

# 269

## MAGAZINE™

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH  
*Summertime in Michigan is...*

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- ...fireflies, fresh tomatoes, and family.
- ...baseball, baseball, and more baseball (or softball!)
- ...hunting for new parks to explore and giggling kids while they devour endless s'mores.
- ...eating ice cream sandwiches, kayaking on Lake Michigan, and riding the camels at the John Ball Zoo!
- ...a barbecue with friends and family on the lake.

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### CORRECTIONS

In the May/June edition of 269 MAGAZINE:

'The Jump from Startup to Growth Stage' featured an incorrect spelling for Fredrick Molnar on page 14.

'Where the Temperature is Just Right' featured an incorrect spelling for Andris Staltmanis on page 30.



Our hope is that the readers of 269 MAGAZINE will become active participants in the world around them and join our mission to make Southwest Michigan the place to make a home, go to work, and bring dreams to reality.

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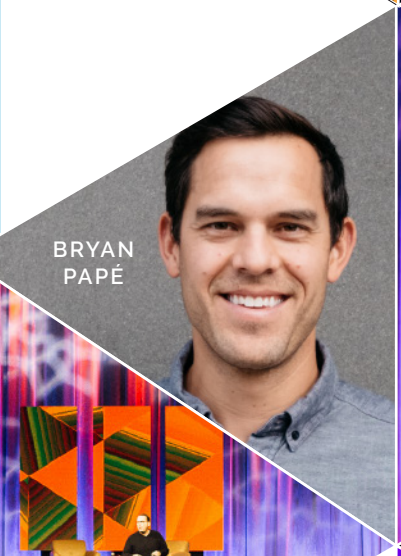
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# Thrive



BY HEATHER BAKER  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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## Everyone's a Storyteller

HOW YOUR PERSONAL STORIES CAN HELP CHART SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN'S FUTURE COURSE

**H**YGGE. IT'S A DANISH AND NORWEGIAN WORD THAT IMPLIES A FEELING OF COZINESS AND COMFORT WHEN YOU ARE IN A SPECIAL PLACE—whether you are at home or out, alone or with friends. Hygge describes a place where you feel drawn to be.

Places are magnets. For you, that place can be a house, neighborhood, city, state, or country. It's where you want to go for Thanksgiving dinner or travel. If a place does its job right, it beckons you like a lighthouse to a boat gliding over Lake Michigan on a foggy night.

And it's not just that exact place—it's that place's connection to other places that can be quickly visited or taken advantage of. That's why places must come together to share their collective attributes. Geography can't do it alone. The people who live in those places most lead the charge by building physical and virtual bridges—structures and partnerships. During a time when most places in the U.S. are experiencing virtual unemployment (yes, that's when the jobless rate in an area dips below 3.5 percent), the quest to attract new residents is a heated one.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, cities must create their own global brand to compete against other population centers. With more than 80 percent of the world's population projected to live in cities by 2080, as cited by the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program, cities “need to position themselves as attractive places for knowledge workers, institutions, cultural and sporting events, and even film shoots.”

Long ago, a place's draw was its climate and access to natural resources and trade markets. Not so today. Technology blurs geographical lines and the need to mine for iron ore. Millennials, generation Xers and baby boomers alike strap on their hiking boots every chance they get to explore the great outdoors—wherever it may be.

A competitive global brand is not a logo, but rather a campaign with a distinct message. Think Nashville as the “Music City,” “People Make Glasgow, or your connection that technology is associated with Silicon Valley.

Today, places that are doing well didn't start off as cool and trendy—places like Tulsa, Oklahoma, or Portland, Oregon. These are places that embrace talent and education, innovation and technology, and inclusivity and acceptance of people from differing backgrounds and with multiple viewpoints. These places are authentic. They differentiate themselves from other places but are realistic about who they are.

These places want more for their residents and themselves. They don't protect their little piece of the pie. They willingly join with neighboring geographies for the greater good. They make

**A competitive global brand is not a logo, but rather a campaign with a distinct message. Think Nashville as the ‘Music City,’ ‘People Make Glasgow,’ or your connection that technology is associated with Silicon Valley.**





**Start thinking about your future, Southwest Michigan. Do you want to be more than we are today? Do we want to be a place that, in 2080, is on the list of the world's most desired places?**

investments in highways, parks, schools, event centers, and even minor league baseball stadiums. Constituents, including municipalities, foundations, corporations, and taxpayers, enthusiastically open their pocketbooks to chip in. These places want to be more than what they are today. They have aspirations. Start thinking about your future, Southwest Michigan. Do you want to be more than we are today? Do we want to be a place

that, in 2080, is on the list of the world's most desired places? If so, then it's time we put aside our boundaries, and invest in our key institutions, attractions, infrastructure, education, arts, culture, entertainment, and companies. It's not about who gets what. When companies make job creation announcements, such as ConcertoHealth, GT Independence, and Zoetis, which are celebrated in this issue on page 47, delivering 50 or more jobs to one locale, the benefits fan out to other locations when new residents locate, shop, or visit a restaurant.

You might be reading this wondering, "How can I help?" You can! Tell our region's story to your friends, relatives, and people you

meet who do not live here. Tell them about your days walking the campus of Western Michigan University. Mention your weekend day trip to South Haven. Or go into detail about the great meal you had last night at The Union in downtown Kalamazoo. Put Southwest Michigan's good reputation and identity on the line so our region is in the game to attract outside talent and capital. Our future depends on it.

**READ ON,**

*Heather*

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# What regional collaborations have you seen deliver results first-hand?

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**REBECCA FLEURY**

CITY MANAGER  
CITY OF BATTLE CREEK

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In working in these two counties, we've been able to accelerate and enhance our business. Partners cooperating with our company include St. Joseph and Kalamazoo counties, along with their respective Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the Michigan Land Bank, and the municipalities where our acquisitions occurred.

In our collaborations, the available brownfield funding has helped relieve some of the burdens of acquiring properties, allowing us to make significant investments of people, time, and capital into them. With respect to the communities, the acquisitions bring jobs and, by improving the property, enhance the value of that community. They bring tax base, they bring jobs, and they also bring local monies to the grocery stores, gas stations, and restaurants of those communities.

## IN MARCH, THE GOVERNOR SIGNED CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS AT THE WALNUT & PARK CAFÉ, A PROJECT OF THE KALAMAZOO PROBATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (KPEP) THAT EMPLOYS PROBATIONERS AND PAROLEES.

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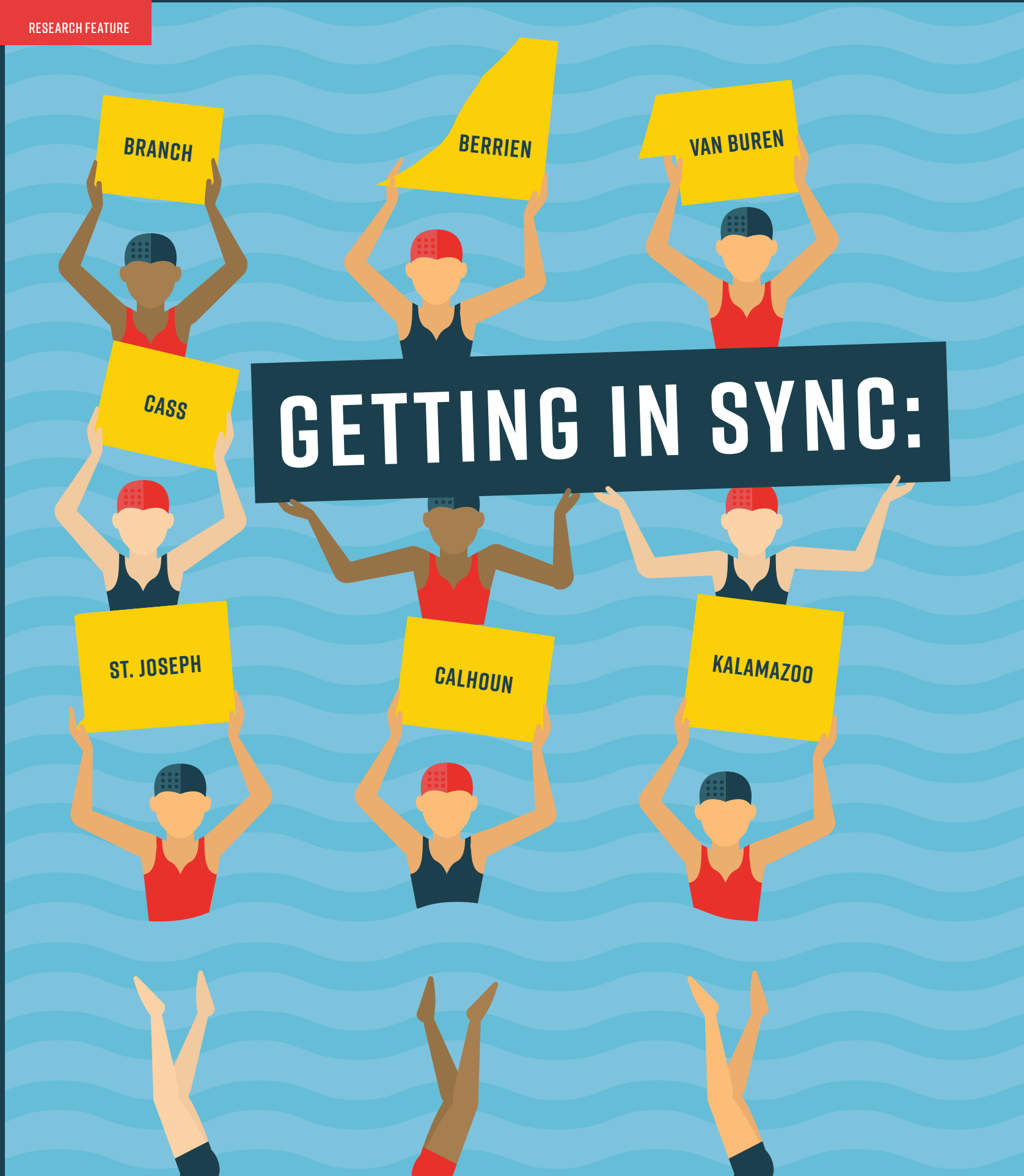
KPEP is delivering results, with more than 700 jobs obtained this year and over 1,700 successful graduates. Roughly 90 percent of our prisoners will return to our communities, making the work of organizations such as KPEP so critically important.

## REGIONAL PARTNERS HAVE JOINED TO SECURE PREFERRED SITE STATUS FOR A THIRD CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES INTERCEPTOR SITE AT PROPERTY BORDERING CALHOUN AND KALAMAZOO COUNTIES.

Located at the Fort Custer Training Center in Battle Creek, it is one of three sites under consideration for the missile defense installation.

Choosing Battle Creek for this project would create nearly a billion dollars in economic impact for Southwest Michigan, a great boon in the form of jobs, and the potential to attract additional aerospace and defense manufacturers. Missile defense also leverages Battle Creek's W.K. Kellogg Airport—home to outstanding business and educational institutions—with the hope of attracting more, while showcasing everything we have to offer in Battle Creek.







## MICHIGAN'S REGIONAL PROSPERITY INITIATIVE

**O**n Feb. 2, 2017, two dozen members of Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder's 21st Century Economy Commission descended on Kalamazoo to participate in a "listening session," one of several held around the state.

Lou Glazer, president of Michigan Future Inc., a think tank based in Ann Arbor, was a legislative appointee to the commission. One by one, business leaders and industrialists from Southwest Michigan regaled the commission with ideas on how to improve the region's economy—mostly in the form of complaints, Glazer recalls: They criticized taxes and regulations. They pleaded for investments in infrastructure. They bemoaned a shortage of skilled trade workers. But above the less-government-is-more din, Glazer heard a new refrain rising.

"The most interesting comment I heard was the business community basically saying we need to do away with townships," Glazer recalled. "The argument is, there's this crazy quilt of regulations, and we'd be much better off with fewer government units. To some degree, that's consistent with the notion that all economies are regional."

Around the country, the concept of regional economies—along with regional governance, consolidation of government services, reduction of duplicative services, and other collaborative initiatives—is taking hold.

In Michigan, the 21st Century Economy Commission follows Gov. Snyder's 2014 Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI), in which the state identified 14 economic regions and subregions around the state for the purpose of service delivery boundaries and the allocation of grants.

"Gov. Snyder's Regional Prosperity Initiative was designed to catalyze Michigan's efforts to think globally and act locally by incentivizing actions according to regional plans, to more effectively use and leverage resources," said a spokeswoman for the governor. "Since the initiative was established, regional organizations, public and private, are now communicating, setting goals, mapping assets, and beginning the planning process."

According to Glazer, regional economies work because they are rooted in a shared labor pool, and companies located within a region are not competitors but players on the same regional economic team.

**Gov. Rick Snyder's 2014 Regional Prosperity Initiative seeks to provide the following tangible benefits for regions:**

- Reduce overlapping responsibilities and competing visions of planning and service delivery entities within regions.
- Provide a platform for collaboration among all parties to achieve better service to shared customers.
- Bring private sector leaders together with public and nonprofit leaders to design a system of service that serves all clients, with an emphasis on job creators and job seekers. The minimum sectors called for are adult education, workforce development,

economic development, transportation, and higher education organizations.

- Does not provide a "one size fits all" solution; instead, empowers local leaders within a region to determine and affect the factors that drive economic prosperity in their region.
- Allows the state of Michigan to invest in its regions in a cost-effective way that will both equip Michigan to be globally competitive for the attraction and retention of talent and give

the state an efficient and responsible avenue to deliver state services.

- Allows regions to demonstrate the ability to better leverage federal resources that are responsive to regional priorities.
- Provides a mechanism to ensure regional transparency and accountability.
- Provides a mechanism to measure regional progress and success.

*Source: Gov. Rick Snyder's office*



## CASE STUDY: THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE ECONOMIC REGION

### KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Missouri has 10 economic regions as defined by the state's Department of Economic Development. Kansas City, split by the Kansas-Missouri state line, has emerged as a leading economic region and serves as a prime example of how economic regions often do not fit geographic or political lines on a map.

Steve Johnson has led regional economic development efforts in St. Louis and Kansas City over the past 30-plus years, and today serves as CEO of an outfit called Missouri Partnership, a public-private economic development partnership that leads business recruitment in Missouri. Johnson said the keys to effective regional economies distill down to measurable statistics such as employment and transit patterns, as well as softer qualities such as teamwork.

"I've worked in regions with maybe 50,000 to 100,000 people, and some with 300,000 to 500,000, and some with two to three million," Johnson said. "Some are textbook economic regions, some are not. One thing I know is there have to be some intersecting lines that extend across geographic boundaries. There's got to be people working. So much comes down to laborsheds. You start to identify commuting patterns, you understand where people are coming from and going to—that can be a pretty good proxy for how a regional economy functions."

Then, too, intangible commodities contribute to a region's economic success.

Foremost, "There's got to be a strong level of trust among the different regional economic development groups," Johnson said. He singled out the Kansas City Area Development Council (KCADC) as an exemplary regional organization. "If we're working with a client who gives us certain parameters, and if they're interested in Kansas City, we'll plug them in. KCADC will take the parameters the client gives them and show them everything for their business solution. It can't be a political solution. You can't say, 'This is what the client told me, but I'm going to pigeonhole them over here.' If you do that, you lose credibility. There has to be that level of trust (that) either we as the Partnership or KCADC is going to give them every opportunity that legitimately is a fit. I know through and through that if we take a project to KCADC, they will never try to take that project to the state of Kansas. I know these people. I trust them. Clients are pretty smart. The state line in Kansas City is just a road. Growing the regional economy starts with trust, confidence, and professionalism."

### REGIONALISM IN MINNESOTA

Michigan Future Inc. has dived deeply into the concept of regional economies. Glazer cited Indianapolis, Louisville, Portland, and Toronto as examples of markets with strong regional leadership and governance. Perhaps the most successful examples of regional collaboration in the nation, certainly in the Midwest, are happening in Minnesota.

Glazer's Michigan Future issued a report in 2014 based on a study comparing the economies of Michigan and Minnesota. The report, "State Policies Matter: How Minnesota's Tax, Spending and Social Policies Help It Achieve the Best Economy among Great Lakes States," compares and contrasts Michigan and Minnesota in economic strategies, tax structure, business climate, and other metrics. One section of the report specifically examines regionalism in the two states.

"Years ago, Minnesota created a strong regional government," Glazer said. "Each region has taxing power and runs a variety of critical regional services—including mass transit but certainly not exclusively. They have regional tax base sharing. And they've effectively ended local governments fighting over the same company, because there's no benefit to it."

**Perhaps the most successful examples of regional collaboration in the nation, certainly in the Midwest, are happening in Minnesota.**

Minneapolis-St. Paul is one of 10 economic development regions in Minnesota. Led by several private and public organizations, Minneapolis-St. Paul continues to thrive and stands out as an economic success story in the Midwest, and perhaps the nation.

### SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN PROSPERITY REGION COUNTIES:

BERRIEN  
BRANCH  
CALHOUN  
CASS  
KALAMAZOO  
ST. JOSEPH  
VAN BUREN



Here's one example of how regional governance works in Minnesota: In 1967, the Minnesota legislature created a body called the Metropolitan Council as the regional planning agency serving the seven-county Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area. In 1994, the Metropolitan Council absorbed the region's waste treatment and transit operations—its two largest functions today—in addition to

Section 8 federal housing oversight.

"When the legislature assigned additional responsibilities to us in the early 1990s, we were able to reach an economy of scale

and deliver value to businesses and households in the region," said Jon Commers, one of 17 members of the Metropolitan Council. "As a region, we're far more efficient than the way we used to do it. Before, using just local wastewater treatment systems, we were reaching limits for how you could do intake

and outflow of wastewater when all the local systems were operating next to each other. It was becoming untenable and leading to groundwater pollution. We look at other providers nationally, and we come out quite well, processing 250 million gallons of wastewater per day.”

#### GOVERNMENT-INDUSTRY EFFICIENCY IN MISSOURI

Another place where collaboration is making strides is Missouri. On June 22, the state’s new director of natural resources, Carol S. Comer, met in St. Louis with about 40 members of the state’s industrial, commercial, and economic sectors. The agenda covered ways the Missouri Department of Natural Resources

(DNR) can work better with corporate and industrial sectors to facilitate economic growth and fulfill the department’s mission to protect natural resources.

“To me, it’s common sense. Most people want to comply with their environmental obligations. We all want clean air, clean land, and clean water,” Comer said in an interview. “Ultimately, the agency can be the hammer, or it can be the helper. I believe we achieve much better—and faster—results as the helper.

“In the past, DNR has been perceived as

a ‘gotcha’ agency, the agency of ‘no,’ or an agency that made doing business in the state of Missouri difficult,” Comer continued. “But DNR is on the front lines of job creation. So, instead of thinking of ourselves as the agency that enforces environmental laws, we view our role as the agency that helps companies meet their environmental obligations. We’re here to help make doing business in the state of Missouri easier.

“The agency does not have to be anti-business to be pro-environment. Missouri needs both a

## CASE STUDY: THE MARRIAGE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES AND PRIVATIZATION IN NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina’s economic growth strategy emphasizes moving traditional government functions into the private sector—or at least into a public-private partnership, according to Christopher Chung, CEO of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.

“North Carolina decided to move away from totally government functions toward privatization with more than just marketing the state for new businesses,” Chung said. “It also decided to move the core economic development functions—tourism, international trade, export assistance, support of existing employers and start-ups—all of those functions were migrated out of the North Carolina Department of Commerce.”

According to Chung, 17 states in the country now have some form of privatization. “States have accomplished this in multiple ways,” he said. For example, “North Carolina took a more comprehensive approach than Missouri did. Whatever the agency in charge, the goals are still fundamentally the same—they are trying to increase the wealth of the communities they serve. Whether you’re a city, a county, a region, or a state, your goal is to drive new economic wealth in those areas, to raise the overall wealth of that community.”

And by wealth, Chung means new wealth, not simply redistributing prosperity from one corner of a region to another.

“If you’re just shifting money, you’re not raising that wealth. That doesn’t do anything. But if you’re able to

attract a new employer or help companies grow their sales, or if you get tourism or film productions, those are all ways new money finds its way into the community.”

Chung described two models adopted by various regions:

1. Wholesale privatization. “You take the entire agency and privatize it,” Chung said. “Rather than a secretary of commerce or a political appointee, now you have a board that hires a CEO that runs the entire agency.” He cited Indiana, Michigan, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Iowa. “These are all definite examples of what you’d call wholesale privatization. Each of these new entities is able to raise funds from the private sector. They control the strategy for promoting the state to recruit companies, and they also have control over the incentives toolbox used to recruit companies.”

2. Partial or hybrid privatization. “You still have a state commerce or economic development department, but you have a clear bifurcation.” Examples of this method include North Carolina, Missouri, New Mexico, Utah, and Virginia. “That’s basically where you have this new nonprofit, and they have a contract from the state to provide the

functions that used to be performed by a state agency. The state provides most of the revenue, but the private agency is able to raise money from real estate, banks, railroads, and other sources willing to subsidize the nonprofit, knowing it’s going to be beneficial to them down the road.”

**According to Chung, 17 states in the country now have some form of privatization.**

The shift to privatized regional economic development is relatively new. “It’s important to remember that of the 17 states with privatization efforts under way, more than half have come into being in the past decade,” Chung said. “This is still relatively new at a state level, rather than county. It’s an economic development corporation, acting with the authority of a county, but funded with private dollars. It’s more common at a local level. At the state level, marrying private and public resources we’ve only started to see in the last decade.”

# they made it possible

After working in the health-care industry for many years, Melanie Norman decided it was time for a change. She and husband Jeff worked with Arbor Financial to purchase Great Lakes Pondscapes last July, and they've been creating tranquility for customers ever since.

**Melanie Norman**

Co-Owner  
Great Lakes Pondscapes

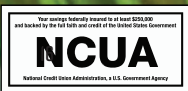
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healthy environment AND a healthy economy to thrive,” Comer said. “You can’t have a healthy economy without a healthy environment, and you won’t have a healthy environment without a healthy economy.”

Steve Johnson, CEO of Missouri Partnership, a public-private economic development partnership that leads business recruitment in the state, attended Comer’s stakeholder meeting.

“She talked about trying to shift the focus from enforcement to a compliance assistance mentality,” Johnson said. “The end result we want is compliance. We’re not going soft, but we can get there faster by helping companies comply rather than be the hammer. Holy moly, what a simple but brilliant notion! I was sitting there with a smile on my face.”

According to Comer, Missouri ranks 25th in *Forbes*’s most recent ranking of Best States for Business. “Our aspiration is be in the top 10,” she said. “It’s a lofty goal that requires cooperation and collaboration with all of our business and environmental partners, but I believe we can achieve it.”

#### COLLABORATION IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

Southwest Michigan has been designated one of the state’s 14 prosperity zones. The region includes seven counties—Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Branch—and regional collaboration is beginning to gain traction.

“This day and age, the more we can harness diverse and differing yet complementary points of view, the better the result,” said Bill Parfet, chairman and CEO of Northwood Group and chairman of Southwest Michigan First, which guides economic development for the Southwest Michigan Prosperity Region. “In the arena of economic development, we used to

**You can’t have a healthy economy without a healthy environment, and you won’t have a healthy environment without a healthy economy.**

worry about other counties stealing our jobs. But now we realize that a job two counties away still has benefits for your county. Everybody should be working together to promote jobs and all the services that go with good-paying jobs.”

The regional initiative has gained ground in public policy initiatives as well.

“We’ve agreed on our top priorities,” Parfet said. For example, regional leaders have agreed to push for common projects, such as improvements to the I-94 corridor. “By combining our wish list, we have a much better chance of getting significant funding for legitimate projects that have widely agreed-upon need.”

A regional approach is catching hold in the private sector as well, Parfet said. He singled out the Advanced Manufacturing Career Consortium, an alliance of 26 companies in Southwest Michigan that combine resources to develop a deeper talent pool for the entire region.

“What it did more than anything was to develop and cement relationships with KRESA and KVCC,” said David A. Maurer, president and CFO of Humphrey Products, one of the 26 companies behind the manufacturing career

consortium. “My involvement with KRESA has led to us having a number of co-op students that help me to build a pipeline of labor. For us, it has worked. We’ve got what we’ve been needing. I have three or four high school kids working in the machine shop this summer. We want to grow these kids that are machinists, but it’s interesting how many kids get into the work environment—never having had exposure to manufacturing—and once they’re here, they go from ‘Maybe I’ll be a machinist’ to ‘Maybe I’ll be a manufacturing engineer.’”

From the examples provided by the state of Minnesota, Kansas City, the Missouri DNR, and the state of North Carolina, successful leaders understand that collaboration is a multiplier of their own resources and that by partnering with others they achieve far more than they could ever on their own. Crisis-driven collaborations garner the headlines, but the truth is that the best examples of collaboration happen proactively. As a function, community-motivated leaders work to find ways to strengthen their own organizations or communities by seeking like-minded partners. Leaders in Southwest Michigan are actively looking for partnership to achieve common goals. What they are finding is that by collaborating, all participants are becoming stronger by coalescing around a shared vision. As University of Michigan President Mark Schlissel said, “Collaboration drives economic prosperity.”

**Whether you’re a city, a county, a region, or a state, your goal is to drive new economic wealth in those areas, to raise the overall wealth of that community.**





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\* At Eaton, we believe in brighter futures. That's why we're dedicated to being actively involved with Southwest Michigan organizations, and offering a great place to work for our employees. Locally, Eaton is continually designing and developing the next generation of vehicle solutions that improve efficiency, safety and sustainability. Because this is what really matters. And we're here to make sure it works.

**To learn more go to: [Eaton.com/whatmatters](https://www.eaton.com/whatmatters)**

**EATON**

*Powering Business Worldwide*

**We make what matters work.**





## COVER STORY VIEWPOINT

## Kathy Mussio



COFOUNDER & MANAGING PARTNER  
ATLAS INSIGHT  
NEW JERSEY

ILLUSTRATION ISTOCK.COM/TCMAKE\_PHOTO

**WE ARE A BOUTIQUE SITE SELECTION FIRM THAT JUST CELEBRATED ITS NINTH ANNIVERSARY. OUR CLIENTELE IS MOSTLY FORTUNE 1,000 AND MIDDLE-MARKET COMPANIES, WITH A FEW SMALLER-SIZED COMPANIES AS WELL.**

Typically, 60 to 70 percent of our client base is manufacturers of some sort. The rest of our client base is a mix of other industries, including a specialty in financial institutions and insurance companies. We deal with some of the largest corporations in the world, and often do multiple projects for them each year.

When we work with a client on a site selection project, aside from the data and analytic side, it's very important, during the actual site visit phase, to be there on the ground. We meet with the economic development organizations, local officials, and folks whom we feel will give us a complete picture of the business climate in

an area. This also means meeting with exiting employers for closed-door meetings where we have the ability to ask questions on their view of doing business in the area and especially questions about their workforce and the labor market in general. There may be questions that a client doesn't think to ask because site selection projects are not something that they do day in and day out. A lot of companies we work with have internal resources. When we are brought in, we add an extra level of expertise that gives our clients assurance that the locations they're considering are a good fit. We help our clients to minimize the risk of a new location.

### SITE SELECTORS ARE REALLY SITE ELIMINATORS

What's important to a manufacturer is different than what's important to a company looking to set up a regional headquarters. Site selection is an analytical, data-filled exercise as we score and rank communities by sometimes hundreds of factors. For manufacturers, labor is a top factor. Why? There's a critical shortage of skilled labor in the U.S., with over 500,000 open, unfilled skilled and semiskilled positions right now. The estimate is that, in 10 years, there may be one million open positions that manufacturers will have trouble filling. Beyond

**Site selectors think of Michigan as having good and skilled talent, albeit talent that sometimes comes at a higher price point than other, competing locations.**

finding an available workforce, again looking at manufacturers, some other major factors that typically rise to the top for consideration are the cost of that labor, reliability, and cost of electricity and highway accessibility. Getting their products to their customers, whether directly or through their distribution centers, in the quickest and lowest-cost manner as possible, is paramount. Quality of life ranks high for certain types of projects—but not for manufacturing ones. Projects that need to attract a millennial workforce, such as headquarters or IT-related companies or

functions, typically have very good quality of life and are places that millennials want to live. Millennials, broadly characterized, are a bit different than the generations that came before them. Whereas we moved to the city or state where we got the job, millennials move to where they want to live and then find the job in that place.

**Millennials move to where they want to live and then find the job in that place.**

During the site selection process, with our client, we typically visit three to five locations—and sometimes many more. Once, for a large call center project, we started with a long list of 150 communities to rank and score and visited over 35 of them until we got down to the final two and then to the final one. Again, during these visits to communities, we meet with similar-type companies to get a firsthand, unfiltered view of what it is like to operate there. Honestly, we are really less site selectors than we are site eliminators, because there's no perfect site, and we are there to eliminate the sites that carry

too much risk for our clients' operations. We do incentive negotiations on the final two or three locations, which carry the least risk. Eventually our client's C-suite makes a decision based on the numbers and the valuable takeaways from the multiple site visits.

### WHAT WE SEE FROM THE OUTSIDE

I offer my perception as a site selector from the outside looking in. Michigan has done a very good job in the last couple of years of lowering taxes and the regulatory burden for companies.

Doing away with personal property tax was a very good thing for manufacturers. Michigan has excelled, in the last couple of years, in large part due to the robustness of the auto industry resurgence. Site selectors think of Michigan as having good and skilled talent, albeit talent that sometimes comes at a higher price point than other, competing locations.

But you're not unlike other states and regions, as you don't have availability of land and buildings to make a quick home for a company. It's hard everywhere. There's little supply. There's way more demand. So real estate is becoming a bigger factor in decisions. Do you have the ideal piece of land? Do you have a building that's ready to go? If you do, you move up on the list.

When I think of Michigan, too, I think of your great universities. Your alumni are a tremendous talent resource. They may have left to experience Chicago, New York, or Boston, but we often hear that once they have experienced the bigger cities, they want to come back to Michigan to raise their families. Reach out to whom you know and get those who are ready to settle down to come back home to Michigan. If

they've formed small companies, they should want to grow their companies there.

#### **DON'T BE AFRAID TO SAY HELLO**

Deal flow can come to locations through state organizations (such as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation). Or deal flow can come directly to regions or the communities, especially if they have strong regional economic development organizations. While our work is data-driven, it's also a relationship business. You never know what relationship seeds you are sowing now will bear fruit sometime in the future.

As I look around the country, your regional economic development organizations are highly thought of. I'm not just saying that because I'm talking about your region! You have great leadership and innovation, and do good outreach to the site selector community, so you stay in mind. So, continue to get in our faces.

REDI Cincinnati, Columbus 2020, and the state of Georgia are other regions and places that do economic development well. Those are all best in class.

**Your alumni are a tremendous talent resource. They may have left to experience Chicago, New York, or Boston, but we often hear that once they have experienced the bigger cities, they want to come back to Michigan to raise their families.**

#### **WORK TOGETHER**

Economies are regional. Economies don't follow lines on a map. Battle Creek companies are not just going to attract workers from Battle Creek. Kalamazoo companies are not

**Economies are regional. Economies don't follow lines on a map. Workers commute from all over a region to get to work.**

just going to attract workers from Kalamazoo. Workers commute from all over a region to get to work.

Communities are stronger together. They prosper by uniting rather than competing on a small level. They prosper and do better as a region by marketing together. As a site selector, we have hundreds of communities, regions, and states come to us and want some of our time. We try to meet with everybody we can. But if 10 communities in a region come to us together, it's a lot easier for us to meet with that regional group than with each community separately. We are really looking for a sense of the region. A rising tide floats all boats, so a strong regional agency is going to make every single community in that region stronger.

You are stronger together. That's regionalism.

**KATHY MUSSIO** is a cofounder and managing partner at Atlas Insight with over 22 years of combined experience as a management, incentive, and site selection consultant. She is widely considered an industry expert in the site selection and incentive negotiation business. Learn more at [ATLASINSIGHT.COM](http://ATLASINSIGHT.COM).





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As the automotive world moves toward fully connected and self-driving cars, it's no surprise who's driving the future of the industry. Michigan. Home to the world's first and only urban real world testing facility for autonomous vehicles, Michigan leads the country in research, development, innovation and technology. Which make us the hands down choice for your automotive business.

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[michiganbusiness.org/PlanetM](http://michiganbusiness.org/PlanetM)



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION





PHOTO IStock.com/RAWPIXEL

# JOBS. POPULATION. INCOME. EDUCATION.

The 269 MAGAZINE™ scorecard provides a combined data snapshot for these important economic indicators for the counties of Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren.

Since 2013, Southwest Michigan has grown by...

**+336 PEOPLE (TOTAL POPULATION)<sup>1</sup>**

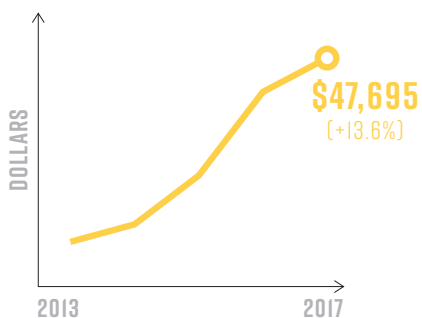
**+19,463 WORKERS (TOTAL WORKFORCE)<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census Estimates, Demographic Snapshot, The Nielsen Company, 2017 Annual Average.

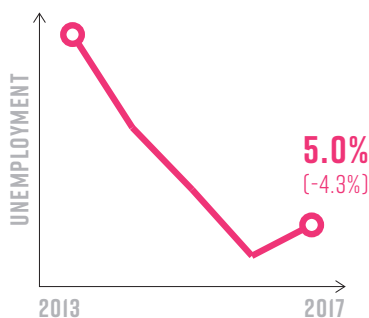
<sup>2</sup>Michigan DTMB, Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS). All estimates are preliminary. Data is not seasonally adjusted. Month of January in corresponding year.

PROGRESS  
IN THE REGION

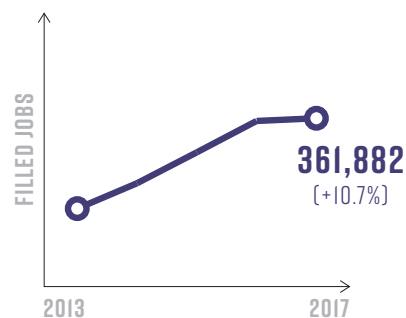
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME<sup>1</sup>



JOBLESS RATE<sup>2</sup>



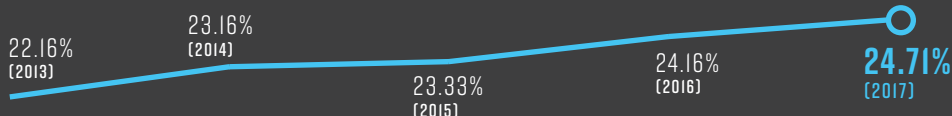
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT<sup>2</sup>



## STEADY GROWTH

PERCENT OF RESIDENTS 25+ WITH BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER

U.S. Census American Community Survey, Five-Year Average, Bachelor's Degree or Higher, Age 25+.





# Summertime in SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN!

ILLUSTRATIONS JACOB HANSEN

## 1 WEST LAKE DRIVE-IN

Let's be-ef frank: It's hard to beat an evening with your car windows rolled down, hot dog in hand, as you soak in a sunset over West Lake.

[facebook.com/WestLakeDriveIn](https://www.facebook.com/WestLakeDriveIn)

PORTAGE | (269) 327-5985



## 2 ROOT BEER STAND

You can't go wrong with the classics. Go where the good old-fashioned root beer and hot dogs are served carside, topped with chili and cheese if you need a little something extra.

[places.singleplatform.com/root-beer-stand-2](https://places.singleplatform.com/root-beer-stand-2)

KALAMAZOO AND PORTAGE | (269) 349-7361 OR (269) 345-4418

## 3 THE SHACK

15 different hot dogs? You gotta be doggin' me! Dare to try them all, and save room for loaded fries.

[facebook.com/TheShackPawPawMi](https://www.facebook.com/TheShackPawPawMi)

PAW PAW | (269) 415-0231

## 4 HOT DOGS PLUS

The fun happens here! Groups love to gather for a good time at this ketchup-and-mustard-colored diner.

[colleenshotdogsplus.wixsite.com/colleenshotdogsplus](https://colleenshotdogsplus.wixsite.com/colleenshotdogsplus)

NILES | (269) 684-2633

## 5 HOT DOG KART

You know you've spotted a treat when you find the rainbow umbrella covering Ben Yacobozzi's metal cart, stationed at the corner of State and Broad streets.

[viennabeef.com/hot-dog-kart](https://viennabeef.com/hot-dog-kart)

ST. JOSEPH | (269) 849-0700



### DID YOU KNOW?

Hot dogs were first invented in 1484 in Frankfurt, Germany (hence the nickname "frankfurters").

## 6 NAGLE'S TOP DOG & MALT SHOPPE

Serving classic treats topped with a twist since 1971, this stop offers a sautéed mushroom-smothered hot dog paired with your choice of thirteen milk shake flavors.

[facebook.com/pages/Nagles-Top-Dog-Malt-Shoppe/121429991203882](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nagles-Top-Dog-Malt-Shoppe/121429991203882)

KALAMAZOO | (269) 342-2031



Saturday, August 12

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

KALAMAZOO | (269) 382-0490 EXT. 275

### PALLETPALOOZA DAY

Cast your vote for innovation crafted from recycled wooden pallets—from furniture

to wall décor—to benefit Goodwill Industries of Southwestern Michigan.





**DID YOU KNOW?**

Every 14 seconds in the U.S., someone either loses or breaks a pair of sunglasses!



# 9

OUTDOOR PATIOS



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Flip-flops have been around for thousands of years and are depicted in ancient Egyptian murals from 4,000 B.C.E.



**1**  
**HOP CAT KALAMAZOO**  
Bands are rocking where the signature “crack fries” meet 100 taps at the juncture of “Michigan’s Craft Beer Crossroads.”  
[hopcat.com/kalamazoo](http://hopcat.com/kalamazoo)  
KALAMAZOO | (269) 210-0075

**2**  
**CAPTAIN LOU’S**  
Hoist the sails and raise your glass! This porch on the river greets South Haven boaters as they launch into sunshine-lathered Lake Michigan.  
[facebook.com/CaptainLous](https://facebook.com/CaptainLous)  
SOUTH HAVEN | (269) 637-3965

**3**  
**GRAVITY**  
Uncork and unwind with a peaceful lakeside view and live music. Here, your glass of wine will always be half full.  
[gravitywine.com](http://gravitywine.com)  
BARODA | (269) 471-9463

**4**  
**OLD DOG**  
Raise your glass to the train conductor as he passes by this patio tucked between railroad tracks and the tavern’s historic, eclectic downtown building.  
[olddogtavern.com](http://olddogtavern.com)  
KALAMAZOO | (269) 381-5677

**5**  
**ADMIRAL JACK’S**  
Cast your cares to the shore as you board a floating bar docked in the Black River. A cold beer awaits you, with shrimp on the side.  
[facebook.com/Admiral-Jacks-791121034264243](https://facebook.com/Admiral-Jacks-791121034264243)  
SOUTH HAVEN | (269) 872-3607

**6**  
**VINEYARD 2121**  
Escape your everyday and savor a sip of serenity. Your visit features fresh air, a view, and handcrafted local wines.  
[vineyard2121.com](http://vineyard2121.com)  
BENTON HARBOR | (269) 849-0109

**7**  
**DARK HORSE BREWING CO.**  
Lead your horse to this watering hole and enjoy a drink and more in this outdoor beer garden from March through October.  
[darkhorsebrewery.com/the-beer-garden/](http://darkhorsebrewery.com/the-beer-garden/)  
MARSHALL | (269) 781-9940

**8**  
**THE WINE LOFT**  
From a front-row seat on the street, experience elegance, bliss, and an extensive wine list in the heart of downtown Kalamazoo.  
[millenniumrestaurants.com/wineloft](http://millenniumrestaurants.com/wineloft)  
KALAMAZOO | (269) 343-9227

**9**  
**ON THE RIVER TAVERN**  
Grab a cold one dockside as you watch boaters drift by on the Morrison Channel of the St. Joseph River.  
[sjotr.com](http://sjotr.com)  
ST. JOSEPH | (269) 983-6878

Saturday, August 26  
[www.donutandbeerfest.com](http://www.donutandbeerfest.com)  
KALAMAZOO | (269) 492-9966

**DONUT AND BEER FESTIVAL**  
Donuts and beer? Yes, right here! Homer Stryker Field is hosting the

first annual Donut and Beer Festival with one-of-a-kind donuts, craft beers, cider, music, and activities.

# GROWING A REGION

COLLABORATION AT  
THE COMMUNITY LEVEL



AN OPINION PIECE BY  
LEWIS WHITFIELD,  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF  
THE CREATE FOUNDATION

WITH DAVID RUMBARGER,  
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION  
TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI

ILLUSTRATIONS  
ISTOCK.COM/ICONICBESTIARY  
AND ISTOCK.COM/ELENABS

## IN 1995, THERE WAS LITTLE UNITY AND LIMITED COOPERATION AMONG THE 17 COUNTIES OF NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI.

Tupelo, located in Lee County, had developed a strong manufacturing base, a rapidly expanding, high-quality regional medical center, a dominant media center, a rapidly growing retail sector highlighted by a recently constructed regional mall, a variety of cultural and entertainment venues, including a new coliseum, and good public schools.

Leaders of other counties realized that more of their citizens were moving or driving to Tupelo to work, shop, seek health care, and take advantage of educational and entertainment opportunities. To compound the situation, several counties were not unified within their own boundaries.

Visionary leader George McLean was the longtime owner of the Tupelo-based regional newspaper the *Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal* and its family of related companies. In 1972, he established CREATE, a community foundation.

Following McLean's death in 1983, all of his ownership interest in the *Daily Journal* companies was transferred to the CREATE Foundation, making it the nonprofit owner of a for-profit business that exerted a great deal of influence throughout the region.

## REGIONAL UNITY IN NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI CREATES COOPERATION

In 1995, the *Journal's* CEO, Billy Crews, realized that CREATE and the *Journal* could play major roles in improving cooperation among the region's leaders. A decision was reached by a handful of successful organizations to form a new entity that could lead efforts to improve regional unity.

That new entity was named the Commission on the Future of Northeast Mississippi. At first, it functioned as an independent task force to assess data and identify key issues confronting

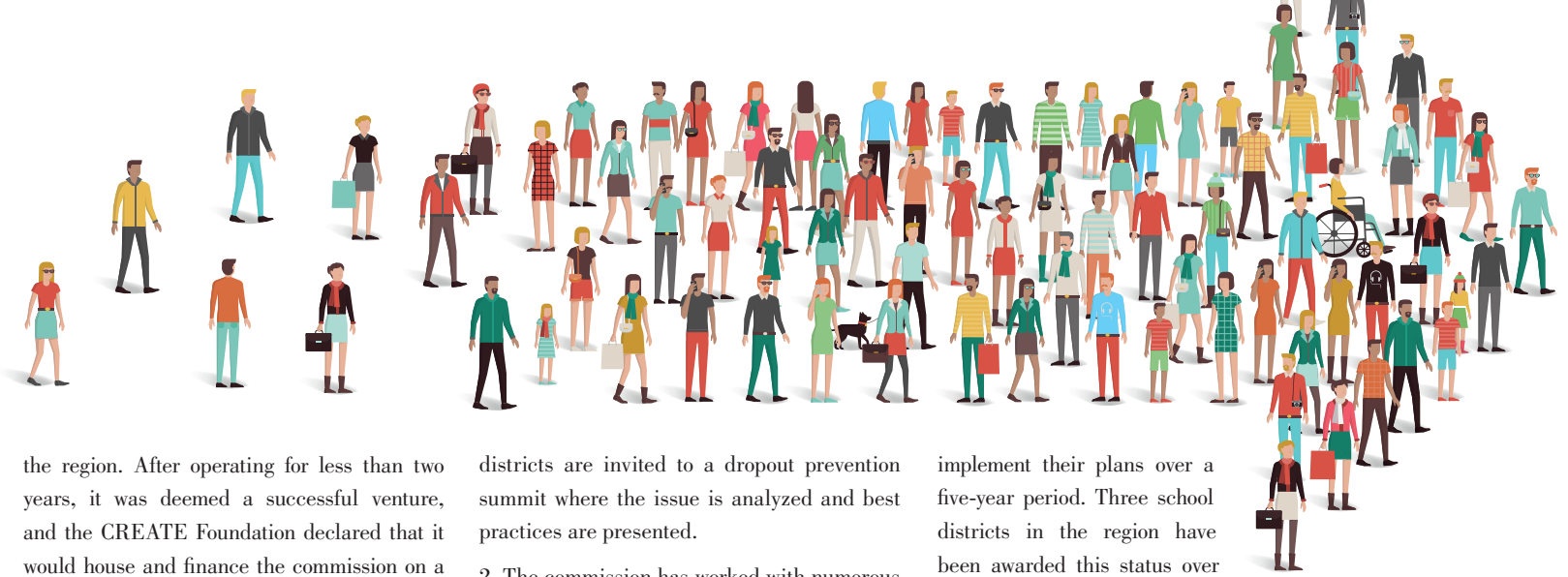


# BUILDERS OF A CHANGING WORLD

As a full-service construction company, we're helping industry leaders in Southwest Michigan transform the ways people work, live, shop, learn, and heal. We're Rockford - builders of a changing world. And what we do is **groundbreaking**.







the region. After operating for less than two years, it was deemed a successful venture, and the CREATE Foundation declared that it would house and finance the commission on a permanent basis.

Today, the commission is composed of 54 community leaders from the region's 17 counties. Its purpose is to build cooperation and unity through regional community development. Its methodology is to study data, identify key issues, establish goals and objectives, and help bring all relevant parties together to address the issues and achieve regional goals and objectives.

Several major issues have been addressed over the past two decades, including leadership development, racial reconciliation, improved broadband access, highway improvement, and higher levels of educational attainment.

The commission does not run programs or pursue economic development projects. Emphasis is almost entirely on community, not economic, development. However, the commission has established a practice of holding quarterly luncheon meetings for all local, regional, and statewide developers who serve the region. They are simply roundtable discussions of what is happening throughout the region, punctuated by presentations on pertinent and timely topics by experts. This has clearly improved communications and cooperation among the developers.

#### A FOCUS ON ELEVATING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

For the past 10 years, the commission's primary focus has been on improving the region's levels of educational attainment. This holds the key to successful community and economic development.

1. Dropout prevention and recovery have been at the top of the commission's concerns. Annually, all of the region's 32 public school

districts are invited to a dropout prevention summit where the issue is analyzed and best practices are presented.

2. The commission has worked with numerous partners to help launch a variety of meaningful education initiatives. A regional summit on early childhood development focused attention on this critical issue.

3. Media companies organized themselves into the North Mississippi Media Alliance, which provided more than one million dollars of free time and space by running advertising messages designed to encourage children to stay in school and to beckon dropouts to seek a GED and additional education.

4. CREATE grants from its Marchbanks Fund, a specified-purpose endowment fund, to two community colleges, serving a total of 10 counties, were used to ignite an initiative to ultimately quadruple the number of GED graduates from those two institutions. Success with the CREATE-funded initiative led to a state annual appropriation of \$3 million for all of Mississippi's 15 community colleges for the same dropout recovery purpose.

5. A tuition guarantee program offers four regular semesters of guaranteed paid tuition to one of four community colleges serving the region for recent high school graduates residing in the region. In the academic year of 2016-2017, almost 2,700 young people were covered by this program for \$1.5 million dollars. Sources of funding vary in each county.

6. Legislation championed by CREATE's commission led to the passage of a Districts of Innovation law, which allows innovative public school leaders to develop new plans of operation designed to improve academic performance and to close achievement gaps. Approval of these plans by the State Board of Education gives the successful applicant districts an opportunity to

implement their plans over a five-year period. Three school districts in the region have been awarded this status over the first three years of program operation.

#### REGIONAL BOUNDARIES EXPAND TOWARD UNIFIED PROSPERITY

During the course of the commission's existence, several of its influential leaders were elected to the CREATE Board of Directors. Today, the foundation can truly say it is a genuine regional organization, as more than one-half of its board members reside outside of Lee County. Also, many leaders from the commission have led efforts to establish affiliate funds of CREATE in their counties, in effect giving them their own community foundations. CREATE offered \$100,000 of matching funds to interested counties, which were asked to raise at least \$200,000 to receive the full match. Many of the issues identified by the commission are pursued on a local basis using earnings from affiliate funds established within 12 counties.

Development of human capital—people—has always been a tenet of CREATE as an extension of the philosophy of its founder, George McLean. Northeast Mississippi is populated by some of the hardest-working and most generous people in the world. In the McLean spirit, the commission is determined to help improve the educational achievement and attainment of all our citizens to assure that they all have opportunities to reach their individual potential and thereby assure that the region will enjoy future prosperity.

Today, the Commission on the Future of Northeast Mississippi embodies the traits that George McLean advocated, including the intensive emphasis on human development using education and leadership development as the primary tools to accomplish positive change. Also, the commission has fostered a spirit of unity and cooperation that was clearly missing 22 years ago.

*The **CREATE Foundation** is committed to improving the quality of life for the people of Northeast Mississippi through building permanent community endowment assets; encouraging philanthropy and managing charitable funds contributed by individuals, families, organizations, and corporations; strengthening regional community development capacity; providing leadership on key community issues; and impacting the region through gifts and targeted grant-making. Learn more at [createfoundation.com](http://createfoundation.com).*



# A PARTNERSHIP THAT SHEDS LIGHT SO OTHERS CAN SHINE

The CREATE Foundation and the Community Development Foundation (CDF), both based in Tupelo, Mississippi, serve as a prime example of how collaboration within a region can pay large dividends for all involved.

## CREATE FOUNDATION AT A GLANCE



FOUNDED IN 1972 AND HEADQUARTERED IN TUPELO, CREATE SERVES **17 COUNTIES** IN NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI.



CREATE IS THE **OLDEST AND LARGEST** COMMUNITY FOUNDATION IN MISSISSIPPI, WITH \$101.8 MILLION IN ASSETS.



CREATE HAS A 28-MEMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND **FIVE FULL-TIME STAFF**.



CREATE IS THE **THIRD-LARGEST** GRANT-MAKING FOUNDATION, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, IN THE STATE.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION AT A GLANCE



WITH \$57 MILLION IN CAPITAL INVESTMENTS ATTRACTED BY THE CDF, TUPELO WAS NAMED **THE TOP MICROPOLITAN IN THE COUNTRY** IN 2012.

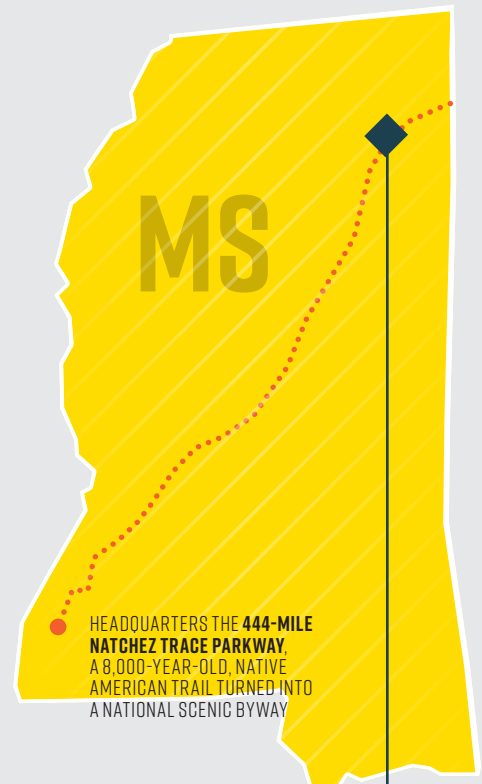


CDF WAS NAMED ONE OF THE TOP 20 MICROPOLITAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUPS FOR 2014, BY SITE SELECTION MAGAZINE. IT WAS **THEIR SEVENTH** SUCH HONOR.

CDF HAS A 60-MEMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND 17 STAFF...



...AND NEARLY 1,200 MEMBERS. (THAT'S **THIS X20.**)



HEADQUARTERS THE **444-MILE NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY**, A 8,000-YEAR-OLD, NATIVE AMERICAN TRAIL TURNED INTO A NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

## TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI, AT A GLANCE

POPULATION OF

**36,066**

JOBLESS RATE OF

**3.5%**

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

**\$44,961**

BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER

**27.39%**



**BIRTHPLACE OF ELVIS PRESLEY AND HOST TO THE ANNUAL ELVIS FESTIVAL THAT DRAWS ABOUT 100,000 EVERY YEAR**

Sources: U.S. Census Estimates, Demographic Snapshot, The Nielsen Company, 2017 Annual Average; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



# GO OFF-ROAD

## TURN OFF SPRINKLE ROAD AND RIDE ON INTO ZEIGLER MOTORSPORTS

BY HEATHER BAKER PHOTOS HANNAH ZIEGLER

### COMPANY

Zeigler Motorsports

### KEY EXECUTIVES

Aaron Zeigler, President

### THE BIG PICTURE

Zeigler Motorsports is part of the Zeigler Automotive Group, which has 79 franchises in 23 locations in Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and New York.

### REGIONAL LOCATION

Celebrating its grand opening on June 14, 2017, this facility boasts 85,000 square feet at 5001 Park Circle in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and sits on 50 acres offering outdoor test track experiences.

### ITS WHY

Zeigler Motorsports aims to please as the “world’s largest action park,” delivering a great experience through the largest selection of powersports equipment in Michigan and top-notch customer service.

### IT'S A DESTINATION

Targeting buyers from the Midwest and even beyond, Aaron Zeigler says, “This is a destination. We’re very different from most motorsports dealerships. Most are mom-and-pop-type small stores or old facilities. We’ve created something unique with our facility’s massive inventory, a very cool inside space, and three tracks spread over four miles where you can try out vehicles. You can even come back and ride (your purchase on) our tracks once you’ve bought something, too.”

And if the thought of buying something makes you hungry, stop into the adjoining Sprinkle Road Tap House operated by Millennium Restaurant Group. One side of the eatery completely opens to the showroom through a giant, rolling garage-style door, allowing you to contemplate a purchase over a cold beverage and plate of pub food inspired by local and international traditions.

ZEIGLER OFFERS A WIDE SELECTION OF GEAR AND ACCESSORIES

ROWS OF BIKES AWAIT IGNITION IN ON-SITE INVENTORY







**“THIS IS A DESTINATION. WE’RE VERY DIFFERENT  
FROM MOST MOTORSPORTS DEALERSHIPS.”**

## THE SHOWROOM

### WHAT THEY OFFER

- Motorcycles
- Dirt bikes
- All-terrain vehicles
- Personal watercraft
- Snowmobiles
- Parts & accessories

### BRAND IDENTITY

At Zeigler Motorsports, you'll find products from:

- Honda
- Kawasaki
- Suzuki
- Ski-Doo
- Sea-Doo
- Can-Am
- Arctic Cat
- KTM
- E-Z-Go
- Bad Boy
- Slingshot
- Polaris
- Indian
- Yamaha
- and more!

### INVENTORY

Want it now? Zeigler Motorsports carries over 1,300 in-stock units.

### BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

Zeigler Motorsports entertains more than 500,000 visitors exploring its website and 2,500 walking through its doors monthly.

### NOW HIRING

To inquire how to become part of Team Zeigler, visit [zeigler.com/zeigler-careers.htm](http://zeigler.com/zeigler-careers.htm)

**TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE VISIT [ZEIGLERMOTORSPORTS.COM](http://ZEIGLERMOTORSPORTS.COM)**



A woman with glasses and a dark sleeveless top is presenting to an audience. She is smiling and gesturing with her right hand. The background is a whiteboard with a faint silhouette of a person's hand. The foreground shows the backs of several audience members' heads.

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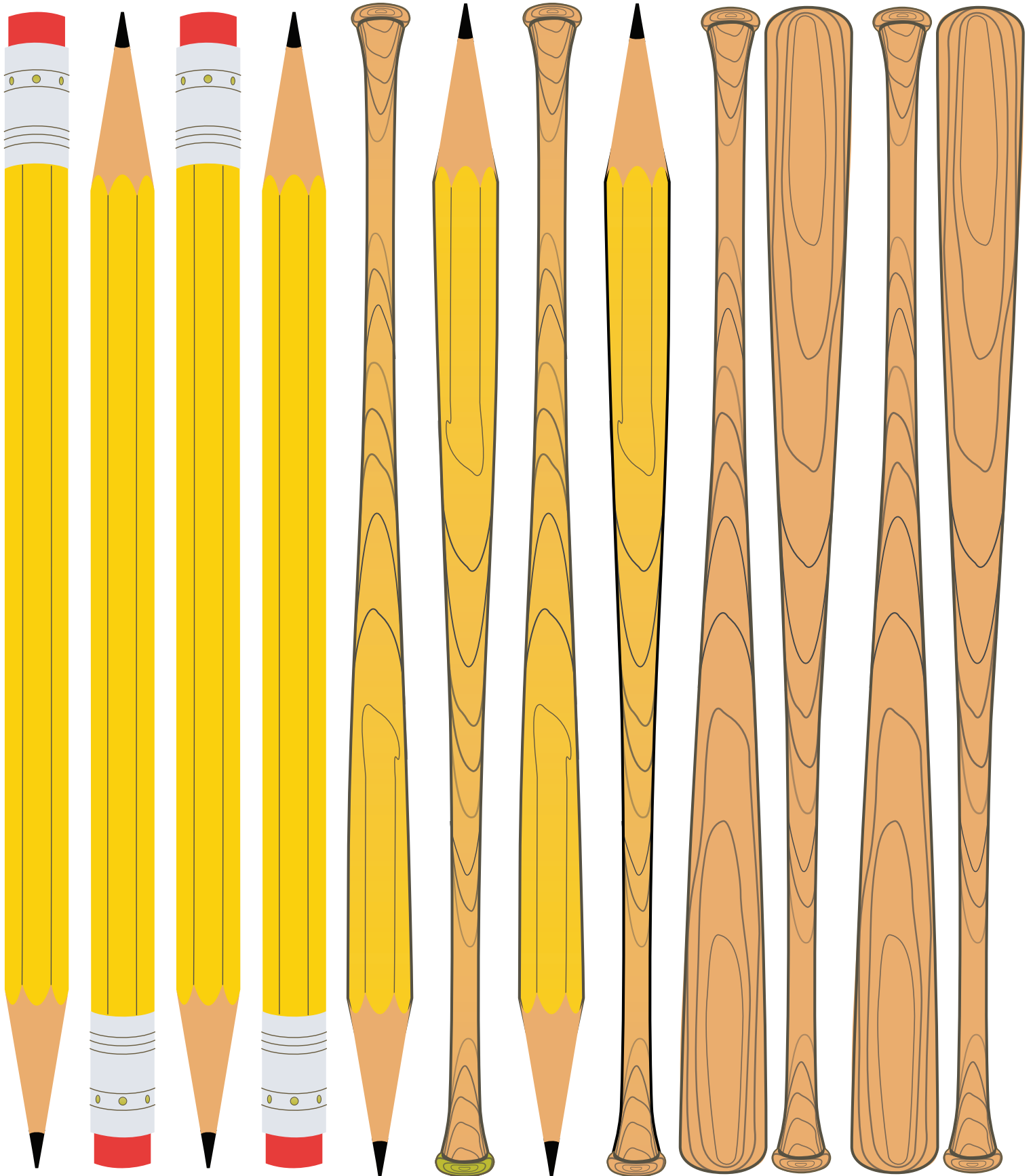
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INSIDE **269 MAGAZINE** IS CONTENT THAT BUILDS UP OUR REGION AND STRENGTHENS OUR VOICE.







# SURPRISE!



FUN ACTIVITIES IN THE WORKPLACE BUILD STRATEGY, CAMARADERIE, AND TRUST

BY HEATHER BAKER ILLUSTRATIONS LISA TALARCZYK

**W**hy do special-delivery flowers bring more joy than those bought at the corner market? Why are cheers following a walk-off game-winning home run so much louder than those acknowledging an early lead held until the last out is made in the ninth inning of a baseball game? Why is that first-date kiss more highly anticipated than an embrace from a long-term partner? Or audience belly laughs heard when water shoots from a flower on a circus clown's lapel into an unsuspecting recipient's eye?

**Mixing up routines can lead to new insights that accelerate business strategy and increased appreciation of an organization and team.**

It turns out that humans crave those unexpected pleasures and events more than the status quo in their daily lives. In an April 2001 study published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, researchers from Emory University and Baylor College of Medicine summarized their findings of an exercise where they used a computer-controlled device to squirt water or fruit juice into awaiting participants' mouths. The squirts came in patterns, both consistent and broken. What they found was that the brain's pleasure centers subconsciously reacted more favorably to unexpected patterns.

Until this study, "Scientists assumed that the neural reward pathways, which act as high-speed internet connections to the pleasure centers of the brain, responded to what people like," explained Read Montague, Ph.D., while doing research on behalf of Baylor College of Medicine. "However, when we tested this idea in brain-scanning experiments, we found that reward pathways responded much more strongly to the unexpectedness of stimuli instead of their pleasurable effects."

Simply put, breaking routines makes people happy and delighted.

Tania Luna and LeeAnn Renninger, Ph.D., agree. These two researchers regularly help companies learn in surprising ways at LifeLabs New York and design surprise experiences at Surprise Industries. In their book, *Surprise: Embrace the Unpredictable and Engineer the Unexpected*, they say, "Delight shifts our perspective about unpleasant and neutral activities ... paving the way for healthy new behaviors. It can also improve productivity. Researchers have found that a positive mood is most conducive for creative problem solving.

"When we trigger delight, we create loyalty, catalyze word of mouth, increase productivity, and turn ordinary into extraordinary. Delight also makes people feel good, which is reason enough to take it seriously. To design delight, spot where the most meaningful expectation bars lie and surpass them."

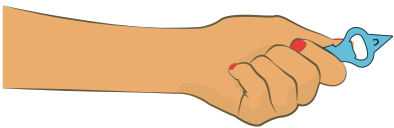
Surprise or fun in the workplace indeed has its rewards. Mixing up routines can lead to new insights that accelerate business strategy and increased appreciation of an organization and team. Forging greater trust among team members is another added benefit, as Luna and Renninger indicate: "Trust is a psychological safety net that allows us to let go, whether it's letting go of the trapeze bar to fling your body through the air or letting go of certainty to embrace the unpredictable."

Understanding the importance of creating a workplace that balances fun with employment is Kalamazoo-based Imperial Beverage, a leader and long-standing member of the Michigan beverage distribution community. The company's history is impressive: Established in 1933 after the repeal of prohibition and purchased by the Cekola family in 1984, Imperial Beverage has grown from a one-county beer distributor to a top 10 statewide beer, wine, and spirits wholesaler. With 330 employees and three locations in Kalamazoo, Livonia, and Traverse City, the distributor provides statewide coverage.

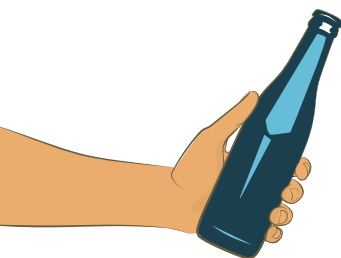
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**Why is that first-date kiss more highly anticipated than an embrace from a long-term partner?**

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**Jackie Anderson**, vice president of human resources at Imperial Beverage, confirms with the *269 MAGAZINE* team the company’s passion for “helping people succeed.” Imperial Beverage works with its customers to “build profit and identity in their restaurants and retail locations through the selection of fine wines, craft beers, ciders, spirits, sodas, and mixers from its diverse portfolio,” she said. Anderson also works to build engagement among employees who provide Imperial Beverage’s customers with top-notch customer service.



**WHAT IS THE MOTIVATION BEHIND IMPERIAL BEVERAGE’S ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES?**

The overall goal of our practices is to make people feel like they are a part of a family. We do that by engaging with our employees, not just one time a year, but

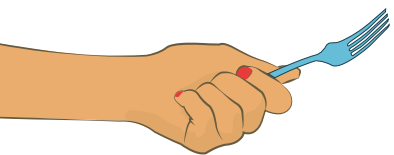
throughout the whole entire year. We have constant contact with our employees to find out what motivates them to make them productive and drive our business.

**WHY FOCUS ON FUN?**

Because we work extremely hard at Imperial Beverage, we feel it’s also important to play hard as well.

**DOES FUN HAVE A PLACE IN BUSINESS?**

In this industry, fun definitely does have a place in business. We’re passionate about our people. And we’re passionate about



our product. As one of our product lines is alcohol, (we embrace fun) because, most times, people have fun when using it responsibly.

**IS IT TRUE THAT IMPERIAL BEVERAGE DEDICATES A WHOLE WEEK OF APPRECIATION TO ITS EMPLOYEES?**

Yes, we dedicate a whole week to employee appreciation, usually in February or March. The whole week is dedicated to our employees and consists of events like pub crawls, lunch or breakfast cooked by our staff, and gifts of company swag like T-shirts, hats, and bottle openers. Employees send “wine-o-grams” or “pint-o-grams” to each other; employees write down on pieces of paper what they appreciate about another employee, roll up the notes, and put them into an Imperial

Beverage logo wine or pint glass to be hand-delivered by our human resources team. We also make “driver bags,” which are bags stuffed with things such as beef jerky, chips, candy, water, and energy drinks and placed on the passenger seat of our trucks; when the driver gets in the truck the next morning at 5:00 a.m., he or she is pleasantly surprised. We also encourage managers to do something special with their team. These special outings have taken the form of a dinner, a golf outing, or even an escape room experience.

**BESIDES YOUR EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION WEEK, WHAT ARE SOME OTHER OUTINGS THAT YOU HAVE FOUND TO BE SUCCESSFUL?**

Imperial Beverage dedicates five main events that we carry out throughout the year to our employees. Beyond the appreciation week, we attend a Kalamazoo Civic Theatre event each year. It’s usually during the first week of December. We rent out its balcony for employees and their families. (Before the show), we provide lunch, and then they see a play such as *Shrek* or *A Christmas Story*.

We hold a softball tournament each year called “The Beer’s on First Tournament.” Our graphic design team designs T-shirts for participating teams. Last year, we had eight teams compete. Afterward, we do a cookout. We have games for the kids. We drink beer and other beverages. It’s a really good way to bring families together. Every year, we do an outing that each employee can bring a ‘plus one’ to. (We’ve gone) to Atwater (Block Brewery in Detroit) and then a Tigers game. This year, we went to Short’s



(Brewing Company in Bellaire) and then rented a bowling alley out for (the team) after we toured the brewery, along with the arcade, including laser tag. We provided a chartered bus and a hotel room (for each employee), plus all the food, beer, and entertainment.

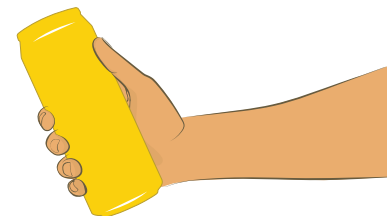
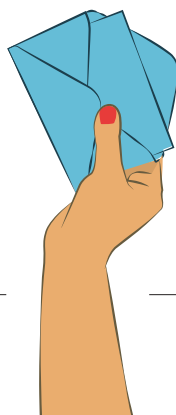
We also do a home brew contest. Teams of four employees brew beer together. We then bring in judges who are customers and suppliers. The winner then gets to brew their beer at a brewery. This year’s winning brew was featured at Liberty Street Brewing Company.

**AS YOU ARE IN AN ALCOHOL-RELATED BUSINESS AND DO HAVE ALCOHOL AT SOME OF YOUR EVENTS, WHAT DO YOU DO TO MAKE SURE THAT YOUR EMPLOYEES STAY SAFE?**

We have an Imperial Beverage program through which we promote responsible drinking. As part of it, if an employee ever has too much to drink, he or she can take an Uber or a taxi home, and Imperial Beverage will reimburse them. No questions asked.

**HOW HAVE THESE FUN-FILLED EVENTS BENEFITTED IMPERIAL BEVERAGE?**

Employee morale after doing one of these events is amazing. Employees walk away from our events feeling energized and like they’re part of something special.







## How will you bring your workplace **into the future?**

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“If you’re lucky enough in your career to be able to choose your team, that’s the greatest reward.”



A Q + A WITH PAUL MARTUS

PRINCIPAL INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER AT NEWELL BRANDS  
BY REGAN DEWAAL | PHOTOS BY HANNAH ZIEGELER





## WHAT DOES AN INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER DO?

I truly believe we provide a service—a problem-solving service. We're part detective, part artist, part futurist. We solve problems through visualization. (Solutions to) these problems shape the future and hopefully make lives better.

## WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME AN INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER?

When I look back, I think I always was a designer, I just didn't know what to call myself. As a kid, we made our own props for our stories and games. We made our own toys. We took apart our toys to "improve them." As I got older, it was the same thinking of innovation, just applied to sports, school, and work.

## HOW DOES A YOUNG INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER GET HIS OR HER START?

Creation. (You gradually come to the) understanding that you can alter the objects around you. Then you realize you do it for others, and you can make them happy. Starting off young, you make your parents gifts. They love it. Next, you start making your friends gifts. After that, people see (what you made), and it's amazing when (other) people ask you to make them something and they're strangers. Then that's kind of how you get involved.

## EVERYONE HAS TO START SOMEWHERE. WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?

I started with anything entrepreneurial. If it snowed, I shoveled snow. If the grass grew, I cut the grass. Anything to make a buck. I knocked on the neighbors' doors. Eventually, they knew I was coming so they'd just leave 10 bucks in the mailbox or something.

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT BEING AN INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER?

Applying creativity. That's the one thing that separates us—is being creative—so applying creativity to see something realized and working with others to make or share an idea into something physical.

## WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT FOR A SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN?

I always say that you have to have an open mind and thick skin.

## WHAT IS THE BIGGEST LESSON YOU HAVE LEARNED SINCE YOU BEGAN YOUR CAREER?

The biggest lesson would be diligence. And then, only take "no" (for an answer) after the fourth time. After that, go ask someone else, because someone out there has the answer you're looking for.

## HOW DO YOU BALANCE CREATIVITY WITH BUSINESS?

Balance is the key word. Good design is good business.

## WHO DO YOU VIEW AS A MASTER OF YOUR CRAFT?

Currently, it's my peers right around me. I'm constantly blown away by what people can produce. Historically, when I think about school, I have a lot of admiration for William Morris, Harry Bertoia, Marc Newson, and Ross Lovegrove.

## WHO WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO WORK WITH?

Anyone willing to try something new. If you're lucky enough in your career to be able to choose your team, that's the greatest reward. But if you succeed with that team, that's the greatest achievement.

## WHAT WOULD BE YOUR DREAM PROJECT?

The list on this one is very long. It could be architecture, it could be biomed. Anything right now, creatively, like animation and entertainment. I have two young daughters, so I watch a lot of Tinkerbell and animations. They're so well crafted. They're just beautiful. Within the entertainment industry, there are no physical boundaries, so you can almost do anything you want to do.

## HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR CREATIVITY SHARP?

You have to find time to recharge the battery and refill the creative flow. You have to go for walks, enjoy family, and enjoy things outside of (work), so that you can give all that you give when you're in the (creative) role.

## IF YOU COULD BE CREATIVE IN ANOTHER SPACE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Cooking or the entertainment, humor, laughter, (the) storytelling world.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AN ASPIRING INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER?

Don't constrain a project too soon (by setting) assumptions in your head before you prove that they're right or wrong. If you're working on a project and you put what you think is right too early, or what you think you can or can't do, you're not going to solve (the problem) or get anywhere new or innovative.



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# A Q+A ABOUT LEADERSHIP

## WITH LOCAL LEADERS



**SOPHIA QUINN**

REGIONAL SALES MANAGER, BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD  
OF MICHIGAN | BLUE CARE NETWORK

**TROY CUVELIER**

PRESIDENT, INTEGRATED SMART TECHNOLOGIES



### DEFINE LEADERSHIP.

**TROY CUVELIER:** Inspiring, always learning, educating, optimistic, listening, caring, compassionate, appreciative, team-focused.

**SOPHIA QUINN:** The ability to bring a group of people together to attain a common goal.

### WHO HAS HAD A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON YOU AS A LEADER?

**TROY:** My grandmother. She instilled in me, from early on, to always be a good person, treat other people the way you want to be treated, work hard, and that anything worth doing is worth doing right by giving 150 percent.

**SOPHIA:** My director when I worked at Blue Care Network-Great Lakes, which is our HMO subsidiary; her name was Sandy O'Connor. She took me under her wing to guide me and to develop me in a way that I didn't feel she was micromanaging me. She had one phrase that really stuck out in my mind, and I share it with my team today: "Mean what you say and say what you mean in your communications."

### WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS YOU MAKE AS A LEADER OF YOUR ORGANIZATION?

**TROY:** How to affect the future of the organization—whether it is a new product or service that we're exploring, or going into a new market. Everything that we do affects both our internal and external customers, and how we service both. I always want to make sure that my team feels well taken care of and appreciated for all the hard work they do, so they feel like they have desire to always go above and beyond for our customers.

**SOPHIA:** The first decision that's the most important is in the

hiring decisions that I make. I'm not only looking for the skills that people come with to do the job, but how they, outside of their skills, will complement the team.

### WHAT IS ONE CHARACTERISTIC THAT YOU BELIEVE EVERY LEADER SHOULD POSSESS?

**TROY:** Humility.

**SOPHIA:** Be your authentic self. Be real and let the real you show through. Don't try (to) be something that you think people want you to be.

### WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE THAT YOU SEE FACING LEADERS TODAY?

**TROY:** Finding talent.

**SOPHIA:** It's the generations in the workplace. Right now, I oversee three generations: I have baby boomers, I have gen-Xers, and I have millennials on my team. The challenge is trying to be thoughtful and very deliberate in how I relate to each of the generations.

### IS THERE ONE BEHAVIOR OR TRAIT THAT YOU ARE SEEING DERAILED LEADERS' CAREERS?

**TROY:** Not getting buy-in from their team.

**SOPHIA:** Ego—making it about them and not the team.

### WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN?

**TROY:** I try to stay pretty active, but of course, my standbys are anything with my family

and friends. I love people. Beyond that, I love technology, cooking, and I'm just getting into golf and really enjoy that.

**SOPHIA:** I love spending time with my husband, traveling, golfing, cooking, gardening, and being with family and friends.

### WHAT'S YOUR "GO-TO" SPOT TO EAT LUNCH IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN?

**TROY:** Water Street Coffee Joint.

**SOPHIA:** Food Dance. They have the best grilled chicken Caesar.

### IF HAPPINESS WERE THE NATIONAL CURRENCY, WHAT KIND OF WORK WOULD MAKE YOU RICH?

**TROY:** I love a good joke. I enjoy sharing them as much as hearing them.

**SOPHIA:** Doing something along the lines that I'm doing today. I would do something where I made somebody's life, hopefully, better in whatever it was that I was doing for them.

### IF YOU COULD GO TO DINNER WITH THREE PEOPLE WHO WOULD THEY BE?

**TROY:** Number one is always my wife; any one of my children—they're all growing up too fast; and, if I could ever catch up with him, my friend Tim Terrentine.

**SOPHIA:** Barack and Michelle Obama, and Oprah Winfrey.



## WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE LEADERSHIP BOOK?

### WHAT ARE THREE THINGS THAT YOU CANNOT TRAVEL ON BUSINESS WITHOUT?

**TROY:** My cell phone, my computer, and some nice threads.

**SOPHIA:** My iPhone, my iPad, and some of my business reading material.

### WHO WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET?

**TROY:** Martin Luther King Jr. It's so obvious what a great leader he was, and a compassionate person.

**SOPHIA:** It would be Jesus Christ. Being a Christian (I'm Greek Orthodox), I would love to know the thoughts he had knowing the purpose for which he was sent for and knowing what the outcome was going to be. Also, how did he go on day by day?

### WHAT ARE YOUR DAILY ROUTINES THAT KEEP YOU DEVELOPING AS A LEADER?

**TROY:** Every morning and/or afternoon—and this may seem like a no-brainer—but it's touching base with our team to get a pulse on how their morning is going or how the day went.

**SOPHIA:** Every morning after I get up and shower, I grab my cup of coffee and I read two devotional books. One of them is *The Confident Woman Devotional* by Joyce Meyer, and the other one is *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young. (Reading these books) gives me the opportunity to contemplate and make sure I'm the best that I can be for what the day is going to bring me.

### WHAT'S THE APP ON YOUR PHONE THAT YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT?

**TROY:** Well, there are two. One is my calendar. If something doesn't go on my calendar, it doesn't happen. Easily a close tie with that would be my home automation app that we use—Control4. That allows me to control everything in my home: security, lights, locks, shades, temperature, TVs, and audio/video. You name it.

**SOPHIA:** The news.

### WHAT EXCITES YOU MOST ABOUT THE FUTURE OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN?

**TROY:** I see things continuing to get better and better. To me, it's exciting because, when I moved here eight years ago, I thought it was already a wonderful community. To see how things have changed even more during that time has been amazing to me, and I feel so fortunate to call this place home.

**SOPHIA:** I moved here almost 29 years ago from Southeast Michigan. I love the area, and what I love is how it's transformed in that time. The community I came into is not the community it is (today) as far as its look, its business climate. I look at how we continue to reinvent ourselves.

### HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN YOUR AND YOUR TEAM'S DAILY MOTIVATION?

**TROY:** By never taking life too seriously. It really is more about, when a mishap should occur, understanding that things happen.

**SOPHIA:** When I'm in the office, which being a sales manager (has me) on the road some of the time, it's touching base with everybody, (seeing) how they're doing on a personal level first. I keep it personal, not just businesswise, because we all have a life outside of work.

### WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ENSURE YOUR CONTINUED GROWTH AS A LEADER?

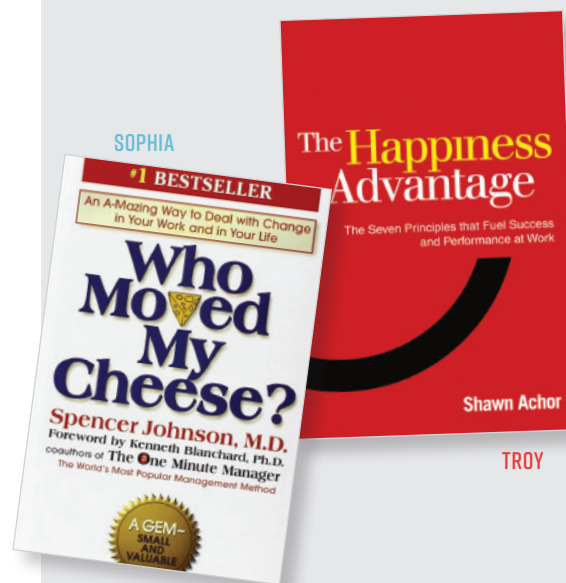
**TROY:** Always learning. Whether it's from my team, mentors, seminars, webinars, or books. I'm always learning.

**SOPHIA:** I've been to Leadership Kalamazoo. I go to Catalyst (University) every year. We have a lot of internal trainings on leadership and developing teams here, (and I read) periodicals.

### WHAT IS YOUR LIFE QUOTE?

**TROY:** The good ole Yoda quote of, "Do or do not, there is no try." That's the way it is for me. I give it my all.

**SOPHIA:** "No" is not an option. Tell me how.



**Be your authentic self. Be real and let the real you show through. Don't try (to) be something that you think people want you to be.**

SOPHIA QUINN

**Whether it's from my team, mentors, seminars, webinars, or books, I'm always learning.**

TROY CUVELIER

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# the Life List

“COLLABORATION DRIVES ECONOMIC PROSPERITY.”

MARK SCHLISSEL



COCKTAIL

## The Vineyard Sunset

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- 2 oz. Grey Heron Vodka
- 2 oz. orange juice
- 2 oz. pineapple juice
- Splash of lime juice
- 2 dashes of Fee Brothers Orange Bitters

Shake well with ice. Strain into an ice-filled Collins glass. Top off with .5 oz. of grenadine for the sunset affect.

Garnish with an orange slice, pineapple wedge, and a Michigan cherry.

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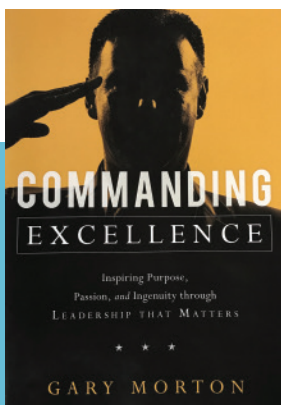
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September 22 & 23, 2017

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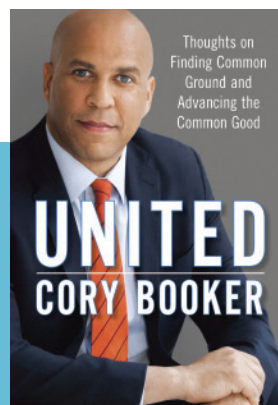
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*Commanding Excellence: Inspiring, Purpose, Passion, and Ingenuity through Leadership that Matters*

BY GARY MORTON



*United: Thoughts on Finding Common Ground and Advancing the Common Good*

BY CORY BOOKER

MUST-READS



# Laura Bell

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
BELL'S BREWERY

STORY BY HEATHER BAKER  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF BELL'S BREWERY

## 1985 | BORN IN KALAMAZOO, MI

I was born at Borgess Hospital. I have a younger brother, David; he's my favorite person. We certainly don't agree on everything, but when it comes down to it, he's just great.

## 2003 | GRADUATED FROM PORTAGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

I (went to) kindergarten at Bronson Childcare Plus, which was on Lake Street, as my mom worked for Bronson. We moved to Portage, and I went to Amberly Elementary, West Middle School, and Portage Northern High School. My senior year was split between going to (high school) and Kalamazoo Valley Community College. I got "gen eds" out of the way for college, which allowed me the opportunity to do some different things. I always felt like I was ready to move on to the next thing.

## 2003 | STUDIED ANTHROPOLOGY AND URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Because of the prep work that I did in high school, I (pursued) two degrees. I started as a journalism major because you have to pick something. I found out quickly that that was not what I wanted to do. I took a class on anthropology and really enjoyed (learning about) cultures, where people are from, and why and how they make decisions. After my freshman year of college, I volunteered with the Appalachia Service Project. I lived in Dungannon, Virginia for a summer, and





helped run one of the centers (through which we) coordinated construction projects. It got me thinking about housing and the importance of what having access to safe and affordable housing means to people and how basic needs, when they're not met, (make) the rest of your life (so much harder). It's something that was very important to me. I added a degree in urban and regional planning.

#### **2007 | ENTERED THE FAMILY BUSINESS**

After graduation, I worked at a coffee shop. I thought I would just do that for a while. I didn't really know what I wanted to do. It was probably for the best, because my dad then said, "Hey, do you want to try working for me for a little while you figure out what you want to do?" In a fatherly way, he wanted to make sure that I had some income and could take care of myself. At the time, the idea of learning the family business was cool. I stayed in East Lansing for another year, and learned the sales side of things for Bell's. I worked under our lead brewery rep for that area; I did market surveys, events, tastings, and things like that.

The thing that changed (for me) during that year was that I was the girl behind the table. Nobody knew this was my family business. Beer for some reason has a strong connection for people and places. People would tell me (their experiences when they came to Bell's), and I learned about the brewery from other people. Even though I had grown up around the brewery, when you're eight, you don't really realize your dad is changing the face of craft beer in the Midwest. Learning about that fact from other people was really intriguing to me.

**Up until this point, we always just grew as we needed to grow and it was intuitive. Now, it was time to say 'What do we want to do?'**

#### **2008 | RETURNED TO KALAMAZOO, MOVED INTO PRODUCTION AND FACED DECISION TIME**

At the end of June of 2008, I moved back to Kalamazoo to start working at the brewery. I got a little apartment on South Street. I worked in every department, every shift, in our brewery for about a month and a half to two months (each). It

**Over the last three or four years, we've hired 100 people each year. We have over 525 employees now. Back in June 2008, we had 60, maybe.**

was the way for me to learn to see if I wanted to be a part of this in a bigger way. I loaded trucks in the warehouse. I drove a forklift and (still keep my) certification up to date. I worked in the bottling line and keg line. I learned how to brew. I had the opportunity to work with pretty much every person that we employed at that point here in Kalamazoo and learn what they liked about Bell's.

Then there was this huge, awesome moment when I knew I wanted to work here; I'm lucky that it just so happens to also be my family business. I don't know if my dad remembers it exactly the same way, but he was in a place of having to decide what to do with the company. I remember us having a conversation about that I had to decide: I was either going to do this or he was going to have to make a different choice. At 24, I went on a road trip to think about it. I think I drove 6,500 miles by myself. I came back and basically said, "Okay, let's do this. I'm in. I want to be able to be the person that you feel comfortable passing (this) down to ... we'll give it a shot."

#### **2009 | BUILT BELL'S MARKETING DEPARTMENT**

At the time, we didn't have a marketing department, so I spent the next couple of years building (one). I built and launched a new website, managed our point of sales, (put together) branded merchandise and coordinated them with our releases, got us on social media, (oversaw) packaging designs, worked on customer support, ran our corporate sponsorships and partnerships, negotiated and executed contracts, and was the face of the brewery at events (and festivals) with my dad. When we hired Scott (Powell), this allowed me to focus on strategic planning.

#### **2014 | BECAME VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES & MARKETING**

Because we had grown so quickly, we aligned our sales and marketing strategy to make sure that we were all focusing on the same things, where Bell's wanted to grow and what products we wanted to grow. We made sure there was base structure in how we do things, because sometimes when you grow so quickly, there's not as much time to stop and say, "Okay, whoa. Does everybody have what they need to be successful?" Over the last three or four years, we've hired 100 people each year. We have over 525 employees now. Back in June 2008, we had 60, maybe.

In May 2015, which is crazy, as we'd been around for 30 years, I led our first annual strategic planning meeting with our directors. That was a turning point for us to stop and (realize) that we are a bigger company than sometimes we think we are. Up until this point, we always just grew as we needed to grow, and it was intuitive. Now, it was time to say, "What do we want to do?"

#### **2017 | NAMED CEO IN FEBRUARY**

With this change, the entire executive team reports to me, and I'm respectful of that chain of command. There's a lot of opportunity. We've spent so much time doing construction, building the brewery, and opening gates. Now we have this great brewery, good structure, and good people. I want to start taking the time to ask some important questions about what success looks like for us: "What kind of beer do we want to make? What kind of experiences do we want to provide and offer? How do we want to train our people? What does our purpose statement mean? How do we actually put that into play? When do we get to party?"

# How Does the Giving Garden Grow?

WITH ITS COMMITMENT TO HEALTHY VEGETABLES, ALL IN A ROW

BY REGAN DEWAAL | PHOTOS BY HANNAH ZIEGLER

Summer evenings are a time when many of us enjoy sitting down to fresh, locally grown vegetables for dinner, whether it's a ripe red tomato on a juicy cheeseburger or slices of zucchini served with barbeque chicken. But for many Southwest Michigan residents, a regular supply of fresh vegetables isn't so easy to come by.

Brenda Kolkman and Linda Clarey, two of eight coordinators of the Giving Garden in Kalamazoo, see these needs as inspiration for the hard work they put in from March through

October on property generously provided by Humphrey Products and Kendall Electric in Kalamazoo, located at the corner of East N. Avenue and Sprinkle Road.

Tucked between these two companies and a set of railroad tracks, the Giving Garden reaches its 20th year serving the community this year. The garden was founded by Master Gardener Mike Blakely in 1997. The current coordinators, also certified as Master Gardeners, now excitedly carry on Blakely's legacy. Clarey has been there since the beginning, noting substantial growth of the garden beyond that of its plants.

"I started in '97 with Mike, and we only planted a fairly small portion compared to what we do now," says Clarey. "I can remember the first year we got 5,000 pounds of produce. We were excited about that. And then I think the next year it went up to 8,000. And now, we're averaging right around 15,000 pounds a year."

The Giving Garden, which has produced up to 30,000 pounds of produce at its peak, is a volunteer project of the Master Gardeners of Kalamazoo County sponsored by Michigan State University Extension. In addition to the garden's coordinators, community volunteers care for the land, with many drawn from the Master Gardeners program who are looking to fulfill hours required for certification. Diverse backgrounds intertwine to form the Giving Garden's team. Volunteer gardeners include a local college professor, a chief financial officer, and everything in between. "When it all comes right down to it," Kolkman explains, "we're all here pushing our sleeves up and getting the job done and our hands dirty."

The heart and the reward behind the entire team's efforts are the vegetable recipients: Ministry with Community and Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes. By Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, when vegetables are picked up by one of the organizations, gardeners have harvested, boxed, and weighed an ample supply. Frequent, consistent pickups ensure that the produce is always fresh. Clarey explains, "(The recipients) get a lot of other things from grocery stores and different pantries and stuff. But they can't really afford the fresh vegetables." Striving to meet this need drives annual garden planning; coordinators use feedback from the organizations to determine which vegetables went over better than others to plant accordingly the next year.







Vegetable recipients are undoubtedly grateful. Janet Karpus, member services director at Ministry with Community, shares, “We consider our meals at Ministry with Community as more than just food on a plate—the food our members eat here may be their only meal of the day, and so it’s important to us to provide a bountiful, beautiful plate of food and to give them a moment of relaxation, community, and joy. The food from the Giving Garden allows us to prepare great meals with not only dignity and respect, but with genuine real flavor!”

Gratitude of the local organizations is, in turn, passed from the Giving Garden to its property owners, Humphrey Products and Kendall Electric. Each October, the garden tops off its season by saying “thank you” to the companies’ employees by inviting their children and grandchildren to visit and select a pumpkin to take home while enjoying cider and cookies.

Kolkman, Clarey, and their team find joy in the labor they put in, rallying as a tight-knit community to provide for regional residents in need. Describing the group’s culture,

**It’s just the idea that we can all band together as a group of like-minded individuals. And we can accomplish a whole heck of a lot.**

Clarey shares, “I love the time that we all spend together. We swap recipes. We laugh. We joke. We talk. We always have a little break in the middle of the day where we all sit and visit and have something to drink, and usually everybody brings snacks.” Kolkman

chimes in, “I also think that it’s just the idea that we can all band together as a group of like-minded individuals. And we can accomplish a whole heck of a lot. We’re able to come out and do work and provide (for the vegetable recipients). It’s rewarding for me to see that and be able to help those who can’t do a whole lot of that kind of work right now themselves.”

What makes the plants grow in the Giving Garden? Clarey quickly responds, “Commitment.”

Rooted in passion and purpose, the Giving Garden coordinators and volunteers are putting their green thumbs to work, ensuring that many Southwest Michigan residents in need will enjoy that juicy red tomato or slice of zucchini along with the sunshine this summer.

*You don’t have to be a Master Gardener to volunteer at the Giving Garden! This is a great place to learn. Interested gardeners may contact [mggivinggarden@gmail.com](mailto:mggivinggarden@gmail.com) to get involved.*

*For more information on becoming a Master Gardener volunteer, contact Linda Whitlock at [whitlo13@anr.msu.edu](mailto:whitlo13@anr.msu.edu) or (269) 383-8815.*





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NEW JOBS: **90**

### Zoetis

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[zoetis.com](http://zoetis.com)

NEW JOBS: **60**

### GT Independence

STURGIS, MI  
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NEW JOBS: **50**

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NEW JOBS: **3**



BY RON KITCHENS  
PUBLISHER

ILLUSTRATIONS ISTOCK.COM/MACROVECTOR  
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## Beautiful Music

THE GREATEST COLLABORATIONS ARE COWRITTEN BY MANY

**HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY SONGWRITERS, SPECIFICALLY, HOW THEY CAN USE A FEW WORDS TO NOT ONLY CONVEY A MESSAGE, BUT ALSO TRANSPORT YOU TO THEIR STORY.**

Great lines, like “She wears a Red Sox cap / To hide her baby dreads” or “We were shinin’ like lighters in the dark / In the middle of a rock show,” transport me to specific places the writer wants to take me.

As I have learned more about the craft of songwriting, the constant seems to be collaboration. Great music is created by teams who understand that each person brings with them unique experiences, talents, and resources.

The interesting thing is that in the hypercompetitive world of the music business, everyone gets credit, regardless if you did a little or lot; if you contributed to the song, you’re listed as a cowriter. Contributions are valued and celebrated.

Great communities, companies, and organizations can create their own music, their own futures, through collaborations as well. But it seems to be all too rare. Too many times, we see others as competitors, when in truth we are not competitors, we are just on the same journey, the same path with different destinations.

Imagine the success we could have if collaboration was our first response, if we understood that there is abundance enough for

all to win. As one of my favorite thought leaders Zig Ziglar would say, “You can have everything you want if you just help enough people get what they want.” Ziglar understood collaboration.

No one person or organization has enough experiences, resources, or talent to succeed on their own. But through partnership, whether it be on one project or over a lifetime, we can conceivably have all the resources of the world at our fingertips if we will just collaborate with those on our journey.

Our challenge as leaders is to be willing to share resources, betting that together we can make beautiful music.

ALWAYS FORWARD,

Enjoyed this article? Let us know! Tweet @269Mag using #269Mag with your thoughts.

**As I have learned more about the craft of songwriting, the constant seems to be collaboration. Great music is created by teams who understand that each person brings with them unique experiences, talents, and resources.**



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