

THE MICHIGAN BANNER

Celebrating 18 years of Positive News Stronger Together, in these Challenging Times



Political commentator
Van Jones set as
virtual MLK event
speaker for SVSU

Community, pg 11



Leading in Diversity, Empowering Communities and Changing Lives

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Guest Column: Despite
funding challenges,
family services must
continue



Community, pg 23

Covid tests return
downtown, free flu
shots also offered



Health, pg 28



Citizens United focuses on too many people in jail

By Mike Thompson



courtesy photos

Alternatives to jail, especially during the covid era, is the topic this week for a meeting with Sheriff Bill Federspiel and other local leaders in law enforcement.

This marks a first initiative for a local advocate group, Saginaw Citizens United for Equity and Justice, that was formed in response to last summer's local and national "George Floyd" rallies and protest demonstrations.

Back around last Thanksgiving, when group

members learned of an outbreak of 22 covid cases at the county jail, they pushed for plans to reduce bookings and imprisonment in order to help reduce virus infections. The result of the Citizens United advocacy is this week's discussion. Hopefully, if the covid epidemic comes to a close during the months ahead, these types of forums may again be open to all of the public at various community buildings.

Continues on pg 3, citizens united

As we enter this new year, the expression, 'Hindsight is always 20/20' stands out in my mind. I am most familiar with the phrase in reference to sports. The Monday morning quarterback, for instance who share the reasons why their team won or lost the big game is said to be using his or her 20/20 hindsight. Most of them have never played on let alone coached even a Little League team, but it all seems so clear after the fact. The actual term is used to describe normal visual acuity. It includes the clarity or sharpness of vision, measured at 20 feet. With it, you can see clearly at 20 feet what should normally be seen at that distance.

Hindsight allows us to look back at situations with a clearer understanding of how we might improve upon decisions we may have made which did not result in our desired outcomes. Perhaps we needed more information; maybe we gave someone the benefit of the doubt when we had a nagging suspicion that we should be taking another course of action and it did not end well; and conversely, we might have overlooked someone or

an opportunity which would have supported our continued efforts to build a safe and healthy community. If we choose to use it wisely, hindsight can be a powerful tool.

As the new year approaches, I am



looking in the rearview mirror – hindsight - at a year that brought in more than a few challenges locally, nationally, and globally. I am giving a great deal of thought to things that I can see clearly now that I have more detailed information to consider. I am having conversations with leaders in the community and from various ministries whose opinions I respect tremendously. I am walking into this new year - 2021, prepared to help a community which has been striving to remain healthy and whole despite the challenges.

It is easy to understand a situation or a person after the fact. Most of us can recall being admonished as a child, 'You should have known better than that'. Most of the time I think we did know better. We have a great opportunity now to remind ourselves of that old idiom and proactively take steps to do better

– to be better in both our decision making and our actions. I will share a few 'tips' – no resolutions - for making 2021 a banner year for those of us who will prepare ourselves with optimism for more positive interactions in our home, relationship, and business communications.

I will surround myself with people who are motivated to change the environment for good.

I will speak less and listen, really listen more.

I will seek opportunities to support others in their endeavors to improve.

I will be the change that I speak about.

When I use my very keen hindsight and take a retrospective look at the happenings of this year, it will be without regret. I, along with many of you will proudly say that we have been the difference our community needed. Happy New Year Bay Region, Tri-Cities and to all of you. Let's get to work.



Jerome Buckley

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Cover Story, Citizens United

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

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DEADLINES
2 weeks before each publication date of the 1st and 16th of each month

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Chairman Brandell Adams noted that in response to the initial news reports, Citizens United has received a "sheer volume of calls from parents and employees who have reached out anonymously to expel the myths propagated by the Sheriff's team (PPE not being utilized or underutilized, case numbers underreported, sanitation issues, etc). Further, several community groups and activists are pledging to get involved and expand investigation and awareness around this issue. It's incumbent on law enforcement to follow guidelines, reduce population and unnecessary intake, and increase transparency and communication to the public to avoid misperception and outcry."

Group activist Hattie Norwood says: "Incarceration before trial is not necessary. More often than not this has lasting effects on the individual under seize. This is more than an 'inconvenience.' Many lose employment, their homes, their modes of transportation, and are oftentimes fined or held on bond with unreasonable bail amounts and conditions."

She adds: "Incarceration has long ago lost its rehabilitative edge, if it ever rehabilitated a person at all. Imprisonment is an extreme and harsh punishment. And if by law we are innocent until PROVEN guilty, then

mandatory minimums on non capital and non violent crimes should be an easy adjustment during this time of the covid crisis."

Regardless of covid, the concept of fewer local bookings, with non-prison alternatives, is in line with the national spotlight on what is known as mass incarceration. The U.S. prison population has increased seven times since 1960, with a disproportion among ethnic minorities, leading to calls for reform among political progressives but also among conservatives.

Saginaw Citizens United is responding to the immediate covid situation, which falls in line with the long-term goal of finding overall long-term alternatives to imprisonment.

If readers have questions or proposals that you wish to be included in this week's private talks, please send them to Saginaw Citizens United for Social Justice, facebook.com/SCUEJ.

The group also has started to accept and to pursue individual citizen complaints not only on encounters with law enforcement, but also regarding housing, employment, shopping or any other area of concern. Again, simply contact them through their facebook page.

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PAUSE.

This past year has been challenging for people in many, many ways. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports a rapid approach to 340,000 COVID 19 related deaths in the United States with 12,690 of those right here in the State of Michigan. Even with the vaccine, for the next several months that number is projected to increase by at least 1,000 deaths each day. We are also facing record numbers of evictions, loss of jobs, closures of businesses unable to survive the repeated full and partial shutdowns and remote learning for many school districts making it extremely difficult to provide students with a quality education. A recent and humorous meme on social media says, 'Shhhh. Move quietly. 2020 will hear us leaving and try to follow us into 2021!!' With all the challenges listed above, maintaining a sense of humor will help us to sustain a level of hope which can support efforts to sustain us through the remainder of this trial. It gives us time, sometimes just a moment is needed to pause and gain a new perspective. Pause, reconsider, rephrase, regroup; whatever is necessary to promote a more balanced approach in our decision making.

When we are intentional about the pause, we can see other points of view. We may still disagree – maybe agree to disagree but whenever possible, we must do so without causing a breakdown in communication. Sometimes words spoken without that pause, that moment to give another person's belief(s) the benefit of the doubt can cause irreparable damage in relationships both personal

and professional. This is not a recommendation to use blind optimism – we must practice and use discernment in communicating with people with opposing points of view. However, opportunities for growth can be missed when both sides choose to see only what makes sense to and is of benefit to themselves.

Being intentional about the pause requires good listening skills. Once spoken, harsh words cannot be taken back and are seldom forgotten. Like learning to see another's perspective, listening with peace, collaboration or resolution as a goal also requires practice. Are we listening with the goal of responding (winning) or understanding (peace/resolution)? Some of us are naturally better listeners than other but all of us can develop the skill. Make a conscious decision to create peaceful environments wherever you go. Refuse to allow chaos, conflict, or confusion to control your surroundings. Pause. Listen with empathy to the anger, fear, or uncertainty others may be experiencing. The outcome may still be the same – it may have to be, but trust and collaboration can nonetheless be achieved if active and intentional listening is taking place. People spend countless amounts of money in therapy, groups, and other settings to feel that they are really being heard.

While our country was in the throes of renewed approaches to confront its centuries old battles for peace, racial justice, equal rights for all its citizens a global pandemic began to wreak havoc. Coupled with the

2020 election, we have experienced devastating blows to our efforts to grow as a united nation. Horrific acts of violence have occurred, and words have been spoken that will not soon be forgotten. Bishop Desmond Tutu once said, 'Forgiving is not forgetting; it's actually remembering – remembering and not using your right to fight back. It is a second chance for a new beginning. And the remembering part is particularly important. Especially if you don't want to repeat what happened.' I think it is safe to say that none of us would choose to repeat this experience. Pause for a moment and think about intentional ways to help move forward in your world. It may be in the workplace, in your home or in extended familial relationships, perhaps in your church or other community organizations. In many instances, forgiveness may be necessary.

I will not offer or recommend New Year's Resolutions. I can almost guarantee that my record for keeping them may set some type of record. I do recommend however, that we learn to pause. Take very intentional steps to see and hear from others in a meaningful way which will enable us to overcome this current divisive community discourse. Be sure to take those steps quietly – 2020 wants in.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO THE GREAT LAKES BAY REGION AND BEYOND!

The Michigan Banner and The Latino Banner wish you and yours a year filled with peace and prosperity.

THE LATINO BANNER

-HAPPY-
New Year

LIDER EN LA DIVERSIDAD

Vamos Adelante



Seen on the Scene: Christmas with Angels



LB pg 4

Submit your
news at
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National Alliance for Hispanic Health praises enactment of the 'Preventing Online Sales of E-Cigarettes to Children Act'



courtesy photo

Washington - "E-cigarette sales are driving a youth tobacco tipping point. But we now have new tools to protect youth and support parents frustrated by the targeting of their children and the ease of purchasing e-cigarettes online," said Jane L. Delgado, PhD, MS, President and CEO of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, the nation's leading Hispanic health advocacy group.

Yesterday, with signing of the 2021 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, The Preventing Online Sales of E-Cigarettes to Children Act becoming law. The new law will apply the same safeguards already in place for traditional cigarettes to online sales of electronic cigarettes and vapor products, including age ID requirements. With vaping linked to substantially increased risk of COVID-19 among teenagers and young adults, it is more important than ever to have all tools necessary to reverse rates of vaping among youth. E-cigarettes are the most commonly used tobacco product among high school and middle school youth, including Hispanic youth. Online

sales are a critical component of reversing e-cigarette use for youth as online and mobile advertising platforms are popular places for e-cigarette advertising, including ads for flavored products appealing to youth, and a majority (63.2%) of internet vendors could not effectively verify age or made no attempt at all to verify.

"We applaud Senators Feinstein (D-CA) and Cornyn (R-TX) in the Senate and Reps. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Kelly Armstrong (R-ND) in the House for their introduction and tireless work to bring about passage of this bipartisan legislation to protect children and families," concluded Dr. Delgado.

About the National Alliance for Hispanic Health (The Alliance)

The Alliance is the nation's foremost science-based source of information and trusted advocate for the health of Hispanics in the United States with a mission to achieve the best health for all. For more information visit us at www.healthyamericas.org

Goya donates 300,000 pounds of food to Catholic Charities of New York



courtesy photos

JERSEY CITY, N.J. - With the mission to bring people together by helping those in need, Goya Foods, the largest Hispanic-owned food company in the United States donated 300,000 pounds of food to Catholic Charities of New York.

"During this year of crisis, the Goya family has worked courageously and tirelessly to provide 4 million pounds of nourishing food to those in need around the Country and around the globe. We are grateful to have our work and to have a purpose to rise every morning for God, our families and our Nation. As a result, throughout the year and especially during this Holy Season, we are proud to present the gift of the fruits of our labor to the needy families serviced by Catholic Charities," said Bob Unanue, President of Goya Foods.

Goya has been a supporter of Catholic Charities for the past five years, donating a total of over 1.5 million pounds of food to people throughout New York City. "The

past year has been uniquely challenging with devastating impact on the health and economic security of families in New York's most vulnerable communities. The need for help with basics such as nutritious food will even increase as the recovery of lost jobs will take years. We are grateful once again for Goya's generous and long-term support. This Christmas season is most appropriate to highlight the generosity of our donors, staff and volunteers that enable us to provide help and create hope throughout the year," said Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, Director of Catholic Charities.

This donation is part of the company's Goya Gives global program and Working for Our Country campaign, which by the end of 2020, Goya will have distributed four million pounds of food to communities throughout the United States.

To learn more about Goya Gives, please visit: www.goya.com



A portrait of a smiling man with short dark hair and a goatee, wearing a grey suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red and grey striped tie. He is standing in front of a wall with a large shield-shaped logo.

Proud to
serve our
community.

*Happy New
Years!*

Elvis Machul

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Seen on the Scene: Christmas with Angels

The COVID-19 Pandemic did not stop the 4th Annual Christmas with Angels for Saginaw kids. This year, five pastors chose five families from applications from their church based on need and volunteer Angels raised \$10,000 in donations to buy them gifts. Seen on the scene are a few Christmas Angels having fun shopping for toys, games, books, dolls, and other gifts for each child.



Community Board

Submit your announcements and events at themichiganbanner.com/submit



2021 Award Recipients

- Jack Luna
- Domingo Vasquez
- Celestina Robles
- Kapulli Tekpatl
- Juve Aldaco Jr.
- Elida Andaverde
- Nina Hageneass
- Bobby Barrera
- Pride Inc.

*Homage award in
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We encourage readers to send letters, story ideas, comments and questions.



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COMMUNITY

Political commentator Van Jones set as virtual MLK event speaker for SVSU



courtesy photo

Saginaw Valley State University in January will welcome Van Jones, a political commentator who regularly appears on nationally-televised TV programs, to deliver the keynote address for the 12th annual Great Lakes Bay Regional Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration. This year's event will be presented virtually.

Jones will appear Monday, Jan. 18, at 7 p.m. in an SVSU-hosted live event, streamed free online. To view the event, participants must register at svsu.edu/mlk.

The Yale-educated attorney serves as president and founder of Dream Corps, a nonprofit focusing on social justice. He appears regularly on TV as a correspondent on CNN and a commentator on political talk shows such as NBC's "Meet The Press."

Previously, he worked as the green jobs advisor for President Barack Obama in 2009. In that role, Jones helped coordinate \$80 billion in green energy recovery spending.

He authored three New York Times Bestsellers including "The Green Collar Economy," "Rebuild the Dream," and "Beyond the Messy Truth: How We Came Apart, How We Come Together."

Jones led several social and environmental justice enterprises over the years, including The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and Color of Change.

He received recognition over the years from several organizations. Jones was the recipient of the World Economic Forum's "Young Global Leader" designation, Rolling Stone's

"12 Leaders Who Get Things Done," Fast Company's "12 Most Creative Minds On Earth," a Webby Special Achievement Award, and Time's "100 Most Influential People in the World."

The 2021 MLK Jr. Celebration theme is "Working Together."

Mamie T. Thorns, the event organizer, said a theme promoting unity is especially relevant considering the virtual event will happen two days prior to the scheduled U.S. presidential inauguration ceremony.

"We're hoping the speaker will energize and motivate us, as well as give us all points on how we can bridge the divides that separate us," said Thorns, SVSU's chief diversity officer.

In addition to Jones' keynote address, the Jan. 18 program will include the presentation of regional scholarship awards by the Bay Area, Midland Area and Saginaw community foundations to high school seniors who have embodied Martin Luther King Jr.'s ideals.

Officials also will announce the winners of the Drum Major Awards, which recognizes people whose community involvement in the Great Lakes Bay Region serves to advance King's vision.

Jones joins a prestigious list of keynote speakers featured during the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Celebration at SVSU. In January 2020, Ruth D. Jones, a trailblazer at NASA, served as the guest. Previous speakers include Valerie Jarrett, former senior adviser to President Barack Obama, in 2019; Karen Carter, the chief inclusion officer for The Dow Chemical Company, in 2018; and former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder in 2017.

Reflecting on 2020

By Pastor-Elect Marcelle T. Smith, Second Baptist Church



courtesy photo

2020 was a unique year. We experienced:

- the beginning of a global pandemic which we are still experiencing
- resurfacing of social ills which have existed in various forms throughout the history of this country
- exposure of the inadequacies and inequalities of our education, healthcare, and prison (as well as other) systems
- a tense political cycle
- virtual education
- exclusively virtual worship experiences
- a realization that the definition of normal will never be the same

As we reflect on the uniqueness of 2020, I want to encourage you by reminding you that the invitation we have in 2021 is the same invitation we were extended in 2020 and each year we are blessed to live through. That invitation is to a relationship with God based on the finished work of Jesus Christ. No matter what has and will happen, having that relationship makes all the difference!

A Prayer for the New Year Adapted from Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman

“God,

Grant that we may pass through the coming year with faithful hearts. There will be much to test us and make weak our strength before the year ends.

In our confusion, we will often say the word(s)

that is not true and do the thing of which we are ashamed. There will be errors in the mind and great inaccuracies of judgment.

In seeking the light, we will again and again find ourselves walking in the darkness. We will mistake our light for Your light and we will drink from the responsibilities of the choices we make.

Though our days be marked with failures, stumblings, fallings, let our spirits be free so that You may take them and redeem our moments in all the ways our needs reveal.

Give us the quiet assurance of Your Love and Presence. Grant that we may pass through the coming year with a faithful heart.”

In Jesus’ Name we pray, Amen.

OPINION >>>>

By the time you ready this Christmas has passed and a new year now approaches. Families have been struggling to decide how to get together, even IF to get together. We used to test Christmas trees to bring home. Now we test the family to allow home. Perhaps because of Covid, I haven't seen as much (any) protesting about Christmas, church and state separation, "humanism," and so on. I've never cared if someone believed or didn't believe in God. I just found it reasonable to live and let live, not assume the other person is somehow unintelligent. Where have I

heard that before?

I want to wish all of you, no matter what you believe or don't believe, the true spirit of the beginning of a New Year. And by that I mean loved ones around you, thankfulness for what we have and where we are, and generosity to help others. When you boil it all down, I think true religion and true goodwill are about tolerance and forgiveness. None of us is perfect. But that doesn't mean we can't be productive and supportive, loving, and full of life. We can't predict what the new year will bring but I know this; the spirit of the American people will survive and I can't help but be optimistic that we will be a better people than we were before. Let's pray that COVID

has taught us something; that life is precious and that the politics that divided us in 2020 will be forgotten and forgiven, We deserve better. We just have to believe that.



**Jimmy E Greene, CEO/
President
ABC Michigan**

Calling all bridge builders!

By Chris V. Pryor, Pastor, Victorious Believers Ministries & Building Kingdom Leaders



courtesy photo

This year has been a challenging year for many. Who would ever think the many difficulties that we would experience, a global pandemic, racial injustice, economic crisis, food shortage, and local and national disasters? It's easy to focus today on the divisiveness, disappointment, and disenchantment that we see in our world. I am truly grateful for my relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. During this time my faith and trust in Him has been tested and has truly grown. I pray the same for each of you realizing we are called to something else, something more, and something greater. I have come to realize that some storms come not to destroy us but to create new paths. I asked God how I could help and one of those ways revealed was to be a bridge builder.

Bridges make a way. They connect one part to another. Bridges provide a passage across a divide enabling others to cross over. Being a bridge builder means following Jesus' lead and actually laying down our politics, prejudices, and sense of entitlement. Isaac Newton once said, "We build too many walls and not enough bridges." When we are too busy building walls with our words, choices, and social media posts, we deconstruct what God has called us to build. I am convinced that what we need in today's chaotic political, social, and racial climate are more bridges. This is hard and holy work for all of us, but I believe it can be accomplished. We must be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

My father, the late Bishop Marvin C. Pryor always discussed having good relationships with people. He was known for building bridges. It was extremely important for him to reach to other leaders amongst the ecumenical community, the business and educational sector, amongst other social economic classes, and supporting all age groups. My father taught, the way you treat people is a true testament of your character.

I have often said that relationships are the foundation of life, but communication is the foundation to relationships. In order for things to change, we cannot work through what we will not talk through. Our gifts, stories, cultures, talents, and sensitivities were all intentionally given to us by God to serve one another. Here are several goals that I believe will be important for each of us to overcome.

1) Don't just say you love Jesus but love like Jesus loved

Agape love does not look for reciprocity neither does it expect it. It does not expect 50/50, instead, it makes a decision to love God by treating all persons the same way Christ would treat them. Jesus came as a lifeguard for humanity with one goal: to rescue, redeem, and restore us back to Himself. Jesus had compassion for all people, and he built relationships with them.

2) Look around and be intentional on expanding your inner circle

Have you ever heard the word, gephyrophobia? It means one who has anxiety

or a fear of bridges. In some area's the only route is the bridge. In order to be a bridge builder, the only way to seek change for the better is to have open discussions. Let's be honest. It's so much easier for all of us to just hang with our own people, to remain in safe spaces that don't require us to be uncomfortable, challenged, or repent of our own prejudices.

3) Be-positive and willing to sacrifice

Building bridges requires sacrifice and positivity. It means taking time to learn the nuances of people who are wired differently from the way we are wired, who look different from the way we look, and have different experiences that each one has had. This process will be uncomfortable and at times painful but worth it for so many people. We may disagree, but we should not disconnect.

4) Read and listen to understand not to be understood

Building a bridge means leaning in to listen to the suffering people who have endured and supporting their own story. Have discussions with others and explain you are trying to learn and grow. All though you may not be affected you should be engaged. Let's learn to sympathize and empathize with one another.

5) Influence those around you. Say something

So many people do nothing because they can only do a little. Remember, our children and grandchildren are watching us, so educating and dialogue will go a long way. Remember, when good people do nothing, bad things happen. Silence on matters of hatred & bigotry are antithetical to the gospel. Our lives begin to end the day the day we become silent about the things that matter. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In my closing, I challenge all of us to be bridge builders. In Hebrews 12:14, it states, "make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." Our Savior Jesus invites us into the ministry of reconciliation. He designed us to be bridge builders for His Kingdom. May the love of Christ compel us to serve and sacrifice for others and build more bridges toward healing. This is my goal and I pray that this will be your goal.

NAACP SAGINAW BRANCH: The lessons of 2020 set a path for 2021

Prepared by: Terry Pruitt, President NAACP Saginaw Branch



courtesy photo

My intent here is to offer a degree of optimism in the face of the pessimism in the current environment. Without question, 2020 was one of the most chaotic and unusual years of our lifetimes. For many of our family members, friends, co-workers, and neighbors it was truly traumatic, if not frustrating. The pandemic upended the lives of people globally. The truth is that none of us know when we will be able to return to “total normalcy”.

No other event in our memory has done what the Covid-19 virus has done to disrupt economies in the United States and across the world. The pandemic transformed how we interact, work, eat, shop and travel. It changed how our children are educated, how we communicate, and what groups of people will thrive and who will suffer. Further, it has contributed significantly to a widening of the income/wealth gap between the “haves and the have nots”. For many there is an endless chase for resources to cover the basic minimums, food, shelter, utilities, and clothing. With the US economy losing more than 20 million jobs, the reality is that it may take several years before we get back to normal or reasonable employment levels.

The source of our frustration in 2020 extends beyond the pandemic. We witnessed unheralded chaos in Washington with our federal elected leaders as well as in many of our state governments. Our elected

leaders at all levels demonstrated limited ability to address the issues important to many of us including, police brutality, the increase in overt racist acts, and the racial disparities unmasked across all aspects of society due to Covid-19.

Despite all of this, most of us continue to endure. Most of us have not lost all hope. We’ve managed to live one day at a time with a level of optimism that makes us know that things will get better.

Throughout 2020 organizations like the NAACP were also able to endure. Like many other organizations, we were significantly challenged to seek alternate ways to pursue our mission. To this end, the organization stood with many other collaborative organizations in the call for law enforcement reform in the face of continuing incidents of police brutality and misconduct, and a president who refused to denounce white supremacy. Most importantly, the NAACP at the national and local levels was a key player in achieving one of the highest voter turnouts in the history of the nation. This work was most evident in the so-called “swing states”, that include Michigan where a victory was delivered to the Biden/Harris team in the presidential race.

Locally a great deal of gratitude is due all those who joined the NAACP Saginaw Branch in the effort to educate voters and encourage their casting a ballot in the 2020 general elections. Beyond the officers and executive committee members who help to lead the effort, we thank the branch membership, local clergy leaders, volunteer poll watchers, members of the Devine-9 (fraternities & sororities), and elected and civic leaders who aided in this important

work.

As we move forward in 2021 and beyond, it is important to understand that our work remains challenging. Racial injustice remains a serious problem in this nation. Inequities in education, healthcare, criminal justice, and societal inclusion are major barriers to our ability to effectively deal with racism and discrimination. The pandemic will remain a formidable force that will test the mettle of our community and our nation. It will continue to be a source of division throughout the nation.

In my capacity as President of the NAACP Saginaw Branch, I pledge to move forward aggressively in pursuit of our mission. Despite the difficulty or the challenges that might be present. Now is not the time to relegate ourselves to a place of complacency in the face of disparity and inequity. Indeed, in many respects the timing is right to press hard toward gaining big victories over racism and inequality.

I need your help. Invite you to join us in this most important work.





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Yet, there is hope!

By Bishop Dempsey Allen, Jacob's Ladder Ministries



courtesy photo

I never liked roller coasters. I found myself riding them because everyone else was doing it. Perhaps it was the steep, slow-grinding rise to the top and then that swift stomach turning descent; so fast that I hardly had time to scream. Or maybe it was the thought of losing my hotdog? I just don't like anticipating dread. I haven't ridden one since my baby girl reached the height when she could ride alone. This year of 2020 has been in so many instances a similarly disgusting roller coaster ride. The crescendo of mounting political division coupled with appalling

racial angst both rode bareback on the wild bronco COVID-19. This year has been like standing in a line waiting for the inevitable dread of a roller coaster ride, over and over again. A ride that we all unfortunately have tickets for.

The end of this year is upon us with few sighs of relief from this dread. The people have spoken politically but handedly, a third of us are dissatisfied. The frustrations of trying to teach some the differences between their individual benevolence and their inherent racism and privilege seems futile. Then... there is the virus! It has broken many of us to a cripple. We've come to understand in the midst of this pandemic that normal only applies to a setting on a clothes dryer.

The prophet Jeremiah, "The Weeping Prophet", lived in a time of political-social and hypocritical ambiguity. A "do as I say, not as I do" philosophy governed along with religious, cultural and class assertions of superiority ruling the day. Through it all, Jeremiah wept. His tears have given modern day prophets permission to do likewise. As Jeremiah wept for the captive people of Israel, I wept over the brutal slaying of George Floyd and the massacre of Breonna Taylor. I lamented, as many others, the nearly 350,000

who have died from the COVID-19 virus in this country.

Jeremiah's call by God was marked with the revelation of God's ability to mold His people to His good pleasure under any circumstances, thus "The Potter's House", in the book of Jeremiah chapter 18. And that He (God) was always willing and well able to provide His beloved with a way out, Jeremiah chapter 33:3. Despite whatever the peril or calamity, Jeremiah realized that the Lord was yet in control.

The Lamentations of Jeremiah 3 outlines a process that God uses on us today. Get out of the complaint line and use your voice instead to "act like you know God", Proverbs 3:5-6. So after his complaint, Jeremiah made his proclamation. The KJV states: Yet there is hope! It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, His compassions never fail, they are new every morning...Great is Your faithfulness!

We see the situation, we know the circumstances, we've thrown up our hands in surrender so now, all those that are called by His Name, humble yourselves and pray and seek His face. He will forgive us and heal the land.



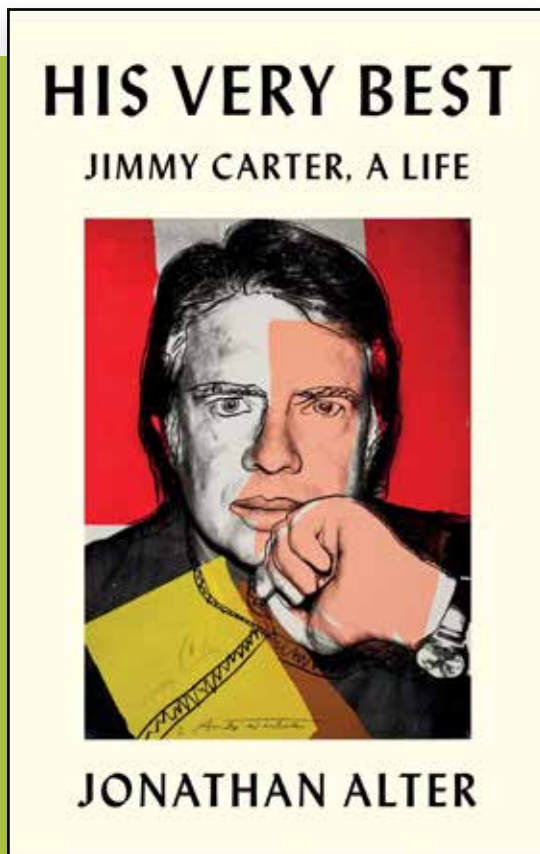
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DOCUMENTARY REVIEW

America's most underrated president?

By Mike Thompson



Jimmy Carter, age 96, has received loads of respect for his humanitarian good deeds during the 40 years after he served as president. Habitat for Humanity home builder, worldwide peacemaker, and much more.

Should he have been held in higher regard for his four years in office?

Readers may consider, or reconsider, their view after absorbing Jonathan Alter's "His Very Best: Jimmy Carter, a Life," because the book is highly neutral and objective. In fact, the title may be the most slanted portion.

That's because Jimmy Carter didn't always perform his very best, as he modestly would be the first to acknowledge. One of his major errors was to allow an ailing Shah of Iran into the U.S., which led to the taking of 52 American hostages for his final 444 days in office.

But even then, he was unlucky and his treatment was unfair. At that precise same time, ABC was looking for an 11:30 p.m. news show to sap some of Johnny Carson's viewers. The hostage crisis was ideal material, and "America Held Hostage," later "Nightline," emerged to give the scenario far more news coverage than it deserved.

Alter, basically a print journalist who makes a few appearances on television, reviews Carter's crowded agenda of issues by focusing on them one-by-one, rather than weaving them together. The president often was portrayed as a stubborn outsider who didn't know how to bargain strategically or play inside politics. Still, many of his accomplishments are underrated, especially in energy conservation and the environment. And the U.S. waged no armed conflicts during his post-Vietnam tenure, although the Cold War with the Soviet Union led to the 1980 boycott of the Moscow Olympics.

But talk about bad luck. Carter ordered a hostage rescue attempt, but a desert windstorm struck and two helicopters broke down, leading to the disgrace of a failed mission. If Barack Obama had met similar ill fortune in his takedown of bin Laden, then he, too, may have ended up as a one-term president. Worse still, the hostage crisis overshadows Carter's amazing peace brokering in the Middle East, which remains a mess but we haven't seen Egypt at war with Israel.

And Jimmy Carter integrated the judicial ranks, both in ethnicity and gender, in a major way. Yet he never had an opportunity to appoint a Supreme Court justice. That was simply unfair, especially considering that Donald Trump has three.

Personally, he was the first president I was able to vote for and I always felt he was getting a raw deal. A main example

was his so-called "malaise" speech, more like a sermon, where he didn't use the word but he challenged all of us for our selfish materialism and our failure to sacrifice for such causes as saving energy. His conqueror in 1980, Ronald Reagan, somehow saw those words as negative and unpatriotic. And a wide swath of the nation, at least the white majority, bought Reagan's pitch of being a sunny optimist as opposed to Carter's dour sourpus. (We wouldn't call that toothy smile fake, but Jimmy wasn't always a happy fellow.)

The book was recently released, leading many reviewers to compare Carter's post-presidential good works to Trump's disgraceful behavior. Point well taken, as obvious as the noses on our faces.

One aspect that surprised me was Carter's racial politics. No, he wasn't a bigot, but earlier in his career he stayed away from the 1960s civil rights movement and, for example, made sure he didn't say anything bad about George Wallace, who joined him wheelchair-bound on stage after his nomination speech at the 1976 Dem convention. To his credit, he later in life expressed honest regrets and carried out his reparations on both domestic issues and significant health care outreach in African nations.

Here's a closing tidbit: Jimmy Carter was born in 1924 and the former Rosalynn Smith in 1927. Their 75th wedding anniversary will be July 7. Walter Mondale was born in 1928 and Berry Gordy Jr. in 1929. All are in their 90s and still with us. So what does Mr. Motown have to do with the others? Well, he and the former president just happen to share a great-grandfather. Page 26.

Similar to all books featured on these pages, "His Very Best: Jimmy Carter, a Life," may be ordered via exchange from your nearest public library. Carter himself is the author of 32 books.

Nearing the year's end finishing strong! 2020 COVID-19

By Pastor Carolyn L. Wilkins, Resurrection Life Ministries Full Gospel Baptist Church



courtesy photo

What a difference a day can make. What a difference an entire year has made in our lives. While relaxed in my comfy chair these words came to mind "Everything Must Change."

In my response I decided to listen to renditions of the song "Everything Must Change" made popular by recording artists Phil Perry, Quincy Jones, Mick Hucknall and Chaka Khan, and Ms. Dottie Peoples. All renditions were moving and easy listening. I listened closely and concurred strongly with the refrain of this piece "There are not many things in life we can be sure of, except rain comes from the clouds,

sunlight from the sky, and hummingbirds do fly." The next verse goes on to say, "The YOUNG become the OLD." How true the lyrics of this song rang home!

It is 2020 and a World-Wide Pandemic is raging, nations are crying, states are at their wits-end, and local governments are frustrated. But guess what, the last time I checked, rain is still coming from the clouds, the sunlight is still shining from the sky, and hummingbirds do fly. As a matter of fact, the YOUNG ARE STILL BECOMING THE OLD.

Normalcy as we have perceived and known over the years has CHANGED! The year 2020 has proven itself a different and a difficult year. Many have experienced hardship and loss until this very moment. Others have become bitter, angry, and cold in hopes that all will return to normal.

No matter what is changing, has changed, or will change the Word of God remains unchanged. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, tomorrow and forever." (Unchanged!) Hebrews 13:8. Thus, we are challenged to position ourselves to remain focused while finishing strong as 2020 closes. Many have started as we all have, but it is the finished product that God finds glory in. The birth of Christ marks the beginning, but It is when He said, "It is Finished! (John 19:28-30), that God was glorified.

Jesus finished Strong!

5-Tips for Finishing Strong

- 1. Be Confident:** "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus". Philippians 1:6
- 2. Be Strong:** "But you, be strong and do not lose courage for there is reward for your work." II Chronicles 15:7
- 3. Endure:** "And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing" James 1:4
- 4. Be Encouraged:** "For all of them trying to frighten us, thinking, "They will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done." But now, O God strengthen my hands". Nehemiah 6:9
- 5. Hold Fast:** "Holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain" Philippians 2:16.

Although things have changed, remember you were born to win! So, get on your mark, position yourself, stir up your faith the end of a matter is better than its beginning! Finish Strong!





In November 2020, it was announced that Napoleon tested positive for COVID-19. He was admitted to a local hospital on November 21 and placed on a ventilator. On December 17, Napoleon passed away from the virus. He was 65 years old.

Born September 10, 1955, Napoleon was an American attorney, law enforcement officer, and politician who served as the Sheriff of Wayne County, Michigan. He was also a 2013 candidate for the office of Mayor of Detroit.

A public viewing was held Monday, December 28, at the Swanson Funeral Home on East Grand Boulevard in Detroit.



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I'm Just Thinking..... with Pastor Hurley J. Coleman, Jr., World Outreach Campus Church

Beginning a "New" New

The annual celebration of the end of one year and the beginning of the next will take on an entirely different motif this year. Normal has left the room. Since the beginning of this COVID invasion, things that were normal have been put on the back burner.

As I consider this year, I am amazed at how much has changed. Early in the year, we experienced one shock after another, as heroes and stars died suddenly. The patterns of politics had already been uprooted by the current national leadership, and the whole idea of an election was put on edge.

As the pandemic raged in the country, everything from the economy to education was put into a freeze. The normal gathering places at churches, schools, sports facilities, restaurants, and even theaters were suddenly empty. A silent fear began to creep into the psyche of the country, and before we knew it, public discourse reflected a great divide.

This divide had always been there, but there was a filter of social decorum that maintained the civility of public interaction. The dangerous exposure of young black men in the streets was largely believed to be a matter of lawless gangs and drug trade. Many in the black and brown communities knew that it was more than that, and the one of the most egregious violations of personal safety came from those who were sworn to protect the people.

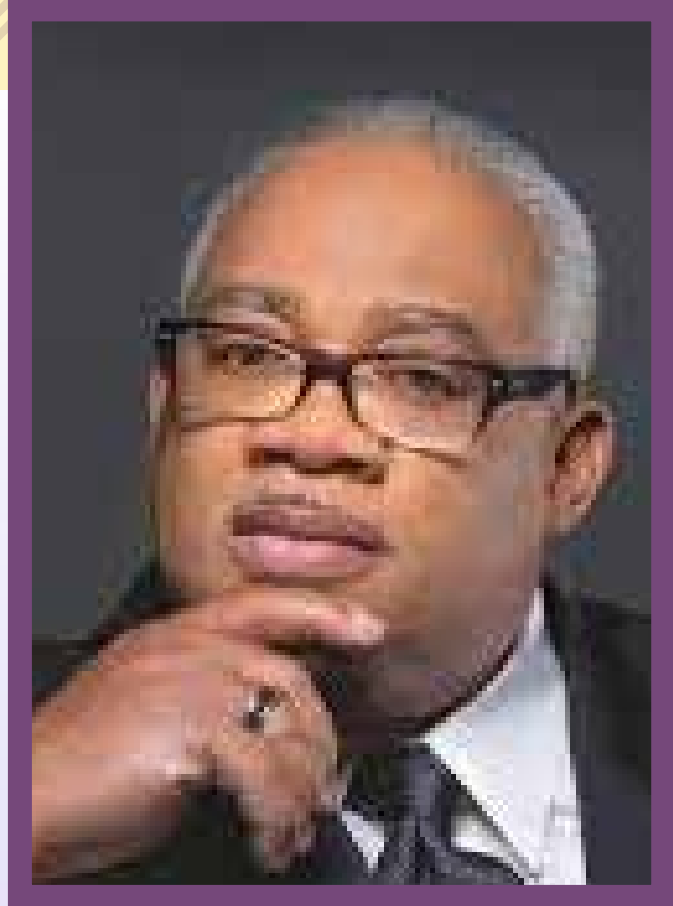
This made for a tumultuous year.

When George Floyd's public execution touched the nerve of the nation, there were more protests and public gatherings than anytime in the country's history. Adding to that history was the broad coalition of those who joined the protests. What began as peaceful protests exploded into riots and counter protests. The ugly head of racism was raised and took its' seat, front and center. The social and political divide became even more sharp as it was politicized in a way that once would have been unconscionable.

The days advanced, and now we have a new president, a new administration, a new agenda for public discourse, and are facing a new year. It is time for a "new" new. We can't go into 2021 with the same New Year's attitude that led us into 2020. It needs to be fresh, equitable, and authentic. The New Year must desire new results, be inspired by new thoughts, and be led by new leadership.

This will require an honest assessment of what was in the past. It will demand that every individual take full personal responsibility for the necessary changes that they will have to make, if they want to see something new. The old saying, "you can't put new wine in an old skin" means so much this year.

If a "new" new is to occur, there will have to be some intentional effort to make it happen. Intentional conversations. Intentional sacrifices. Intentional moves.



Intentional honesty. Intentional exposures. Intentional release.

The lyrics of the song that has become the theme song for the New Year celebration is a presentation of a curious conundrum. "Should old acquaintances be forgot and never brought to mind?" How difficult to truly begin a "new" new without having considered what it is that you are leaving behind.

I submit to you that we need to be clear on what has to change to insure that we get what it is that we want. I am confident that there are those who truly want this year to be different. I am also confident that there are those who will be comfortable with the honest effort necessary for this to happen. Welcome to the "new" new.

I'm just thinking.....



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Martin Luther King, Jr.

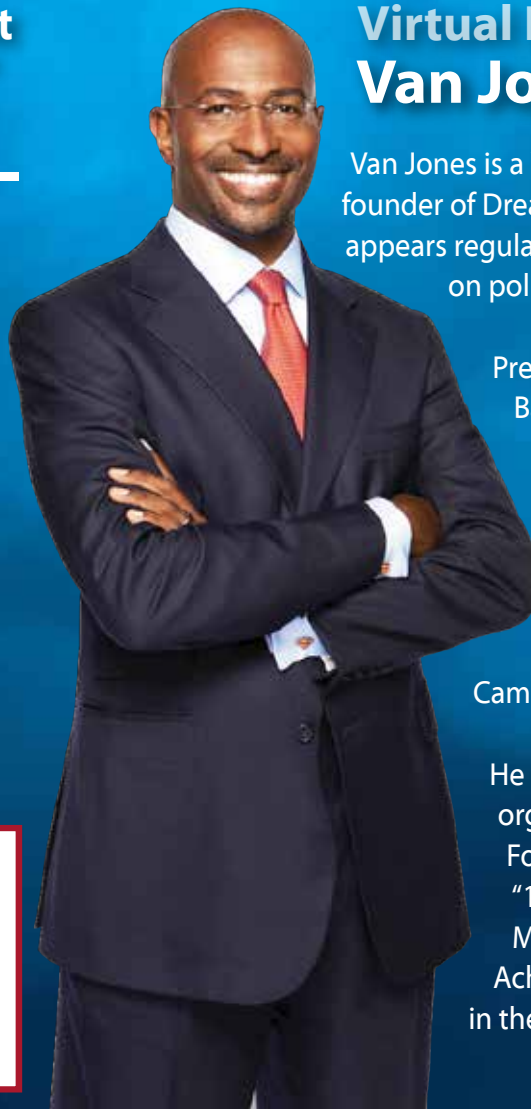
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Virtual Keynote Speaker Van Jones, Political Contributor, CNN

Van Jones is a Yale-educated attorney who serves as president and founder of Dream Corps, a nonprofit focusing on social justice. He appears regularly on TV as a correspondent on CNN and a commentator on political talk shows such as NBC’s “Meet The Press.”

Previously, he worked as the green jobs advisor for President Barack Obama in 2009. In that role, he helped coordinate \$80 billion in green energy recovery spending.

He authored three New York Times Bestsellers including “The Green Collar Economy, The Definitive Book on Green Jobs;” “Rebuild the Dream, a Roadmap for Progressives;” and “Beyond the Messy Truth: How We Came Apart, How We Come Together.”

He received recognition over the years from several organizations. He was the recipient of the World Economic Forum’s “Young Global Leader” designation, Rolling Stone’s “12 Leaders Who Get Things Done,” Fast Company’s “12 Most Creative Minds On Earth,” a Webby Special Achievement Award and Time’s “100 Most Influential People in the World.”

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Joy to the world

By Dick Sayad, Glory House International Ministries



“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
—Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)

At the moment, the world around us feels like anything but peace. Angry rhetoric, threats of violence and a lingering spirit of strife are all out to do one thing—rob you of your peace.

But praise God, peace doesn't come from outward circumstances! That is, if you find your peace in the right place.

Christmas is the perfect reminder of what true peace looks like and how Jesus—the Light of Peace—is all you'll ever need to live a peace-filled life.

When Jesus Christ came here as an expression of God's great love to mankind, He showed us this peace from God's love, that gives us hope and fills us with joy. I want to take this opportunity this Christmas to share this joy that Jesus brought.

“I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people” (Luke 2:10).

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! This week, we're lighting the candle of joy and focusing our attention on Jesus—the Light of Joy. That's what people were looking for those 2,000 years ago as they awaited the Messiah—the hope, peace, love and JOY we so need and desire.

Sadly, most people today don't understand real joy. They almost treat it as if it were a rarity, rather than the norm. But that isn't what God intended!

John 15:11 says, “I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!” These are Jesus' words directly to us. Our joy doesn't come from outside circumstances but from the Holy Spirit who resides within us.

That's because joy is not an emotion, it is, as Galatians 5:22 tells us, a fruit of the spirit. Joy is already inside every born-again believer! That is

because Emmanuel came and He is with you and inside each of those who are believers in Christ.

This Christmas as we go into 2021, let this joy you have inside you be your strength. “the joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10

The Joy that came when Jesus was born is Good News! Joy is an integral part of our salvation in Christ. It is an inner peace and delight in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in the blessing that flows from our relationship with Them. Scriptural teaching about Joy includes the following:

- (1) Joy is associated with the salvation God provides in Christ and with God's Word
- (2) Joy flows from God as one aspect of the Spirit's fruit. Joy is experienced only as we maintain an abiding relationship with Christ. Our Joy becomes greater when the spirit mediates a deep sense of God's presence and nearness in our lives. Jesus taught that the fullness of Joy is inseparably connected to our remaining in His Word, loving others, obeying His commands, and being separated from the world.
- (3) Joy as a delight in God's nearness and His redemptive gifts cannot be destroyed by pain, suffering, weakness, or difficult circumstances.

So rejoice in the Joy of the Lord!

Joy at Christmas and all Year Long!

Maybe this Christmas, you're lacking the real joy you know the season should bring. Even in what's supposed to be the most wonderful time of year, we can face situations that seem custom-designed to steal all the joy out of Christmas and life.

Financial pressure. Family dynamics. Work situations. Health concerns. These are all things that try to steal our joy every day of the year.

The Bible says the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10), and without this joy, we won't be able to live the blessed life God has planned for us at Christmas, or any other time of year.

Your Joy Is Your Power

Since the joy of the Lord is your strength, you've probably noticed that when you're down and discouraged, you also feel sapped of strength, energy and purpose. You feel powerless. That's the enemy's plan - to render you helpless.

Here's something you must remember: Joy is not subject to your circumstances—your circumstances are subject to your joy. That's

pretty much the opposite of what the world will tell you, isn't it?

That's what makes joy so crucial. You can't live a life of faith without being strong in the Lord—and when God wants to make you strong, joy is what He uses to do the job!

Joy is not just a state of mind. It is not a fleeting emotion. Joy is a very real force, and the devil doesn't have anything that can stand up against it. Just as fear has to yield to faith, discouragement has to yield to joy.

Whatever circumstances you are facing today, you can be full of joy. You can be strong in the Lord. You can draw on the supply of the Holy Spirit within you and come out on top.

We may be challenged, we may be tried, we may be weeping in the night, but joy comes in the morning!

So, next time you're facing troubles that seem to steal the joy right from under your Christmas tree, be intentional about releasing the joy that's already inside you. Laugh out loud at the enemy; declare, “The joy of the Lord is my strength!”; begin to praise and worship Him. When you stir up joy within your spirit, your strength will be renewed as well. And that type of strength is unstoppable.

How Joy Flows!

Here is how I think the Joy of God flows out from the lyrics of Joy to the World, from our hearts into the world.

1. The Holy Spirit gives us the Joy of God in mind, heart, and life
2. The church, through the Holy Spirit, furthers that change in our hearts by His Word and our worship
3. The Joy of the Lord flows among His people to relate spiritually with each other
4. How we live in the world is a witness to others of this Joy of the Lord
5. This Joy through the work of the Holy Spirit will bring others to experience God's Joy to our friends and neighbors.

Joy is meant to strengthen us and pass it to others!

Merry Christmas and let the Joy the Lord be your Strength and help others experience God's Joy!

God Bless You!

Guest Column: Despite funding challenges, family services must continue

By Sam Beals, CEO of Samaritas



Sam Beals

Across the state, the coronavirus pandemic has revealed the need for greater health and human services. But the longer the pandemic has continued, the harder it has been for nonprofits to secure funding to continue providing quality services for Michigan's most vulnerable populations.

Samaritas has fought for these populations, including children in foster care, senior residents, refugees, the homeless and those struggling with substance use disorders, for decades. Unfortunately, this past October, we learned the Department of Education had rescinded its start-up grant award that would have provided the funds to launch a new partnership in Southeast Saginaw. While we know the decision did not come easily, this funding was critical to launching the New Hope Public School Academy at Samaritas' Saginaw Community Center, where hundreds of children would have received a combination of a high-quality education designed for at-risk students and life-changing

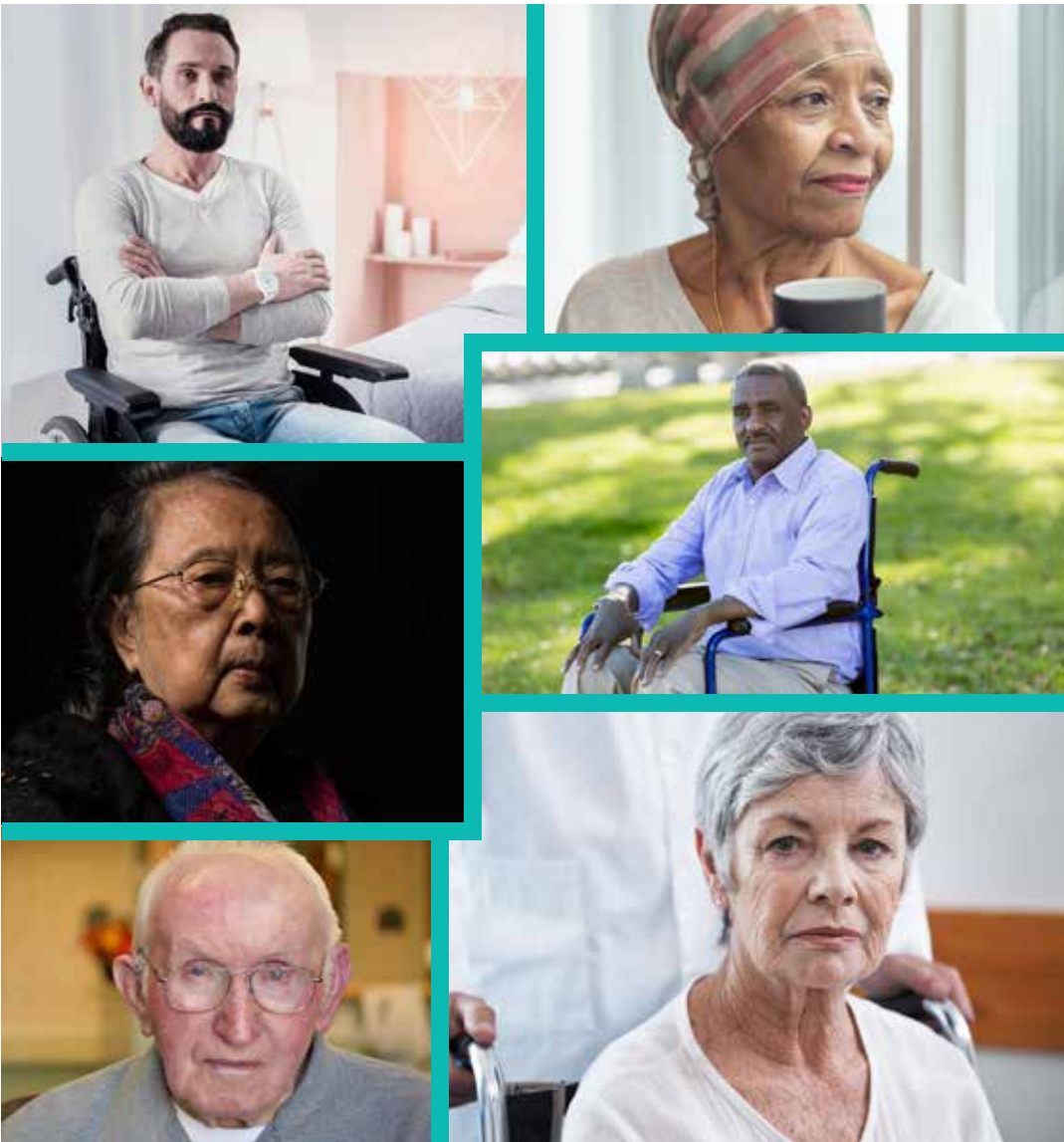
wraparound support services from the Samaritas Community Center. As a result, we are unable to move forward with opening the new school.

The lag in funding resources due to the pandemic has also forced Samaritas to make the extremely difficult decision to close the aforementioned Community Center in favor of a new site that accommodates the budget realities we now face. Given the commitment the community has shown Samaritas over many years, we remain committed to Saginaw and working closely with residents and local partners to keep and possibly even grow the services of the Community Center as an integral part of the neighborhood for years to come. Let me be clear—Samaritas is here to stay in Saginaw for the children and families, those with disabilities and seniors we serve.

The need for resources, programs and spaces for vulnerable families is far greater during the pandemic. Samaritas has taken immediate

action to continue providing vital support. That is why we need policy makers and donors to prioritize health and human services, especially in the face of increasing demand for such services. When the money is prioritized in these areas, we know that positive outcomes follow.

Samaritas has been sending ripples of positive change into Michigan communities since 1934 and in Saginaw, for more than 70 years. We are committed to the residents of Saginaw and will continue to provide adoption, foster care, disability support services, skilled nursing for seniors as we have for decades—but we'll need to work together as a community to overcome the many challenges presented by the global pandemic. Based on our rich history together, I am confident that we will be successful.



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Sermonette: A joyful heart makes a face cheerful

By Rev. Rodrick A. Smith, Zion Missionary Baptist Church



courtesy photo

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed (Rom. 13:11).

Doctrine should lead to duty. Belief will affect behavior. Position will determine practice. How can there be a new you in a New Year? We need to know what time it is. We are living in the age of spiritual slumber, and many of us in the church need to wake up. The final phase of our salvation, which is glorification, is closer than ever. The time of spiritual darkness is far spent, and the Lord's return is at hand. Knowing the time should compel us to repent and forsake sin, and put on the the weapon of light. Jesus said, "You

are the light of the world." Take off the grave clothes and put on the grace clothes. The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age. The time has come for us to walk decently, honestly, and uprightly. Go into the New Year, not partying but praying; not drunk with wine but filled with the Spirit; not in lewdness and lust, but in purity and godliness; not in envy and strife, but in love and togetherness. Finally, be Christlike, and cease from planning and plotting sinful activities that are often allowed to linger long in the mind. God has been gracious and merciful to us again and again. Let us live like we know and appreciate this.



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Second Chance Ministries is a small "boots on the ground ministry" supporting the homeless in downtown Detroit. We have partnered with them for several years now, as we truly appreciate their service to those among us in greatest need. Today, I want to offer up my thanks to every one of you, our clients and friends, who make this possible.

The boots you see in the picture are a sampling of the year round support we provide. Special thanks to my friends Dave Spieth, Gary Maurer and Steve Edwards for chipping in on this project.

Merry Christmas!

"The holiday season is a perfect time to reflect on our blessings and seek out ways to make life better for those around us."

I want to wish each of you a very Merry Christmas and the happiest of New Year's!



Always my best,

Bill

POLITICS & PUBLIC POLICY

Governor Whitmer signs \$106 million bipartisan relief bill, bills extending unemployment benefits to 26 weeks

LANSING, Mich. -- On December 29, Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed the bipartisan relief bill that the Michigan legislature passed after she urged them to provide support for Michigan families, frontline workers, and small businesses. The relief bill includes \$55 million to help small businesses impacted by COVID-19. Grants of up to \$20,000 will be made available to small businesses across the state that need support this winter. The relief bill also includes \$3.5 million for grants of up to \$40,000 each for live music and entertainment venues, and includes \$45 million in direct payments to workers who have been laid off or furloughed as a result of the virus.

"I proposed this stimulus plan to the legislature in November because I know how much our families, frontline workers, and small businesses need relief. This bipartisan bill will provide families and businesses the support they need to stay afloat as we continue working to distribute the safe and effective vaccine and eliminate COVID-19 once and for all," said Governor Whitmer. "There is still more work to do to eliminate this virus and grow our economy. All Michiganders have a personal responsibility to do their part and mask up, practice safe social distancing, and avoid indoor gatherings where the virus can easily spread from person to person. We will beat this virus together."

"After zooming a few weeks ago with Governor Whitmer, we are thrilled that she heard our cry for help," said Chef Jenna Arcidiacono, owner of Amore Trattoria in Comstock Park. "Many restaurants will not survive without financial support. This gives us hope after the devastating year we have endured."

"Live entertainment venues are vital to communities across Michigan, they are

community gathering spaces and vibrant hubs for culture and arts," said Xavier Verna, Executive Director of the Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts. "These funds will provide critical support to help them get through until we can all gather safely and enjoy entertainment together again."

"We are grateful that Governor Whitmer has signed a bill that provides some much needed support for entertainment venues and stages like ours," said Scott Hammontree, President of the Michigan Independent Venue and Promoter Association. "Our number one priority is keeping our staff, patrons, and their families safe, and we encourage everyone in communities across Michigan to do your part to end this virus once and for all."

The governor also signed bipartisan Senate Bill 604 extending unemployment benefits for Michiganders who have lost work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic from 20 to 26 weeks until the end of March 2021. Senate Bill 604 was sponsored by Senator Curtis Hertel.

"No Michigander should have to worry about how to put food on the table or pay their bills, especially during a global pandemic," said Governor Whitmer. "These bipartisan bills are an important step in providing immediate relief for working families, but there is more work to do. I urge the legislature to take further action to make this permanent. 40 states, including all of our neighbors, automatically provide at least 26 weeks of unemployment relief. Michiganders deserve better than a short-term extension that expires in March. It's time to work together on a bipartisan, long-term solution for working families."

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Whitmer and her

administration have worked around the clock to ensure benefits for Michiganders who have lost work because of the virus. Since March 15, Governor Whitmer's administration has paid nearly \$27 billion in benefits to nearly 2.3 million workers.

When she signed the bipartisan relief bill, Governor Whitmer line item vetoed any items not subject to negotiated agreement. That includes a \$220 million giveaway of taxpayer money to the employer-owned Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund - a pool of funds designed to help businesses fund benefits for laid off workers. General fund dollars must be used to fund essential services like vaccines and PPE, not to give tax breaks to big businesses. The Unemployment Insurance Agency has also provided more than \$900 million in tax breaks to businesses impacted by COVID-19. Today, the governor urged the legislature to return to work in January and pass a permanent extension of unemployment benefits and an increase in weekly benefits that provide unemployed Michiganders the support they need to put food on the table for themselves and their families.

On Sunday, the President signed a COVID relief bill that provides some support for Michigan's unemployed workers. This bill extends benefits to self-employed and gig workers and provides all unemployment recipients with an additional \$300 per week. This extension will bring relief to nearly 700,000 Michigan workers who are currently receiving benefits under the federal UI programs. The continuation of these benefits coupled with the additional \$300 per week for all claimants will provide our workers with the emergency financial assistance to buy essential items like groceries and prescription drugs.

Who is accountable?

As the pandemic health crisis and current political, economic, and social problems spill over into the New Year, people want to know more about the politicians in power who are responsible for getting us out of this mess. Individuals who some folks refer to as “the fat cats in Washington” who clearly must do more to change policies that continue to marginalize, oppress, and subjugate different segments of society.

The top 10 wealthiest members in the U.S. House of Representatives and in the Senate are some of the individuals who are charged with this task. Elected officials who receive a base salary of \$174,000/year, have the best health benefits of anyone on the planet that continue into retirement, and who retire with 80% of their base salary (currently \$139,200/year) for life. Wouldn't it be nice if all of us could determine our own salaries, salary increases, and pay ourselves whether there was a balanced budget and whether that budget had passed or not?

The top 10 wealthiest members of the House of Representatives listed below include four Democrats and six Republicans. Two of these wealthy Republicans are from the State of Michigan. The 10 richest members of the U.S. Senate will be highlighted in another article. It's interesting how the net worth of many elected officials in Congress seems to soar during and after their second term in office.

As we take many of our personal hardships into 2021, it's time to identify a few of those people in power who may appear callous as they enjoy their wealth and oversee policies that have resulted in widespread joblessness, dwindling bank accounts, food insufficiencies, delinquent mortgages, and threats of eviction nationwide.

Another point of interest is why wealthy politicians in the United States Congress accept those gracious salaries when so many Americans are hurting and slipping further into despair. It's beyond ludicrous for anyone in Congress to be reluctant to appropriate more than a mere \$600 per person in the stimulus/relief bill when that amount wouldn't even pay some folks delinquent utility bill. “When you are wealthy does it seem humane to accept a full \$174,000 annual

salary while individuals and families are clearly struggling and largely because of your own doing?” Would giving all, or part, of that yearly income to food pantries, soup kitchens or other organizations that help people who are struggling in your districts be a show of good faith, of caring, of compassion for the ‘have nots’? “And if you are already doing this or more, can you let us know so that we might get a sense that you have an interest in us other than during those times when you are actively soliciting our votes?”

These are questions TV news media might consider asking when shoving microphones beneath the noses of Congressmen. Questions that go beyond the typical emotionally charged political hot topic or sound bite of the day. Questions many of us would like answered as coronavirus morbidity and mortality rates soar in the midst of economic and social decline.

These are the 10 richest members in the U.S. House of Representatives based on their reported net worth (2018). They are listed in descending order.



1. Greg Gianforte, Republican – Montana At Large District. \$189,334,335



2. Paul Mitchell, Republican – Michigan 10th District. \$179,610,071



3. Vernon Buchanan, Republican – Florida 16th District. \$157,169,056



4. Don Beyer, Democrat – Virginia 8th District. \$125,901,516



5. Dean Phillips, Democrat – Minnesota 3rd District. \$123,765,476



6. Nancy Pelosi, Democrat – California 12th District. \$114,662,521



7. Suzan DelBene, Democrat – Washington 1st District. \$79,361,042



8. Fred Upton, Republican – Michigan 6th District. \$78,965,614



9. Roger Williams, Republican – Texas 25th District. \$66,980,026



10. Buddy Carter, Republican – Georgia 1st District. \$66,464,062

~ Sofus ~

Note: The annual salary of Nancy Pelosi is \$223,000 compared to the \$174,000 for most Congressmen because of her position as Speaker of the House. Current annual salary for this position pays \$7,000/year less than the Vice President's salary. Speaker of the House is a ranking position that places it second to the Presidency after Vice President.

HEALTH

Covid tests return downtown, free flu shots also offered

By Mike Thompson



courtesy photo

Free-of-charge covid tests via Great Lakes Bay Health Centers will return to the original Saginaw downtown location, beginning Monday, Jan. 4.

The site is the parking lot of the David Gamez facility at 501 Lapeer, and hours are weekdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday early-bird hours start at 7:30 a.m.

Downtown roadwork had caused a temporary shift to Cumberland near Holland, across from

the post office. This site was less convenient, causing traffic jams on some occasions. The return to the Gamez location should lead to a smoother flow, even while demand for the tests has grown with the increased wave of covid cases during recent months.

Information on specific covid vaccines is not yet available but will be forthcoming.

Residents also may receive flu shots at the same time as the covid tests. Also, drive-

through flu shots only are offered from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every Saturday at the Janes Street Center, 1522 Janes.

Bay County residents should visit Bayside Health Center, 3884 Monitor, for both covid tests and flu shots from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. weekdays.

In all drive-through operations, people are asked to have identification and insurance cards. However, neither is required, simply desired if possible to help Great Lakes Bay meet costs.

The policy statement is: "Services provided are sensitive to the needs of the community, and are NOT based on ability to pay."

Federal policy debate, such as regarding the Affordable Care Act (so-called Obamacare), focuses on national health insurance and long-term care. However, citizens should be aware that federally-funded basic services have been in place since the 1960s, first known as clinics and now as health care centers.

Great Lakes Bay is among thousands of centers nationwide, serving a combined 29 million patients. Still, leaders express concerns that some Americans remain unaware of these programs, including dental, and they encourage public awareness in all ways, including word-of-mouth.

For information on all Great Lakes Bay services, including covid testing and flu shots, and also general medical exams and care, along with prescription coverage, please visit greatlakesbayhealthcenter.org or call 759-6470.

The Saginaw County Health Department provides information on covid testing. The hotline is 758-3823, and the general number for all services is 758-3800. The website is saginawpublichealth.org.

MDHHS updates priority group guidance for COVID-19 vaccination, Over 37,000 frontline health care workers have received safe and effective vaccine

LANSING, Mich. - On December 23, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) officials updated prioritization guidance for COVID-19 vaccination administration for essential workers and those at high risk of severe infection. Additionally, MDHHS announced the vaccination of more than 37,000 frontline health care providers.

“Some essential workers are at higher risk of exposure or exposing others due to the nature of their work and older individuals, particularly those with underlying health conditions, are particularly vulnerable to the virus,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health. “As new information is learned, this guidance will continue to evolve. The availability of these safe and effective vaccines means the end to the pandemic is near. Everyone should be planning now for how they will get their vaccine when it becomes available to them.”

MDHHS is following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations for prioritization of distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines. CDC recommendations are based on input from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the federal advisory committee made up of medical and public health experts who develop recommendations on the use of vaccines in the United States. ACIP updated its recommendations on Saturday, Dec. 20 regarding Phases 1b and 1c, including essential workers and those at high risk of severe infection. This was an effort to balance prevention of illness and death, while preserving societal functioning. CDC published the accepted recommendations on Tuesday, Dec. 22.

Updated phases are as follows:

- Phase 1: Paid and unpaid persons serving in healthcare settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials and are unable to work from home as well as residents in long term care facilities.

- Phase 1B: Persons 75 years of age or older and frontline essential workers in critical infrastructure.
- Phase 1C: Individuals 16 years of age or older at high risk of severe illness due to COVID-19 infection and some other essential workers whose position impacts life, safety and protection during the COVID-19 response.
- Phase 2: Individuals 16 years of age or older.

These prioritizations may change as more information on vaccine effectiveness and additional vaccination products become available. MDHHS has provided additional prioritization guidance within these categories. It is important to note that vaccination in one phase may not be complete before vaccination in another phase begins. There may be vaccination of individuals in different phases that occur simultaneously. The timing of the start of vaccination in a phase is dependent on the supply of vaccine from the manufacturer, how vaccine is allocated from the federal level to Michigan and the capacity to administer the vaccine to populations. Decisions on moving to the next phase will be made at the state level.

More than 231,000 doses of Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine have been delivered to local health departments and hospitals across the state with over 120,000 additional doses expected next week. This data is being tracked on the COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard, which also includes information on the number of providers enrolled to provide the vaccine, and doses administered. The dashboard will be expanded over the coming weeks to include vaccination coverage rates by age and race.

Even with COVID-19 vaccinations starting in Michigan and worldwide, Khaldun urges everyone to continue to practice preventative measures such as properly wearing masks, social distancing and frequent handwashing to reduce the spread of the virus until the vast

majority of people have been vaccinated.

Michigan health officials have set a goal of vaccinating 70% of Michiganders over age 16, about 5.6 million people, by the end of 2021. There will be no out-of-pocket costs to individuals for the vaccine, however, healthcare providers may bill insurance for administrative costs. The COVID-19 vaccine will require two doses, separated by three or four weeks depending on the manufacturer. Michiganders should receive both doses in order to have full protection from the virus. Individuals who receive the vaccine may experience mild side effects such as low-grade fever, sore arm and general discomfort, which indicate that the vaccine is working. There is a robust state and national process for tracking vaccines and reporting side effects.

Michigan residents seeking more information about the COVID-19 vaccine can visit Michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine. As additional information and resources become available, it will be posted to this site.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus.



courtesy photo

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Covenant HealthCare prides itself on delivering extraordinary care. But lately, we've been on the receiving end. Our community has given us:

- 20,000 N95 masks
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- 10,750 face shields
- 10,000 ear loop/tie masks
- 50,000 gloves
- 2,000 pairs of goggles
- 312 gallons of sanitizer
- 5,000 caps and hair nets
- 4,100 shoe/boot covers
- Thousands of donated meals
- Thousands of dollars in gift cards and monetary donations
- Countless prayers and messages of encouragement

Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone who has supported us. You are all extraordinary.



EDUCATION

Great times and bad times for Saginaw schools

By Mike Thompson



courtesy photo

At the beginning of 2020, the top goal for the Saginaw School District was to become current and up with modern times. This was mainly accomplished with the wrapup of a community wide strategic plan and passage of a 7-mill property tax for a unified high school and other major facility upgrades.

But all this occurred, some will say by miracle, during a year full of covid virus assaults on education everywhere, not just in the city.

And so 2021 begins with a far more basic outlook.

"The number one priority is to get our kids back into school," says Superintendent Ramont Roberts.

He pauses.

"How we do that remains the question," he

notes.

As the calendar flips, Dr. Roberts says he still has received scant information from federal or state authorities on how or when vaccines will be made available, either for teachers or for students. He feels it's best to remain cautious and settle for a general "May or June" response to parents and the public.

In the meantime, local educators will do their best to maintain at-home learning, even while the superintendent concedes varying levels of hardship among hundreds of households. Virtual schooling is a "distant second" to direct classroom education, Roberts notes, which is why reopening the buildings grows in urgency with each grade-marking period that passes.

At the same time, "May or June" also will be the timetable focal point for when the \$99.95 million millage -- costing several hundred

dollars per year for the occupants of even Saginaw's more modest homes -- will begin to kick in with bulldozers and bricklaying. "Visionary sessions" on spsd.net will begin this winter but the work will not commence until the snow melts in spring.

Other immediate tasks will be to pick a name for the new high school at the riverfront SASA site, along with sports team colors and a nickname. Plenty of activity also will be seen at Arthur Hill High, where SASA will relocate and a new Handley School will be built, and at Saginaw High, home of a renewed East Side middle school. Sizeable older sections of The Hill and The High will encounter wrecking balls.

Beyond the virus endemic and the millage projects, Dr. Roberts sees no big surprises entering 2021. But then, a year ago, who had ever heard of Covid-19?

Scott Sawyer, J.D. promoted to Deputy Superintendent for Saginaw Intermediate School District



courtesy photo

Scott Sawyer, J.D. has been promoted to serve as Deputy Superintendent for Saginaw Intermediate School District (ISD) effective immediately during the Saginaw ISD Board of Education meeting on Wednesday, December 9, 2020. Mr. Sawyer has served as the Executive Director of Human Resources at the ISD for five years and had acted in the dual capacity of Executive Director for both the Human Resources and Finance departments for the past 18 months. Mr. Sawyer will assist in providing servant leadership to all internal departments within the ISD and over 800 employees, as well as local school districts and educational programs throughout Saginaw County.

Under this new title, Mr. Sawyer's primary

responsibilities are to ensure alignment and attainment of strategic plans, represent the Superintendent at official school and community functions, monitor the changes in trends, laws, rules, and regulations as passed by the Michigan Department of Education and other government agencies, and help lead special projects and initiatives. As part of this role, Mr. Sawyer will also communicate and advocate for district needs, ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, and administer the school district's budget.

Mr. Sawyer began his professional education career as a Math Teacher at Chesaning Union Schools in 2003, and was promoted to Director of Finance in 2006. In 2010, Mr. Sawyer transitioned to Birch Run Area

Schools to serve as their Business Manager before joining Saginaw ISD in 2015. In addition to his educational background, Scott is a Partner Attorney for Dickinson Sawyer, PLC specializing in estate planning, small business, and residential leases.

Mr. Sawyer received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Alma College and a Juris Doctor degree from Western Michigan University Cooley Law School. He holds licensure for the United States District Court Eastern District of Michigan and the Michigan State Bar Association. Mr. Sawyer also maintains a secondary teaching certificate from the Michigan Department of Education and Michigan School Business Officials certification.

Scott is an engaged member of the Michigan Negotiators' Association, Michigan Association of School Personnel Administrators, Saginaw County Bar Association, Saginaw Valley School Business Officials, and Michigan School Business Officials. He further serves on the Saginaw Light Up the City Planning Committee.

Mr. Sawyer commented, "I am humbled by this new opportunity and look forward to continuing to support local school districts and staff, students, and the community of Saginaw ISD. We know these times have been difficult for the school community, but education staff across the county are working hard to create quality educational opportunities for students amid a pandemic and financial uncertainty. The education community continues to support one another for the betterment of Saginaw County students."

Superintendent Jeffrey Collier stated, "Mr. Sawyer is a dynamic, ethical leader with diverse leadership experience and expertise. He passionately advocates for the continual improvement of educational services, resources, programs, and infrastructure to best serve students. Scott exemplifies our core values of serving, innovating, and empowering and promotes equity, diversity, and inclusion while championing the success of every student throughout our community."

MDE establishes network to address children's social and emotional learning and mental health needs



courtesy photo

LANSING – To help address the social and emotional learning (SEL) and mental health needs of children across Michigan, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is establishing an SEL network of state stakeholders with input from national experts.

“This developing network will help broaden, deepen, and make more cohesive our efforts in SEL and children’s mental health across the state,” said State Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice.

“This work is essential and consistent with the state’s strategic education plan in promoting the health, safety, and wellness for all of our children, both physically and socio-emotionally,” said State Board of Education President Dr. Casandra Ulbrich.

SEL comprises five competencies important to all students: self-awareness, awareness of others, self-management, relationship to others, and decision making. One of the network’s efforts will focus on increasing the numbers of staff members with rudimentary professional development in social and emotional learning, as well as the deepening of the knowledge base of those who already have some training in the area.

The SEL network will also weave its efforts

into addressing children’s mental health. Even before the pandemic, 20 percent of children were experiencing mental health challenges, according to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This summer, Michigan was named one of nine states to work with the national Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the major SEL association in the country, on strengthening SEL and school-based multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) within their states.

CASEL’s collaborating states initiative and CCSSO welcomed Michigan into their Effective Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): SEL and Whole Child Development program. This program, funded by the Chad Zuckerberg Initiative, connects states with national experts to provide technical assistance, coaching, document review, and early access to resources and examples from CASEL and CCSSO.

Additionally, Michigan participates in the American Association of Superintendents and Administrators (AASA) SEL Cohort, of which Superintendent Rice serves as a co-chair. AASA is the national superintendents’ association and has worked closely with

CASEL to expand knowledge of and competence in SEL nationally.

A \$500,000 Michigan Health Endowment Fund (MHEF) grant will help MDE build out a community of practice over the next two years to support district-wide adoption of social and emotional learning embedded into classroom instruction and out-of-school time. The department will work with 20 districts—by competitive application—that have an interest in deep implementation of SEL within their school communities.

“We are building on the important efforts from the last several years and making them into a more cohesive initiative that will affect a broader range of interested schools, school districts, children, and staff,” Dr. Rice said.

In partnership with organizations, associations, and agencies across the state, MDE will lead this diverse network. The growing network includes a wide range of professionals, including school health coordinators, school counselors, school psychologists, and educators and administrators with experience in SEL and SEL’s connection with children’s mental health.

SVSU Board grants degrees to 550 students who persevered to complete their studies

The Saginaw Valley State University Board of Control granted graduate and undergraduate degrees during the Board's regular meeting Friday, Dec. 18. Around 550 students have completed degree requirements despite disruptions arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

SVSU held a series of virtual Commencement ceremonies Friday, Dec. 18.

"We are immensely proud of these graduates," said Donald Bachand, SVSU president. "They have shown remarkable determination to complete degree requirements, which are demanding even under normal circumstances."

In other action, the Board:

- Confirmed board members for previously authorized public school academies
- Approved faculty sabbaticals for four faculty members: Sara Keough,

geography; Natalia Knoblock, English; Erik Trump, political science; and Matthew Vannette, physics.

- Granted emeritus status to George Eastland, who retired after 51 years teaching chemistry.
- Granted emeritus status to Jane Girdham, who retired after 25 years teaching music.
- Granted emeritus status to Wayne Mackie, who retired after 42 years teaching finance.
- Granted emeritus status to James Sullivan, who retired after 33 years teaching English.
- Granted emeritus status to Laurie Reed, who retired after 26 years teaching physics.
- Granted emeritus status to Joe Vogl, who retired after 42 years of service to SVSU,

including 35 years as head golf coach.

- Reappointed Andrews Hooper Pavlik PLC as SVSU auditors for the 2020-21 fiscal year.
- Passed a resolution to restore President Bachand's salary for 2021; he had taken a 10% salary reduction in 2020 in response to the pandemic.



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Graduation rates have increased (2011-2019)

Source: MI School Data

- ▶ Arthur Hill High School from 82.5% to 90.17%
- ▶ Saginaw High School from 67.0% to 86.92%
- ▶ Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy (SASA) from 85.3% to 95.65%

Dropout rates have decreased (2011-2019)

Source: MI School Data

- ▶ Arthur Hill High School from 7.5% to 5.2%
- ▶ Saginaw High School from 19.55% to 8.46%
- ▶ Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy (SASA) from 14.75% to 2.17%

Students can apply Online today. Deadline to apply is **February 15, 2021.**

To learn more visit www.saginawpromise.org.

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About Saginaw ISD HE/EHS

Established in 1965, Head Start promotes school readiness for children, ages three to five, in low-income families by offering educational, nutritional, health, social and other services.

Head Start programs promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families.

Early Head Start, launched in 1995, provides support to low-income infants, toddlers, pregnant

women and their families.

EHS programs enhance children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; assist pregnant women to access comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care; support parents' efforts to fulfill their parental roles; and help parents move toward self-sufficiency.

Together Head Start and Early Head Start have served tens of millions of children and their families.

At Saginaw ISD Head Start our attentive staff is available Monday through Friday to answer all your questions and make every effort to ensure you are 100 percent satisfied.

Saginaw ISD Head Start
Claytor Administrative Building
3200 Perkins Street
Saginaw, MI 48601
Phone 989.752.2193
Fax 989.921.7146

Office Hours
Monday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Tuesday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Wednesday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Thursday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Friday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Saturday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Sunday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM

For additional information concerning Saginaw ISD Head Start visit: www.saginawheadstart.org

Source: www.saginawheadstart.org



Sabrina Beeman-Jackson

Saginaw ISD Head Start/Early Head Start Program Director

“Head Start graduates are more likely to graduate from high school and less likely to need special education, repeat a grade, or commit crimes in adolescence.”

Joe Baca, former Dem. Calif. Congrmn., Dist. 43.

“Our mission is to provide high quality services, developing school readiness and family empowerment for prenatal to age five children and families by working in partnership with parents and the community.”
-Saginaw ISD HE/EHS

BUSINESS & WEALTH

Saginaw cobbler still keeps his stride

By Mike Thompson

Can an old-time shoe repair shop survive and thrive within a 21st century economy? Yes, indeed, insists the longtime proprietor of Kim's Shoe Repair.

"You'd be surprised," Kim Stephens says, explaining why his cobbler skills remain in demand.

He says today's AARP generation grew up during a time when their parents did business with neighborhood butchers and bakers. And yes, shoe repairmen.

Meanwhile, aspiring young professionals don't want their wing tips or high-heeled pumps to appear as if they were purchased just yesterday, but they still desire a well-maintained image. And blue-collar laborers know that foot comfort and protection come first.

"Everyone has a favorite pair of shoes," Stephens says, "and regardless of whether the price was \$10 or \$200, they don't want to give them up."

At the same time, he realizes that society has moved beyond his childhood era, half a century ago, when he grew up hanging out with the "menfolk" at a downtown shoe shop. Therefore, more and more, he combines his repair handiwork with retail sales. He peddles brand-new boots, both for work and for outdoor recreation.

But even while Stephens modernizes, he remains traditional. He competes with today's new product/no repairs chain retailers, in Birch Run and elsewhere, by asking, "Who can guarantee this level of service after the sale?"

A sample of the old days

He works from a tiny former neighborhood store at 313 North Mason, three blocks from the historic Court Street Theater, and



courtesy photo

maintains a Norman Rockwell-type of setting. Seemingly disorganized shelves are packed with footwear awaiting repair that otherwise could be found in a basement box or in an upstairs attic, along with shoestrings, polishes and dyes.

"Not only can I repair just about any boot or shoe, I can build either from scratch," Stephens boasts. "I operate a full-service shop. If someone needs personal corrections such as lifts or orthopedics, or for problems like bunions, we can do that here. You won't find that at the big-box stores."

His services go beyond footwear. He can restore virtually anything made of leather, from purses to briefcases to baseball gloves.

Stephens, a 1974 Saginaw High School grad, was unhappy with his toolmaking job and unsure of his future when he took his leap into self-employment. His fiance and the future mother of their two sons, the former Sylvia

Smits, expressed understandable concern in looking forward to starting a family.

"During the early 1980s, it was described as the second depression," Stephens recalls. "Some of my friends and co-workers were moving to Texas, but we chose to stay at home. I said to Sylvia that by being my own boss, instead of being dependent on an employer, actually would make us more secure in the long term. She supported me, and she had her own work (accounting, and then school teacher aide) that provided health insurance benefits, or we never could have made it."

He describes customers who have moved from Saginaw, but who still bring their worn footwear on annual vacations back home.

"One guy is now in Arizona," Stephens says with a chuckle. "I tell him he's in 'boot heaven,' but still he sticks with me."

Renue Physical Therapy expands with new locations in Frankenmuth and Tawas

Renue Physical Therapy in January will open new outpatient physical therapy clinics in Frankenmuth and Tawas. With the opening of these clinics, Renue now serves Mid-Michigan with 16 outpatient physical therapy clinics.

Managing Partner and Frankenmuth native Mindy Bierlein, PT, DPT will oversee clinical services in Frankenmuth at 406 W. Genesee Street. Dr. Bierlein has also been managing partner at Renue Physical Therapy's Bridgeport clinic on Dixie Highway since 2013.

"It has always been my greatest passion to serve my community, and I am thrilled to open a new clinic in my hometown of Frankenmuth," said Bierlein. "We will offer

the same customized one-on-one care our patients have come to know and love from Renue in a new convenient location. Our goal is to make each patient feel like part of the Renue family and help them feel their absolute best."

Managing Partners Jesse Siwek, PT, DPT and Courtney Siwek, PT, DPT will oversee clinical services at the Tawas clinic at 540 W. Lake Street. The husband-and-wife team met at Nova Southeastern University's physical therapy program in Tampa, Florida, and returned to Michigan to start their careers in 2018.

"Courtney and I share a passion for helping people through the highest quality, evidence-based physical therapy services," said Dr.

Siwek. "We look forward to bringing our diverse experiences in physical therapy to my hometown of Tawas through Renue's patient-centered practice model. We look forward to providing fully customized care for the needs of each patient."

The Frankenmuth and Tawas clinics will accept new patients in early January, and also offer free 15-minute screenings without a physician referral. For more information or to request a screening, visit www.renuept.com/frankenmuth or www.renuept.com/tawas.



Taking a closer look at the small business ecosystem in Flint & Genesee



courtesy photo

The state of small business in Flint and Genesee County is going under the microscope in early 2021.

The Flint & Genesee Chamber's Economic Development unit is working the Ann Arbor-based consultant EntryPoint to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities confronting local businesses and entrepreneurs. The first order of business will be the distribution of a comprehensive survey to area businesses to establish a baseline on what the strengths, weakness, opportunities

and threats are in the marketplace.

"We'll be seeking input from about 600 businesses to get good cross-section of the local business community" said Tyler Rossmassler, the Chamber's director of economic development. "We want to better understand the unique challenges of businesses as well as the challenges that are unique to our community."

Input will be sought from all industry sectors, from "from inventors to retail shops to


manufacturers," Rossmassler said.

The Chamber is working in tandem with EntryPoint to leverage the firm's expertise in developing comprehensive research reports that deliver insights on strengths and challenges facing companies, communities, and the broader region. The research findings will be used to inform future initiatives and programs to strengthen Flint & Genesee's business community. Survey respondents will also get access to the data and other survey findings, said Rossmassler.

In the meantime, the Chamber is working with local business and economic development partners to ensure both a wide distribution of survey and a high return of participation by businesses. The partners include the Michigan Small Business Development Center, City of Flint Economic Development, Flint Township Economic Development, 100K Ideas and Fenton & Linden Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The survey will be distributed in mid-January.



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Three Rivers Corporation receives four ABC Greater Michigan Awards



courtesy photo

Three Rivers Corporation has had an amazing year, receiving three Gold Excellence in Construction Awards and a Platinum award in the Safety Training & Evaluation Process (STEP) from Associated Builders and Contractors of Greater Michigan at the Excellence in Construction 2020 Awards.

Shelterhouse in Midland, Michigan won the Gold Award for best GC/CM: New Construction - \$5-\$10 Million. This is a design/build of the 25,000 square foot building containing 15 suites, each designated for a single family. Each suite has its own living space and kitchen area. Two suites were designed specifically to be wheelchair-accessible.

The H Hotel Courtyard located in Midland, Michigan won the Gold Award for the best GC/CM: Addition/Renovation - \$1-\$5 Million. This project consists of removal, reconfigurations, and replacements of hardscape and landscape within the Courtyard. The Courtyard is a green roof of the parking garage located below. New improvements included: reconfigured planters, rearranged drainage with a central trench

drain, reworking geofoam to new grades, foundations for a 60'x30' tent canopy, installing snow melt system throughout, new porcelain pavers (two different tiles laid in an intricate pattern), lighting & power, adding a fireplace, constructing a cabana with a specialized wood deck surface, and new plantings with drip irrigation.

The Mid Michigan College – Outdoor Learning Center in Harrison, Michigan won the Gold Award for the best GC/CM: New Construction – Under \$1 Million. This project was done to increase usage and enjoyment of the forested acreage. The 1,600 square foot center will also serve as a trailhead for community use of the biking/hiking trails. The Center features a flexible space layout so that it can be used as education or recreational/event venue. There is an additional 1,400 square feet of outdoor space with 600 square feet covered.

“Construction gives physical form to our communities in which we live and work, and it is an honor to recognize Three Rivers for their accomplishments across Michigan, and to have the company as a long-time

ABC member and exemplary leader in the construction industry,” said Angela M. Latino, president of ABC of Greater Michigan.

The Safety Training and Evaluation Process (STEP) Award recognizes efforts of ABC members who strive to achieve effective safety practices within their companies; it is an organized approach for analyzing and developing safety and loss prevention programs. ABC provides contractors with tools to objectively evaluate their safety programs, policies, procedures and training. Three Rivers is honored to have won this award each year for over the past decade.

“I am grateful for the tremendous amount of safely completed work our team performed over the past year,” said Jon Lynch, President of Three Rivers Corporation. “We have finished some unique projects across the state while maintaining our high safety standards. We couldn’t have won these awards without our wonderful customers, our committed employees, and our dedicated partner suppliers and subcontractors.”

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FUNDRAISING GOOD TIMES

2020 Windfall gifts: words of caution!

2020 wasn't all bad. The "good" includes unusual – and large – investments by the philanthropic community Black-led nonprofits and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). These organizations have been the beneficiary of gifts and investments on a scale most have never seen before. An understanding of current and historical inequitable giving and investment has spurred much of this. The cry "Black lives matter" is being heard by philanthropy – and corporations – who engaged in soul-searching and grantmaking as they listened and responded. And COVID-19 has deepened disparities, bringing pain and suffering in disproportionate ways to Black and Brown communities. If there has ever been a time to wake up to the impact of conscious and unconscious racism, it has been 2020.



courtesy photo

We saw Reed Hastings, the CEO of Netflix, and his wife Patty Quillin give \$40 million gifts to Spelman College, Morehouse College, and the United Negro College Fund. That's \$40 million each; \$120 million in one round of giving. Not to be outdone, the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis created a \$40

million beneficial endowment for Memphis' only HBCU – LeMoyne-Owen College. Ford Foundation issued a \$1 billion Social Bond as "an innovative solution that achieved both objectives of increasing resources for grants and not taking capital out of the endowment at a critical time of market volatility." This means Ford Foundation can respond to the devastation caused by COVID-19 with double their annual grantmaking for 2020 and 2021. Black foundation executives issued a call to action to their peers on how to take action against anti-Black racism. Michael Bloomberg gave \$100 million to medical schools at four HBCUs. MacKenzie Scott gave \$4,158,500,000 in gifts to 384 organizations. And, as we write Congress passed economic relief legislation including forgiveness of \$1.3 billion in institutional debt at HBCUs. And this is just a sampling!

There has never been a year like this. For many leaders this is the first time they haven't had to make increasingly difficult decisions about how to do more with less. There appears

to be an understanding of the role that Black-led organizations and institutions play. At the same time, we've talked with philanthropists, fundraisers, and leaders who are grateful, and also cautious. These are people who have "been around the block" and wizened by the school of life. We share some of their comments with you for your consideration.

"How long will the window stay open?" "Will people think this round of giving is all we need?" "Will this be a case of 'one and done.?''" "Does a \$40 million gift to an HBCU mean the institution's needs are now met?" They are grateful for the investment, and simultaneously concerned that organizations and institutions won't build the capacity and infrastructure they need to sustain for decades to come. They are urging leaders to use this moment in time to build long-term relationships. We'll share suggestions in part two.

In part two we share suggestions for sustaining investment.



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SPORTS

MHSAA gives update on Fall & Winter sports



mhsaa.com

The MHSAA released the following updated regarding the completion of Fall Sports and start of Winter Sports:

Completion of Fall Sports

MDHHS created a rapid testing pilot program for the three remaining fall tournaments to finish in early to mid-January. Details on this program were first shared with the MHSAA and fall schools on Dec. 22 which has created a number of questions and logistical issues. This is a new MDHHS program with details being created and shared daily with the MHSAA, and this has created changes to tournament dates that were shared with schools last Friday. The MHSAA are continuing to work through the details, questions and issues with the involved fall schools and will share finalized plans/dates soon.

Winter Sports Planning

Under current MDHHS emergency orders, winter practices may begin on Jan. 16. The first day of competition is Friday, Jan. 22 for basketball, bowling, ice hockey and boys swimming & diving. In competitive cheer, gymnastics and wrestling, the first day of competition is Monday, Jan. 25. Know that if current orders are amended that allow practice activity prior to Jan. 16, first days of practice and first days of competition would

be moved up accordingly. If current orders further delay activity beyond Jan. 16, the MHSAA staff and Representative Council will devise updated plans that address both winter and spring sports. This flexible planning has been required of the MHSAA since June, and they will continue to advocate for all kids in all seasons with their continued goal of three seasons played to completion. Also, skiing is able to proceed now.

The season limits of competition remain unchanged for all winter sports, and the weekly limits of competition also remain unchanged in all sports except for these two modifications for 20-21 in ice hockey and wrestling. In ice hockey, teams may play two games on one non-school day a maximum of two times during the season. When the two games/one day option is used, ice hockey teams could play 4 games (on three dates) in those two weeks. For high school wrestling, teams and individuals are allowed two days of competition in a week. Remember that all regular season wrestling competition is limited to 4 teams at a site (3 matches per student per day of competition). For middle school wrestling, one day of competition in a week is allowed. Again, all regular season wrestling competition is limited to 4 teams at a site (3 matches per student per day of competition). Schools and/or leagues may elect to play fewer games or use fewer days of competitions.

The following winter tournament dates are below for your scheduling purposes which assumes a Jan. 16 (or earlier) start to winter seasons. Further delays beyond Jan. 16 would require changes to the dates below along with possible modifications to spring dates.

Boys and Girls Basketball

Girls Districts- March 8, 10 and 12; Boys Districts- March 9, 11 and 13
Girls Regionals- March 16 and 18; Boys Regionals on March 17 and 19
Girls QF, Semifinals and Finals- March 22 (QF), March 24 (Semifinals- 2 Sites) and March 26 (Finals)
Boys QF, Semifinals and Finals- March 23 (QF), March 25 (Semifinals- 2 Sites) and March 27 (Finals)

Bowling

Finals- March 26-27
Regionals- March 19-20

Competitive Cheer

Finals- March 19-20
Regionals- March 13
Districts- March 5-6

Gymnastics

Finals- March 26-27
Regionals- March 20

Ice Hockey

Finals- March 25-27
Regionals- March 15-20

Boys Swimming & Diving

Finals- March 26-27
Dive Regionals- March 18
UP Swim & Dive Finals- Feb. 27

Wrestling

Individual Finals- March 26-27
Team Finals- March 19-20
Regional Week- March 8
District Week- March 1

Saginaw Spirit wait as start of 2020-21 OHL season is delayed

2020-21 OHL REGULAR SEASON
DELAYED

courtesy photo

The following statement was released from OHL Commissioner David Branch:

Toronto, Ont. – After meeting with our Board of Governors and General Managers, the OHL has made the decision to delay the start of the 2020-21 season. Training camps

had been scheduled to begin in mid-January, many players were set to report to their teams in early January, and games were scheduled to commence on February 4, 2021.

This decision follows Premier Ford's announcement of a province-wide shutdown

in Ontario commencing on December 26, 2020. The League will continue to consult and work closely with Governments and health authorities to determine potential start dates in the new year.

The safety of all of our stakeholders and communities is our priority and we are committed to starting the 2020-21 season when it is safe to do so. We know that this is difficult news for many of our players, fans, billets, parents, staff and teams. However, the restrictions both provincially in Ontario as well as nationally with regards to cross-border travel have informed our decision.

On behalf of the OHL, we wish everyone a safe and healthy holiday season and we look forward to dropping the puck when we safely start the 2020-21 season.

Calvin Johnson, Chauncey Billups headline 2020 Michigan Sports Hall of Fame inductees

The Michigan Sports Hall of Fame announced its inductees for the class of 2020, headlined by Calvin Johnson and Chauncey Billups.

The inductees were selected by a statewide task force which includes current and former journalists, former sports executives and a public online vote. It was then approved by the Hall of Fame's Board of Directors.

Professional

Chauncey Billups – Detroit Pistons championship point guard who won the MVP in the 2004 NBA Finals

Calvin Johnson, Jr. – Six-time Pro Bowl wide receiver for the Detroit Lions

Amateur

Shane Battier – Two-time NBA champion who played at Detroit Country Day and won Michigan's "Mr. Basketball" before going to Duke.

Jordyn Wieber – Olympic Gold Medalist with

2012 U.S. Women's Gymnastics Team from DeWitt.

Coach

Margo Jonker – Central Michigan University softball coach from 1980-2019 who with 10 conference tournament titles

Pete Schmidt – Record-setting championship football coach at Albion College and Okemos High School

Media

Tom Kowalski – Longtime Detroit Lions writer for the Oakland Press and Booth Newspapers

Mary Schroeder – Pioneering Detroit Free Press sports photographer who captured iconic images of memorable championship moments

Contributor

Ralph Wilson, Jr. – From Detroit, he founded the Buffalo Bills in the AFL and owned the

team for his life. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2009.



courtesy photo

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Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Thermo Fisher Scientific partner to provide virtual STEM education programming for youth globally

courtesy photo

WALTHAM, Mass. - Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Thermo Fisher Scientific, the world leader in serving science, today announced a partnership to make virtual STEM education programming available to millions of young people around the world.

Thermo Fisher is providing financial support and content expertise for the "DIY STEM" curriculum, now available through MyFuture, Boys & Girls Clubs of America's online program that allows members a safe, fun digital platform to showcase their work and earn recognition in the form of stars, badges and master badges. Unique offerings include interactive videos of scientists working in real labs, games and other content specially developed by Thermo Fisher scientists.

"We are excited to support Boys & Girls Clubs of America's effort to build excitement and life-long interest in science, and given the COVID-19 restrictions on many in-person programs, it's an important time to be launching this type of online resource," said Paul Parker, Senior Vice President of Thermo Fisher Scientific.

MyFuture is an online space where young people ages 9-12 can interact with each other – free from the risk of cyberbullying – and share their accomplishments locally and beyond. Members engage in facilitated and self-directed activities with online support from Club staff, teaching digital skills and STEM literacy that prepares them for future classwork and eventually, careers.

"MyFuture is a great way for kids and teens to experience digital learning, make new friends safely and build a positive self-image through online achievement," said Jim Clark, President and CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of America. "Thanks to Thermo Fisher, we're now able to expand our popular STEM programming so that our local Clubs can introduce future scientists to an exciting and rewarding career path or simply spark interest in science that lasts a lifetime."

For more information about the program, see <https://www.bgca.org/programs/my-future>.



On the Job: Quanhyia Wade



courtesy photo

Flushing High School Graduate Quanhyia Wade is in her first year as a nursing student at Mott Community College. But as she works on schooling, Wade is also working at Berston Field House through the Chosen Few Arts Council as an aide – a job that developed out of a position she took through Summer Youth Initiative last summer.

“About a month ago, my supervisor at Berston called me and asked if I was available to work the day school program,” says Wade. “I was looking for employment, so I said yes. I just needed to reschedule some of my courses at college.”

Now, Wade works with students during the day, helping with breakfast, directing students in between programs and making sure they follow social distancing and mask guidelines.

“I am kind of like the big sister helping them keep on top of things,” says Wade. “I come up with art projects for kids and help with their schoolwork – we work closely with any kids that need help.”

Wade, who also worked at the Food Bank

of Eastern Michigan and Asbury Methodist Church through SYI, credits her time at TeenQuest for her success.

What did you learn through TeenQuest/SYI that you use in your current position?

Teamwork for sure – learning how to talk to my coworkers. Also, I learned to not be afraid to ask questions when I don’t know something.

What skills did you use from TeenQuest that helped you interview for your position?

In TeenQuest, they told us that if we have questions during an interview, to make sure we ask them. My interview was over the phone and the first question that came to me was to ask what measures they had in place due to the pandemic. They worked with me, answered my questions and made me feel more secure.

What advice would you offer current TeenQuest students?

Don’t be afraid to talk to your peers. They

can give you some of the best advice. Don’t be afraid to talk to your boss when you don’t understand something. And don’t be afraid to try new things. New opportunities are out there.

What are your plans for the future?

When I graduated from high school, I had plans to go to Saginaw Valley State University. However, I got a scholarship to Mott that paid for my first two years. So, my plan is to complete my two years at Mott and then transfer to Saginaw to finish my degree.

What has been your proudest moment since graduating TeenQuest?

When I worked through SYI, I saved all the money I made during the summer. My senior year, I had saved enough to buy my first car with my own money.

TeenQuest and Summer Youth Initiative are made possible through the generous support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.



PICS OF THE WEEK

Students at Youth Development Corp - YouthBuild put into place 33 new raised wooden garden boxes at the Houghton Jones Neighborhood Association community garden located at 1608 Tuscola street. These new and improved raised boxes will accelerate their ability to produce and harvest vegetables and fruit from our gardens.



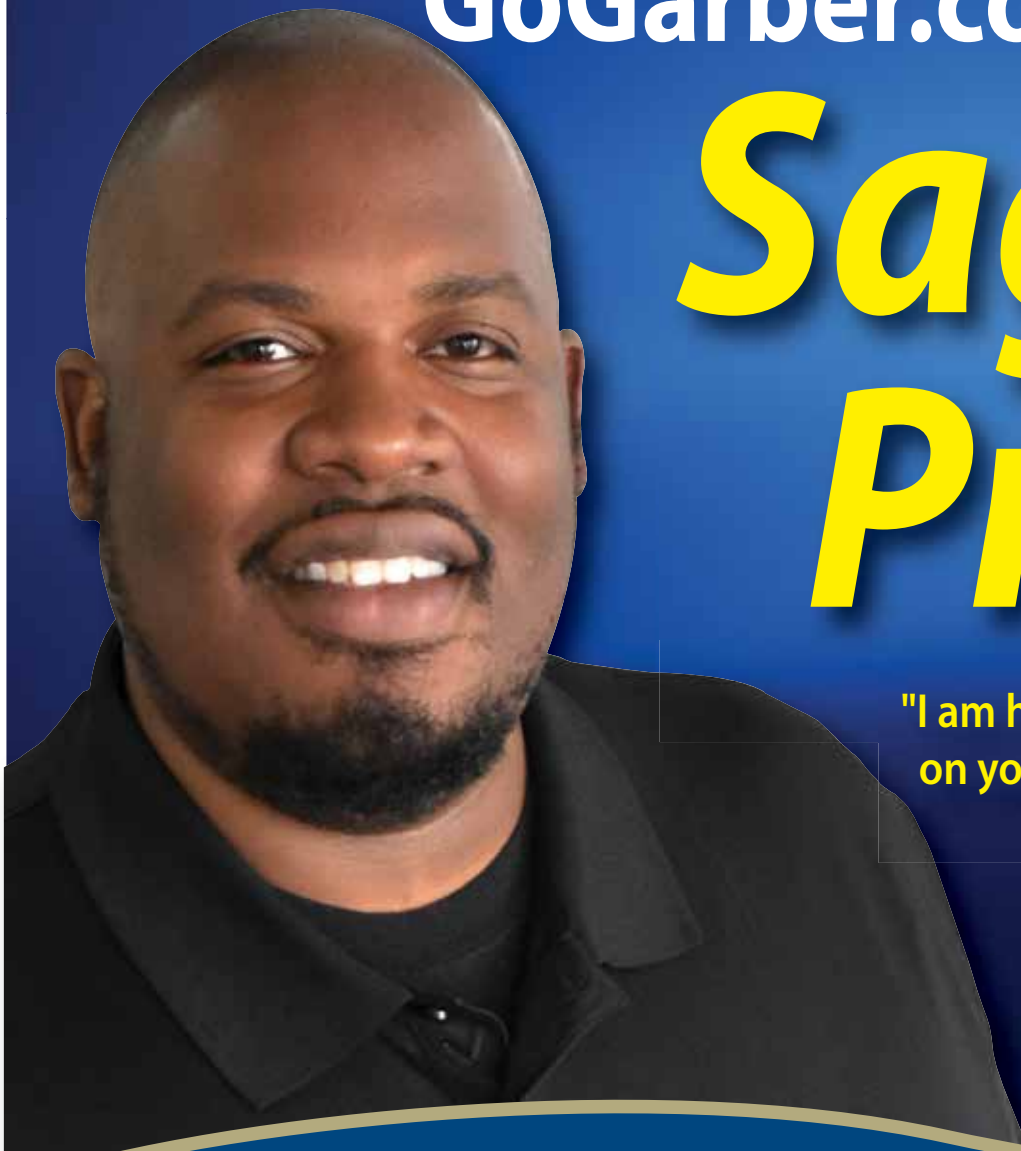
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Brittany Saunders is ready to pay it forward. The Chicago native enrolled at SVSU with ambitions to pursue a teaching career. Brittany was encouraged and invigorated by other passionate educators who worked closely with her to ensure she would accomplish her goals. And she is. Even before she was set to graduate, Brittany could boast a résumé with a paid internship in a school district along with K-12 classroom experience. **Now she can't wait to begin a professional career, inspiring students with the same kind of one-on-one attention she received from her professors at SVSU.**



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