Ionia resulted in the detection of at least 90 cases of the B.1.1.7 COVID-19 variant last week. The first set of samples showed that 90 of 95 tests among prisoners and staff that tested positive for the coronavirus had also tested positive for the more contagious B.1.1.7 variant.

Spartan Precision Machining Inc. in Holt was fined \$2,800 this week for violations of emergency rules regarding COVID-19 workplace safety. State officials allege the business didn't conduct daily self-screening protocols, require face masks or train its staff on coronavirus mitigation.

— KYLE KAMINSKI

CORONAVIRUS IN MICHIGAN BY THE NUMBERS...

WEEK 49

Michigan

| | CASES | DEATHS | VACC. |
|---------------|---------|--------|-----------|
| 2/16/21 | 576,264 | 15,177 | 1,634,609 |
| 2/23/21 | 582,719 | 15,396 | 1,942,759 |
| Weekly Change | ↑1.1% | ↑1.4% | ↑18.9% |
| | | | |

Eaton County

| | CASES | DEATHS | VACC. |
|---------------|-------|--------|--------|
| 2/16/21 | 5,534 | 143 | 19,802 |
| 2/23/21 | 5,621 | 148 | 23,138 |
| Weekly Change | ↑1.6% | ↑3.5% | ↑16.8% |
| | | | |

Clinton Co.

| | CASES | DEATHS | VACC. |
|---------------|-------|--------|--------|
| 2/16/21 | 4,363 | 65 | 12,380 |
| 2/23/21 | 4,397 | 66 | 14,427 |
| Weekly Change | ↑0.8% | ↑1.5% | ↑16.5% |
| | | | |

Ingham County

| | CASES | DEATHS | VACC. |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|
| 2/16/21 | 15,145 | 264 | 50,196 |
| 2/23/21 | 15,357 | 272 | 58,924 |
| Weekly Change | ↑1.4% | ↑3% | ↑17.4% |
| | | | |

The "Vaccines" category refers to the total number of doses administered to patients that reported living within each jurisdiction, according to state data. Patients require two doses.

Public Notice

The Ingham County Land Bank is soliciting bid proposals for **Clean-Outs** at various residential and commercial properties in Ingham County. The RFP # Cleanouts-2021-24 is available on February 24, 2021, at Ingham County Land Bank, 3024 Turner St, Lansing, MI 48906, or at www.inghamlandbank.org. Bids will be due at the Land Bank office by 11:00am on March 10, 2021. Bid Opening will begin on March 10, 2021, at 11:00am. The Ingham County Land Bank is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer. Women- and Minority-Owned Businesses are encouraged to apply.

CP#21-039

B/21/021 MDOT MOWING as per the specifications provided by the City of Lansing. The City of Lansing will accept sealed bids at the City of Lansing, 124 W Michigan Ave, 8th Floor, and Lansing, Michigan 48912 or electronically submitted thru MITN (www.mitn.info) until **2:00PM** local time in effect on **MARCH 4, 2021** at which time bids will be opened and read. Complete specifications and forms required to submit bids are available by calling **Stephanie Robinson** at (517) 483-4128 email: stephanie.robinson@lansingmi.gov or go to www.mitn.info. The City of Lansing encourages bids from all vendors including MBE/WBE vendors and Lansing-based businesses.

CP#21-040

B/21/073 TREE REMOVAL PROJECT as per the specifications provided by the City of Lansing. The City of Lansing will accept sealed bids electronically on line at www.mitn.info or at the City of Lansing Purchasing Office, 124 W. Michigan Ave 8th FL, Lansing, Michigan 48933 until **2:00 PM** local time in effect on **MARCH 3, 2021** at which time bids will be opened. Complete specifications and forms required to submit bids are available by contacting **Stephanie Robinson** at (517) 483-4128 email: Stephanie.Robinson@lansingmi.gov or go to www.mitn.info. The City of Lansing encourages bids from all vendors including MBE/WBE vendors and Lansing-based businesses.

CP#21-041

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Councilwoman fixes Lugnuts lease deal — saving \$2 million

The Lansing Lugnuts are set to play at a soon-to-be improved version of Jackson Field through at least 2038 after the City Council approved an extended lease agreement last week with the franchise — including some renovations to the city-owned facility.

And by some conservative estimates, City Councilwoman Kathie Dunbar helped lead the city into at least \$2 million in savings over the course of the amended agreement when compared to a draft contract submitted by Lansing Mayor Andy Schor's administration this month.

"The proposal that was initially presented put the city in a negative position," Dunbar explained. "Nobody on the Council was going to support that, and the only way to get us in a better position was to negotiate, so that's exactly what I did, all weekend long, to help fix this deal for the city."

The Lugnuts — which recently shifted into a higher-tier "High-A" league team following the reorganization of Minor League Baseball — play at the city-owned Jackson Field (formerly Cooley Law School Stadium) as part of a long-term lease agreement last amended in 2014.

New mandates from MLB require certain renovations at stadiums that remain part of the league this year — like locker rooms for women, new batting cages and updates to LED stadium lights. And because the team was strapped for cash following the cancellation of last year's baseball season, city and team officials negotiated an amended lease agreement to keep things kosher.

Among the changes in both Schor's proposal and the agreement passed by the Council:

- The contract was extended from 2034 to 2038, making the lease 24 years in total.

- The city also agreed to an additional \$1.25 million in facility renovations as part of new league requirements. The entirety of those renovation costs will be paid by the city.

- The city agreed to waive a \$350,000 in minimum payments from the team to the city this year for revenue sharing, which was also part of the existing lease agreement.



Dunbar

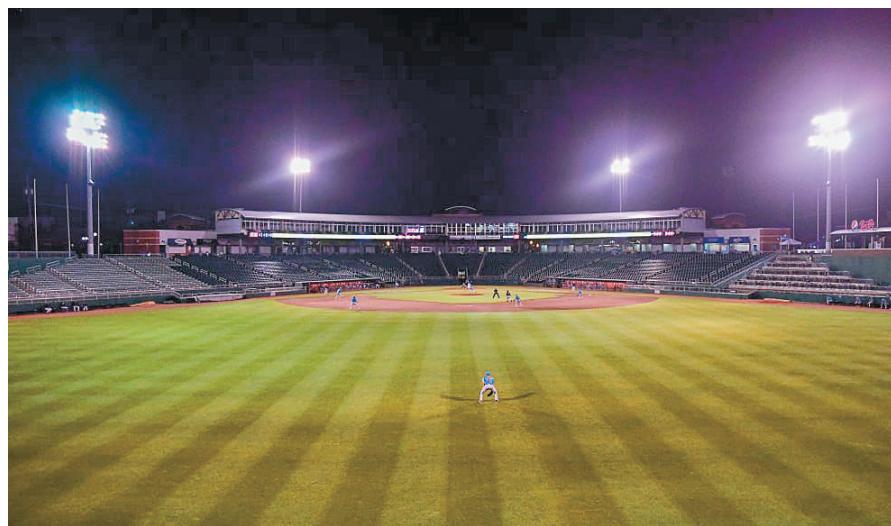


Photo by Jesse Goldberg-Strassler

The Lansing Lugnuts signed a new contract after Councilwoman Kathie Dunbar stepped in to negotiate a better deal for the city.

A clause in the contract allowed the team to dodge that cost in the event of a catastrophe — much like the pandemic. City officials agreed to waive it rather than argue the concept in court.

Both leases also maintain a revenue stream for the city in the form of a percentage of the annual Lugnuts' sales on things like tickets, concessions and advertising. In both the existing and the revised contract, that includes a minimum \$350,000 annual payment to the city. But had Schor and team owner Tom Dickson charged forward as planned, that would all look different.

Here's what Schor pitched:

Those revenue-based payments switch to a flat fee next year that starts at \$175,000 and gradually escalates to \$300,000 — resulting in at least \$2 million less for the city through 2038.

Here's what Dunbar fixed:

Dunbar said she renegotiated that rate to remain as a percentage of revenues, including the annual minimum \$350,000 payment to the city. To help address the Lugnuts' financial pitfalls, only advertising revenues — estimated at \$38,000 for the city annually — have been excluded from the city's calculated share of those revenues for the next 10 years.

Dunbar also reinstated a series of annual payments for promised capital improvements to the stadium but reduced the amount from a minimum of \$1.7 million through 2034 to a minimum of \$800,000 through 2038 — at least \$900,000 more saved for the city of Lansing over the lease.

Additionally, Dunbar pushed officials to refinance outstanding debt

from 2015 for capital improvements that were split between the city and the team — resulting in lower payments over a longer term. The team agreed to cover the early termination fees. Due to financial struggles, the latest \$125,000 installment from the team can be paid in installments over 10 years.

An added clause also ensures the city will be paid at least \$150,000 per year for naming rights to the stadium. The current rights for Jackson Field escalate to \$166,000 annually though 2034.

Translation: Dunbar's plan, which was approved, 6-1, by the City Council last week, included plenty of concessions for the Lugnuts, which are struggling without a regular season. But it also drove in millions of dollars to the city that Schor was otherwise willing to leave on the table.

Both the original stadium lease and Schor's proposed amendment, which didn't account for savings from LED lights, resulted in a net loss to the city, according to a report from Internal Auditor Eric Brewer, who reports to the Council. The old contract — worst-case scenario — had the city on the hook for up to \$1 million. The newer version edged that total up to \$1.7 million. Still, city finance officials billed the move as "cost neutral" when it was first presented to the Council this month.

"I don't know if it was a lie as much as they just missed something," said Councilman Adam Hussain. "As soon as this was figured out, the administration was deeply, deeply engaged."

Dunbar's replacement plan, instead, has been widely accepted as a better

deal. Obligations for capital improvements were offset by lower annual obligations over the next 10 years. That \$350,000 waiver for last year and loss of advertising revenue were concessions that will be balanced by retaining the \$350,000 annual payment to the city over the next 16 years, she said.

Factoring in annual savings for both the city and the team through the conversion to LED lighting by 2023, the city also now stands to turn a profit of at least \$1.3 million over the course of the new lease agreement. Those split utility bills — which were tracked at nearly \$250,000 last year — are expected to at least be halved, according to Dunbar's latest cost estimates.

"I do think it's a long-term win for the city," said Council President Peter Spadafore. "I'd like to give a big shout-out to Councilmember Dunbar and our internal auditor for doing that extra work and really analyzing this a bit further for the city. Clearly, those efforts paid off in this case."

Added Hussain: "This ensured a win-win and gave the team an opportunity to stay in Lansing."

Dunbar recognized that it's not necessarily in her job description as a member of the City Council to negotiate more favorable lease contracts on behalf of the mayor's administration — especially in a "strong mayor" system of government that gives Schor wide discretion to lead.

But when duty calls: "I know more about baseball than I ever hoped to learn," she added. "It's not my job as a City Council member to pad Tom Dickson's bottom line at the city's expense. We needed to get this under control because the Council wouldn't have passed it."

A spokeswoman for Schor's office declined City Pulse a chance to interview Schor and finance staff for this story, instead sending a brief statement in response to questions about the last proposal. It still labeled the more expensive flatrate as "consistent" and "affordable" versus a percentage rate.

"The deal negotiated was good for the city of Lansing, which reduced costs through the length of the contract, and good for the Lugnuts as they took on added costs as well," Schor added. "The Lugnuts have been an economic driver and anchor in the City of Lansing for 25 years."

— KYLE KAMINSKI



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This was Brandon Mitchner's vision.

Brandon always wanted to own his own business. He didn't think he could work a 8 to 5 job. He wanted to be his own boss. So, he and a partner started a business selling athletic wear. The name of the business is M.I.Y.M. means Make It Your Mission to do the right thing. He worked hard for his business and worked another job and attended college. On June 28, 2014 Brandon tragically drowned in the Grand River.

Six years later his mother, Shirley Mitchner

decided to take his business and do her best to make it successful. She knew it was something her son would have wanted. To honor Brandon and keep his memory alive, she is offering several scholarships and donating profits to various shelters. This is the type of person Brandon was; kind, generous, protector, friendly, happy, helpful and most of all a son, a brother, a uncle, a nephew, a cousin and a good friend. Your support is deeply appreciated.

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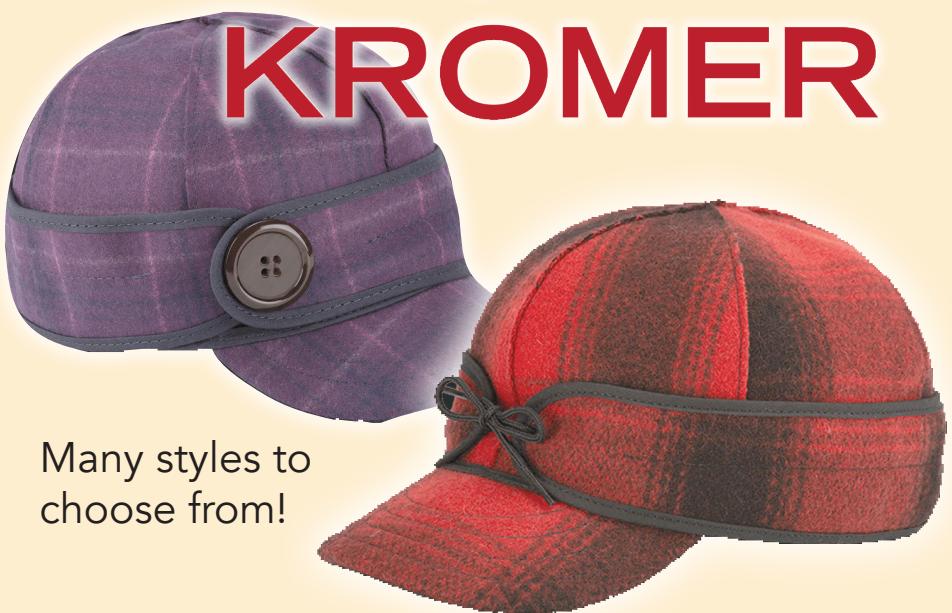


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BLACK BUSINESSES MATTER

Racial inequities permeate economy in Greater Lansing — and beyond

LEAP launches Department of Equitable Economic Planning to foster inclusion

By KYLE KAMINSKI

The economic landscape of Greater Lansing has a diversity and inclusion problem.

Only about 15% of the small businesses in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties are owned by minorities, according to statistics from the Lansing Economic Area Partnership. And despite accounting for about 19% of the tri-county population, the data shows that those historically disenfranchised populations have struggled to narrow an ever-widening racial wealth gap.

"Unfortunately, a lot of these things are deep rooted, and deep-rooted things are hard to pull out and hard to change," explained Tony Willis, who was promoted this month to chief equity development officer to help run LEAP's new Department of Equitable Economic Planning.

"We are seeing more fortitude and willingness from different groups," Willis added. "Hopefully through continued education and advocacy on these issues, that will continue to empower Black and brown businesses, getting people in a position, professionally, to push through barriers."

For now, white-owned businesses outnumber their more diverse counterparts 6 to 1 in Greater Lansing. Across Michigan, state economic statistics show that about 19% of the state's 874,000 small businesses are owned by people of color, who account for 21% of the population.

Reporters at City Pulse — as just one small example — navigated those disparities firsthand and could only compile a listing of 20 to 30 Black-owned businesses locally.

But over the last year, the murder of George Floyd has only sharpened a spotlight on racial disparities in health, business and public safety nationwide. Google Trends data shows searches for "Black-owned businesses near me" surged to their peak last June. And for Willis, that signaled that the timing was just right to make strides toward a more inclusive economy.

"The main driver was really an understanding that the economy works best when all people participate in the economy," Willis said. "But we also understand that there are obstacles for each different type of group and demographic. Each obstacle is unique, so they need unique solutions



Willis

to solve them. This department was about being intentional to address these issues."

To help put long-sought plans into action and kick off Black History Month in Lansing, LEAP launched DEEP and promoted Willis to help guide the economy toward a more equitable future. The department's stated goal: Unlock the "full potential" of the business world in Greater Lansing by expanding opportunities for low-income residents — namely people of color.

The inaugural year at DEEP is focused on three areas: Building collaborations with entities already focused on economic equity — like the Black Business Alliance of Greater Lansing and One Love Global; Strengthening internal policies at LEAP to put inclusion at the forefront of the entire organization; and developing programs to bolster diversity in local business ownership.

The first two are simple. They're about setting goals and networking. Putting programs into motion that actually help lift the anchors of systemic discrimination is a bit more of a challenge — especially when Lansing's diverse population is scattered relatively evenly across the city.

"We can do this by empowering other groups and understanding what our role is in economic development for the region," Willis said. "We believe that the most compelling and growing communities of the future are the ones that are the most welcoming and the ones that do the best job taking out obstacles that block opportunities for people to be able to fulfill their dreams."

"Beyond a moral imperative, it also makes economic sense," Willis added.

Willis will oversee LEAP's One and All entrepreneurship initiative that was launched last year to provide business coaching and workshops to underrepresented populations — including people of color, women, people with disabilities, immigrants and military veterans.

That program provides \$2,500 in seed money, geared toward eliminating wealth disparities that have persisted for decades. Michigan State University research shows that earnings of Black workers and the share of Black ownership in businesses nationwide dropped across much of the country between 2012 and 2017. Willis said Greater Lansing is "on par" with national trends.

That MSU study showed that the racial wealth gap is not due to cultural factors, but rather differences in income, stock ownership and business ownership. It also pointed toward a need for action to "correct inequality in the system" and enact policies to address institutional rac-

ism.

Part of that work at DEEP involves recruiting Black-owned businesses — most of which operate under a DBA license — into a program that registers them as limited liability companies. Willis said that will bolster access to federal help, including the Paycheck Protection Program.

"The majority of Black-owned businesses are DBAs. So, you have a majority of these groups in that status that are being discredited from that program," Willis said. "We thought, let's start converting them or at least make them aware they are primed for more benefits through this."

In addition to rewriting internal policies at LEAP that dictate things like grant distribution and assistance for businesses looking to obtain tax incentives for development, Willis plans to expand the criteria for the organization's annual Diversity Star award program — further incentivizing businesses to strive toward a more diverse workforce with equitable opportunities.

Longer-term goals at DEEP involve strengthening the diversity of the business supply chain in Greater Lansing, moving Black-owned businesses higher and higher up the economic ladder.

"Black-owned businesses are typically undercapitalized," Willis said. "When it comes to Black and brown and underrepresented businesses, most of these groups are at the very last end of the supply chain — the retail part. That part is really at the whims of the consumer. Widening that supply chain into manufacturing and procurement creates more income and more stability."

A recent McKinsey & Company study projects that the Black-white wealth gap will cost the U.S. economy up to \$1.5 trillion by 2028. Revenue parity between the two demographics would not only be fair, but it would inject another \$290 billion to the economy, according to the study.

The pandemic hasn't helped. Reports show that about 58% of Black-owned businesses were at risk of financial distress before the pandemic, compared to about 27% of white-owned businesses. Ultimately, 41% of Black-owned businesses nationwide closed last year.

Generations of inherited wealth gaps without serious reforms to move to the needle on equitable economic reforms has only created barriers to acquiring the cash needed to weather the storm, Willis said. That's why LEAP is actively prioritizing more help for racially diverse busi-

BLACK BUSINESSES MATTER

Getting to know some of Lansing's Black business owners

By SKYLER ASHLEY

Deanna Ray-Brown, Everything is Cheesecake

Everything is Cheesecake
5443 S. Cedar St., Lansing
Saturday-Sunday, 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
everything-is-cheesecake.business.site
(517) 862-2979

Deanna Ray-Brown, 40, opened her food truck Everything is Cheesecake back in 2018 after growing tired of working full time as a training manager for a Fortune 500 company. When pondering a career change, she turned to one of her longtime passions, baking.



Ray-Brown

"I was stressed out and no longer mentally cut out for the job. I began experimenting with recipes, taking a lot of them from my mother, and began baking cheesecakes. I gave the product to my family and friends and they said it was some of the best they ever had," Ray-Brown said.

Before purchasing the official Everything is Cheesecake truck, Ray-Brown would sell her baked goods out of a tent to walkup customers. She went with a food truck instead of leasing a brick-and-mortar space to cut costs, citing the expense of building a kitchen fit for a bakery from scratch.

"I just wanted to get started. I purchased a truck that was fully equipped with everything I needed," Ray-Brown said.

Once the food truck got rolling, Ray-Brown quit her job and made Everything is Cheesecake her full-time occupation. Ray-Brown's favorite part of running her own business is interacting with her customers and lending a helping hand to the Greater Lansing community. "I love being able to make a difference and creating something unique for people to enjoy," she said. "I always try to give back to the community whenever I can."

During the pandemic, Ray-Brown and Everything is Cheesecake led an effort to feed children and displaced workers. She's also used her business to head several other charitable operations, including providing toys to children and purchasing lunches to keep people from going hungry.

"That's what being a business owner is all about. Making an impact on somebody's life," she said.

Ray-Brown said she has received a lot of love and support from Lansing since opening Everything is Cheesecake, and hopes that more Black-owned businesses will open in Lansing in the future.

"I try to support a lot of businesses, and I am hoping to see a lot more Black businesses established in Lansing."

Atalie Buycks, Thriftique

Thriftique
1137 S. Washington Ave., Lansing
Thursday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Friday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Facebook.com/thriftiquebiz • (517) 256-0962

Atalie Buycks, 42, got the inspiration to open her business, Thriftique, after taking care of a friend's thrift store for a year in 2008. After returning the keys, she was driven to open her own shop. The fol-

lowing year, she had Thriftique up and running and is still going strong to this day.

"I was really inspired by my grandmother. She taught me the art of thrift. I also had a natural passion for it," Buycks said. "I took out a bare bones business loan, and then I had a location and a sign."

Buycks wanted to create a thrift shop that was more of a boutique, with higher quality items that still possessed that special thrifty feeling. She credits her longevity to the support she's received from the Lansing community.

"You've got to be smart. Most of your money just goes back into your business. It's not like you're sitting there with piles of money," Buycks said.

Buycks described her experience as a Black woman business owner with Mexican heritage as eye opening.

"It wasn't something that was on top of my radar. But with people supporting me in that factor, it made me realize, 'Where are my dollars going? Is there something that I could be doing that is more supportive to a smaller Black-owned business?'

Buycks said she wants Thriftique to help combat hurtful stigmas surrounding thrifting, including the notion that buying clothes at a thrift shop is "only for poor people."

"I'm adamant about trying to change that perspective. One shopper at a time," Buycks said.

Buyck's advice for people that are looking to open up their own business is to be prepared for long hours and hard labor.

"Just get started. Doing something that is actually tangible, that is more than just a business plan. It's like having a baby, there's never going to be a perfect time," she said.

Maurice Summerville, Mo Wings

Mo Wings
424 S. Washington Sq., Lansing
Monday-Thursday, 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Mowingslansing.com • (517) 721-1770

Before Maurice Summerville, 49, opened his first restaurant, Mo Wings, he had his own real estate company, Ewing Enterprises, which renovated old properties. He wanted to make the change after being inspired by his family.

"We wanted to do something as a family. My auntie Rosie passed away a couple years ago. She always wanted to do a business together — there was a lot of inspiration there," Summerville said.

Summerville said opening Mo Wings was a smooth process. He leased the location on Washington Square in 2019 and spent several months fixing it up and getting it ready to house all of the necessary kitchen equipment. Summerville wanted to open a restaurant that had delicious, but still affordable food. "I put my prices where the community can come in and afford a meal," he said.

Summerville considers his first couple of years a

and retain more people in the community because we're doing it right."

President Joe Biden also announced changes on Monday to the Paycheck Protection Program which are geared toward ensuring more lower-income and minority-owned businesses — as well as contractors and self-employed people — can qualify for additional federal assistance.

In the meantime, local residents can continue to level the playing field for Black-owned businesses by showing support with their wallets. Steve Japinga,



Buycks

restaurant owner as exciting and positive. "It was a little shocking how much people loved our wings and food. It was great. Silver Bells was excellent. We were pushing strong until the pandemic came, things slowed down then," he said.

While the pandemic has brought upon a lot of changes to the menu, reduction of employee hours and a shift to focusing on takeout, Mo Wings is still persevering thanks to a lot of love from dedicated customers.

"I think people really gravitated toward us because of who I am as a person. Whether I was Black or white, I don't think it would have a lot of bearing," Summerville said. "But our community supports our Black owners, and that's important. Our Black owners support our Black communities, it's all positive all the way around."

Aside from Mo Wings, Summerville is also well known for his work as a youth basketball coach at Waverly High School. In the future, he wants to open a second Mo Wings location and expand his efforts in giving back to Lansing. "We want to be there for a lot of community activities. We want to support our people," he said.

Rizza Marie Benton, Roots Hair Lounge

Roots Hair Lounge
Opens March 1
More info: Rootshairlansing.glossgenius.com

Rizza Marie Benton, 32, who uses they/them pronouns, is just a couple weeks away from opening their very first business, a salon called Roots Hair Lounge. Benton's salon will be located inside of the Wild Ferns Wellness Center, which also includes spaces that offer counseling and massage.

Benton's mission with Roots Hair Lounge is to create a safe space for all people of color, as well as members of the LGBTQ community, to get their hair styled, cut and dyed.

Benton has worked with several Black woman business owners in their career as a stylist, and cites them as inspiring figures when it came to striking out to open up Roots Hair Lounge.

"There is a great salon called Rhonda's Reflections, which is owned by a Black woman who's amazing. Every time I've gone there, I've always tried to absorb her techniques and talk hair. I really respect the way she runs her business."

Benton also cites their time at Rubie's Paradise Salon as formative for their vision with Roots Hair Lounge.

Benton said they are feeling a little bit nervous, as this is their very first business. But their passion comes down to caring for people and making them feel beautiful in their bodies, and Benton said they are willing to face any challenges that might arise.

"I feel pretty excited, opening a business during COVID is scary for obvious reasons. But this was a space that I really wanted to a part of it, and it feels like we are building something beautiful. I think it will be worth it in the long run."



Benton

LEAP

from page 15

nesses.

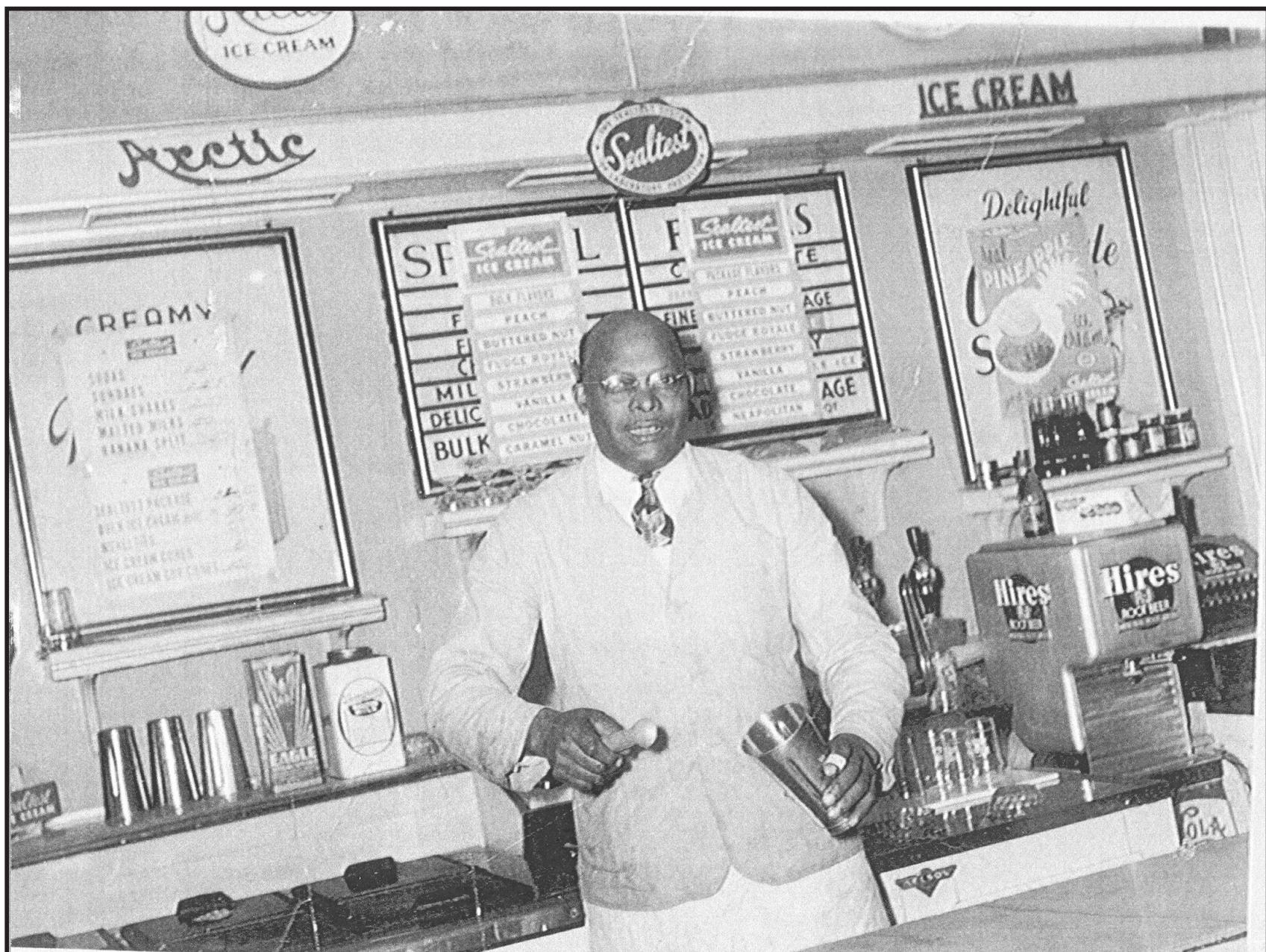
"I want us to be known for this — that we took it upon ourselves as a region to do the right things, on all accounts, for everybody," Willis said. "That alone is an attraction piece. It will attract more business

a vice president at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, said he has noticed a growing base of support in the local community to help ensure that dollars are being spent at diverse businesses in Greater Lansing.

"A lot of people are waking up, learning and educating themselves more about these issues and that's great to see all of these things coming together to be a part of the solution," Japinga said.

(Visit buyblacklansing.com to view an aggregated listing of Black-owned businesses in Lansing.)

BLACK BUSINESSES MATTER



Courtesy of Historical Society of Greater Lansing

In the 1960s, Alexander's Confectionery was a popular hangout for young adults. Owned by William and Effie Alexander, the soda shop was located on Williams Street just south of the St. Joseph Main Street Corridor.

A brief look at the history of Black businesses in Lansing

By BILL CASTANIER

It didn't matter if you were an 18-year-old looking for a wedding ensemble; a state employee sizing up a party dress or a 19-year-old ad salesman, as I was for my college newspaper. When you walked into Lett's Fashion on Butler Boulevard in downtown Lansing, owner Bill Lett greeted you with a welcoming "How are you today?"

Lett's charm was effusive and put you in the mood for buying. His downhome charm may have come from his humble roots of selling nylons out of the trunk of his car before opening Lett's Distributors in 1959 at 627 St. Joseph St., where he would sell everything from culottes and muumuu's to toasters and transistor radios. Lett was also persistent. When his first shop was bulldozed in 1965 for the I-496 Expressway, he moved his operation to the Butler and Ottawa Street location. The State of Michigan decided it needed the property for expansion, and he was the

lone holdout until he was forced to move in the 2000s to the east side of Lansing.

His brother, Fay, had the same easy-going charm and built it into a successful heating and cooling business until his retirement. Fay Lett was the go-to guy when it came to sitting down with homeowners to close the sale.

The Lett brothers were just two of many African American entrepreneurs who called the west side of Lansing home prior to the construction of I-496 and its completion in 1970.

One of the first, if not the first, African American business owners in Lansing was a young man named William Leabs



Lett

Jr., who in the early 1900s opened the Marquette Shoe Shine Parlor. Although an early pioneer, he would be far from the last African American to strike out on one's own.

The list includes Rankin-Lewis & Sons; Haskins & Sons Paving Excavating; Riley Funeral Home, a plethora of beauty shops and barbershops; and small café owners like Alexander's Confectionary, I & H Grill at 718 Division St. and Fred and Bill's Take-Out on Butler Street.

Before the expressway cut a wide path through the St. Joseph and Main Street neighborhood, African American residents could get pretty much anything they needed in the neighborhood.

The doctor, dentist, lawyer and shoe repairman (Bob's Shoe Repair on Logan Street, now Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard) were all within a stone's throw of each other.

See History, Page 18

BLACK BUSINESSES MATTER



Cadillac Clothing Store was located at the corner of Logan and Hillsdale Streets.

Courtesy of Historical Society of Greater Lansing

History

from page 17

During the Jim Crow era — when white dry cleaners wouldn't take clothes from African Americans — a number of dry-cleaning services cropped up to fill the needs of the community.

Those looking for a night on the town would make their way to the Tropicana Lounge on Williams and Division Streets, which featured an ever-rotating crop of jazz musicians and singers who would stop to play and sing between gigs in Detroit and Chicago or while on their way to Idlewild, the Eden of the North.

Sonny Adam's Tropicana nightclub was the only black nightclub in Lansing listed in the Green Book for African American travelers, along with four boarding houses run by women.

But it was Johnny's Record Shop (sometimes called Johnnie's), 812 S. Logan St., that everyone talks about. The owner, Johnnie Johnson, in addition to selling black music, hair products and cosmetics, created a community gathering place where kids and adults from the neighborhood would drop in to see what was going on and listen to records that were not sold elsewhere.

Johnson, who began selling records out

of his apartment, would also order records from Detroit or Chicago. The brick-and-mortar store opened in 1960 and held on to the mid-'70s, when it was purchased by the Department of Transportation for a field office. It also served as a ticket outlet for some amazing shows, such as the Motortown Review in 1963 at the Lansing Center featuring Marvin Gaye, Mary Wells and Little Stevie Wonder. Amazingly, there are no known photographs of what Johnny's looked like either from the outside or inside. (Anyone with photographs should email hsgl@gmail.com.)

Workers with skills had side jobs doing household repairs, shooting photographs, booking singing gigs or turning out peach cobbler for parties. Frederick Richardson, in addition to working for Oldsmobile in accounting, became the community's official photographer. He shot weddings, parties, the Cotillion, Jabberwocky and the Ebony Fashion Show. His spouse, Jessie Richardson, would take her musical talents and gospel repertoire on the road to churches and religious gatherings across the world. Former State Rep. Earl Nelson founded the Earl Nelson Singers, which traveled to gigs in a customized bus.

The primarily African American neighborhood was also one of the few locations where teenagers could land their first job at a grocery store, party store or clothing store. A popular place to work for young men was Cadillac Clothing Store. Located at the cor-

ner of Logan and Hillsdale streets, the store featured men's clothing, including the popular Nehru jacket.

Some westside African Americans used their businesses to build capital, like Gregory Eaton, who used his cleaning service business, Greg's Janitorial, to open the Garage and later Gregory's bar, on MLK Boulevard.

When the dust settled on the expressway, most African American businesses closed for good. Their clientele base was dispersed across the city, and the high cost of relocating and the inability to get loans sealed their doom. A few businesses prospered, such as Haskins & Sons founded by Otis Hankins in the late-'50s and Rankin Lewis and Sons, founded in 1926.

Rankin Lewis was founded by William Rankin Lewis, who was a football star for Lansing Central in the '20s, winning a state championship playing alongside the famed Kipke brothers. Harry Kipke went on to coach football at both the University of Michigan and Michigan State College. When the business started in 1926, the company was still hauling manure along with coal ash and black dirt. Lewis' persistence paid off and his company became the largest garbage business in Lansing, selling to Granger in 1975.

(*Bill Castanier, a longtime contributor to City Pulse, is president of the Historical Society of Greater Lansing.*)

ARTS & CULTURE

ART • BOOKS • FILM • MUSIC

Notes in a bottle

Lansing Symphony releases chamber concert on line

By LAWRENCE COSENTINO

The dark margins of the sound stage at Lansing's Public Media Center looked like a valley of Egyptian sarcophagi, with 12 human-sized cello cases scattered around in various poses.

It was an unusual Lansing Symphony concert. Instead of leading a full orchestra in view of 2,000 people, maestro Timothy Muffitt paced back and forth behind the soundstage, alone, listening intently. He settled into a chair for about half a minute and sprang back up as the music reached a crescendo.

Sound and video technicians busily bottled the notes on a series of sunny afternoons in December. Listeners can crack the bottle and enjoy a welcome sign of life from the orchestral home team when the concert goes online Monday (March 1).

With the 2020-21 season cratered by cancellations, Muffitt saw a chance to do some things the symphony wouldn't normally do. An ensemble of 12 cellists is an anomaly you'll never see at a subscription concert, and too big of a group for the usual chamber concert.

"It's not something you should try at home, either," Muffitt cracked as the cellists broke into pairs and chatted in the driveway during a break.

The masked cellists had 40 minutes to rehearse before the room was cleared, the chairs and equipment sanitized and the air was left to circulate for an hour. Then it was back to work again.

To build a coherent and meaningful hour, Muffitt wove a tight braid of music from the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa Lobos, Baroque composer Antonio Vivaldi and the symphony's composer-in-residence, Patrick Harlin. A mixed ensemble of violins, violas, cellos and a bass play the latter two works.

Harlin's music is the show-stop-

LANSING SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Chamber Concert 2
Available to subscribers Feb. 28;
Available to public March 1
isovideo.com

per. Inspired by the murmurations (flocking patterns) of birds, jet contrails and perceptual tricks played by a free fall, the music plummets to its doom and floats in ecstatic suspension at once. The cellists meld into a collective prism and achieve a glassy sonority that refracts a thousand elusive colors.

Clarity, counterpoint and a deep-breathing life force is woven into all three works on the program. In a parched concert landscape, it's a tall drink of water, drawn from the crystal well of Baroque masters Bach and Vivaldi.

The intertwining cello lines of "Bachianas Brasilierias" pulsate with Villa Lobos' love of Bach. "Autumn" from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," gives you the real Baroque deal. Harlin's "Art of Flight" is a floating, free falling effusion of joy and loss, with a transparent, modern sensibility, but it contains a direct quote from "Autumn" and even features a harpsichord.

Having masterminded the program, Muffitt largely stayed out of the way while principal cellist Hong Hong and his 11 colleagues collectively worked out the music.

"I wanted to see a chamber music experience, so I stayed on the sidelines," Muffitt said. "I popped in and out, listened to the rehearsals and made some notes."



Lansing Symphony cellist Hong Hong confers with 11 other cellists at a taping of the Lansing Symphony Orchestra's latest chamber concert, to be released online Monday (March 1).

Lawrence Cosentino/City Pulse

At the Villa Lobos taping, Muffitt asked the cellists to play the third movement once more, which they did, with more urgency and bite, but he kept his input to a minimum.

"It's more fulfilling for the musicians that way," Muffitt said. "It becomes very democratic very quickly. It was wonderful to see the chemistry unfold among the musicians."

Muffitt said the experience resulted in much more than a concert for people to enjoy on line.

"It's going to have benefits when we return as an orchestra, because it will have strengthened the musical relationships among the musicians, and that will translate when we're all together on stage," he said.

In a year packed with "re-imagined" seasons, Muffitt has been keeping up virtual concerts from orchestras around the world. He was impressed

with the editing and technical support of the Media Center technicians.

This may be a chamber concert, but it's not meant to be played on a phone. The high fidelity audio and fluid camerawork are best enjoyed on the biggest setup available.

"I'd match the quality with anything the big orchestras are doing," he said.

For any performing arts group struggling to do its thing during a pandemic, virtual concerts are a way to keep audiences engaged, but perhaps more important, they keep the musicians engaged as well.

"We have to keep things coming on the horizon for them, so they have something to work for," Muffitt said. "These are moments when they can recharge themselves and it can help sustain all of us."

The adventures and calamities of two hiking sisters

By BILL CASTANIER

Ten years is a long time for sisters to be apart, but as Lansing's Erin Bartels writes in her new book, "All That We Carried," an arduous hiking trip through Michigan's Porcupine Mountain might not be the best idea for a place for them to reunite.

In addition to being amateur hikers, it doesn't help that the two sisters, Olivia and Melanie, are as different as night and day. Olivia is a hard-driving lawyer, a materialist and a by-the-clock doer. Melanie, on the other hand, is an online life coach with a go-with-the-flow attitude in life.

Hanging over the hike is the memory

of their parents' fatal car crash 10 years ago while they were on another hike in the Upper Peninsula.

The new book is the third for Bartels, who works as a literary copywriter for Revel, a division of Baker Publishing, which specializes in books with a message of Christian living.

"I sell other people's books for a living," she said.

Bartels said the idea for the books comes from her own hiking experiences with her sister, Alison. They have taken eight major hikes together, but none of them have the high drama of the trek in her new book.

"Thankfully, we have not experienced any calamities on our trips," Bartels said. Except for a "plague of mosquitos," which cut short a Porcupine Mountain hike.

"You prepare for every eventuality, so you can write about it all happening," she said.

That includes misplacing a compass, inadequate gear for the elements, a lost trail map, an unexpected dunking in water and a forest fire.

Bartels said her hikes with her sister don't match up with the dangerous travails of Olivia and Melanie.

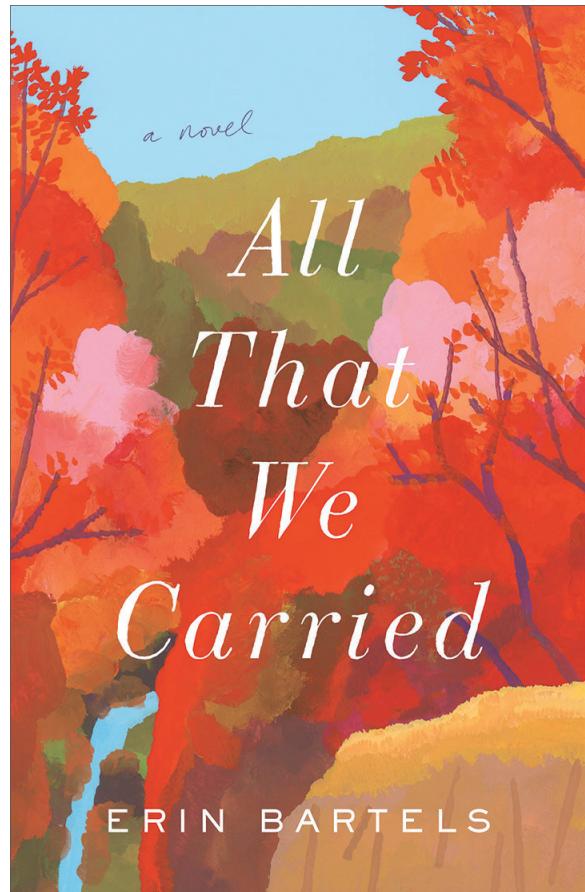
"Except for the bear sleeping outside our tent," she said. On a hiking trip in the Manistee Valley in Michigan's Lower Peninsula, Bartels said, "a bear hunkered down 6 inches from my head."

"At first, I was more worried it was a human," she said.

Bartels admits that the two fictional characters have pieces of her and her sister in their personalities. She said they both enjoy hiking without distractions. "Nobody can reach you; you



Bartels



don't need to talk and it's a great time to get away from responsibilities," Bartels said.

In the book, when Olivia and Melanie are in the most need of help, a mysterious man out fly-fishing is there to help them. He reappears several times as an angel of mercy and shepherds the women to safety.

"Some things in life are not easily explainable," she said.

Bartels said her new book came with some hurdles she hadn't experienced while writing her first two.

"They already were complete, and I only had a short amount of time to write this new book," she said.

"Also, I was concerned about how my sister would receive the book. I had to reassure her the hikers were not us, but there are parts of us in both of them," Bartels said. "It could've been a little bit sticky, but she liked the book. We spent most of our twenties thinking we were very different people. As it turns

out, we're not so different after all."

Olivia and Melanie have pretty much the same revelation in Bartels' new book, but how they get there and the tribulations they undergo are much more daunting. As an aside, the book — although not a guide to hiking Michigan — does provide some examples of what can go wrong if you are not prepared.

Bartels next book takes place on an inland kettle lake in Northern Michigan, where cross generations gather at a summer cottage. It's a concept many Michiganders will understand intimately.

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We are offering a virtual meet + greet with Melissa de la Cruz, author of the Alex & Eliza trilogy and Disney's Descendants novels. We are opening a limited number of spots for a 90 second Zoom chat with Melissa. **Register at neveraftermeetandgreet.eventbrite.com**

THE OWL WHO ASKS WHY STORYTIME
February 27 · 11am

The little ones always have the best questions! Sit down with your little inquisitive minds and author Michelle Garcia Andersen as she reads her new book, *The Owl Who Asks Why*. Join us LIVE on Facebook!

March Is Reading Month Storytime: HAPPY BIRTHDAY DR. SEUSS!
March 2 · 11am

Hang on to your hats, it's time to celebrate Dr. Seuss' Birthday! We will read a few favorites and try some new things. Watch us on Facebook LIVE for a story, song and activity to kick-off March is Reading Month!

Chicken Little and the Big Bad Wolf STORYTIME WITH SAM WEDELICH
March 3 · 11am

Grown-ups! Grab your littles and settle in to hear author and cartoonist, Sam Wedelich share her newest *Chicken Little* story. Watch LIVE on Facebook.

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Favorite Things

Ian Cross and his 2003 BMW

Ian Cross is extremely passionate about two things: cars and photography. It's only natural that his favorite thing would be his heavily modified BMW. He purchased it in Saginaw and tuned it up himself.

For me, the obvious choice for my favorite thing is my 2003 BMW. It just popped up on my Facebook memories that I got it a year and two months ago. My buddy, who builds drift cars, bought it, and it was all stock. He gave me a really good deal on it, and I went out to his house in Saginaw and picked it up, with the intentions of turning it into a project car. I got my parts car, swapped over all the parts and started daily-driving it.

It's crazy when you get that first big drive. When you go out somewhere and drive the car back for the very first time. That's when you truly get to bond with it. You watch all of the gauges and hope it doesn't overheat. You're listening to the car — listening for any noises and trying to adjust to driving it for the first time.

When I got it back home, the first step was getting a quick-release steering wheel. My buddy and I threw down halfway on a parts car in Ohio that was wrecked in the rear. I got the suspension and all of the components and started installing it on the BMW. I built it all in about two weeks. The original BMW owner didn't know what was wrong with it. I really just needed all four brakes and I could've just started driving it. It was high miles, but well maintained, as BMW owners tend to do.

I've always loved cars, but I didn't realize until about 2013 that what I really wanted to do was start modifying them myself,



versus just looking at them. Once you start getting into high-level cars, it's cool to see where you came from and it's cool to see where you end up. For me, I just did the research on YouTube and just slowly began learning. I was able to save myself a lot of money by just doing the work myself.

My big thing with project cars, it can be hard to make very big trips. Any time I would drive to Detroit to visit my grandma or go to Grand Rapids for a car meet, and I'd make it back home with nothing going wrong, well, that was a good day.

My goal with a project car is to stand out, and have an opportunity to express myself everyday. If you daily-drive a project car, there is no better feeling. I got into car culture, because it doesn't matter where you go — if you pull up in a unique car, there's always going to be somebody that knows about it and it's always going to be a conversation piece.

Interview edited and condensed by Skyler Ashley. If you have a suggestion for favorite things, please email skyler@lansingcitypulse.com

Cornel West delivers virtual speech at MSU

By SKYLER ASHLEY

Michigan State University's Dr. William G. Anderson lecture series From Slavery to Freedom concludes its 21st year Thursday with a virtual speech from prolific civil rights activist and author Cornel West, associate

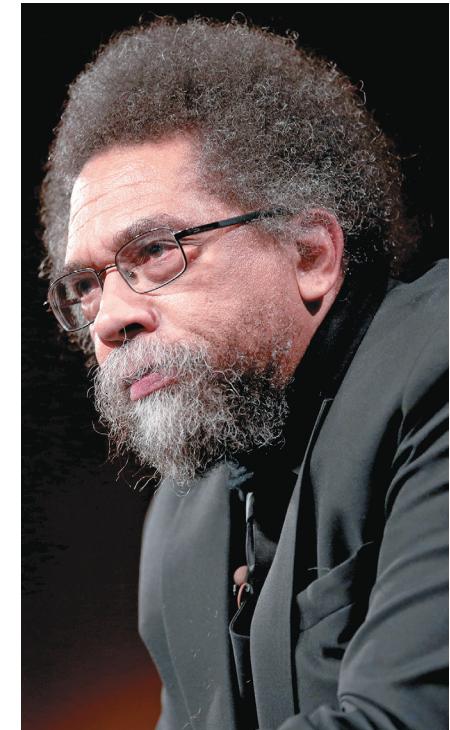
professor of public philosophy at Harvard University and professor emeritus at Princeton University.

Previous speakers in this year's lecture series included filmmaker Monique Morris and Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors.

"This is the first time we've done this in our 21-year history. Typically, we'd all gather together in the Kellogg Center, but we wanted to follow pandemic protocol. It's also an opportunity for us to have a different reach this year. Being able to participate from your living room gives us a chance to reach more people," said Marita Gilbert, associate dean of diversity and campus inclusion at MSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine. "Which is important, because we are having very critical conversations."

The lecture series comes after a watershed year for grassroots activism against police brutality and systemic racism, spurred by the police killings of Black citizens including George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Gilbert said the important conversations that arose from a summer of widespread demonstrations amid the coronavirus pandemic had an influence on the content of the keynote speaker's lectures.

West is world-renowned for his work as a thought-provoking speaker and academic visionary. Some of his most well-known and influential published works include "Race Matters" and "Democracy Matters." While West is a highly respected figure in the world of academia, he is also unafraid of participating in direct action. He was arrested in 2014 at a demonstration in Ferguson, Missouri, protesting the police killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown.



West

"He talks to the community and the academy in a way that front and center challenges us on what we're willing to do to make social and political conditions better," Gilbert said. "As a public intellectual, what I admire about him is that he's not afraid for folks to disagree, even within our own community. He asks, 'Even if we don't agree, what can we commit to in terms of the vision of the work?'"

The Dr. William G. Anderson lecture series began as a way to discuss and explore the history and culture of the African American experience in the United States. Anderson, now 93, is still an active participant in the lecture series' programming and still works with MSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine. Anderson is a longtime advocate for civil rights and social justice, having participated in the Albany Movement, a desegregation campaign that took place in 1961 in Albany, Georgia.

"He was a trailblazer in our field of osteopathic medicine. He's a champion of social justice and transformative change. He has connected that within our field of osteopathic medicine and pushed the field to learn what inclusive excellence really means," Gilbert said.

MSU's podcasts for actors: A coach in your pocket

By DAVID WINKELSTERN

Thursday marks this year's Digital Learning Day. To celebrate, Michigan State University is launching "The Moment Before" — a series of warm-up exercises for actors. Project organizer Alexis Black calls the series "the only known podcast that focuses on quick and convenient ways for an actor to warm-up and prepare for auditions, rehearsals and performances."

The podcast is available on Spotify or Apple, just search for "The Moment Before: An Actor's Warm-up Podcast" or "Actor Warm-up Podcast." Each segment ranges from five to 15 minutes.

There are six chapters: "Activating Imagination," "Energizing the Body," "Exploring Emotions," "Discovering Character," "Finding Closure" and "Preparing Special Skills."

"There are around 30 being released during the launch, with 10 more still in the editing phase," Black said.

Black seems an unlikely leader for a voice-only series. Originally from Kent, Ohio, the 38 year-old is a certified teacher of the Michael Chekhov Physical Acting Technique. Black has performed in over 50 productions on stages across the country and throughout Europe. She's even taught workshops as far away

as Seoul, South Korea.

For three years, she has been an assistant professor of acting, movement and stage combat at MSU. "I teach acting and several levels of movement for the actor — how to physicalize things like characterization, emotions, stage combat and staged intimacy," Black said. "I help to create and maintain protocols around actor safety when it comes to physical storytelling."

Black also choreographs and mentors student choreographers for productions at MSU, but that's not all. "I take care of our impressive armory of stage weapons, such as rapiers, prop firearms and broadswords," Black said.

Forced to teach online, audio segments became a logical option and producing them is pandemic-friendly. After noticing a striking lack of podcasts that explore the mental, physical and emotional preparations required for theater, Black immediately knew the subject she would pursue.

To integrate audio media with theatrical movement, she reached out to Daniel Trego, MSU's educational media design specialist. "He was thrilled by the idea," Black said. Trego provided the space and recording equipment, as well as a refined eye on how best to work with technology.

"I was on process and Trego was on product," Black said.

Eight graduate students created the recordings. Kevin Craig, Claire Wilcher, Ryan Adolph, Sharon Combs, Abbie Cathcart, Darah Donaher, Cameron



Courtesy photo

Chase and Eloy Gomez-Orfila are in their final year at MSU. They have a wide range of specialties and come to MSU from across the United States, Spain and Johannesburg, South Africa.

"This seemed like the perfect challenge for the amazing graduate students in our current class. These eight artists were excited to provide a resource for emerging performers," Black said.

Every three years, a new cohort of M.F.A. candidates will be involved.

"This is an ongoing process. Auditioning and performing can feel like you're diving into the deep. As teachers, we wanted to make that swim a little easier," Black said. "For those unable to afford theatrical classes, this is a free coach in their pocket."

Black believes the podcast can appeal to non-actors, too. "For those interested in peeking behind the curtain, this could give them an inside look."

Black also believes in deeper meanings for the performances.

"As humans, we have been fascinated with good storytelling since the dawn of time. Theater is part of the fabric of humanity, and a way to expand empathy for experiences outside our own."

NOTICE

To mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and to provide essential protections to vulnerable Michiganders and this State's health care system and other critical infrastructure, it is crucial that all Michiganders take steps to limit in-person contact, particularly in the context of large groups. Therefore, the Board of Review will be conducted via audio/video conference in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, as amended, in an effort to protect the health and safety of the public. The board will meet on March 08, 09, 10, 11, & 12 2021 at 9:00 AM to 12:00 NOON and 1:30PM to 4:00PM. EXCEPT for Wednesday, March 10 from 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM and 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM to review the assessment roll and hear appeals from taxpayers. **Taxpayers are permitted to file their protest by letter and a personal appearance is not required.** Protest at the Board of Review is necessary to protect your right to further appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal if your property is residential or agricultural. **Letter appeals are strongly encouraged and must be received in the Assessor's Office by 4:30 PM, March 11, 2021.** City of Lansing will also hold its Organizational meeting on Tuesday March 2nd, 2021 at 2:00 PM; no appeals may be heard at this meeting. Please call the City of Lansing Assessor's Office at (517) 483-7624 for information about access to the meeting per via audio/video conference.

RATIO AND TENTATIVE EQUALIZATION FACTORS FOR 2021

Ingham County

| Property Class | Tentative Ratio | Multiplier |
|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Agricultural | N/C | |
| Commercial | 48.57 | 1.02952 |
| Industrial | 47.01 | 1.0636 |
| Residential | 46.67 | 1.07136 |
| Timber-Cutover | N/C | |
| Developmental | N/C | |
| Personal | 50.00 | 1.0000 |

Eaton County

| Property Class | Tentative Ratio | Multiplier |
|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Agricultural | N/C | |
| Commercial | 0.5126 | .97542 |
| Industrial | 47.64 | 1.04954 |
| Residential | 45.91 | 1.08909 |
| Timber-Cutover | N/C | |
| Developmental | N/C | |
| Personal | 50.00 | 1.0000 |

Clinton County

| Property Class | Tentative Ratio | Multiplier |
|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Agricultural | 54.91 | 0.9106 |
| Commercial | 45.8 | 1.0917 |
| Industrial | 51.2 | 0.98 |
| Residential | N/C | |
| Timber-Cutover | N/C | |
| Developmental | N/C | |
| Personal | 50.00 | 1.0000 |

CP#21-026

DON'T FORGET • WE'VE GOT

THE PULSIFIEDS

BACKPAGE CLASSIFIEDS

CityPULSE

Rates start at \$24
for 4 lines

Submit your classified ad to
Suzi Smith: 517-999-6704 or
suzi@lansingcitypulse.com

Contract rates available, all rates net. Classified ads also appear online at no extra charge. Deadline for classifieds is 5 p.m. Monday for the upcoming Wednesday's issue.

Skip the coffee. Try one of these spicy sativa products from Skymint

Skymint rolls out new concentrates with Amsterdam-based DNA Genetics

By KYLE KAMINSKI

It was a big deal when Skymint announced a collaboration last year with Amsterdam-based DNA Genetics and rolled out seven of the most widely sought, potent and internationally acclaimed cannabis strains available in Greater Lansing. It's still among the best around.

But this month, the weed wizards at Skymint are pushing the limits on premium products.

In addition to rolling out several more Skymint x DNA strains over the last several months, select varieties are also now being processed into live resins and waxes. And they truly represent the next-level way to experience some of the best-in-class marijuana on the market.



Skymint x DNA Genetics — Chocolope Wax

Price — \$45/1g

THC content — 76.10%

The Chocolope strain — which won the High Times Cannabis Cup in 2007 — is a cross between Chocolate Thai and Cannalope Haze and is widely known as a potently (almost) pure sativa. In concentrate form, those energizing and uplifting effects were exacerbated tenfold.

Skymint advertises: "You can't get concentrates this good anywhere else." And after sampling this lineup, I haven't found any other shops out there willing to step up and prove them wrong.

What seems like more crystals than wax, these bright orange crystals bubbled away into a deliciously sweet herb profile. I couldn't detect any chocolate or coffee notes like the name would imply, but there's certainly a sugary and earthy mouthfeel well ahead of any fruit flavors.

I'm still working out the science on

Lansterdam in Review:

Skymint

3315 Coolidge Rd., East Lansing
517-376-4640
1015 E. Saginaw St., Lansing
810-379-0090
2508 S. Cedar St., Lansing
810-250-7627
skymint.com



how long to torch my quartz banger before dropping in a dab, but this stuff worked out great at a variety of temperatures. Lower temperatures preserved the flavor; Higher temperatures were a bit more harsh but provided a quick and harder-hitting high.

After two rips and a dozen coughs, I was absolutely invigorated and focused. Chocolope offers a productive and cerebral high that doesn't fog the brain or keep you locked on the couch. In fact, I don't think I could stay seated after smoking this stuff. This is a great concentrate to hit with your morning coffee and continue forward with a productive day. Most of your coworkers — especially on Zoom — will probably just assume you got a great good sleep the night before.

Side note: Skymint also sells Chocolope flower. But the Lansing Botanical Co. near the Capital Region International Airport had a stellar deal — \$25 eighters — on a similar product last week.



Short's Brewing by Jolly Edibles — Mule

Price — \$24/10 Gummies

THC content — 100 mg

I've spent more time than I'd care to admit inside Short's Brewing Co.'s taproom. Bellaire was just a short drive from Traverse City, where I lived for about five years before moving back to Lansing. During that time, I always made a point to sample its new brews, including the Mule.

This beer, as expected, tastes like a Moscow Mule and was packed with

notes of lime and ginger. A few cans on the beach was a perfect way to wind down after a long work week.

Those spicy ginger notes — though obviously missing the alcohol content — carry over flawlessly into these cannabis-infused gummies. Just don't expect to wind down afterwards. Each one is packed with a bouquet of citrusy, sativa-leaning terpenes that provide a invigorating lift of energy. And since I didn't leave myself any chores around the house this weekend, I spent the next six hours playing dozens of sweaty games of Call of Duty. And honestly, I think my first-person shooter skills were much sharper under the effects of this potent THC distillate.

Jolly Edibles is a subsidiary of Skymint, with all edibles being pro-

duced in Dimondale. And the company really did itself a favor by partnering with Short's Brewing for both added name recognition and an array of familiar flavors. The Soft Parade gummies are also delectable. Be warned: The delicious nature of the gummies does absolutely nothing to curb the munchies.

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. Almost weekly, Kaminski samples some of the best cannabis products available in Greater Lansing, gets real high and writes about them.

2021 MARCH BOARD OF REVIEW

MEETING SCHEDULE

Charter Township of Lansing, Ingham County

The Lansing Charter Township Board of Review for March 2021 will be held by electronic remote access, unless by the dates of the March Board of Review meetings it becomes lawful under state agency rules and statute for an in-person meeting to be held. Electronic remote access, in accordance with Michigan law, will be implemented in response to COVID-19 social distancing requirements and limitations on the number of individuals in a meeting hall.

If in-person meetings become a lawful option, then the meeting will be held both in person at the Lansing Charter Township Hall, 3209 W Michigan Avenue and via electronic remote access.

The public may participate in the meeting through electronic remote access via Zoom access by computer, smart phone/device using the following link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2315421280>

Meeting ID: 231 542 1280

Passcode: LansingTwp

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,2315421280# US (New York)

+13017158592,,2315421280# US (Washington DC)

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

Meeting ID: 231 542 1280

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kcoDJDYUb>

Taxpayers are able to protest by letter or email, sent to: Board of Review, 3209 W Michigan Avenue, Lansing, MI 48917.

Or to DeeAnnO@lansingtownship.org, provided protest is received prior to March 12, 2021.

The township will post the information confirming whether the March BOR will meet in person on its notice (*board, sign, window*), and the township's website.

The Lansing Charter Township March Board of Review will meet on the following dates:

- Tuesday, March 2, 2021, 11:00 a.m. - **Organizational Meeting**
- Monday, March 8, 2021, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. - **Appeal Hearing**
- Monday, March 8, 2021, 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. - **Appeal Hearing**
- Wednesday, March 10, 2021, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. - **Appeal Hearing**
- Friday, March 12, 2021, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. - **Appeal Hearing**

The tentative ratios and the estimated multipliers for each class of real property and personal property for 2021 are as follows:

| | | |
|-------------------------|--------|--------------|
| *Commercial..... | 49.76% |1.00000 |
| *Residential..... | 46.88% |1.06656 |
| *Industrial..... | 48.54% |1.03008 |
| *Personal Property..... | 50.00% |1.00000 |

Americans With Disabilities (ADA) Notice

The Township will provide necessary reasonable services to individuals with disabilities at the Board of Review meetings upon 2 days notice.

Contact: Margaret Sanders, Clerk, 3209 W Michigan Avenue, Lansing, MI 48917 517-485-4063

DeeAnn Overton, Secretary of Board of Review

CP#21-023

Jonesin' Crossword

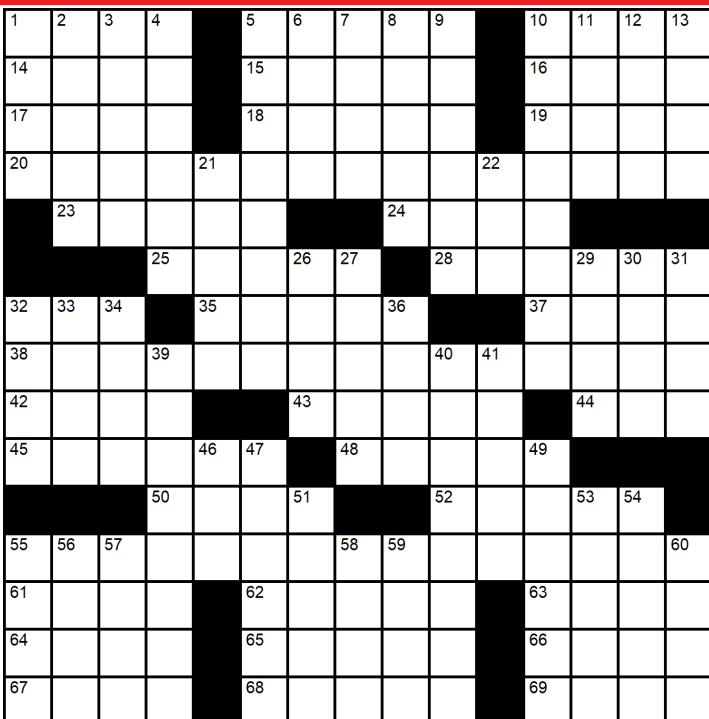
By Matt Jones

"Re:Re:Re:-
-better than
a long email
thread."

by Matt Jones

Across

- 1 Harry's partner in crime in "Home Alone"
- 5 Draw forth
- 10 Fledgling's home
- 14 "Scratch a lover and find ____": Dorothy Parker
- 15 Ephron and Dunn, for two
- 16 Italian city known for sparkling wines
- 17 "The Avengers" star Diana
- 18 Bed covering
- 19 Sandcastle shaper
- 20 Late-night monster movie, maybe
- 23 Existential boredom
- 24 Institute in "Contact" and "The X-Files"
- 25 Throw out
- 28 Deadly snakes
- 32 Dollar divs.
- 35 Paparazzi subject
- 37 Lake source of the Niagara River
- 38 Reason for a dashboard warning light
- 42 Idaho's neighbor
- 43 "Okay, so I was wrong"
- 44 Cartoonist Rall
- 45 Nursery rhyme loser of sheep
- 48 Poopdeck (Popeye's dad)
- 50 Tournament exemptions
- 52 Fish wrap spread



55 Places designated for biking, camping, etc.

61 Cooking acronym

62 Barbera's animation partner

63 "The Joy of Cooking" author

Rombauer

64 "Oh, drat"

65 Prodod, with "on"

66 Barbecue left-overs?

67 Dark gemstone

68 "____ lift?"

69 Prince hit of 1986

Down

1 Soft Cell lead singer Almond

2 Glowing

3 Seth of "Future Man"

4 Aquafaba users, e.g.

5 Controversial

"National" tabloid that had a TV show in 1999

6 Gloomy

7 Michael of "Ugly Betty" or Brendon of Panic! at the Disco

8 ____ liver (butcher shop option)

9 Appreciation

10 Afternoon breaks of a sort

11 Genesis twin

12 Recipe directive

13 Do some floor work

21 "Stanley ____ :

Searching for Italy"

68 "____ lift?"

69 Prince hit of 1986

36 California's La Tar Pits

39 Where hip-hop originated

40 Savory turnover

41 Antique photo tone

46 Pupil's place

47 Female fowl that doesn't have that ornate tail

49 His skull is held in "Hamlet"

51 Play place?

53 Poet Jones (aka Amiri Baraka)

54 Feet for poets

55 Overhaul

56 Longtime Indiana senator Bayh

57 Booker in the Senate

58 "Natural Affection" playwright William

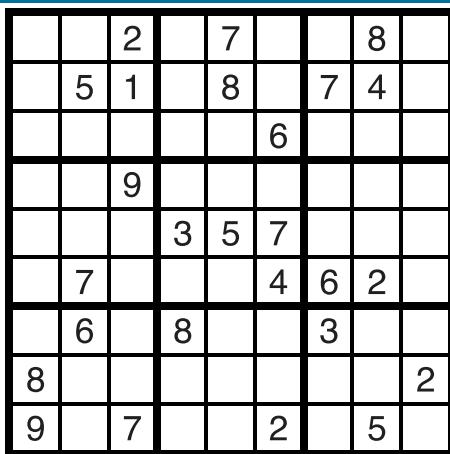
59 Linear, for short

60 Insolence

Answers on page 27

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SUDOKU



Intermediate

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 27

Free Will Astrology

By Rob Brezsny

Feb. 24-March 2, 2021

ARIES (March 21-April 19): I invite you to think about one or two types of physical discomforts and symptoms that your body seems most susceptible to. Meditate on the possibility that there are specific moods or feelings associated with those discomforts and symptoms—perhaps either caused by them or the cause of them. The next step is to formulate an intention to monitor any interactions that might transpire between the bodily states and emotional states. Then make a plan for how you will address them both with your own healing power whenever they visit you in the future.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Poet Billy Collins describes "standing on the edge of a lake on a moonlit night and the light of the moon is always pointing straight at you." I have high hopes that your entire life will be like that in the coming weeks: that you'll feel as if the world is alive with special messages just for you; that every situation you're in will feel like you belong there; that every intuition welling up from your subconscious mind into your conscious awareness will be specifically what you need at the moment it arrives.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You're entering a potentially heroic phase of your astrological cycle. The coming weeks will be a time when I hope you will be motivated to raise your integrity and impeccability to record levels. To inspire you, I've grabbed a few affirmations from a moral code reputed to be written by a 14th-century Samurai warrior. Try saying them, and see if they rouse you to make your good character even better. 1. "I have no divine power; I make honesty my divine power." 2. "I have no miracles; I make right action my miracle." 3. "I have no enemy; I make carelessness my enemy." 4. "I have no designs; I make 'seizing opportunity' my design." 5. "I have no magic secrets; I make character my magic secret." 6. "I have no armor; I make benevolence and righteousness my armor."

CANCER (June 21-July 22): "The only way to live is by accepting each minute as an unrepeatable miracle," writes Cancerian author and Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield. I disagree with him. There are many other modes of awareness that can be useful as we navigate our labyrinthine path through this crazy world. Regarding each minute as an opportunity to learn something new, for instance: That's an excellent way to live. Or, for another example, treating each minute as another chance to creatively express our love. But I do acknowledge that Kornfield's approach is sublime and appealing. And I think it will be especially apropos for you during the coming weeks.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): The coming weeks will be a poignant and healing time for you to remember the people in your life who have died—as well as ancestors whom you never met or didn't know well. They have clues to offer you, rich feelings to nourish you with, course corrections to suggest. Get in touch with them through your dreams, meditations, and reminiscences. Now read this inspiration from poet Rainer Maria Rilke: "They, who passed away long ago, still exist in us, as predisposition, as burden upon our fate, as murmuring blood, and as gesture that rises up from the depths of time." (Translation from the German by Stephen Mitchell.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): I'm fond of 18th-century Virgo painter Quentin de La Tour. Why? 1. He specialized in creating portraits that brought out his subjects' charm and intelligence. 2. As he grew wealthier, he became a philanthropist who specialized in helping poor women and artists with disabilities. 3. While most painters of his era did self-portraits that were solemn, even ponderous, de La Tour's self-portraits showed him smiling and good-humored. 4. Later in his life, when being entirely reasonable was no longer a top priority, de La Tour enjoyed conversing with trees. In accordance with the astrological omens, I propose that we make him your patron saint for now. I hope you'll be inspired to tap into your inner Quentin de La Tour.

Go to RealAstrology.com to check out Rob Brezsny'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.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): I'm not saying there's anything wrong with your overall health, Libra. In fact, I expect it's probably quite adequate. But from an astrological point of view, now is the right time to schedule an appointment for a consultation with your favorite healer, even if just by Zoom. In addition, I urge you to consult a soul doctor for a complete metaphysical check-up. Chances are that your mental health is in fair shape, too. But right now it's not enough for your body and soul to be merely adequate; they need to receive intense doses of well-wrought love and nurturing. So I urge you to ask for omens and signs and dreams about what precisely you can do to treat yourself with exquisite care.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): "Love commands a vast army of moods," writes author Diane Ackerman. "Frantic and serene, vigilant and calm, wrung-out and fortified, explosive and sedate." This fact of life will be prominently featured in your life during the coming weeks. Now is a fertile time to expand your understanding of how eros and romance work when they're at their best—and to expand your repertoire of responses to love's rich challenges. Don't think of it as a tough test; imagine it as an interesting research project.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Sagittarian poet and visual artist William Blake (1757-1827) cultivated a close relationship with lofty thoughts and mystical visions. He lived with his wife Catherine for the last 45 years of his life, but there were times when he was so preoccupied with his amazing creations that he neglected his bond with her. Catherine once said, "I have very little of Mr. Blake's company. He is always in Paradise." I hope that you won't be like that in the coming weeks. Practical matters and intimate alliances need more of your attention than usual. Consider the possibility, at least for now, of spending less time in paradise and more on earth.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Poet Robert Graves regarded the ambiguity of poetry as a virtue, not a problem. In his view, poetry's inscrutability reflects life's true nature. As we read its enigmatic ideas and feelings, we may be inspired to understand that experience is too complex to be reduced to simplistic descriptions and overgeneralized beliefs. In fact, it's quite possible that if we invite poetry to retrain our perceptions, we will develop a more tolerant and inclusive perspective toward everything. I'm telling you this, Capricorn, because whether or not you read a lot of poetry in the coming weeks, it will be wise and healthy for you to celebrate, not just tolerate, how paradoxical and mysterious the world is.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): The coming weeks will be a favorable time to shed old habits that waste your energy, and create constructive new habits that will serve you well for months and years to come. To inspire and guide your efforts, I offer these thoughts from author and naturalist Henry David Thoreau: "As a single footprint will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path, we walk again and again. To make a deep mental path, we must think over and over the kind of thoughts we wish to dominate our lives."

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Piscean author Anais Nin was a maestro of metamorphosis, a virtuoso of variation, an adept at alteration. She regarded her ceaseless evolution as a privilege and luxury, not an oppressive inconvenience. "I take pleasure in my transformations," she wrote. "I look quiet and consistent, but few know how many women there are in me." Her approach is a healthy model for most of you Pisceans—and will be especially worth adopting in the coming weeks. I invite you to be a Change Specialist whose nickname is Flux Mojo.

TURN IT DOWN!



Loud dispatches from Lansing's music scene

BY RICH TUPICA

Q&A: RACHEL CURTIS UNVEILS 'STROBE LIGHTS'

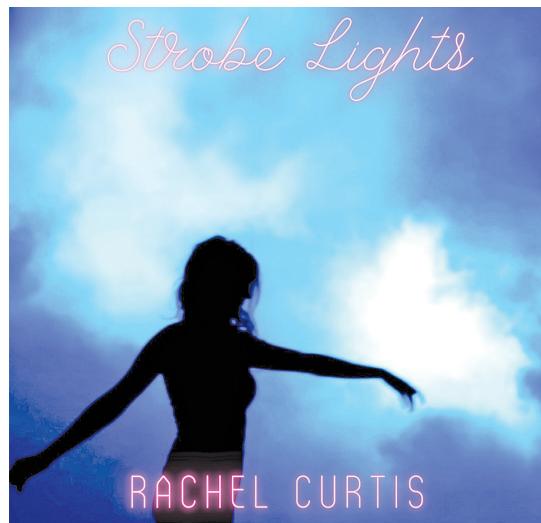


Photo by Eric Palmer

Lansing-based singer-songwriter Rachel Curtis released her latest single, "Strobe Lights," last week. It's streaming on all platforms and the video is on YouTube. (Courtesy photos)

Lansing singer-songwriter talks new single, navigating the pandemic as an artist

Last week, Lansing-based singer-songwriter Rachel Curtis released a new video and single, "Strobe Lights." The poppy track was mastered by Grammy-nominated engineer Steve Fallone, who's worked on tracks for the likes of Kacey Musgraves, The National, Norah Jones, John Mayer and more.

Curtis debuted in 2018 with her "Senses" EP and has since dropped a stack of folky, dreamy singles. As for "Strobe Lights," it was co-written and produced by band bassist Tyler Tesla.

"Tyler came to me with an intriguing main guitar riff and listening to it made me think of a long, relaxing car trip — looking out and seeing the afternoon sun shine through the trees lining the road, resembling a strobe light as you move past," Curtis said. "Writing the song provoked a pleasant memory, filling me with a calm, peaceful feeling from past adventures."

Here's more of what Curtis had to say.

Who has inspired you the most over the years as a songwriter?

When I first started writing music that I intended to share, Hozier had just released his first self-titled album in 2015. I really gained influence from his poetic lyricism and

his unique melodies. Most recently, Maggie Rogers has been an incredible inspiration for me, as she started off with a more folk inspiration and has merged that into a contemporary pop sound in her more recent music.

Your new single is much more pop than some of your previous recordings. What inspired that?

Growing up, I would listen and be inspired by multiple genres all the way from Christina Aguilera, Alicia Keys, Norah Jones to Dolly Parton and Ella Fitzgerald. Then, when I started performing and releasing music, I became interested in more folk pop bands like Vance Joy, The Lumineers and Florence & The Machine. My releases in the past have leaned toward more of a contemporary folk-pop sound. I'm excited to explore a different style of music in me that I haven't really focused on after listening to more pop the past couple of years. My upcoming songs have naturally drifted into more of a pop sound that I gained inspiration from at an early age.

How did the "Strobe Lights" video come together?

As far as the video, my mom was the one who found the space "Glenlore Trails" outside of Detroit. She has always been a huge help

with not only the creative input for this video but past album covers and photography. We came up with the idea of sewing battery powered lights into my old prom dress and planned out the scene ideas. I don't consider myself much of a dancer, but I started coming up with ideas in my apartment kitchen. Honestly, the video just felt like it magically came together. I contacted a super talented local videographer, Craig Derek Jones, and his team was on board. I couldn't be more grateful. After seeing the interactive light forest, we knew that it would be a perfect way to convey the vision of a past adventure in a magical way.

Were you able to stay creative in 2020?

After a long year without live shows, I really missed that sense of community and excitement. During that time, I was able to focus on multiple new songs I plan to release throughout the year. It was a much-needed break to focus on learning more about the music industry, what style I wanted to focus on creatively and how to collaborate virtually with others. Oddly enough, I have collaborated more during the pandemic than at any point in my musical journey. I also ended up recording the vocals from my couch which was

definitely a first for me.

Looking back, when did you first start writing and performing live?

I first started writing songs in middle school for fun but I didn't start actually sharing the content till senior year of high school. I had always done little talent shows, national anthems and musicals growing up, but right out of high school is when I started singing in bars. It all actually kind of snowballed from singing karaoke at Reno's West. The owner put me in contact with the talent manager that brought bands in to play. I then joined a duo, started playing more shows, and then eventually started solo gigs and finally the full band. It is pretty crazy to me that signing karaoke a few blocks away from where I grew up started a journey I hope to continue into the future.

After this new single, what are your plans for 2021?

I am looking forward to some safe, socially distanced, outdoor shows this spring or summer. I also plan on releasing multiple singles and music videos throughout the year. I am thankful for all the built-up creativity after being quarantined in 2020. I can't wait to continue to share.

Follow @rachelcurtismusic on all platforms.

OUT ON THE TOWN

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.

Wednesday, February 24

Allen Farmers Market - We are back at 1629 E. Kalamazoo! 3-6:30 p.m. 517-999-3911.

Encompass Series Celebrating Black History Month: The Art of Protest: Songs for My Right Side - short narrative film. 7-9 p.m. Info at bookings.lib.msu.edu/

Focus Tour: Saving Seeds - One artwork. One guest. One theme. In February, we'll look at The Palestine Heirloom Seed Library featured in Seeds of Resistance. 4-5 p.m. Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum. broadmuseum.msu.edu.

Future Present Exhibition - MSU's Science Gallery Detroit debuts exhibition in E. Broad Art Lab, 565 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing, through April 11th. Info and reservations: detroit.sciencegallery.com.

Jackbox Games: Guesspionage. Play via Zoom and the jackbox.tv website. Two screens required.. 7-8 p.m. gladl.org

The Simpsons Trivia - Join us for The Simpsons Trivia on the heated patio 6:30-8:30pm! 6:30 p.m. Ellison Brewery + Spirits, 4903 Dawn Ave, East Lansing.

Threads of Wisdom: Self and Sustainability - Join us on Zoom for a double Threads of Wisdom discussion. 6:30-7:30 p.m. weaversoftheweb.org.

SUDOKU SOLUTION From Pg. 25

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 6 |
| 6 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| 7 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
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CROSSWORD SOLUTION From Pg. 25

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Virtual Science on a Sphere: People, Planet, Progress, Predicament - Progress is a good thing, right? 12:30-1:30 p.m. MSU Museum. museum.msu.edu

Thursday, February 25

Good Morning Mason February - Join us for an update from the Mason Area Chamber of Commerce and hear from our special guests. 6:45 a.m. masonchamber.org

Myths & Legends - Join us on our YouTube Channel to explore myths, legends and fairy tales from many cultures. New content premieres twice a month. 11-11:30 a.m. gladl.org

Prospective ArtPath Artist Workshop - Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center is partnering with the City of Lansing for the fourth annual ArtPath Public Art on the Lansing River Trail. 6-7:30 p.m. lansingartgallery.org

Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual) - 6-7 p.m. facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing

Friday, February 26

Garnet Rogers, Archie Fisher, Jez Lowe, James Keelaghan - From the Archives: Audio will be available streaming at tenpoundfiddle.org

Old Town Chocolate Walk - For the seventh year, we are hosting the Old Town Chocolate Walk! Old Town Lansing. For tickets visit iloveoldtown.org

Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual) - 7:30- 8:30 p.m. facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing

Virtual Preschool Family Storytime - 11-11:30 a.m. Grand Ledge Area District Library, Go to gladl.org for link.

Saturday, February 27

Free Online Roast of Labyrinth - Playing drinking games online with dance-magic comedians as they make jokes over Jim Henson's most beloved masterpiece: David Bowie in Spandex. 9 p.m. frontrowfilmroast.com

Impression 5 Science Center's WinterFest - Join Fenner naturalists at Impression 5 Science Center. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Impression 5 Science Center, 200 Museum Dr, Lansing. 517-485-8116. mynaturecenter.org

Old Town Chocolate Walk - For the seventh year, we are hosting the Old Town Chocolate Walk! Old Town Lansing. For tickets visit iloveoldtown.org

Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual) - 10:30-11:30 a.m. facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing

WinterFest - 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Potter Park Zoo, 1301 S Pennsylvania Ave, Lansing. 517-483-4222. impression5.org

WinterFest 2021 An Outdoor Celebration of Lansing Non-Profits! Join us at Impression 5 Science Center 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Impression 5 Science Center, 200 Museum Dr, Lansing.

Sunday, February 28

Greater Lansing Beer Trail - Join us for our second annual Greater Lansing Beer Trail! Throughout Greater, Lansing. lansing.org.

Discord Book Group: What The Eyes Don't See - by Mona Hanna-Attisha. 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Eaton Rapids Area District Library. eradl.org

Monday, March 1

Jump Into Reading - Join Ms. Anna on our Facebook or YouTube channel for a favorite story time read aloud and activity. 11-11:30 a.m. Eaton Rapids Area District Library. eradl.org

Lansing Symphony Orchestra's First Virtual Concert of 2021 - Harlin, Vivaldi & Villa Lobos. The general public will be able to view the concert for free until April 30. LSOvideo.com. More information at lansingsymphony.org

Our Daily Work, Our Daily Lives Brown Bag Series - Journalist and historian Edward McClelland presents "Midnight in Vehicle City: Telling the Story of the Flint Sit-down Strike" 12:15-1:30 p.m. Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, 547 E Circle Dr, East Lansing. 517-884-4800. broadmuseum.msu.edu

Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual) - 6-7 p.m. facebook.com/refugerecoverylansing



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|---------------------------------|----------------|
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| Snow Crab Leg - 1/2 lb. | \$12.99 |
| Crawfish - 1 lb..... | \$10.99 |
| Black Mussels - 1 lb..... | \$9.99 |
| Green Mussels - 1 lb. | \$11.99 |

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| | |
|---|---------------|
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| Fried Shrimp Basket (6 shrimp)..... | \$8.99 |
| Fried Oyster Basket (6 oysters) | \$8.99 |

All discounts & promotions not valid with lunch special.



New seafood joint brings Louisiana flavor to Lansing

By COLE TUNNINGLEY

Just in time for indoor dining's return, King Crab Cajun Seafood opened its doors on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The restaurant serves a wide variety of fried and boiled seafood available in single-serve and family portions.

"Our main dish is the boiled seafood dinner," said owner Eko Dananjaya. "We have many different types of seafood including crawfish, lobsters, crabs. It's Louisiana, Cajun-style food."

About eight months ago, Dananjaya began perfecting his craft, learning to

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4190 E Court St, Burton, MI • 810-265-7028
720 Brown Rd, Auburn Hills, MI • Coming Soon!
OHIO
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267 Boardman Canfield Rd, Boardman, OH
330-629-8003.
INDIANA
4730 Grape Rd, Mishawaka, IN • Coming Soon!

craft the perfect meal. According to his first round of customers, he did a good job. So far, he's received positive reviews on Facebook and from customers who visited the restaurant in

person.

"The customers have only said kind words so far," Dananjaya said. "It's been booming. It's been busy."

Dananjaya is proud of the work he's doing. While he recommends the whole menu, he pointed out that the seafood boil is "amazing." With their order, customers get their choice of seafood, their choice of seasoning, corn and potatoes.

King Crab also serves a selection of the classic Louisiana sandwich, the Po'boy. Customers can pick between seafood as their sandwich meat or fried chicken tenders.

"We want to create a seafood experience that people never forget," Dananjaya said.

Dananjaya hopes that the people of Lansing give him and his restaurant a chance. Being the new restaurant on the block can be difficult. But with enough word-of-mouth buzz, he thinks that King Crab has the chance to flourish.

"I want people to try it out just so I can show them what we do," Dananjaya said. "I want to prove that we can do Cajun seafood better than any other place in the area. That's our main goal."

FOOD & DRINK

Ox meat odyssey

By ARI LEVAUX

I have always lived among the Irish. I grew up in Boston, a legendary Celtic hub, and settled in Missoula, Montana, 100 miles downstream from America's most Irish city per capita: Butte. I used to credit my affinity for that feisty tribe to this coincidental geographic overlap, but now I see a deeper connection. And you can see it by looking no further than the nearest bowl of corned beef and cabbage.

For a time, Ireland exported some of the world's finest corned beef. It was a pricey treat, and it never caught on in with the frugal Irish, who preferred lamb and pork to beef anyway. Corned beef and cabbage became an American Irish delicacy in Boston and New York, where immigrants from the Emerald Isle found themselves in Jewish neighborhoods, with the means to bring home a corned brisket from the local delicatessen once in a while and cook it Irish style: in a pot with cabbage and potatoes. As such, it resembles a meaty version of a cabbage-based borscht my Jewish ancestors made in Ukraine.

Leopold Bloom, the co-hero in James Joyce's "Ulysses," was a lot like a bowl of corned beef on St. Paddy's Day. Like the dish, Mr. Bloom was the product of Jewish and Irish parentage, which Joyce used to illuminate the parallels he saw in the struggles of the Irish under British rule and the Jews trying to escape Egypt. In the U.S., the Irish Americans and Jews shared a sense of exile from their respective homelands.

And with their North American countrymen, those same Irish Americans shared a resentment of British rule, which helps explain their apparent enthusiasm for American Revolutionary history. How else can we explain the obsession, among the Irish of Boston, with Evacuation Day, which was signed into law in green ink in 1941. Evacuation Day commemorates the end of the 11-month siege of Boston by the British, when Gen. George Washington fortified Dorchester Heights and sent the Continental Army packing to Nova Scotia. The official date of this evacuation was March 17, an extremely fortuitous coincidence for anyone wishing to skip work for St. Patrick's Day, but stymied because it's not a federal holiday.

The Irish of Montana, meanwhile,



DINING OUT IN GREATER LANSING

are a bit more "Wild West." Rather than organize to lobby for legal holidays, they simply skip work and walk around with their beers. The gold rush of 1862 had brought them to Butte, which sits on the continental divide, and was once America's largest city west of the Mississippi. As a young reporter in Missoula, I felt like I'd struck gold myself when I was assigned a story on Butte's St. Patrick's Day festivities.

After the parade, revelers raised their pints in massive beer halls and howled in festive crescendos, like "the wave" going around a stadium. It was there that I sidled up to the bar and ate my first bowl of corned beef and cabbage.

Corned was traditionally a way to preserve meat before refrigeration. Tough cuts were cured in sugar and salt, the grains of which were the size of corn kernels. It was a delicacy in England, but since Ireland had lower salt taxes for a time, it became corn central.

Today, corned beef comes in a special can with a key on the outside, which you turn until the can opens. Inside a typical can, you'll find what would be considered cat food in any other context. Amazingly, it can be made palatable when heated, for better or for worse. But once you try the salty, stringy taste and texture of home-canned brisket, you'll no sooner go back to tinned than the British went back to Boston.

Corned Beef Brisket

Like most contemporary corning recipes, this one calls for a nitrate salt to help tenderize the meat and give it a bright red hue.

- 1 brisket, about 4 pounds, preferably marbled with fat
- 3 quarts distilled or spring water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup canning/pickling salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup tenderizing salt (it has nitrate in it)
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons pickling spices
- 2 bay leaves
- 8 whole peppercorns
- 2 minced garlic cloves

Add everything but the brisket to a gallon pot and heat to a boil. Turn it off

and let cool to room temperature. Place the meat in the pot with a weight on top to keep the meat submerged. Let it brine, refrigerated, for about a week.

Irish Borscht

(corned beef with roots and cabbage)

- 1 corned beef, prepared as above
- 2 pounds medium-sized potatoes, uncut, unpeeled
- 1 large onion, sliced in half end to end
- 1 pound carrots, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick rounds
- 1 whole green cabbage, cut into 8 wedges

Drain the corned beef and replace the water. Bring to a simmer and replace the water again, to remove the salt. Bring to a simmer again and cook, covered, until tender, about 3 hours. Add the potatoes and onion and cook until the potatoes are tender. Add the carrots and keep cooking until the carrots are tender. Add the cabbage wedges and simmer for another 15 minutes. Slice the meat and serve in a bowl with vegetables and broth.

Corned Beef Hash and Eggs

In Missoula, my favorite breakfast

joint serves corned beef hash, aka chopped corned beef and potatoes, fried until brown and tossed with scrambled eggs. That, I realized, is the final destination when first we dunk a brisket in that sweet and salty brine.

Eggs

Leftover corned beef and potatoes

Oil

Parsley as a garnish

Scramble the eggs and set aside. Fish out some meat and potatoes from the pot. Cut them into 1/2-inch cubes. Heat a pan on medium and add the beef cubes first, along with some oil if there's not enough fat in the beef. When you smell the beef starting to brown, add the potatoes, and fry for about 10 minutes. Toss in the scrambled eggs, and serve garnished with a four-leaf sprig of parsley.

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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Abby Sumbler/City Pulse

Shoppers at
East Lansing's
Underground Market.

Underground Market opens in E.L.

By COLE TUNNINGLEY

East Lansing is hoping to give its small business owners and employees a boost after almost a full year of struggling to stay afloat during the COVID-19 outbreak. To stimulate the local economy, city officials created a whole new shopping experience designed to drive traffic to local businesses.

East Lansing's biweekly Downtown Underground Market is located on the lowest level (P1) of the M.A.C. Avenue Parking Garage, located under the Marriott Hotel. The market will be open every other Sunday through early May of this year.

"Some businesses are just getting by and some have closed their doors permanently," said market manager Karla Hewitt. "Downtown Underground Market is an engagement tool to encourage visitors to the downtown, with thoughtful safety protocols in place."

The ultimate goal of the market is to show people what downtown East Lansing has to offer. Fresh fruits and vegetables, locally produced crafts,



East Lansing
Downtown
Underground
Market

Feb. 28, March 14, March 28, April 11, April 25, May 9
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
310 M.A.C. Ave. East
Lansing
517-319-6823
Cityoffeastlansing.com/
undergroundmarket

artisan cheeses and burritos — the Underground Market has it all.

Underground Market vendors represent a balanced variety of products. So far, shoppers have been treated to goods from artisans such as the Cheese People of Grand Rapids, the Pasta Shop, Two Stix 5 Stones, Wooden Shoe Herb Farm, Dirty Paw Mixed Media, MI Great Lakes Fish Co. and many more.

While more vendors are interested in opening up shop, Hewitt said the market is at capacity. Those who did not get a spot at the market were placed on a waiting list.

To keep both vendors and customers safe, the market is following COVID safety precautions. Customers are advised to stay home if they are ill. Masks are required, and shopping groups are limited to two people each. Food purchased at the market should be taken home or consumed at an outdoor dining space, not eaten on the premises. No pets are allowed, except for service animals.

Parking for the market is free all day, so you're free to shop without worrying about racking up meter fees or getting a ticket.

Hewitt said that East Lansing residents should support each other in whatever ways they can.

"Shopping local helps keep our local economy going and makes our communities resilient, especially in hard times," she said. "People can help by supporting their local businesses and getting to know the small business owners in our community."

Appetizers

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