

269

MAGAZINE

inside:

A FIRST LOOK AT 2019
CATALYST UNIVERSITY
SPEAKER TIM SCOTT

Education & the Economy:

The Ties That Bind

RECOGNITION

**The Honor Roll:
Recognizing 2018 Catalyst
Education Award Winners**

HOW DID I GET HERE?

**Balancing Work and Family
with Tim Lester, Head Football
Coach of the WMU Broncos**



UNIFORM PROGRAMS BUILT FOR A MOBILE WORLD.



**WE
HAVE
AN
APP
FOR
THAT**

G-Trak Mobile. The first App of its Kind.

Technological advancements push businesses today to provide efficiency and data that drive the organization forward. Leading the way in the uniform rental industry, we have created our own mobile application, G-Trak Mobile, to provide our customers and every uniform wearer with personalized, live access to uniform delivery tracking and service requests.

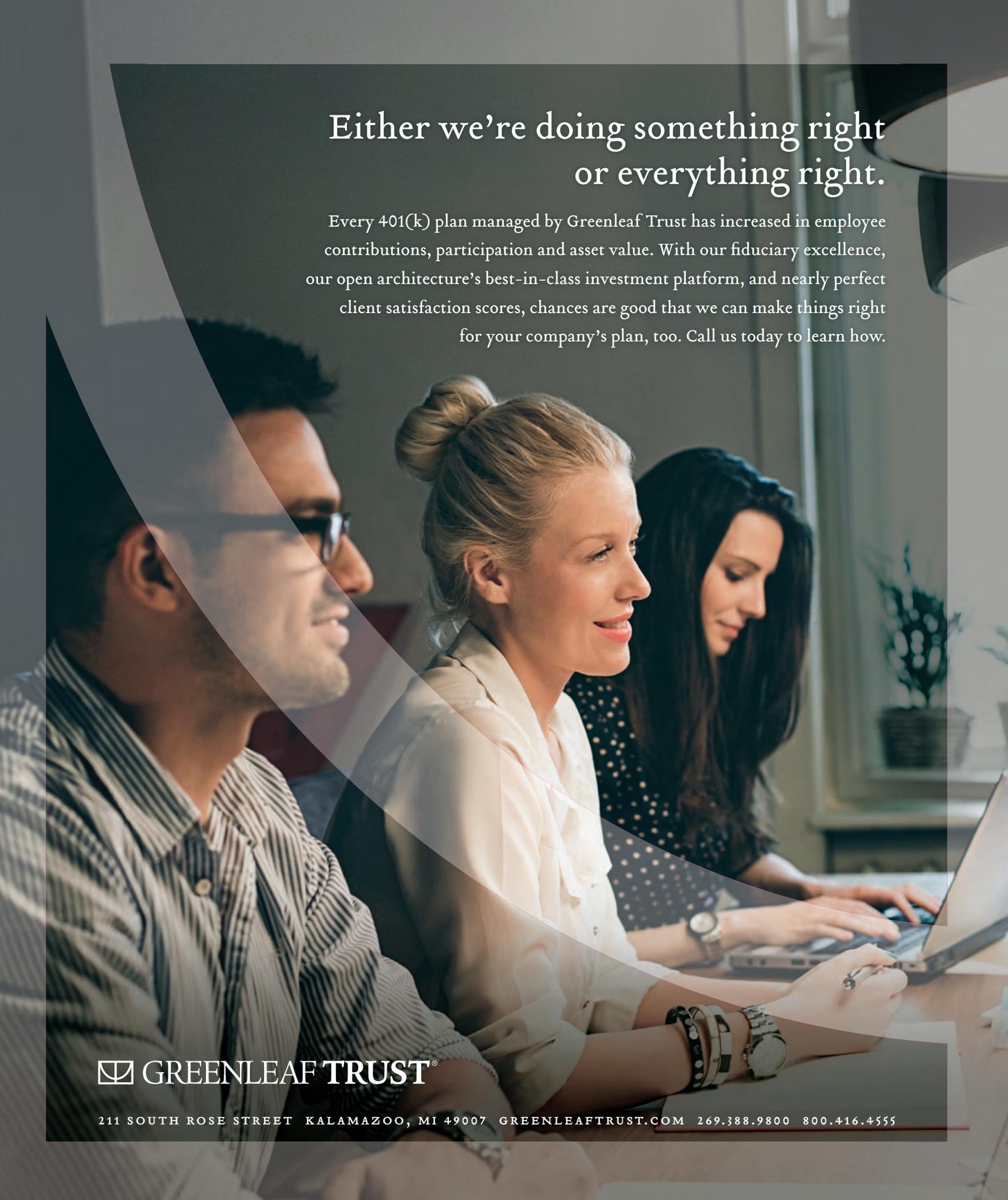
Finally, a uniform company that saves you time, energy, and keeps your employees happy by putting access to repair requests, delivery status, size changes and more in their hands...literally.



NO ONE ELSE MAKES
YOU LOOK SO GOOD.

P: 800.468.7174
GallagherUniform.com

151 McQuiston Drive,
Battle Creek, MI 49037



Either we're doing something right or everything right.

Every 401(k) plan managed by Greenleaf Trust has increased in employee contributions, participation and asset value. With our fiduciary excellence, our open architecture's best-in-class investment platform, and nearly perfect client satisfaction scores, chances are good that we can make things right for your company's plan, too. Call us today to learn how.

 **GREENLEAF TRUST®**

211 SOUTH ROSE STREET KALAMAZOO, MI 49007 GREENLEAFTRUST.COM 269.388.9800 800.416.4555



We make community spirit work.*

* At Eaton, we take pride in our community. We know that success for our business is about more than just profits. Success means improving sustainability, enriching our communities, engaging our employees, and promoting inclusion and diversity to build a better future. Because this is what really matters.

To learn more about Eaton in Southwest Michigan, go to: [Eaton.com/SWMichigan](https://www.eaton.com/SWMichigan)



Powering Business Worldwide

We make what matters work.

CONTENTS

EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY

THE TIES THAT BIND PG 10

FEATURES

HONOR ROLL

Recognizing the winning school, principal, and teacher of the 2018 Catalyst Education Awards.

18

DEPARTMENTS

EDITORIAL

6

COMMUNITY COMMENT

9

REGIONAL SCORECARD

17

PRODUCTION LINES

Sturgis Molded Products in Sturgis, MI, is allowing family to shape its winning culture.

24

DESIGNER BLUEPRINT

A Q+A with Kelly Canavan, Global Market Development Manager at 3M.

28

JOBS REPORT

31

GRADS ON THE GROUND

33

TOAST OF THE TOWN

Boost your spirits this winter at Green Door Distilling Co. and Kalamazoo Stillhouse.

36

MADE IN (269)

39

LEADER2LEADER

40

FIRST LOOK

43

LEADER LITERACY

47

HOW DID I GET HERE?

Balancing work and family with Tim Lester, head football coach of the WMU Broncos.

48

ALWAYS FORWARD

50



LOOKING BACK

What did you learn from a memorable assignment given to you by a K-12 teacher?

STAFF

- PUBLISHER RON KITCHENS
EDITOR IN CHIEF HEATHER BAKER
ASSISTANT EDITOR JAKE FREDERICKS
CREATIVE DIRECTOR MARTIN SCHOENBORN
CREATIVE CONSULTANT SCOTT MILLEN
DESIGN ADAM ROSSI
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS MIRANDA GARSIDE
STEVE HERPPICH
MIKE LANKA
HANNAH ZIEGELER
EDITORIAL COORDINATOR MICHELLE MILLEN
ADVERTISING NICK RIASHI
PETEY STEPHANAK
JOBS REPORT JILL BLAND
PRINTER RIVER RUN PRESS
SUBSCRIPTIONS 269MAG.COM/SUBSCRIBE

CONTRIBUTORS

- HEATHER BAKER
JAKE FREDERICKS
RON KITCHENS
CATHY KNAPP
JAMES LOUGHMILLER
SARAH MANSBERGER
RICK VAN GROUW

My agribusiness (FFA) teacher asked me to create a business plan for manufacturing cattle feeders. I have been writing business plans ever since. @ronkitchens

Using math to prove that nature is intentional, my eighth-grade science project confirmed the appearance of the Fibonacci sequence in pinecone spirals and buttercup petals. @imheatherbaker

During the design sprints in Ms. Miner's high school visual imaging class, I discovered that there are many ways to solve the challenges that arise in any project. @iAmAdamRossi

Arguing in front of a "judge" (our brilliant teacher) for mock trials in fourth grade impressed upon me the power of asking thoughtful questions. @s_mansberger

My journalism teacher elected me to the role of high school newspaper editor, and that position became a crash course for me in learning the importance of teamwork. @CathyKnapp12



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 build a home, go to work, and bring dreams to reality.

For full-length articles & more, visit 269mag.com.

241 E. MICHIGAN AVE., KALAMAZOO, MI 49007 | (269) 553-9588



DISTINGUISHED DOWNTOWN PROPERTIES



MORE THAN 70 LUXURY UNITS

DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO

Starting at \$1,500/month, including parking



Peregrine Tower



Peregrine Square



Peregrine Plaza



Peregrine 100

Downtown Lofts

PEREGRINECOMPANY.COM

269.226.6336



BY HEATHER BAKER
EDITOR IN CHIEF

PHOTOS ISTOCK.COM/ENKORKMAZ



From a Bud to a Rose

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE YET EMBRACEABLE

ONE DAY, IN SIXTH GRADE, MY ENGLISH TEACHER DELIVERED A SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT TO OUR CLASS: FIND A WORLD LEADER WHO INTERESTS YOU AND PREPARE TO TELL HIS OR HER STORY IN A 10-MINUTE SPEECH IN FRONT OF THE CLASS.

For any sixth-grader, a research project is daunting. For someone who considers herself to be shy, as I did, the amount of stress associated with standing in front of 40 classmates for 10 minutes giving a memorized speech is colossal. And remember, I come from a time, long, long ago, when “we had to walk to school uphill, both ways”—which in this case meant we had no PowerPoint, only about 100 hand-written index cards to guide us.

I spent the next several weeks in preparation, researching my leader’s background. I selected Mahatma Gandhi. This was before the movie based on his life was made, and to be honest, I’m not sure how or why I picked him. He wasn’t the usual suspect. He was from India, a country that did not typically rise to the fore pages of U.S. and world history. And he wasn’t the typical “hero.” Gandhi wasn’t a general expertly trained in war games, a monarch leading dramatic cultural changes, nor an explorer changing world geography with a discovery. Rather, he was a physically unimposing man who led the Indian people to stand up against the British empire with the seemingly weakest of all weapons—nonviolent civil disobedience.

Looking back, I thank my teacher for challenging me to put together a huge amount of research into something others could understand and to face the fear of my first official public

speaking opportunity. I also thank Gandhi for expanding my conflict management toolkit, or emotional intelligence as you will learn on page 45. His teachings helped me understand that there is another remedy for a social or political conflict other than bearing arms. Gandhi taught me that “we must become the change we want to see.”

Speaking of change, in this issue of 269 MAGAZINE, you’ll notice some changes of our own as we move toward the change our team wants to see in Southwest Michigan.

Speaking of change, in this issue of 269 MAGAZINE, you’ll notice some changes of our own as we move toward the change our team wants to see in Southwest Michigan. Relevant research-based articles investigating issues that affect economic growth are still our passion, as well as stories of standout leaders and companies in our midst, much like Amy Cummings, Mike Barwegen, and Kalamazoo

Regional Educational Service Agency—winners of the 2018 Catalyst Education Awards honored on page 18.

But we’ve changed. We’ve added new features like Grads on the Ground, showcasing young talent in our workforce, and Toast of the Town, celebrating local makers of beer, wine, and spirits—a leading segment in the region’s agricultural industry. There’s more planned for future issues, too. And we’re trying out new names like Production Lines and Designer Blueprint on current features. As Shakespeare’s Juliet says, “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Same great features with great new names.

Come along with us, turn the page of 269 MAGAZINE’S first issue of 2018, and get ready for a new era of the change we want to see.

READ ON,

Heather

Tell us about your Southwest Michigan stories @269Mag with #MySWMIStory!

The **perfect** mix of banking technology and local customer service.



www.smb-t.com | Member FDIC

CREATING LEARNING & HEALING ENVIRONMENTS
 THAT SERVE OUR COMMUNITIES
 NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE.....

DIEKEMAHAMANN
 architecture & engineering
 612 S Park Street, Kalamazoo, MI (269) 373-1108 www.dhae.com



WMU Homer Stryker School of Medicine, Kalamazoo, MI



East Jackson Elementary School, Jackson, MI

TAKING CARE OF YOU IS OUR PASSION.

At Keyser, we know insurance. Catalyst University knows leadership. We're proud to partner with Catalyst University to focus on your goals, your passions and helping you thrive.



KEYSER TAKING CARE OF YOU

877.381.3570 keyseragency.com

Benefits | Insurance | Surety | Consulting

How can our region best support innovation in K-12 curriculum?

USE YOUR VOICE @269MAG WITH #COMMUNITYCOMMENT



MARK CUSTER

VICE PRESIDENT BUSINESS RELATIONS
CUSTER

INNOVATION IN K-12 SCHOOL DISTRICTS BEGINS WITH THE SUPERINTENDENTS.

It's up to these leaders to find models that are working and explore these with a group of teachers who are great thought leaders. Many districts are testing new models of teaching, technology equipment, furniture, and curriculum programs.

The next step would be to set up trial or pilot classrooms with grant money to test these innovation models to see what works. If the pilots are successful, school districts could then try to raise or capture the additional dollars necessary to expand these programs.



DANIEL BACKMAN

PHARMACEUTICAL DESIGN TEAM LEADER
CRB ENGINEERS ARCHITECTS & BUILDERS

CURIOS STUDENTS THRIVE ON INDIVIDUAL ADULT ENGAGEMENT.

Teachers do a fantastic job, but they need help. Get involved! Kalamazoo RESA's Project Lead the Way is a fantastic program that brings STEM education to schools. Eager children are looking for guidance on how to bring new ideas to life. The sooner we engage the youngest students, the more likely they are to still believe anything is possible. That's where the seeds of great ideas are nurtured.

Beyond the classroom, let's bring students into our workplaces. In my industry, engineers, architects, and constructors need to show students what we do every day. The sooner we expose middle school and high school students to real professional environments, the sooner they can contemplate options for their own careers and the sooner they can start innovating. Students need to understand how various professions impact discovery, invention, and improvement in our world so that they can be several steps closer to contributing, well before they're looking for their first internship or first "real" job.



EMILY TURNER

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
ONSTAFF GROUP

THE REGION CAN SUPPORT INNOVATION BY EXPOSING YOUNG MINDS TO WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF MANUFACTURING AND TECHNOLOGY.

We need to highlight to K-12 classrooms the opportunities available in our communities that are based on teams, technology, and innovation. Students should explore what companies, like Schupan & Sons and MANN+HUMMEL USA to name a few, have to offer; what a possible career path looks like for them as they enter the workforce; and how they can provide a family with a meaningful living and themselves with a noteworthy career.

Our K-12 curriculum must change its mindset to one that supports manufacturing and technology as must-have skill sets that are of significance and importance in our society today.



REPRESENTATIVE BETH GRIFFIN

66TH DISTRICT
MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUPPORT FROM REGIONAL EMPLOYERS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF DRIVING INNOVATION IN THE CLASSROOM.

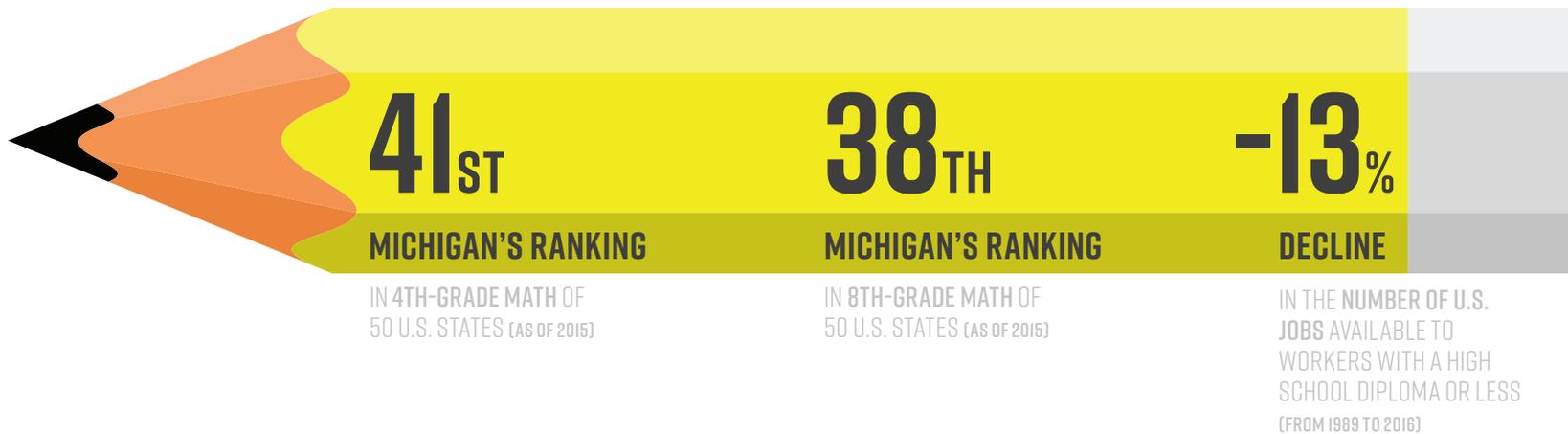
Southwest Michigan is well situated to take advantage of the ideas businesses can bring to the table when it comes to education. Preparing students for today's in-demand jobs often requires new ideas and methods for teaching students. Hearing directly from employers about the skills they need in employees will allow teachers to develop new and innovative ways to deliver that information in a classroom setting.

Innovation also requires us to think outside of the traditional classroom setting and work on getting students hands-on experiences so that they are better prepared for higher learning or to enter the skilled trades workforce.

EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY

THE TIES THAT BIND BY RICK VAN GROUW

PHOTOS HANNAH ZIEGLER



So how are Michigan and the nation doing in terms of generating educated workers? The short answer: not great.

TWENTY YEARS AGO, THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS (NCES) EMPHASIZED THE CONNECTION BETWEEN GOOD EDUCATION AND A STRONG ECONOMY—AND IDENTIFIED CORE WEAKNESSES THAT ENDURE TODAY.

The center’s 1997 report, titled “Education and the Economy: An Indicators Report,” talks about economic vitality in terms of worker productivity and establishes that worker productivity “is affected by many factors, including the education and skills of the workforce,” and that “education remains an important contributor to productivity growth and has a major influence on the standard of living.”

Two decades later, even as the U.S. and Michigan economies continue to rebound from the Great Recession, worker productivity and economic strength continue to depend heavily on an educated workforce.

“I think in general, when people are better educated, they have more earning power and they produce more. That tends to help the economy,” said Tom Burt, chief operating officer at Duncan Aviation. “The economy is about producers; it’s about a product that somebody wants to buy.”

To find enough qualified workers, Duncan Aviation recruits from Western Michigan University (WMU) and a few community colleges in Grand Rapids and Lansing, plus further afield to places like Purdue University and colleges in Texas and Pennsylvania.

Over time, the skill sets and education requirements of the workforce have evolved, Burt says. “As years go by, we see a more technology-driven economy and we know that education is what helps somebody produce in a technology world,” he said. “Years ago, it took strong legs and strong backs to produce, but more and more it’s changing to where it’s higher technology. It’s less about physical strength and more about brain power and how you apply things and do things more efficiently. That sort of education is certainly going to help the economy do better.”

In a nutshell, in today’s economy, “If you want to earn more, you have to be worth more.” And to be worth more, you need to learn more.

EDUCATION BUILDS A BETTER ECONOMY

National statistics bear this out. Two decades after its indicators report, a new NCES study identifies clear economic advantages for those who attain a college degree or at least take some college courses.

- In 2015, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor’s degree (\$50,000) were 64 percent higher than those of young adult high school completers (\$30,500).
- In 2016, the employment rate among 20- to 24-year-olds was 88 percent for those with a bachelor’s or higher degree and 48 percent for those who did not complete high school.

In Southwest Michigan, ties between education and economy remain strong:

- The Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) and local school districts continue to grow programs that prepare students for life after graduation.

- “Our programs offer career and technical educations in subjects including manufacturing, drafting, construction trades, electrical technology, auto technology, aviation, and culinary arts—all the pathways students might pursue after high school,” said Cameron Buck, program administrator for Kalamazoo RESA’s Education for Employment department.
- The Kalamazoo Promise continues to offer college tuition subsidies of 65 to 100 percent to graduates of Kalamazoo Public Schools.
- And the value and impact of having WMU in the region are huge.

“Education, whether you’re talking about higher education or K-12 education, plays a vital role in preparing workers,” says WMU president Dr. Edward B. Montgomery. “Skilled workers are more productive; workers who are more highly educated have more skills and are more adaptable.”

Montgomery cites a 2016 report from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce as evidence of the increasing need for a better-educated workforce. The study found that from 1989 to 2016, total U.S. employment grew by 31 percent, yet “the number of jobs for workers with a high school diploma or less actually declined by 13 percent—a loss of 7.3 million jobs.” The same study reported that “college graduates outnumber high school-educated workers in the workforce for the first time ever.”

An earlier study from Georgetown University (“Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020,” 2013)

predicts, “By 2020, 65 percent of all jobs in the economy will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school.” The percentage of jobs in Michigan that currently requires postsecondary education is even higher (70 percent).

What this means to academic leaders like Montgomery: “It’s getting harder and harder to get into the middle class with a high school

The short answer: not great.

Lots of kids attend school, but too few emerge with the knowledge and skills necessary for economic success. The 1997 NCES report determined, among other conclusions: “Although the population in the U.S. has higher educational attainment than that in most other industrialized countries, students in the U.S. do not have higher achievement levels than students

Education, whether you’re talking about higher education or K-12 education, plays a vital role in preparing workers.

degree and no further education. I’m not saying nobody can do it, but the easier way to go forward is if you’re prepared with the skills that college provides. A degree prepares you not just for that first job, but six or seven or eight jobs from now. The expectation of a degree is: Does it prepare you for that sixth job?”

WORKING TO BUILD A BETTER-EDUCATED WORKFORCE

So how are Michigan and the nation doing in terms of generating educated workers?

in other industrialized countries. In particular, elementary and secondary students in the U.S. have far to go in mathematics and science before their test scores assume the lead.”

At the same time, the Michigan Department of Education wants the state’s students to be 85 percent proficient across a range of indicators by 2024. Much of the state, including Southwest Michigan, is falling short of that goal. For example, Kalamazoo Public Schools’ highest proficiency scores in the 2016-17 academic

MICHIGAN STUDENT RANKINGS AMONG 50 U.S. STATES

	2003	'05	'07	'09	'11	'13	'15
4TH-GRADE READING	28TH	30TH	30TH	34TH	35TH	38TH	41ST
4TH-GRADE MATH	27TH	32ND	32ND	38TH	41ST	42ND	42ND
8TH-GRADE READING	27TH	29TH	32ND	32ND	28TH	32ND	31ST
8TH-GRADE MATH	34TH	33RD	36TH	36TH	36TH	37TH	38TH

SOURCE: THE EDUCATION TRUST-MIDWEST



SUCCESS STORIES

year were 38.5 percent in third-grade math, 44.8 percent in fifth-grade English language acquisition, and 46.4 percent in 11th-grade evidence-based reading and writing. And Michigan ranks fair to middling in nationwide student achievement scores.

Brian Gutman, spokesman for Education Trust-Midwest, knows Michigan a lot of work ahead. “Much research has been done around student success,” Gutman said. “No matter the student’s goal and path after high school—entering the workforce, pursuing a certificate or license, entering a two- or four-year program, or enlisting in the military—education matters. No matter the goal, our students need to be prepared to succeed.”

Right now, that happens too infrequently. A 2014 report from Gallup cites a 2013 study that found “that fewer than three in 10 Americans feel high school graduates are prepared for college, and that fewer than two in 10 say graduates are ready to enter the labor force.” Many Michigan high school graduates are among those who enter college underprepared. According to statistics compiled by the Michigan Department of Education, 78 percent of Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency high school graduates in 2015-16 had to enroll in some form of postgrad education, and 39 percent of them required at least some remediation course work.

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Gutman and Montgomery acknowledge that quality classroom education is vital to educational improvements in the state and region—which in turn fosters a better-educated and more skilled workforce.

“We know the single greatest in-school factor for student learning is the quality of classroom instruction,” Gutman said. “There are plenty of variables we, as a system and schools, cannot control—issues that students walk in with every day. But we can make sure our teachers are well supported. We can enact policies to make sure the most vulnerable students have

In terms of academic achievement, two states stand out: Massachusetts is widely regarded as having the highest-performing schools in the nation, and Tennessee is viewed as the fastest-improving education state.

“By most measures, Massachusetts is the top-performing education department in the country, and maybe in the world,” said Brian Gutman, spokesman for student advocacy organization Education Trust-Midwest. “They have high academic expectations, they have accountability systems in place, they actually identify where schools and educators are struggling so they can drive improvements. They’re top in most subjects, and it’s not by accident. There has been a long, careful process that’s been followed by multiple administrations of both political parties. Massachusetts is a testament to creating success and progress and building on it.”

	MA	TN	MI
TOTAL NUMBER OF K-12 STUDENTS (PUBLIC AND CHARTER)	927,550	967,183	1,519,065
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO QUALIFY FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH	38.3	58.6	47.9
PER PUPIL SPENDING PREK-12, FY 2012	\$14,142	\$8,294	\$10,855
ESTIMATED AVERAGE SALARY OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS, 2013-14	\$73,736 (2ND)	\$48,049 (42ND)	\$61,866 (10TH)

SOURCE: THE EDUCATION TRUST-MIDWEST

Meanwhile, Tennessee gets props for having the “most improved” education strategy.

“Several years ago, the state really started focusing on this process in a holistic way,” Gutman said. “By focusing largely on its educational workforce and using data to inform practice and professional development, Tennessee has become the fastest improving on several key metrics.”

For example, the Tennessee Department of Education prepares an annual survey of the educational workforce on a wide range of topics.

“I’m surprised by two things—high participation rates of 50 percent or more and, more important, is a question they’ve asked for a decade regarding teacher satisfaction: ‘Do you feel supported?’ They ask questions about the data systems and whether they help teachers improve. And the results are solidly in the 30th percentile. Something like 86 or 87 percent of the teachers in Tennessee feel supported and valued.”

Meanwhile, a 2016 survey of 11,000 public school faculty and staff by Michigan’s two

largest teachers’ unions found that 83 percent found the quality of support they receive average or below. Titled “Dissed, Devalued, Demeaned,” the study found educators’ primary complaints are compensation, job security, and standardized tests. The study’s key takeaways:

“Widespread discontent among public school employees;”

“Growing sense that the education profession is headed to a crisis without more funding and better policies;” and

“Near universal feeling that public school employees are not respected or considered when policies are being crafted.”

According to Gutman, if Michigan wants to improve academic achievement, it should support its teachers, protect vulnerable students, provide access to quality education, and focus on early literacy. “All those things will help us increase student success,” he said.

I am independent.

I want my own space.

I want to express myself.

I want to make noise.

I want to settle down.

I want room for my children to grow.

I want a place to call home.

AmeriFirst Home Mortgage.
The first step to homeownership.

AMERIFIRST[®]
HOME MORTGAGE

welcome home

www.amerifirst.com | 269.324.4240

950 Trade Centre Way, Suite 400 | Kalamazoo, MI 49002
NMLS # 110139 | a division of AmeriFirst Financial Corporation





access to the highest quality education. We can make sure we're focusing on early literacy, where Michigan is really far behind. All those things will help us increase student success.

Montgomery said WMU is actively addressing the challenges of pre-K and K-12 education. For example, professors Patricia Reeves and Jianping Shen in the university's Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology recently received a \$12.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education for their High Impact Leadership for School Renewal Project. According to Montgomery, "They'll use the funding over the next couple of years to work with leadership teams—principals and aspiring principals—at up to 150 high-need schools in our communities. How do they enhance their reading curriculums? What are the best practices around early childhood education?" Reeves and Shen will "work with these school districts to take proven methods to raise kids' reading scores. Because right now, kids who are supposed to be at a third-grade reading level are reading a full year behind—and more kids are doing that more regularly. And if they're that far behind in third grade, how far behind will they be in high school? They're probably going to drop out."

Kalamazoo RESA's Cameron Buck said the effort will continue to prepare students no

matter their career path. "It's a great time to be in career and technical education," he said. "For so long, the conversation has been that, if college isn't the right path for you, then you

It's a lot different now, not like the experience of their parents, who worked at the same company for 35 years. Their careers are going to shift multiple times, and we want them to have the skills they're going to need.

always have the trades to fall back on. But trades are an equally valid career path. It's not, 'One, and if not one, then the other.' It's both. We're shifting the stigma away from what people think about vocational learning. Our goal is not to put kids into entry-level positions where we expect them to stay for the next 30 years. We want them to be equipped with the tools to change occupations several times. It's a lot different now, not like the experience of

their parents, who worked at the same company for 35 years. Their careers are going to shift multiple times, and we want them to have the skills they're going to need.

Duncan Aviation's Tom Burt agrees that schools and society need to broaden their definition of a successful education. "We need to continue to work on not just focusing on four-year degrees, but work on two-year degrees, and maybe some transition, where students get a bit more hands-on, technology-based experience." He acknowledged the potential in capabilities-based education—as, for example, in Germany—but worries about premature and irreversible pigeonholing. "Maybe we need people to do a better job to understand their strengths," he said. "We need to help people understand more about who they are, about their strengths and weaknesses, to recognize that they're stronger in some areas and less strong in another area. Young people especially, all through school, need to come to terms with who they are. Unless you know who you are, it's hard to know where you want to go."

All the focus on education can only strengthen the economy down the road.

"[Consider] the value of higher education—producing graduates and enhancing the people skills of our graduates—and the earnings of those with a college degree [compared] to those with a high school diploma: you're talking about a \$1 million spread in earnings potential over a lifetime," WMU President Montgomery said. "That's a dramatic impact on your lifetime earnings. College graduates tend to live longer, own a house, and stay married—lots of things are positively associated with a college degree."

“ I have received very professional resolutions to any issue we have encountered in a timely manner. The staff understands our company culture and requirements which makes my job as a manager easier. ”

– *Greg Kapus*

Edwards Garment



LEARN MORE:

wsitalent.com/workforce-strategies



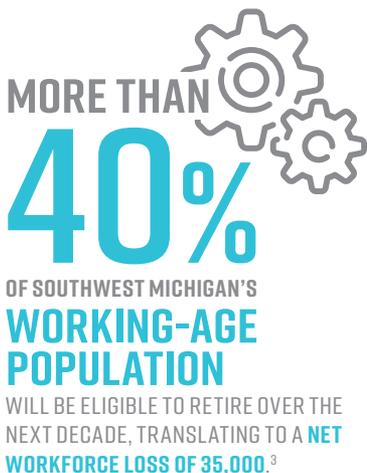
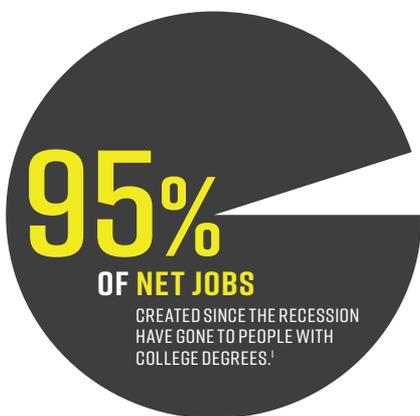
RECRUITMENT & STAFFING

EDUCATION COUNTS

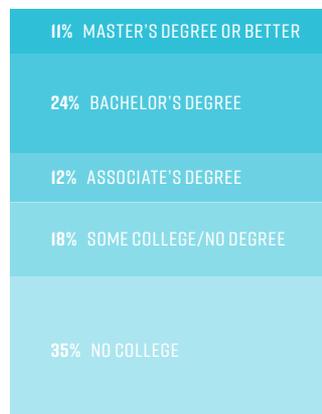
IN THE WORKFORCE RACE

Companies and geographic locations are working harder than ever to attract top talent. Shifts in population demographics and swift technology changes are transforming how the workplace functions. In the coming years, locations with an educated and agile workforce are expected to win big in the race for skilled workers.

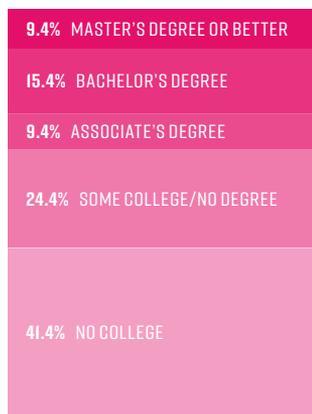
DID YOU KNOW...



BY 2020, 65% OF U.S. JOBS WILL REQUIRE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION:²



CURRENT EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT LEVELS WITHIN THE REGION:³



¹"AMERICA'S DIVIDED RECOVERY: COLLEGE HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS," GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, 2016.

²"RECOVERY: JOB GROWTH AND EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS THROUGH 2020," GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, 2013.

³POP-FACTS DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT OF BERRIEN, BRANCH, CALHOUN, CASS, KALAMAZOO, ST. JOSEPH, AND VAN BUREN COUNTIES, CLARITAS, 2017.

DESPITE HAVING
51,285 COLLEGE STUDENTS
IN THE REGION,
SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN IS THE
ONLY REGION LOSING MILLENNIAL
POPULATION AMONGST ITS PEERS.⁴



⁴TOTAL ENROLLMENT, COLLEGESIMPLY.COM, 2016; AND COMPARISON OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN TO ACTUAL PEERS—AKRON, OH; GREENSBORO, NC; HUNTSVILLE, AL; PEORIA, IL; ROCHESTER, NY; AND SPRINGFIELD, MO; AND TO ASPIRATIONAL PEERS—AUSTIN, TX; BOISE, ID; GREENVILLE, SC; KNOXVILLE, TN; MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL, MN; AND OMAHA, NE. AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 2009-2013, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU.

TRENDING DOWNWARD

DURING ITS ONE-STATE RECESSION, MICHIGAN LOST FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN.

THIS HAS RESULTED IN A

**10%
DROP**

IN THE NUMBER OF STATEWIDE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES.



THIS DECREASES THE NUMBER OF APPLICANTS TO MICHIGAN'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.⁵

THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE VARIES FROM 93.4% OF INCOMING NINTH-GRADERS WHO GRADUATE WITHIN FOUR YEARS IN KANSAS TO 62.3% IN WASHINGTON D.C.⁶

THE NATIONAL AVERAGE IS

81.4%

MICHIGAN RANKS 39TH OF THE 50 STATES AT

74.3%

⁵2014-2016 SPECIAL RUFFALO NOEL LEVITZ REPORT: 2014-2024 PROJECTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES BY STATE AND RACE/ETHNICITY, BASED PRIMARILY ON DATA FROM WICHE, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU.

⁶"AMERICA'S HEALTH IMPACT REPORT," UNITED HEALTH FOUNDATION, 2015.



HONOR ROLL

INNOVATION IN EDUCATION MARKS THE 2018 CATALYST EDUCATION AWARD WINNERS **BY JAKE FREDERICKS**

PHOTOS HANNAH ZIEGLER

IN THESE EXCITING TIMES OF ASTONISHING ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION, THE TRADITIONAL MODEL OF EDUCATION HAS CHANGED.

Today's schools are dynamic, filled with experimentation and active learning. Throughout Southwest Michigan, educators are dreaming up innovative methods to reach students.

Regional economic development organization Southwest Michigan First founded the Catalyst Education Awards with the mission of making the region globally recognizable for its success in preparing young people to thrive in education and employment. According to Ron Kitchens, the organization's chief executive officer, "Everyone can point to a single life-changing

moment in their past that set them on their current path. And for many, this occurred in a classroom. We would like to celebrate the fact that across the region, these moments happen in our schools every day."

The 2018 Catalyst Education Awards, sponsored by the Michigan Lottery, recognize educational excellence by honoring one elite school, principal, and teacher for their diligent and creative work to elevate student achievement. By implementing best practices in their classrooms and schools, they pave the way for the next generation of thinkers, engineers, artists, and leaders. Take out your number-two pencils and read on to take note of the extraordinary successes of our region's exemplary educators.

TAKE OUT YOUR NUMBER-TWO PENCILS AND READ ON TO TAKE NOTE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESSES OF OUR REGION'S EXEMPLARY EDUCATORS.



WINNING PRINCIPAL

MIKE BARWEGEN

TOBEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VICKSBURG, MI

ONE AUTUMN DAY IN VICKSBURG, MICHIGAN, A FIFTH-GRADER AT TOBEY ELEMENTARY NAMED CARCEL THARGE WALKED INTO PRINCIPAL MIKE BARWEGEN'S OFFICE LOOKING UPSET. HIS PROBLEM WASN'T A CASE OF PINK EYE OR A PETITION FOR EXTRA RECESS TIME—HE WAS CONCERNED FOR ANOTHER STUDENT.

A kindergartener named Hannah Cook, born with cerebral palsy, was new to the school that year. Though Hannah is armed with a positive attitude and the determination to learn and play like every other student, Carcel noticed that she was having difficulty at recess.

Because Hannah uses a walker and crutches, she was having trouble getting through the sand on the playground and couldn't access the equipment alongside her classmates. Instead, she spent her recess time in a small sandbox, far removed from the other children.

"Carcel approached me and said, 'That's just not right Mr. B; we have to do something for her,'" Barwegen remembered.

Hearing his concern, Barwegen asked Carcel to return with some friends so they could brainstorm solutions. Together with their principal, Carcel and a group of fifth-graders used a green screen to film a short video and launched a GoFundMe webpage. They hoped to raise \$20,000 to purchase a piece of equipment that every student at Tobey would be able to use.

"The kids did a ton of work. They went fundraising door-to-door. They were in a parade. They called companies. They were doing it all for Hannah and future kids. They were fifth-graders on their

THE KIDS DID A TON OF WORK. THEY WERE DOING IT ALL FOR HANNAH AND FUTURE KIDS. THEY WERE FIFTH-GRADERS ON THEIR WAY OUT OF THE SCHOOL. THEY KNEW IT WASN'T FOR THEMSELVES.

way out of the school. They knew it wasn't for themselves," said Barwegen, who was there to support his students every step of the way. After months of effort, the school raised over \$90,000—enough money to install three special pieces of equipment.

This is just one of the principal's many heartwarming stories of behaviors exhibited by the school's students. "I am all for the kids," he said. "When you create the environment that gives them that opportunity, they do incredible things." Tobey students have raised money after natural disasters, started campaigns for local food banks, and worked tirelessly to support their classmates.

For Barwegen, the environment he has created can be summed up by what he calls "The Tobey Way," a schoolwide value system he conceived to teach students about responsibility and integrity. "The Tobey Way goes for everyone here," he said, "from the cafeteria workers to the teachers, to the janitor, to the students—everyone."

As principal, Barwegen strives to live this code every day and leads biweekly assemblies where the whole school learns about building good character. For this school year, Barwegen has chosen to focus on a theme of "1.57" during these assemblies. This number refers to educational researcher John Hattie's study of collective teacher efficacy. Hattie concluded that a teaching faculty's ability to work together as a team is the number-one factor influencing a student's academic growth with an effect size of 1.57. This figure far outweighs other factors such as homework, parental involvement, and socioeconomic status. Barwegen's model has proved to be successful for his students, as schooldigger.com reports that in 2017, academic achievement at Tobey ranked above 90 percent of elementary schools in the state of Michigan.

If you pay a visit to the school, you will likely see "Mr. B," as his students affectionately call him, sitting down and chatting with a group of first-graders at lunch, giving out high-fives as a line of kindergarteners pass by, or filling in for a teacher when substitutes are scarce.

WINNING SCHOOL

KALAMAZOO REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AGENCY

EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT
KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MI

AFTER LEARNING THE QUADRATIC EQUATION IN ALGEBRA CLASS, OR MEMORIZING MULTISYLLABIC VOCABULARY WORDS, OFTEN ONE STUDENT RAISES THEIR HAND TO ASK THE AGE-OLD QUESTION, "WHEN AM I ACTUALLY GOING TO USE THIS?"

The answer that follows is an important one, but teens who have not yet explored possible career paths may be left feeling unconvinced.

Jason Luke, administrator of the Education for Employment (EFE) program for the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA), explains, "The challenge is that kids don't know what career they want to pursue. The magic bullet that they say to appease society is, 'I'm going to college,' but often their post-high school plans don't get more specific than that."

As a result, many undergraduate students change their major, often multiple times, delaying graduation. And when they do enter the workforce, graduates can struggle with unemployment or underemployment before finding a direction that is right for them.

Kalamazoo RESA aims to meet this challenge head-on with its EFE project, spearheaded by Luke. Kalamazoo RESA is one of Michigan's 56 independent school districts that work with local school systems to provide special education, career readiness, and technology support to students within the county. EFE is a program that offers students real-world learning experiences not available in a traditional school setting. The goal is to help young adults prepare for a career



Your workspace can help you **achieve your goals.**

We're committed to creating a space that helps you fulfill key objectives and create a seamless environment where you love to work. The Grand Rapids Griffins' new custom conference room, above, features videoconferencing technology, a custom display case, supportive seating, and even a table designed to look like the ice rink. So whether you're setting goals or scoring them, we're here to help make it happen.

cluster

through interactive trade-specific courses, STEM curriculum, and career awareness programs.

As one of these initiatives, Kalamazoo RESA partners with local employers to recruit industry professionals with a passion for teaching to provide the most valuable learning experience possible. In Vicksburg High School, for instance, EFE's automated manufacturing teacher has decades of experience as an engineer, while a Kalamazoo Public Safety Officer teaches a class of young adults attracted to law enforcement. Through EFE, high school students can explore their interests while potentially accumulating credits toward a college degree. As of 2017, 96 percent of EFE students graduate and already have the knowledge and experience to get a jump start in the job market.

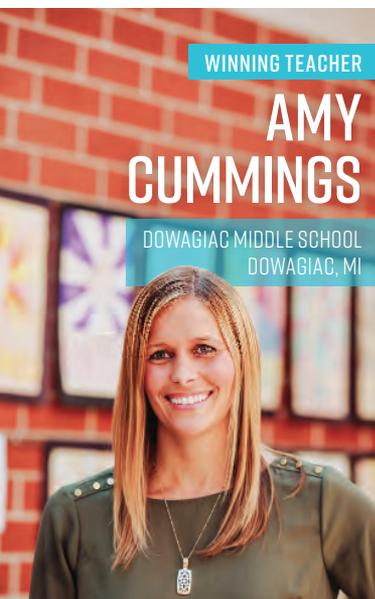
Beyond specialized courses, EFE reaches young people of all grade levels through various projects and interventions. The program's goal is to ensure that every student in the county has an opportunity to explore potential career paths each year. "It's about getting to know yourself introspectively," said Luke. "We try to connect with our business communities to give kids more insight than they would get sitting down to Google it or just not having a clue where to start."

Luke believes that the earlier kids can start thinking about this, the better. That's why EFE has launched an exciting initiative called MiCareerQuest Southwest—a gathering of 6,000 eighth- and ninth-graders and hundreds of local business leaders that recently convened at the Kalamazoo Expo Center during the first two days of November 2017. Employers from four diverse industry areas set up interactive displays to quickly engage teens in some of the exciting things that they might do in an average day of work.

For one day, students can speak with industry experts and test-drive careers they may not have even heard of before. They can try brain surgery with Stryker tools, or join a pit crew to see if they can change a tire faster than a mechanic. They might pick up a hammer to work together shingling a roof, or take off piloting a virtual plane.

"Unless we take direct measures and have some strategies in place to help young people with this career question, we are going to get a lot of the same results," Luke said. "I think the number-one piece is recognizing that all kids have value and we want to let them understand why they're important, what their strengths are, and how they can be successful in life."

WE TRY TO
CONNECT WITH
OUR BUSINESS
COMMUNITIES
TO GIVE KIDS
MORE INSIGHT
THAN THEY
WOULD GET
SITTING DOWN
TO GOOGLE IT
OR JUST NOT
HAVING A
CLUE WHERE
TO START.



WHEN AMY CUMMINGS POSES A QUESTION TO A CLASS OF EIGHTH-GRADE EARTH SCIENCE STUDENTS, EAGER HANDS SHOOT UP ALL AROUND THE ROOM.

"I love to have class discussions," Cummings said. "On a Monday morning, it's my job to keep the energy up. I hate silence."

As any teacher or parent can attest, keeping a middle schooler's attention is no easy task, but Cummings is more than able to meet the challenge. "I'm a full-blown science geek," said Cummings. "My family will make fun of me because that's all I talk about. But the kids love it. They see me and think it's okay to love a subject."

Cummings brings that passion to every assignment, hand-crafting each worksheet, PowerPoint, and project to meet a classroom full of different learning styles. "I have never once taught out of a book—I create everything myself," she said. "I spend hours and hours." Cummings' inexhaustible energy sparks an excitement for learning in her students, many of whom stay in contact with her long after the year ends.

With Cummings at the helm, eighth-graders know to prepare for the many thrilling activities that she has planned throughout the year. Classmates cheer as an earthquake shake-table demolishes miniature structures, or when their team gains a point in a competitive game of review Jeopardy. Some days students come to class and get their fingers sticky creating delicious graham-cracker models of plate tectonics, while on a different day they might log on to their class Chromebooks to analyze hurricanes and other natural events in real time.

To connect with her middle schoolers, Cummings often injects personal stories and pictures from scientific field studies she

has participated in across the country. But to take students on an expedition along with her, she turns to technology. Cummings, Dowagiac Middle School's science chair, has been able to purchase virtual reality goggles for the school, enabling her classes to go on cyber field trips. From the comfort of the classroom, she uses her iPad to lead her students on expeditions to Mount Everest or even the moon!

Cummings' hard work and creativity not only makes her class more entertaining but also has a measurable impact on her students' learning. This past year, before her classes began their study of plate tectonics, Cummings gave her students a pre-test to assess their baseline knowledge. Without any classroom instruction, the average score was 38.36 percent. At the end of the unit, students retook the test to measure their learning growth. Cummings' goal was for 80 percent of her eighth-graders to get at least an 80 percent on the post-test, or to increase their pre-test score by 50 percent. After weeks of learning, experimenting, and asking questions, 97.6 percent of her students met or exceeded that goal.

More than anything, Cummings cherishes the chance to instill a love of learning in her young students and show them that science can be fun. "There have been class periods where my cheeks hurt from laughing so hard," she said. "I love to look out at a room full of smiles."

To Cummings, teaching is more than just a career, and sharing her joy is the best part of the job—a theme shared by all 2018 Catalyst Education Award winners.

EXPANDED WINNER PROFILES
CAN BE READ AT 269MAG.COM.

THERE HAVE
BEEN CLASS
PERIODS WHERE
MY CHEEKS HURT
FROM LAUGHING
SO HARD.
I LOVE TO LOOK
OUT AT A ROOM
FULL OF SMILES.

Intentionally
preparing the
**next generation
of leaders.**

Learn more at
catalystuniversity.me/programs

50
First 50



the
Always
Forward
Leadership
Podcast
with Ron Kitchens



RON KITCHENS
ALWAYS FORWARD

Do you desire to lead big?

The Always Forward Leadership Podcast is designed to encourage and inspire emerging and existing leaders to greatness. Listen in as Ron shares insight on leadership and other relevant topics such as innovation, talent, engagement, and economic development in these weekly conversations.

 iTunes

Subscribe on iTunes or download episodes
from ronkitchens.com/podcasts

Collaboration is critical to creativity and creativity is at the heart of everything CSM Group does. So when they were looking to create an environment designed to facilitate more personal interaction and inspire the next generation of creatives, Treystar emerged as the perfect partner.

“They’re very creative, very agile. Which was really a great fit with us. They helped us create a space that reflects what our culture is, not just what we say it is.”

Called The Foundry after the business that occupied it in the early 20th century, the facility is a 53,000 square foot creative incubator built on the Herman Miller Living Office® concept. With exposed girders, clerestory windows, artful meeting and breakout areas, The Foundry breathes fresh air, sunlight and encourages a sense of camaraderie and cooperation. It’s simply the most powerful working environment in Southwest Michigan. The Foundry. Join us now, or join us in the future.

To learn more about Treystar’s managed and developed properties contact Fritz Brown at fbrown@treystar.com or call 269.329.1808. To see Todd tell the rest of his story and CSM Group’s transformation of The Foundry visit thefoundrykzoo.com/csm. 

Todd McDonald
President
CSM Group



CSMGROUP

A CULTURE MOLDED BY FAMILY

PROVES TO BE A WINNER FOR STURGIS MOLDED PRODUCTS

BY HEATHER BAKER PHOTOS HANNAH ZIEGLER

COMPANY

Sturgis Molded Products (SMP)

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SPARK

After working for others during his twenties and thirties, Paul Clark established his own mold-making business at the age of 40. SMP resulted from the Clark family's vision to establish a culture that is both family-owned and privately held, which it still is today.

MOLDED TO PERFECTION

"We're a plastics injection molding company. We use the latest technologies in scientific molding to provide solutions for our customers who typically provide us with designs for parts that they want made," explains Mark Weishaar, president of SMP. "Figuring out how to make traditional metal parts in plastic is our specialty. Our customers will bring us a metal part, and our engineers will concept out how to design it in plastic. We're also now doing two-shot molding, a specialized and automated process where different materials, including two separate kinds of resin, are injected into a single, multi-chambered mold."

PRODUCT PLACEMENT

"About 80 percent of our business is functional automotive and heavy truck parts—all kinds of parts found in a car. You just can't see them. They're under everything and involve technical

design," says Weishaar. SMP products are not just under the hood; you can even find them under the mascot logo on football helmets. "And then the remaining percentage of our business is for the medical and packaging industries such as dosing devices that come with medicines. We have a clean room where we perform those functions, which is one of our advantages."

JOBS RUN THE GAMUT

Jobs range from unskilled positions to technical positions that require a technical or two-year degree, such as electricians, toolmakers, and automation specialists. A four-year degree is required for engineers.

COMMUNITY ROOTS GROW DEEP

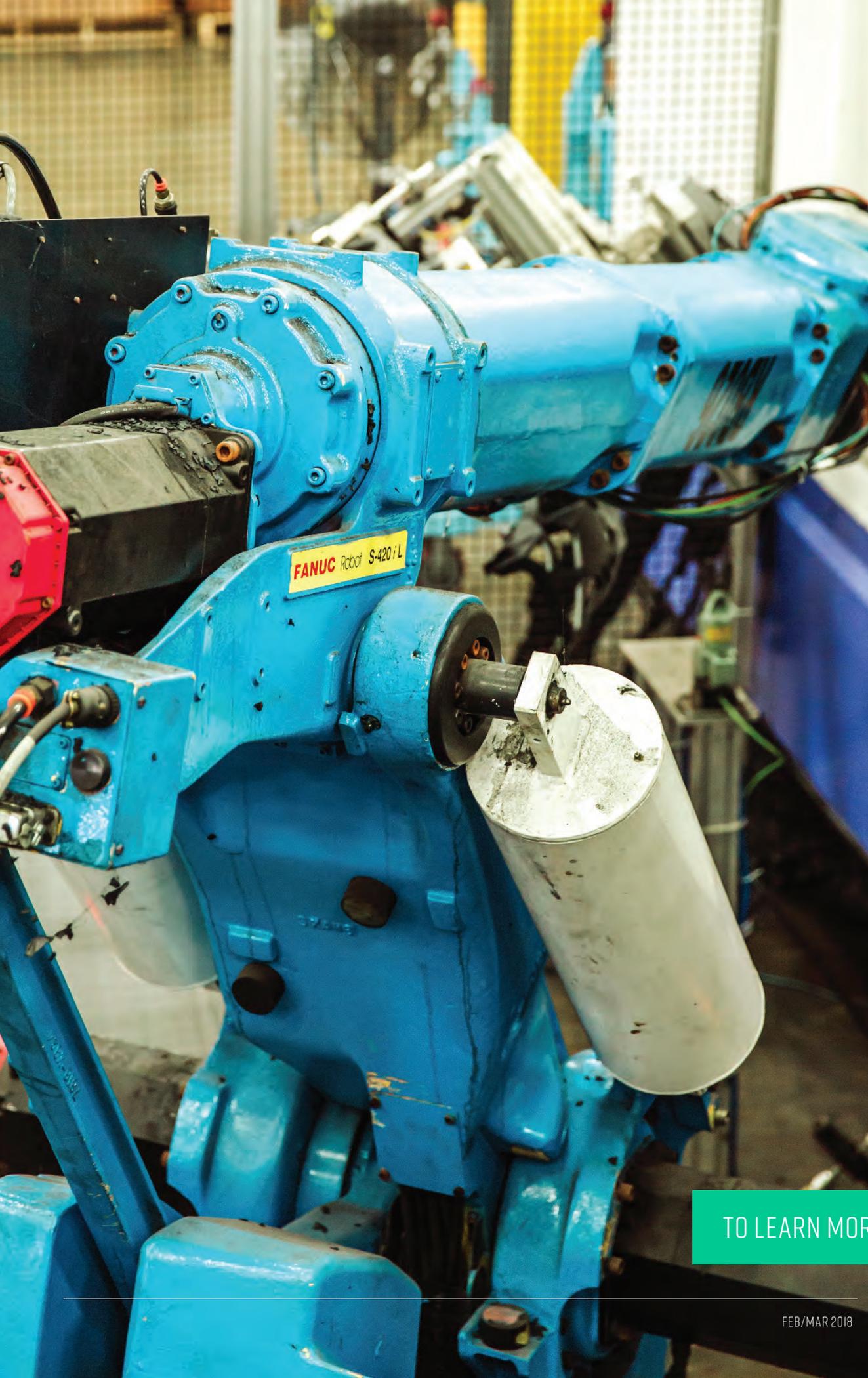
"We had an employee who retired (a couple of months ago) who was here 42 years. His kids worked here in the summers. This is a place where people know there's going to be stability. They know we're going to be here for the long haul. We want to be family-owned for the next hundred years," says Weishaar.

WHAT YOU NEED

"If we say something, we're going to do it. We focus on quality for our customers. Our engineers develop deep collaborations with technology experts around the world to offer solutions to our customers before we are asked, 'Hey, I need this product to be made in plastic. Can you do that?'" says Weishaar.

"The word 'stewardship' means a lot to us—stewardship of the environment, stewardship of our people, and stewardship of the assets that we have. Our customers experience an empowered culture as we give people tremendous opportunity to grow and do new things. And we find a way to make our work structure fit that. We give them 'What You Need.' That's our 'WYN' culture: W-Y-N, or the first letter from each word in 'What You Need.'"





LOCAL EXECUTIVE

Mark D. Weishaar, President

HEADQUARTERS

1950 Clark Street
Sturgis, MI 49091

YEAR FOUNDED

1966

REGIONAL FOOTPRINT

182,500 square feet, with a
30,000-square-foot warehouse
expansion planned in 2018

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

240

ANNUAL SALES

\$50 million

NOW HIRING

Dedicated people looking for
a career in a family-oriented
environment can learn more
at smpco.com/jobs.aspx
or by calling 269.651.9381.

Those with tooling, automation,
or maintenance skills are most
in demand.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT SMPCO.COM

Realizing Potential, Delivering Results.

Office

Industrial

Retail

Multi-Family

Investment



Your Southwest Michigan Commercial Real Estate Experts

Kalamazoo

1803 Whites Rd. Suite 2
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
269 353 0311

naiwwm.com

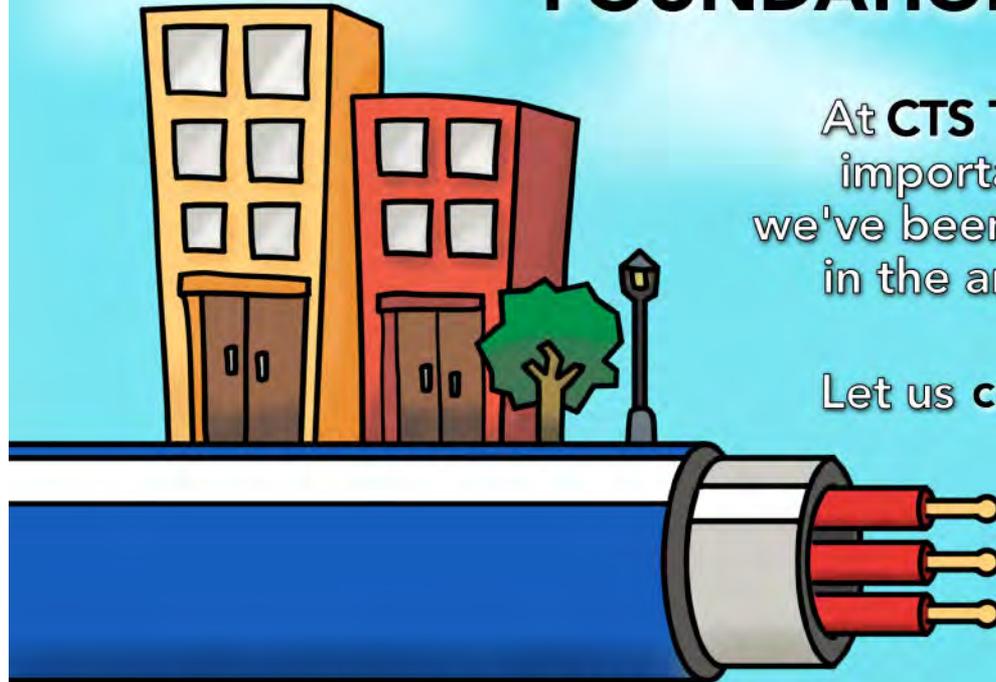
Grand Rapids

100 Grandville Ave. SW Suite 100
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616 776 0100



2016 Top Firm Award

Build your Business on a **FOUNDATION OF FIBER**



At **CTS Telecom**, we know the importance of infrastructure - we've been building our network in the area for over 100 years.

Let us **construct a solution** for your business today.



We Answer the Call

www.ctstelecom.com - 269.746.4411

No **pr**oblem.

We didn't become a premium-quality digital and offset printing company by accident or acquisition. Instead, we worked our way up, one satisfied customer at a time. In fact, at this point, we can provide an array of solutions to most any printing and fulfillment need you have. We'll go the extra mile to make sure you'll have great product, great value and an even greater experience.



600 Shoppers Lane | Parchment, MI 49004
269.349.7603 | We're different.

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

A Q+A WITH KELLY CANAVAN

GLOBAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT MANAGER AT 3M

BY JAKE FREDERICKS | PHOTOS BY STEVE HERPPICH

If you dive in headfirst and really understand what's going on behind the scenes, the rest of it will be so much easier.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

MIX

POWERED BY SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST

mixswmi.com

HOW DO YOU APPROACH DESIGN FROM YOUR MARKETING POSITION AT 3M?

In today's world, I think visual communication itself is a mini-miracle.

So many different things are competing for our attention all the time. The fact that we can find anything at all is miraculous. My job is to make that happen and help things that are really important stand out.

We at 3M approach this problem through technology; we have this idea that hardcore science should be descriptive, but also useful. We are lucky enough to live in a time where technology can help us do just about anything, including design.

WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN THIS FIELD?

In one of my first few days at 3M, I happened to run into a neuroscientist. He asked me, "You're in marketing, right? I've got this model on my laptop that will predict what people are likely to notice when they first see something. Wouldn't that be interesting?"

After that conversation, he became one of my best friends, and his idea became 3M's Visual Attention Software (VAS) and my main body of work. I had no idea how important that moment would be. It just happened. That's the way a lot of things happen at 3M: Somebody has an idea for a new technology or innovation, and then everyone figures out how we can make it happen. Today, I am responsible for making sure people understand this software and know how to get the most out of it.

WHAT DOES 3M'S VISUAL ATTENTION SOFTWARE DO?

It's a pretty sophisticated piece of technology, but its function is dead simple. All it does is one thing: It just analyzes whatever you give it—photographs, layouts, or mock-ups—and gives you data highlighting which areas observers are most likely to see at first glance. This tool is already being used by companies like General Mills, Shell, and P&G, but absolutely anyone can use it. The interface couldn't be more user-friendly.

WHAT PRACTICAL USES DOES THIS TECHNOLOGY HAVE?

The VAS is very useful for anyone who's involved in visual communication. People from all different walks of life are using it in the real world to get a sense of what is getting noticed and what people actually see. We have designers using it for all sorts of things: package design, advertising, webpages, and in-store merchandising.

Everyone is looking for a silver bullet. Everyone is looking for a best practice. There really are no best practices when it comes

to design. The 3M VAS helps designers get their work reviewed and approved more quickly with a little bit of data at their back. With objective data, they can reduce the amount of subjective feedback that can lead to design churn.

WHAT IS THE SCIENCE BEHIND THIS SOFTWARE?

Research shows that when it comes to vision, people notice a lot less than you might expect. The human brain only processes about two degrees of our total visual field in high definition and full color—the rest is foggy and unfocused until you move your eyes.

You can get a sense of what I mean with a simple experiment: Hold your arm out straight and put your thumb up. The width of your thumb is about the same size as your full resolution visual field. This narrow focus makes it really important to be able to direct people's eyes where you want them.

People quickly shift their attention from one image to the next, so first, you have to capture their attention and then funnel their eyes exactly where you want.

HOW CAN YOU PREDICT WHAT PEOPLE WILL SEE FIRST?

When a person views something, their brain processes the information in two stages—unconscious viewing first and then conscious viewing. We are all familiar with conscious viewing; it's what you're doing right now. But even before your eyes completely focus—and this can be for up to five seconds—the brain is still seeing things unconsciously.

You can think about this phase as a filter. Everything is filtered out except five essential elements: edges, intensity, red-green and blue-yellow color contrast, and human faces. This is the same for every human being, no matter where you were born or how old you are.

When your conscious viewing eventually kicks in, your eyes will most likely be directed to areas that your brain identified as "important" during unconscious viewing. These are the areas where the five elements of unconscious vision were the most intense. Our VAS takes an image and produces a heat map identifying areas of an image that a casual viewer is most likely to look first.

HOW CAN DESIGNERS MAKE USE OF THIS INFORMATION?

By maximizing these five elements tactically, you can create something that is more visually catching. People quickly shift their attention from one image to the next, so first, you have to capture their attention and then funnel their eyes exactly where you want.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN IN TODAY'S WORLD?

Any neuroscientist will tell you that when we communicate visually, more than half of our cortex, the part of the brain that thinks, is engaged. There are roughly 40 different areas in our brain that process a distinct aspect of vision in some way. For example, colors, shapes, and spatial relationships all relate to specific areas. This makes it an excellent idea to communicate visually; humans just naturally find the medium so engaging.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR PEOPLE JUST STARTING OUT?

If you are planning to go into any field, first decide if you really care about it. Ask yourself, "Do I have the passion to carry me through?" Next, I would advise you just to plunge in headfirst. Information is so readily accessible now, and there is so much to learn. People tend to understand things superficially now because information is miles wide and an inch deep. I feel that it is essential to pick a slice of it and go deep. If you dive in headfirst and really understand what's going on behind the scenes, the rest of it will be so much easier. Then, you can start to have meaningful conversations with people who can help you build and do things.



THANKS
FOR A GREAT YEAR!

SUBSCRIBE AND ADVERTISE AT 269MAG.COM





PROPELLING MICHIGAN'S WORKFORCE FORWARD

THE STATE'S SKILLED TRADES TRAINING FUND SERVES COMPANY NEEDS

BY GATHY KNAPP PHOTO ISTOCK.COM/PRIMAGEFACTORY

A PRIMARY ACTIVITY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS IS TO VISIT LOCAL COMPANIES AND LEARN ABOUT THEIR SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, AND NEEDS. AN ALL-TOO-COMMON DISCOVERY AT THESE VISITS IS ONE SPECIFIC NEED: SKILLED TALENT.

In response, the state of Michigan created the Skilled Trades Training Fund (STTF) program in 2014. Through Michigan's workforce system, grants are awarded to assist employers in training, developing, and retaining their current and yet-to-be-hired employees. The program is delivered through collaboration between economic development, educational, and Michigan Works! agencies.

From 2014-2017, the state awarded 1,422 companies an average grant of \$33,938 each. The trend continues. In 2018, 74 employers in Southwest Michigan will receive awards totaling \$2,889,781; the average award is \$39,051.

X-L Machine, Inc. in Three Rivers is one of the 2018 recipients. The manufacturer builds prototype-to-production parts with the goal of fulfilling each role in their customers' supply chain.

"Our customers have a unicorn idea," said General Manager Chris Orłowski. "We make it cost-effective and manufacturing-ready by creating a prototype and taking that through a couple iterations to result in a product that can be produced in volume."

Highly immersed in serving the automotive sector, X-L Machine is a high-mix, low-volume business, producing from one to 60,000 of a given part per year. The company employs

86 people with unique skill sets, contributing to its use of the STTF program.

"To run our organization, we need machinists, in addition to CNC (computer numerically controlled) and CMM (coordinating measuring

Kaizen, Green Belt, blueprint reading, CNC machining, and more.

Controller Patty Lieffers completed this year's STTF grant application, which will provide training for 14 team members.

WE BRING IN PEOPLE WITH MECHANICAL APTITUDE OR A CTE (CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION) BACKGROUND AND TRAIN THEM FROM DAY ONE. THEY START AS AN OPERATOR AND, AS THEY EXPAND THEIR SKILLS, CAN MOVE INTO A MACHINIST'S ROLE, PROGRAMMER, OR MANUFACTURING ENGINEER.

machine) programmers," Orłowski explains. "We bring in people with mechanical aptitude or a CTE (career and technical education) background and train them from day one. They start as an operator and, as they expand their skills, can move into a machinist's role, programmer, or manufacturing engineer."

X-L Machine has found the STTF program to assist with the forward development of its team. The company has utilized the funding for apprenticeships and classes in Mastercam,

Did she find the process to be difficult? "I thought it might be daunting, but it really wasn't," Lieffers said. "The spreadsheet has the formulas built in. Once you have the class schedule and pricing, it's easy to fill out the application. Plus, there are people available to help. They were able to give me feedback and suggestions on the narrative portion."

To the question if this program brings X-L Machine value, both Orłowski and Lieffers respond with a resounding "Yes!"



From First Encounter, to Lasting Impression. Think Edwards

Born in Kalamazoo and raised on Edwards Street, we've been a part of the community for 150 years. We began our journey as the Kalamazoo Pant Company manufacturing men's and boys pants. In the late 1970s we transformed the organization into Edwards Garment, a premier career and uniform supplier. Today, we are known as Edwards, a special brand with a strong heritage and a bright future. Drawing strength from our deep roots in our quest to change, risk, innovate, reinvent and grow. Edwards is your single most reliable source for career and uniform apparel that helps organizations bring their brands to life by sending people to work and play looking great and feeling engaged. It's the reason why millions of people have gone to work wearing Edwards. Call for a local distributor near you.

800.253.9885
edwardsgarment.com



KALAMAZOO SCORES BIG

AS ZACH TERRELL CHANGES HOMETOWN TEAMS

BY HEATHER BAKER | PHOTO MIKE LANKA

EDUCATION

Western Michigan University (WMU)
Finance, BBS '15,
MBA (in progress)

HOMETOWN

Fort Wayne, Indiana

EMPLOYMENT

Executive Development Associate,
Zeigler Auto Group

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

Neither my wife or I am from Kalamazoo, but it has become our home. We love it here. We love the people. We love this community. We feel strongly about staying, putting down roots, and continuing to make this our home.

ON THE JOB

At Zeigler, I'm in a management development program. I'm selling cars, the core of the business, and helping to lead their cultural leadership and team development program called the Elevate Leadership and Development Academy. Zeigler is giving me the opportunity to share what I have learned along the way from tremendous leaders in college, football, academia, and my experience in the NFL.

LESSONS LEARNED

I got this role because of networking and building relationships through WMU. The things you learn in school obviously help, but honestly forming relationships has been the biggest piece. I'm not in the business of cars; I'm in the business of people, and everybody here wants to exceed our clients' expectations. That's my job every single day: to exceed people's expectations—how we treat people and how we make them feel.

LOOKING AHEAD

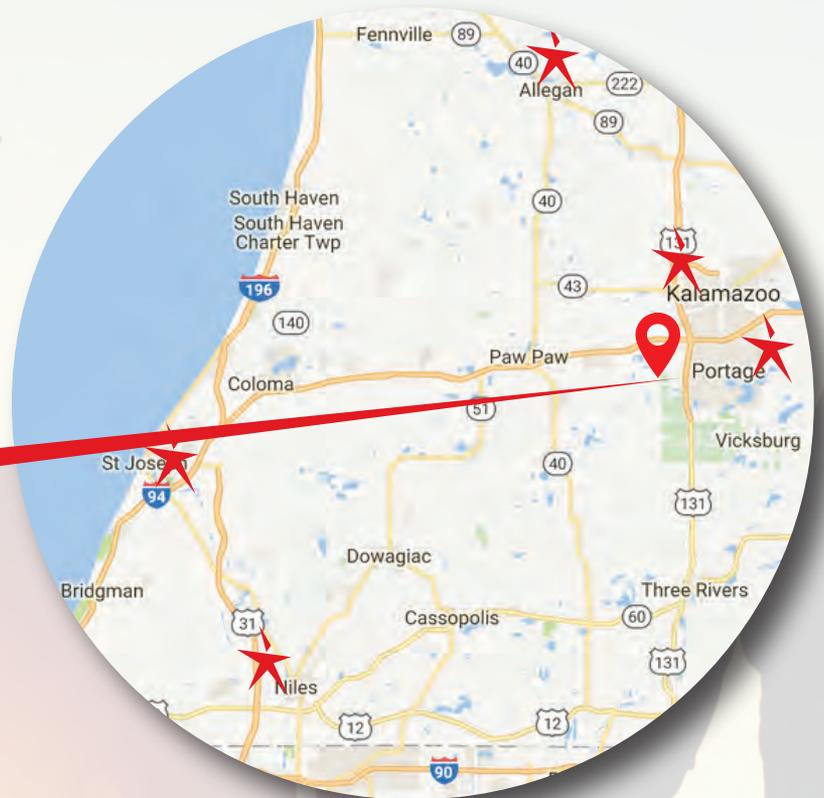
There's a lot that excites me about Southwest Michigan's future seeing the development being brought here. We have some major corporations that have chosen to stay, but also new and fun things are coming to the area that, as a young adult, really excite me.

A FEW OF ZACH'S FAVORITE THINGS

Going to football games and eating. The Kitchen House in Richland. Arcadia Brewing Company, Bell's Eccentric Café, and the different breweries in downtown Kalamazoo. For breakfast, it's Maggie's Café on Stadium Drive.



At **OnStaff USA**, we want to make sure everyone has a chance to succeed so we offer a GED class at our Portage location during the week.



Corporate Office :
5207 Portage Road, Portage,
Michigan 49002



269-385-6292



Info@onstaffusa.com



NOT JUST ANY TEAM YOUR TEAM



Justin Horn, Bryan Todd, Nancy Turtle, Kim Labadie, and Marcus Brussee

At Mercantile Bank our team of business banking pros are invested in the growth of Southwest Michigan and the vibrant businesses that call this area home. From business loans to payroll services, we can help you navigate growth or streamline processes.

For banking that's **here to get you there**[®], visit [MercBank.com/Business](https://www.mercbank.com/Business)

BUSINESS LOANS
TREASURY MANAGEMENT SERVICES
WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT TOOLS

mercbank.com 269.553.9100

 **Mercantile**[®]
Bank of Michigan



A REASON TO LIFT YOUR SPIRITS

CRAFT DISTILLERIES ARE GETTING INTO THE LOCAL MIX

BY JAMES LOUGHMILLER | PHOTOS COURTESY OF IMPERIAL BEVERAGE, GREEN DOOR DISTILLING CO., AND KALAMAZOO STILLHOUSE



I'VE NEVER HAD TO EXPLAIN
WHAT CRAFT ALCOHOL MEANS.
CUSTOMERS UNDERSTAND...AND
APPRECIATE THE TIME AND QUALITY
THAT'S ASSOCIATED WITH IT.



THE U.S. CRAFT SPIRITS INDUSTRY IS BOOMING. WITH MORE THAN 1,315 CRAFT DISTILLERS NATIONWIDE AND GROWING, THE “CRAFT” MOVEMENT IS TAKING HOLD IN A WAY THAT COULD MIRROR THE SUCCESS CRAFT BREWERS HAVE HAD IN RECENT YEARS.

And with a reputation for its world-class breweries, Kalamazoo is poised to be a destination point for the craft spirits industry as well.

Distilleries like Green Door Distilling Co. and Kalamazoo Stillhouse are bringing craft spirit production to downtown. Retail stores, bars, and restaurants have been seeing a shift toward consumers who are looking for craft and local.

“Though the regulations for distilleries are more stringent than craft breweries, we have the luxury that craft breweries have opened the minds of customers to craft alcohol,” says Jon Good, founder of Green Door, located in Kalamazoo’s River’s Edge District. “I’ve never had to explain what craft alcohol means. Customers understand what it means and appreciate the time and quality that’s associated with it. We have the craft brewing industry to thank for that.”

For Joanna and Nic Merrill of Kalamazoo Stillhouse, craft spirits have been a longtime passion. Nic grew up admiring his dad’s winery and eventually his distillery adventures in Washington, and, before founding Kalamazoo Stillhouse, he and Joanna traveled frequently to the West Coast to apprentice with his dad and leading distillers. When they saw an opportunity in Kalamazoo, they decided to make their mark on the town with the craft spirits they both cared so much about.

“We found a niche in a community that we love, and the possibilities are endless,” explains Joanna. “It’s comforting for us to support other local businesses, and we do that as much as we can. Michigan is an agricultural mecca, with grains, botanicals, and other flavors and natural resources right here in our backyard. We can also get locally sourced glass bottles, barrels for aging our spirits, and even our

T-shirts printed down the street. We only see that list growing and growing. In turn, we hope to have our spirits served in our favorite eateries, cocktail lounges, stores, and beyond. The ‘it takes a village’ adage is coming to fruition for us in a mutually beneficial way, and we couldn’t happier to be a part of our hometown community through our distillery.”

And Kalamazoo-area consumers are responding to the local, small-batch craft spirits, as Scott Niecko of Mega Bev can attest. Following the trend of craft beer, requests for craft spirits have been steadily rising over the past six months, says Niecko, who is optimistic about their continued growth.

While craft distillers may face challenges breaking into the market, competing with the price and name recognition of predominant brands on the shelf, he says that “more consumers are coming in everyday and looking for craft and local spirits. Some consumers are gravitating toward them just to support local business—it is really neat to see our community behaving like that with their buying patterns.”

Imperial Beverage was excited to watch this trend grow and to see the parallels between craft beer and craft spirits. It was one of the first distributors in Michigan to pick up craft beer brands before they had really caught on—to the extent that Imperial’s President, Joe Cekola, earned the nickname “Weird Beer Joe.”

In April 2017, Imperial Beverage joined the three other Michigan ADAs (Authorized Distribution Agents) as a distributor of spirits, which had been a long-sought-after milestone for the distributor. “We are pleased to be the first beverage distribution company to receive a new ADA certification in Michigan in over ten years,” says Cekola. “With the statewide footprint we’ve built with our beer and wine portfolios, and the growing consumer interest in craft cocktails, this was a clear next step for Imperial. We are excited to be engaged in the craft spirits community growing in Kalamazoo.”

The first distillery to sign on with Imperial was Kalamazoo’s own Green Door Distilling—a partnership that was symbolically significant, as Imperial Beverage and the Cekola family have always had strong roots in the community.

When Green Door opened its doors in September of 2016, it became the first distillery established in Kalamazoo since 1858. That distinction was important to Good, who is committed to honoring Kalamazoo’s rich distilling history, both in the tasting room, where the team of mixologists offers specialty handcrafted cocktails using as many local ingredients as possible, and in the distillery itself, where he’s aging the 2019 release of “Luke’s Best Bourbon,” based on a recipe created by Luke Whitcomb, one of Kalamazoo’s original distillers.

WE FOUND A NICHE IN A COMMUNITY THAT WE LOVE, AND THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS. IT’S COMFORTING FOR US TO SUPPORT OTHER LOCAL BUSINESSES, AND WE DO THAT AS MUCH AS WE CAN.

In 2016, craft distillers sold 4.9 million cases—an annual growth rate of 40 percent. Imperial saw the same growth, selling 1,500 cases from April to September with an average growth rate of roughly 40 percent each month. It is growth it doesn’t expect to see slow down anytime soon. “We are currently working with over 10 craft distilleries and constantly growing our spirits portfolio. We are also restructuring and adding additional positions to set us up to continue to grow in all categories—including spirits,” says Cekola.

With distilleries, distribution, and retail all represented in Kalamazoo, the region has a unique opportunity to contribute to the rise of craft spirits while supporting its local businesses.



James Loughmiller is Spirits Portfolio Manager at **Imperial Beverage**, a long-standing member of the Michigan beverage distribution community. Established in 1933 after the repeal of Prohibition and purchased by Kalamazoo’s Cekola family in 1984, Imperial 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, Imperial provides statewide coverage that serves every Michigan county, every week, all year long.

PURE MOBILITY



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.

1.888.565.0052
michiganbusiness.org/PlanetM



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Makers' MART

THE 269 MAGAZINE TEAM SUGGESTS THAT YOU CHECK OUT THESE EXCEPTIONAL PRODUCTS FROM FIVE SMALL REGIONAL BUSINESSES.

All are made locally by finalists in the 2018 Makers' Mart competition, an annual regional entrepreneurial contest highlighting creators in Southwest Michigan.

Learn more at catalystuniversity.me/recognition.



After years of curating an art gallery, founder Cherri Emery uses her eye for aesthetics to now beautifully sculpt and hand-dip couture chocolates, truffles, and eatable designs.



CHERRI'S CHOCOLART
KALAMAZOO, MI
CHERRISCHOCOLART.COM



Leave it to former movie theater owners to know exactly how to satisfy your craving for gourmet popcorn flavors like chocolate peanut butter caramel corn popped fresh daily in trans fat free coconut oil.



POP CITY POPCORN
KALAMAZOO, MI
POPCITYPOPCORN.COM



Offering premium natural scrubs, creams, body butters, and bubble baths galore, this local business aims to keep you looking and feeling your best.



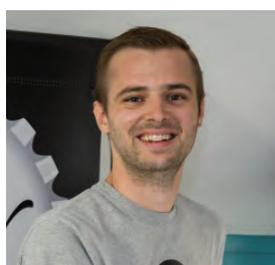
THE PERFECT PUCKER
KALAMAZOO, MI
THEPERFECTPUCKER.COM



Diagnosed with breast cancer in 2012, founder Jamie Kastelic's product line is devoted to offering all-natural deodorants and body butters for a chemical- and cancer-free lifestyle.



SPERO-HOPE
ST. JOSEPH, MI
SPEROHOPELLC.COM



What started as a side business has evolved into a full-scale production of custom-manufactured, stainless-steel bottle openers that let you show off your unique pride.



MIDWEST OPENER
KALAMAZOO, MI
MIDWESTOPENER.CO

LEADER²LEADER

PATRICK SCHEFFERS

COMMERCIAL PORTFOLIO MANAGER AT HUNTINGTON NATIONAL BANK

DANIELLE ANDERSON

PRINCIPAL AT MILLER, CANFIELD, PADDOCK AND STONE, PLC

HOW DO YOU DEFINE LEADERSHIP?

DANIELLE ANDERSON: Leadership is the ability to instill confidence and inspire others to be the best version of themselves.

PATRICK SCHEFFERS: Leadership is the act of driving a committed mission and continuously delivering positively to better a group or organization.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION THAT YOU CAN MAKE AS A LEADER IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

DANIELLE: As a leader, I strive to make roles more than “just a job” for my coworkers. We spend more time together than we spend with our families. I make sure I “show up” in so many ways, set an example, build trust, show compassion, and reward hard work.

PATRICK: The biggest and most important decision I make every day is to remain positive. You can’t always control what comes at you, but you can control how you react. Staying positive helps me focus and be efficient. It also affects the people around you and allows you to lead through example.

WHAT IS ONE MISTAKE YOU OFTEN SEE OTHER LEADERS MAKING?

DANIELLE: A title of authority does not make you a leader—it makes you a boss. Not understanding the difference is a mistake and leads to confusion and disconnect within an organization.

PATRICK: I have seen leaders who do not pay particular attention to emotional intelligence really damage the trust that people have in them. One of the most harmful things you can do as a leader is to lose control of yourself.

HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE CREATIVE THINKING WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

DANIELLE: Part of being a lawyer is finding creative solutions for your clients. Mentor/mentee relationships are great resources in addition to diversity of opinions. By bringing different perspectives and life experiences to a team, the results are far more creative.

PATRICK: Being inclusive is key. Creative thinking comes from all different levels, and being inclusive allows more diverse ideas to come in. You also can’t just sit back and listen to ideas without sometimes challenging them to encourage a deeper level of thinking. That’s how truly great ideas are born.

HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE?

DANIELLE: Is it terrible to say there is no such thing as perfect balance? “Healthy” is the key. That said, make choices between life and work that are right for you and your family. Working parents are plagued with the guilt of missing out on family events for fear of shortchanging their work duties. There is no magic bullet, or one-size-fits-all solution. It takes trial and error and knowing what is acceptable for you. But that doesn’t mean you’ll get a second chance to see that kindergarten graduation!

PATRICK: I have found that it’s not always about the hours you work. You really have to be efficient and effective, paying attention to the quality of work you are doing. When it comes to striking a balance, I always prioritize. I believe that the most important thing is knowing your priorities and keeping them in alignment. For me, my family will always come first, followed by my physical and mental health. When I come back to the office after spending quality time with my wife, I am a lot more focused, productive, and happy to be there.

WHAT RESOURCES WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO SOMEONE WHO IS WORKING TO BECOME A BETTER LEADER?

DANIELLE: I find that nothing is better than surrounding yourself with other leaders, asking questions, and listening. Listen to the successes, but more than anything, listen to the failures. There is more to be learned in failure than in success.

PATRICK: Commuting to work can be one of the most stressful things for an American, especially if you live in a bigger city. I used to try to swerve in and out of traffic to get to work maybe two minutes faster, but now I have been using that time to listen to podcasts, particularly ones on the power of positivity. That way, I can set aside some time every day and just learn how to better myself.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR 20-YEAR-OLD SELF?

DANIELLE: I would tell my 20-year-old self to stay the course and trust yourself and your decisions. There will be a lot of sparkly, shiny distractions along the way, but don't fall for them. You've got this!

PATRICK: The number one thing I would say is, "be adventurous." Whether it's traveling or trying new food, I think that always being open to new experiences is something that drives growth. I would have liked to explore different disciplines like creative writing to spawn some sort of divergent thinking early on. But the most important thing I would do is take more opportunities to travel. I think I may have learned more while traveling that I did in some of my college classes.

WHAT'S THE LAST NEW THING YOU LEARNED OR EXPERIENCED?

DANIELLE: This was my first summer on a lake in Portage, and I made it my mission to learn to waterski. A few bruises and a lot of sore muscles later, a very patient friend who is an experienced boat driver and skier made it happen. It was amazing!

PATRICK: I learn new things every day, but the most significant development in my life has been marriage. My wife and I have been married for a year, and I have learned more in one year about how to care for other people, communicate with others, and how to be a thoughtful person than I have in my entire life.

WHICH TEACHER HAD THE MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON YOUR DEVELOPMENT?

DANIELLE: I would have to say my fifth-grade teacher. He gave me a major speaking role as the narrator in *Hansel and Gretel*. To put it mildly, it was an epic failure. I froze when I saw the huge audience and stumbled through the entire thing. It was a tough lesson for a child, but it taught me that I could never be prepared enough! I do a fair amount of public

speaking—in court and otherwise—and I will never forget how awful I felt that day. Getting that failure out of the way early was a blessing in disguise.

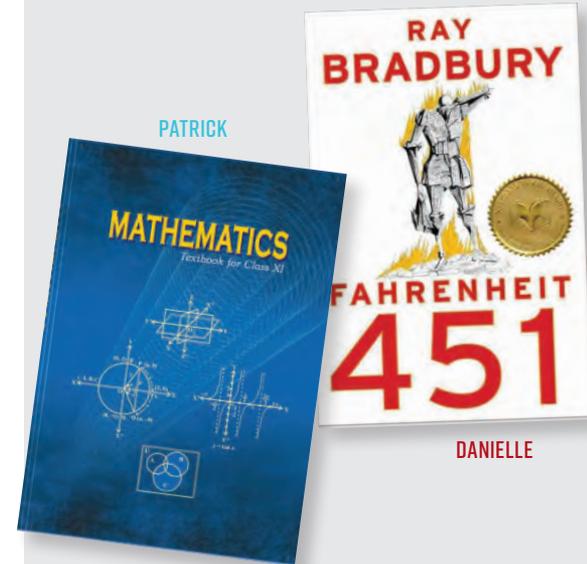
PATRICK: My sixth-grade homeroom teacher was crucial in my development as an individual. She would always ask, "How did you get that answer?" She made me realize that it's not just about getting the right answer—what's more important is the thought process that goes into deriving that answer. In other words, the process is more important than the result. She also taught me to own up to my mistakes. I was a typical rambunctious middle schooler, and she taught me that when you do something stupid, you can't lie or blame your way out of the consequences. Today, I admire leaders the most when they have the integrity to take responsibility for their mistakes.

WHAT WAS THE MOST IMPACTFUL BOOK YOU READ AS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT?

DANIELLE: *Fahrenheit 451*. I am a major book lover, and the idea of destroying books to censor thought and expression is horrific to me. In it, members of society only focus on entertainment, immediate gratification and speeding through life. They do not see the value of reading and thinking. Freedom of expression and exploration of new ideas are cornerstones of our society. Books are a way to unplug and open up to new ideas.

PATRICK: From a very young age, I always loved math classes. Later, in high school, that led me to read many different historical books that told the stories of financial collapses. I always knew that I would end up doing something with math, but reading those books drove me to take my passion in a specific direction. After that, I started taking economics and accounting classes that really prepared me for my future.

WHAT WAS THE MOST IMPACTFUL BOOK YOU READ AS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT?



I find that nothing is better than surrounding yourself with other leaders, asking questions, and listening. Listen to the successes, but more than anything, listen to the failures.

DANIELLE ANDERSON

I admire leaders the most when they have the integrity to take responsibility for their mistakes.

PATRICK SCHEFFERS

IF
HISTORY
HAS TAUGHT US
ANYTHING
IT'S THAT
WE ALWAYS REMEMBER
THOSE WHO WERE

FIRST



Whether you're the first to the office or were the first on the moon, put your leadership **FIRST** at **Catalyst University** in 2019.

www.catalystuniversity.me

TIM SCOTT

The co-founder and CEO of Mitscoots Outfitters, a buy-one, give-one business dedicated to donating high-quality outdoor gear to the people that need it most, sat down with Ron Kitchens to talk socks, values, and giving back.



Where did the name Mitscoots come from?

It's actually a version of my own name. When I was a kid, I would spell my name "Mit" instead of "Tim" and "Scoot" instead of "Scott." The name stuck and followed me through the military and college. I secretly hated it, so using it for the company was my way to turn it into something positive. **How did you get the idea for your business?** My wife and I started the company based on the volunteer work we were doing for the homeless. We discovered that really basic items like socks often don't get donated, and when they do, they don't last long on the streets. **How do you get inspiration for products?** We would go out and ask people what they needed most. The answers we got helped define our product line. Today, we can outfit someone from head to toe, and our products are designed to be worn out in extreme environments perpetually. **What are Mitscoots' core values?** When I was in the Air Force, our mantra was "integrity first," "service before self," and "excellence in all we do." I find those three values to be amazingly applicable to business decisions. **How are these values represented at your company?** It's not a marketing effort. Mitscoots only exists to help people. We just try to be authentic and true. We're not grasping

at straws trying to be popular only for a brief moment. **How has this venture impacted your personal life?** For some people, there is this race to get to that big Scrooge McDuckian vault at the end, and then maybe give back after that. To me, that's backward. **What has been your biggest achievement?** We have been able to grow enough to hire individuals transitioning out of homelessness. There is a lot of pride and integrity that comes out of that. **What resources do you use to improve as a leader?** I hear a lot of the same tropes over and over again. As a general tip, I wouldn't look only to people that say they're advice givers for advice. **What approach has given you the most success as a leader?** I think it's crucial to understand and learn about the people you are trying to lead. What do they need? What speaks to them? **What is something people can do every day to give back?** If you happen to have a Ziploc bag, throw in a nice new pair of socks, maybe a granola bar, and some hygiene items. Keep it in your car and as you pass by someone on the streets, take the opportunity to say hello. It lets them know that they're not invisible. ✨

CATALYST UNIVERSITY

Catalyst University is a one-day leadership conference featuring world-class speakers, incredible peer-to-peer interaction, and an energizing atmosphere that can change the course of a leader's journey.

LEARN MORE AT

catalystuniversity.me

LEGACY SPONSOR



SPONSORS



FACULTY



2 Fish Company, LLC is Miraculously Creative!

GENERAL



MEDIA



GENERAL



FACULTY



FACULTY



GENERAL



GENERAL



CATALYST BREW



Ascension

GENERAL



LUNCH



FACULTY



FACULTY



SELFIE STATION



BAG TAG



GENERAL



WORKSPACE



GENERAL



FACULTY



FACULTY



SWAG



LANYARD



TAILGATE



GENERAL



GENERAL



LAGNIAPPE



SWAG



CATALYST EDUCATION AWARDS



GENERAL



MAKERS' MART PRIZE



GENERAL



SWAG



GENERAL



FACULTY



NOTEBOOK



BAG



MAKERS' MART PRIZE



GENERAL



PEN



eNOTES



FACULTY



GENERAL



MAKERS' MART PRIZE



MAKERS' MART



MEDIA



MOTOR EXPERIENCE



Thank you to all of our generous sponsors who made it possible for leaders to THRIVE at Catalyst University!

A woman with short, curly hair and glasses is speaking at a table. She is wearing a black and white patterned top. Her hands are raised in a gesture as if she is explaining something. The background is a bright, out-of-focus room with large windows.

Put your leadership first!

Emerging leaders can enjoy breakfast with their peers and experience an executive panel like no other.

Big breakfast. Big ideas.

iii
First Leaders

Register for one breakfast or the entire series at catalystuniversity.me/programs

ARE YOU SAVVY?

GREAT LEADERSHIP IS A CAREFUL BALANCE OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

BY SARAH MANSBERGER | PHOTO ISTOCK.COM/RAWPIXELLTD.



THINK OF THE BEST LEADER YOU'VE WORKED WITH. WHAT QUALITIES COME TO MIND? GREAT VISION, RELENTLESS DRIVE, DEEP COMPASSION, ENTERPRISING ENERGY, A GROWTH MINDSET.

These are just a few of the admirable attributes that make for leaders worth following. Now think of this same leader in the face of heated conflict. What made them stand out? Their grace or a gaffe?

Truly exceptional leaders are distinguished not only by the force of their talents, but also by their temperaments. The greatest among us monitor and manage their emotions. They respond to others with a spirit of goodwill, even in times of stress. They are socially adroit, and understand the kind of emotional contagion their words and actions can incite. In short, they have emotional intelligence in spades.

The theory of emotional intelligence (EI), popularized most notably by Daniel Goleman, suggests there are two broad categories of emotional savvy (personal and social), organized around four domains of related competencies (self-awareness and self-management, complemented by social awareness and relationship management).

As Goleman makes us aware, vision, drive, and energy are “threshold” capacities, a suite of basics required of any top performer in a leadership seat. What distinguishes the best

from the rest is an ability to navigate not only the strategic challenges of leadership, but also the peaks and valleys of emotional terrain in the workplace.

Too often, EI is prioritized as an area of development only after a leader has had a problematic outburst on the job, but by then, the damage is done. Poorly managed emotions have the power to clip the momentum of even the most compelling leader. So how can current and aspiring leaders get ahead of the curve and cultivate the harder skills associated with emotional intelligence? Practice self-awareness and build your playbook to better manage your own emotions and relationships when it matters most:

- **Tune in today**—and every day. Know what you are bringing to the table each and every day. How do you feel physically? Mentally? Emotionally? How are these aspects of your inner life showing up in your leadership today? Pick an everyday action (e.g., buckling your seatbelt, pouring your coffee, opening your office door) and

use it daily as a cue to “tune in” to your inner life—then choose what to do.

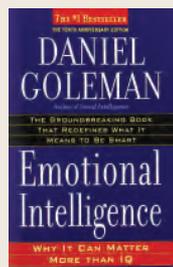
- **Know your triggers.** What circumstances, situations, and relationships are most likely to provoke an unproductive response in you? Make a mental list and know before you engage so you are better able to manage your response.
- **Build your playbook.** Emotionally intelligent leaders develop strategies for handling emotionally potent situations before they arise. What catchphrases and stock lines can you have ready to “press pause” when tensions run high?

Don't delay. Start tapping into your EI now to achieve what matters most to you personally and professionally.



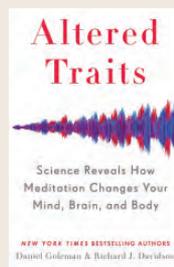
Sarah Mansberger is a partner at Southwest Michigan First tasked with curriculum development behind leadership programs like First 50 and Leadership Kalamazoo. Learn more at catalystuniversity.me/programs.

BOOKS YOU'VE BEEN MEANING TO READ



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: WHY IT CAN MATTER MORE THAN IQ

BY DANIEL GOLEMAN



ALTERED TRAITS: SCIENCE REVEALS HOW MEDITATION CHANGES YOUR MIND, BRAIN, AND BODY

BY DANIEL GOLEMAN AND RICHARD J. DAVIDSON



FOLLOW DANIEL GOLEMAN @DANIELGOLEMANE1

How Did I Get Here?

TIM LESTER

HEAD FOOTBALL COACH,
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

STORY BY JAKE FREDERICKS

PHOTOS STEVE HERPPICH

1977 | BORN IN WHEATON, IL

I grew up in a very tight-knit family town. I think it was [an answer] on Jeopardy [once] for having more churches per capita than anywhere else in the world.

We also love our football in Wheaton. Harold “Red” Grange was from Wheaton. He was arguably the best college football player of all time—people called him “The Galloping Ghost.” We all tried to live up to his legacy. Starting in 1988, there was a 22-year stretch when we were in 11 state championships; I was proud to be a part of that.

1994 | GRADUATED FROM WHEATON WARRENVILLE SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

I played high school football from 1991 to 1994. I was so lucky, mostly because I had John Thorne as a coach. He was the best coach I have ever been around, still to this day. He’s in every hall of fame possible, but he never talked about winning because character and integrity were much more important.

Because I was surrounded by terrific teammates and coaches, a lot of opportunities opened up. I used to dream about where I would play after high school. I wanted to go to the University of Florida, UCLA, Nebraska, or any of the other places that were sending me offers. Everything changed my senior year,

HOW TIM LESTER BALANCES WORK AND FAMILY

Years back, my middle child, Carter, was standing on the sidelines, and one of the players came right down on top of him during a play. At that point, Carter was crying, so Emmanuel, our defensive back, picked him up, put him on his shoulders, and started running around the field with him. In just a few seconds, the tears went away, and Carter was laughing his head off. He still talks about it to this day.

I think it’s important to include family in everything you do. Especially in this profession because the work never ends. You can never watch enough film, and you are never done reviewing plays. I encourage people to bring their families to practice, or to come eat dinner with us. We invite them to everything we can.

I could have gotten offer letters every day, but my mind was made up: I was going to go with my gut.

when I blew my knee out during the second-to-last game of the season. I was so frustrated with the timing that I tricked the trainer into letting me play the final game. That lasted four plays before it happened again and I needed surgery.

A few schools like Penn State and West Virginia stayed with me through the injury. But I needed to reevaluate my options, especially when all the Mid-American Conference (MAC) schools that initially thought I wouldn't be interested started calling me. I realized that I had to change my priorities; I decided to base my decision not on prestige, but on people and environment.

1995-99 | STUDENT AND QUARTERBACK AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY (WMU)

Normally, kids choose their school very carefully and weigh their options. WMU must have spent so much effort to recruit me, but none of that had any effect on my decision. The first time I drove through campus, I looked around and immediately thought, "This is where I'm going." I remember driving down Stadium Drive with this big brace on my knee. I was awestruck at how beautiful the campus was. I thought, "Man, even if I never play again, this is where I want to go to school." I could have gotten offer letters every day, but my mind was made up—I was going to go with my gut.

I was the third quarterback taken in that class. I learned a lot through the whole process of being hurt and then coming in with two other quarterbacks. I was at a disadvantage, and

I think the best coaches are teachers, just because they know how to motivate people.

I had to beat everyone else out. I got benched a few times but fought through that first year. Eventually, things turned around, and I figured out a way to win. When you screw up as a quarterback, you end up getting hit by a 300-pound guy. That helps you learn fast. I think I set an NCAA record for getting hit that year. I think that might have been my first record—getting sacked.

2000 | MATH TEACHER AT AURORA WEST HIGH SCHOOL

I think the best coaches are teachers, just because they know how to motivate people. I think the core of teaching is the relationship you build with your students. Coaching is the same thing, I think there are many parallels between the two professions. I may be teaching different content now, but I'm still teaching.

I always knew that I would eventually become either a teacher or a coach, and if I were to teach, I knew that math would be my subject—I love math. Even football is easier if you know math. Numbers tell us everything if you'll just listen to them. I still do a statistical analysis of every single stat.

2001 | QUARTERBACK FOR XFL CHICAGO ENFORCERS

A lot of people have a negative impression of the XFL because the league was so short-lived. The funny thing about being in the XFL was that our team was actually very solid.

Our training was excellent; the problems didn't come until our first game. That's when I realized that it was a rock concert and football game with both going on at the same time. It wasn't quiet when you needed it to be quiet, and interviews were going on during plays. Some positive things came out of the league though, and it ultimately made football better. The NFL and other outlets saw what worked and what didn't and adjusted their practices.

2004 | HEAD COACH AT ST. JOSEPH COLLEGE AND NAMED INDEPENDENT FOOTBALL ALLIANCE COACH OF THE YEAR

At this point, I knew I wanted to make coaching my career. I really enjoyed building a relationship with each player. Coaches can't hide from their players, and players can't hide from their coaches. As a coach, you spend too much time with the team not to know the ins and outs of each and every one of them.

2005-06 | QUARTERBACK COACH AT WMU

I have been both an offensive coordinator and a defensive coordinator, but I'm a quarterback guy at heart. I love training them. The thing about being the quarterback is there's only one person in your position—it's not like offensive line or anything else. You're on your own.

2008-12 | HEAD COACH OF ELMHURST COLLEGE BLUEJAYS

One of the things I learned was that, if the players don't trust their coach, they can't win games. If you tell a guy to run down a kickoff and throw his head through that wedge,

he better trust you. It's not an easy thing to get somebody to do.

2013-15 | QUARTERBACK COACH AND RECRUITING COORDINATOR AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

It's hard to come up in this profession without having been on a ton of different teams. I've learned so much from every coach I've worked with. I think a small part of myself belongs to each of them. As long as you are willing to put your ego aside and just listen, everyone can teach you something.

2015-16 | QUARTERBACK COACH AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY

At the time, Terry Malone was the offensive coordinator for Purdue. He was one of the main reasons I took that job over the other positions I was considering. Terry is one of the best men in the game. He spent ten years as the offensive coordinator for Lloyd Carr, won a national championship, and even coached Tom Brady. Terry ran that offense and then went to the New Orleans Saints, spent ten more years there, and won the Super Bowl. He's got a national championship ring, but he's also the nicest person you'll ever meet. I knew that this would be a position that would allow me to grow.

2017 | HEAD COACH AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

My job is to build a team of great men—that's it. The one thing people don't realize is that, if I can continue to teach my players about life, they will continue to grow together as a team.

We bring speakers in, we do leadership training with them, and we even teach them how to cook.

But here's the deal: We're hard on them, especially when it comes to their attention to detail. Every team has a culture, and it's set by the head coach, there's no doubt about that. Our culture is a championship culture. If I build a team of great men, we'll win. Great men are disciplined. Great men have excellent attention to detail. Great men are on time every time. Great men win football games. If I can accomplish that, then the football will take care of itself.



BY RON KITCHENS
PUBLISHER

PHOTO HANNAH ZIEGELER



Innovate to Educate

EVEN AFTER 20 YEARS, THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO LEARN

THE LANDSCAPE OF LEARNING LOOKS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT TODAY THAN IT DID TWO DECADES AGO WHEN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST WAS FOUNDED.

Today, we have all the knowledge of the world literally at our fingertips. The smartphone resting in each of our pockets that we now take for granted is our library, calculator, and oracle rolled into one, with millions of times more computing power than NASA could muster in 1969 to put a man on the moon.

As we move from a world of digital tourists (people my age who grew up without access to computers) to a world of digital natives, how we wield that incredible access to knowledge makes all the difference.

Research from the U.S. Department of Labor indicates that on average, people are going to change career focuses—not just employers—five to seven times in their lives. With the advent of the information age, people are no longer limited to taking that job down the block. They can go anywhere in the world to work, or they can choose to go nowhere yet work remotely all around the globe from their living room.

We as leaders have a responsibility to empower our young people to take up the reins of their future, and, in turn, use their success to better their communities. Middle schoolers need to know what steps they can take today to achieve their dreams so they won't have to churn through jobs before finding their way. Those who take action and make the most of their early years are going to earn more, they're going to be happier with their lives, and they're going to want to stay in the communities that enabled that kind of growth for them in the first place.

Southwest Michigan has a proud history of educational innovation that sets a very high standard for our future. Kalamazoo was one of the first places in Michigan to offer free universal high school education in 1858.

We as leaders have a responsibility to empower our young people to take up the reins of their future, and, in turn, use their success to better their communities.

Almost 150 years later, in 2005, Kalamazoo became the first to provide a free college education through the Kalamazoo Promise. With the advancements that have taken place in the fields of technology and economics since then, what innovations can we dream up next as a region that will help our school systems adapt to better prepare the next generation?

Today, our region's schools are still leading the way with exciting initiatives. Teachers are integrating technology into the classroom to meet each student at their unique level, while programs like Kalamazoo RESA's

MiCareerQuest Southwest are opening the eyes of our youth to the many different career possibilities available to them. These leaders realize that education is not just about reaching specific benchmarks and covering basic content; learning is the tool that helps you accelerate and build your own life. The ultimate freedom an individual has is to develop their mind to make self-actualizing choices.

My wish for the future is that every young person will have a personalized education plan. I hope that each student can understand their strengths and how to build upon them. What would happen if each individual were at the center of every decision we make as a region? What choices would we make to accelerate our young people to be incredible, master their intellects, and drive progress in their lives?

What changes can we make today to invest in our collective future, and why are we waiting?

ALWAYS FORWARD,

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



We've got plans to cover all of yours.

At Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network, we know your life and the things you need from your health insurer are constantly changing. That's why we're always doing more to bring you everything you need to move forward with confidence. Learn more at bcbsm.com.



GROUP HEALTH PLANS | INDIVIDUAL PLANS | DENTAL | VISION | [BCBSM.COM](https://bcbsm.com)



DOWNLOAD OUR MOBILE APP

Sparking Economic OPPORTUNITY in Southwest Michigan

CONSUMERS ENERGY WORKS directly with state and local economic development agencies to provide tools beyond energy:

- Competitive energy-intensive electric rate options
- Energy Ready certified sites
- Energy efficiency rebates
- New construction incentives
- Onsite and virtual engineering services
- Links to business-building resources and readily available top-tier talent



Call 800-805-0490 or visit
ConsumersEnergy.com/econdev

Consumers Energy
Count on Us®



BY THE NUMBERS

CONSUMERS ENERGY is stimulating economic growth in Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Cass, Van Buren, Berrien, Branch and St. Joseph counties:

- \$14 MILLION in purchases with area businesses in 2016.
- \$21.5 MILLION paid in property taxes in 2016.
- \$2.5 MILLION contributed to non-profit organizations since 2010.

MORE THAN \$1 BILLION in savings across the state since our energy efficiency programs began in 2009.

5620-C