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# MOMENTUM

Uniquely Macomb County, Michigan  
Volume 4, Issue 1

## A new place for Macomb Robotics

Center for Robotics Innovation  
fosters high-tech learning

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### Industry:

Selfridge study  
focusing on long-  
term sustainability

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### Community:

Food, food and  
plenty of beer on tap  
at local breweries

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The Robotics Collaboration and Innovation Center in Sterling Heights is scheduled for an October 1 opening.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

**Jane Peterson** has been a journalist for more than 20 years, working at newspapers such as The Oakland Press, The Holly Herald and The Berrien County Record. Today, she is an active freelance writer who contributes to write articles and other materials for newspapers, online publications and private clients.

**On the cover:** A scene from the 2019 FIRST Robotics World Championship in Detroit. This four-day event drew more than 40,000 people and teams from 40 different countries. Notably, the ThunderChickens, a Sterling Heights-based team from Utica Community Schools, won the championship for the third time in the last 13 years. (Photo by Matt Pierscinski, courtesy of the Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development)

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**Macomb County Executive  
Mark Hackel**

Phone: (586) 469-7001  
Email: [Executive@MacombGov.org](mailto:Executive@MacombGov.org)  
Twitter: @markhackel

**Macomb County Department of  
Planning & Economic Development  
John Paul Rea, executive director**

Phone: (586) 469-5285  
Email: [info@macombbusiness.com](mailto:info@macombbusiness.com)

**Macomb County Administrative Building**

1 South Main St.  
Mount Clemens, Mich. 48043  
Phone: (586) 469-5285  
Fax: (586) 469-6487

**Websites:**

[www.MacombBusiness.com](http://www.MacombBusiness.com);  
[www.MakeMacombYourHome.org](http://www.MakeMacombYourHome.org)

**Email:**

[planning@macombgov.org](mailto:planning@macombgov.org)

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publication, please contact  
[info@macombbusiness.com](mailto:info@macombbusiness.com)

**Publishing Partner**

MediaNews Group / Michigan Group  
19176 Hall Road  
Clinton Township, Mich. 48038

**President  
Greg Mazanec**

[mipublisher@medianewsgroup.com](mailto:mipublisher@medianewsgroup.com)

**General Manager, Advertising  
Dave Swantek**

[dswantek@medianewsgroup.com](mailto:dswantek@medianewsgroup.com)

**Vice President / Content  
Don Wyatt**

[dwyatt@medianewsgroup.com](mailto:dwyatt@medianewsgroup.com)

**Advertising Manager  
Jason Uhlenhake**

**Advertising Executives**

Carol Clancy, Keri Kruegger,  
Monica LiCavoli, Carol Mason,  
Nicole Pazzi, David White,  
Mary Ellen Zander

**Contributors  
Jane Peterson**

**Design, Editing and Production**

Steven Josephson and Jenny Sherman  
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# Celebrating, innovating, improving

Strong economy, strong workforce and improved infrastructure remains a top priority for County Executive Mark Hackel

*By Mark Hackel*

Strengthening our economy and helping to create new jobs is a top priority for my office. Earlier this year, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles announced plans to invest another \$1.5 billion to transform the Warren Truck Assembly Plant into a world class facility that can produce FCA's most sophisticated and advanced vehicles ever. The investment is also expected to create 1,400 new jobs.

To help prepare our future workforce for careers related to science, technology, engineering and math, Macomb County is partnering with the City of Sterling Heights, the Macomb Intermediate School District and Macomb Community College to develop a center for robotics innovation and collaboration.

In partnership with area businesses and educational organizations, the center will provide access to tools, experts and educational workshops to help inspire the next generation of our workforce to pursue careers in this expanding industry.

While these developments provide reason to celebrate, a major issue that requires our attention remains — the current state of our roads and bridges.

According to our Department of Roads, it would cost \$2.3 billion to fix the 1,278 lane miles of roadway that are currently

rated to be in poor condition and 39 deficient bridges.

Yet, our allocation from the state to make repairs is only \$70 million.

At that rate, it would take up to 20 years to reconstruct our most critical roadways and that does not even begin to address the cost to maintain our roads that are currently rated as good. These details and others can be found on a new tool we developed to illustrate the problem, which can be accessed at [www.MacombGov.org](http://www.MacombGov.org).

This is a massive problem and ironic when you consider that while our community is building vehicles for the 21st century, the state of roads funding is stuck in the 20th century.

Clearly, we are facing a monumental task. We will continue to effectively deploy all available resources to respond to our infrastructure challenges.

With the help of these inventive new tools, we can better engage our state legislators and ensure that they find the funding necessary to fix the roads. **M**

## CONNECT

The Macomb County Roads: Conditions and Costs tool can be accessed at [bit.ly/2XiQdrl](http://bit.ly/2XiQdrl)



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# Happy trails

## Project in Center Line one step closer to connecting to Iron Belle Trail

*By Jane Peterson*

Center Line City Manager Dennis Champine says he is honored to be a part of a historic project like the Iron Belle Trail.

“It’s going to be a great source of community pride,” he said. “It will be representative of who we are, a small town, a bedroom community in the heart of the metro Detroit area.”

Center Line is wrapping up the planning stages of a two-mile trail construction project that will connect the Iron Belle Trail in Macomb County. The city worked closely with Macomb County Planning and Economic Development, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), Greenway Collaborative, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan Department of Transportation to develop the trail route.

Center Line’s trail will stretch from Stephens Road west to Lawrence Avenue, then extend north to Bernice Street to Arsenal Street in front of Center Line High School and then over to the I-696 service drive to cross over the bridge into Warren. It will follow an urban path, winding through these areas:

- Rotary Park
- Memorial Park
- Center Line’s municipal complex
- Various businesses
- Mom and Pop shops

Public comments were sought in March when Macomb County, Sterling Heights, Warren and Center Line launched an interactive crowdsourcing map that outlined the proposed improvements to the Iron Belle Trail.

“For many years, local municipal governments and the county have worked collaboratively to develop a route for the Iron Belle Trail from 8 Mile Road north to 24 Mile Road and Dequindre,” said Amanda Minaudo, senior planner, Macomb County Planning and Economic Development, in a news release. “This is one of Michigan’s premier trails, so we are thrilled to be taking a step towards finalizing a route plan by reaching out to the community and asking for their input with our new interactive map.”

Macomb County, along with the cities of Sterling Heights, Warren and Center Line, received a SEMCOG grant to look at routes and safety during the planning process in order to help close this gap of the Iron Belle Trail, said Tyler Klifman, planner with SEMCOG’s Economic and Community Vitality group.

With planning complete, Champine said the city will likely seek an additional grant to help with trail construction. While all surfaces are already paved, there is patching and repairs that need addressing as well as paint striping and signage.

When finished, Champine said the trail will benefit local residents just as much as those interested in traveling along the Iron Belle Trail by creating a more walkable, bikeable city. He added



that more trails are likely to be developed that branch out from the Iron Belle Trail.

Across the state, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has been working with county officials and local community leaders since 2012 to create the Iron Belle Trail, a 2,019-mile trail with two routes – one for walking and hiking and another for biking – that will traverse the entire state from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood in the far western tip of the Upper Peninsula.

When completed, the trail, which makes use of existing trails as much as possible, will touch hundreds of communities as it crosses through 48 counties.

In Macomb County, 17 miles of the Iron Belle Trail are planned. It includes portions of the Clinton River Trail and existing trails at Riverbends Park. A portion of this trail is slated to cut through Macomb County south from Van Dyke through Center Line, Warren, toward Freedom Hill and near Sterling Heights before heading to Utica and exiting the county into Rochester. **M**

**Above:** The Iron Belle Trail includes portions of the Clinton River Trail and existing trails at Riverbends Park (pictured here). PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**Top, right:** Hikers take a break to enjoy the scenic view at Fallasburg Park along the Iron Belle Trail. PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**Bottom, right:** Center Line is wrapping up the planning stages of a two-mile trail construction project that will connect the Iron Belle Trail in Macomb County. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF CENTER LINE

### CONNECT



Learn more about the Iron Belle Trail by visiting [Michigan.gov/ironbelle](http://Michigan.gov/ironbelle). Visitors to the website will be able to click on an interactive trail map and review commonly asked questions about the project.






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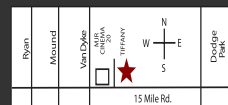


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## Macomb Township

### Dynamic growth brings new amenities

Macomb Township is now on the cutting edge of urban growth with an estimated population of more than 90,000 residents, new housing being added regularly, infrastructure improvements, a vibrant parks and recreation system and much more.

In recent years, Macomb has been named as one of the fastest growing communities in Macomb County and throughout Michigan. According to SEMCOG, the township was the 17th largest community in the state in 2012. By 2017, it had become the 12th largest community. Among the many reasons are strong industrial/commercial corridor for growth that is balanced with our beautiful residential neighborhoods and wonderful parks.

There were more housing starts in Macomb Township than any other community in Michigan in 2017 (more than 500) according to Township Supervisor Janet Dunn. From the Town Center area that includes homes with a more old-fashioned design, to newer, two and three-level homes, the township offers different types of housing for its residents to choose from on a variety of parcel sizes that allow for optimum space and design.

In addition to single family homes, there are condominiums and apartments available for purchase with different layouts and styles. Dunn estimates that most homes have a current value of at least \$200,000 and that prices have continued to rise quickly in recent years.

"From what we're seeing we have homes that are being sold in a day or two pretty regularly," Dunn said. "It is a desirable (community) right now for new residents."

From an infrastructure standpoint, Macomb Township's growth has caused a few challenges with traffic flow and road conditions but steps are being taken to right-size that infrastructure. One example is the 23 Mile Road expansion starting at the eastern boundary line of Macomb Township to Romeo Plank. This multi-phase project will result in a five-lane, continuous road from Van Dyke Avenue to the border of Chesterfield Township.

"We recognize that with growth we have to take a look at our roads and we are working with the county on planning for future updates," Dunn said.

Located at 20699 Macomb Street, the township's Recreation Center could be considered the envy of other communities throughout southeastern Michigan. The Macomb Township

Recreation Center is a 92,000 square foot facility providing both residents and non-residents with a wide array of recreational activities and amenities. The state of the art Recreation Center facilitates a fitness center, two gymnasiums, three birthday party rooms, two aerobics rooms, an indoor playground, meeting space, a feature pool, an activity pool, a lazy river, water slide and a hot tub.

There are classes held throughout the year from swimming to personal training and everything in between. The classes are available for youth, teens, adults and seniors. Residents can become members or pay small daily fees to use the facility throughout the week.

Other parks around Macomb Township are also well received and used on a regular basis. Waldenburg Park offers a variety of children's equipment while Macomb Corners Park houses a sports-oriented collection of fields for football, baseball and soccer. A 40-acre parcel of township-owned property at 24 Mile and Foss will likely to be turned into another park in the future although Dunn does want to maintain much of the natural vegetation.

A variety of development options are being considered, including picnic areas, a dog park and more for that space. The township is working with an engineering firm to develop that plan. Additionally a new township library is being planned right across from the township's main offices for a 2020 open. That will replace the existing "north" library that is a converted office building at 24 Mile and Romeo Plank. Macomb Township will continue to partner with Clinton Township for its library system services.

Finally Macomb Township holds many events, often in conjunction with its parks and recreation department, throughout the year. Events like Tons of Trucks, Halloween Hoopla and Music in the Park Summer Concert Series attract residents and guests to the community.

Visit [www.macomb-mi.gov](http://www.macomb-mi.gov) to learn more. **M**

#### FAST FACTS

**Founded:** 1834

**Population (2010 census):** 79,580

**Square miles:** 36.3



# Home sweet home

## Residential building boom in Sterling Heights shows no sign of slowing down anytime soon

*By Jane Peterson*

**S**terling Heights may have turned 50 years old in 2018, but the city is certainly not showing its age.

“There is a natural cycle to a city,” said City Manager Mark Vanderpool. “It grows with development, becomes fully developed and then experiences a decline in population and the number of children enrolled in school. We realized coming out of the Great Recession that we needed to get on a path of prosperity for the city to continue moving forward.”

For the last three years Sterling Heights has averaged 2,231 building permits annually. This includes residential and commercial construction projects, including numerous new developments.

Mayor Michael Taylor said the uptick started back in 2014-15 after the remnants of the Great Recession were swept away.

“That’s when it really exploded,” he said. “Wherever builders can find, they are building.”

The housing developments are in different stages of the process, but they include single-family starter homes, high-end single-family homes, upscale condominiums and luxury apartments. While Sterling Heights, the state’s fourth largest city, has a good mix of housing available already, the new builds are filling in some gaps. Many of them are single-family homes 2,000 square feet or larger and some are selling in the \$500,000 range, said Taylor.

“This is quite a change from the past decade,” he said.

In the past five years, 765 housing units have gone online in Sterling Heights, said Vanderpool, and many more are still forthcoming in the planning process. One of these is the Verandas, a development at the Maple Lane Golf Club, which calls for an 18-hole golf course and a 9-hole executive course, while providing more than 800 residential units ranging from single family homes and townhomes to assisted living spaces.

Taylor contributes the increase in permits and interest in the city overall to the quality of life in Sterling Heights, saying the city is centrally located with easy access to Lake St. Clair, has low taxes, good schools and great neighborhoods.

In addition, city officials, he said, have made an effort to emphasize placemaking projects, taking a multi-faceted approach to improving public spaces by incorporating more public art, beautifying street medians and investing in green spaces like Dodge Park, which welcomed a new splash pad, sports fields, concert stage and farmers market pavilion last summer.

The Recreating Recreation plan that voters approved in 2016



has proven to be very transformative, said Vanderpool. It will provide the funds needed to make capital improvements to nearly every one of the city’s 26 neighborhood and five major parks; open a dog park at Delia Park; install a mini turf soccer field; construct a 100,000-square-foot community center; and more.





City officials are also addressing infrastructure improvements by repairing major thoroughfares in the city. They are working with Macomb County officials on transportation issues like the Mound Road project and branding the M-59 corridor, added Vanderpool.

Businesses are drawn to Sterling Heights because of its highly skilled, talented workforce, Taylor said.


“We have more engineers per capita than any other city,” he said.

In the last few years, manufacturing projects within the city have indeed seen a boost. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA), has made some substantial investments in the Sterling Stamping Plant and Sterling Heights Assembly Plant.

As a result, hundreds of new jobs that are attracting families who want to live in the same area where they work. They have also spurred additional investment by suppliers and restaurants and hotels, particularly in the Van Dyke and Mound road corridor where many of the city’s hi-tech companies are located.

In fact, seven new hotels have sprung up in the past three years. Among other newer commercial developments is BJ’s Restaurant & Brewhouse, which opened in mid-April near

Lakeside Mall.

“We have very sound planning, but it never really ends. We are always adapting,” said Vanderpool. 

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS

**Top:** An exterior rendering of a proposed mixed use development along north Van Dyke just south of the Clinton River. The development consists of 135 residential apartments and retail uses on the ground floor.

**Bottom:** The Verandas, a development at the Maple Lane Golf Club, which calls for more than 800 residential units ranging from single family homes and townhomes to assisted living spaces.

## CONNECT



Keep up with all the latest community events, programs, activities, news and new developments in Sterling Heights by checking out the spring/summer 2019 edition

of the City Magazine. Find it on the city’s website at [www.sterling-heights.net](http://www.sterling-heights.net).





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# Warren Consolidated Schools

Partnering with business professionals, post-secondary educators and community leaders, Warren Consolidated Schools prepares its students for future success. Graduates leave high school with a solid foundation that they can build upon as they pursue their unique goals, be that college, military, work or family.

“Warren Consolidated Schools offers all students the opportunity to gain hands-on skills through 21 cutting edge Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, offered at our three traditional high schools and at our state of the art Career Prep Center,” said Superintendent Dr. Robert Livernois.

The Career Prep Center (CPC) exposes students to a wide variety of high-demand, high-paying careers. Through hands-on activities and real work experiences, students strengthen their academic knowledge, develop technical skills and explore growing career fields.

“CTE provides real world work experience and exposure to help students achieve success, regardless of which post-secondary path they choose. We believe all children learn differently. While some students thrive in a traditional academic setting, others find success at CPC by discovering alternate routes and certifications. We aim to identify and cultivate the individual talents and interests of our students, providing them direct access to a variety of post-secondary options,” he said.

Among the career pathways offered at the CPC are: Building trades, collision repair, computer aided design (CAD), computer information systems, culinary arts, cybersecurity, dental science, emergency medical technician, health science, marketing, metal technology, robotics and mechatronics and visual imaging and printing technology.

These career pathways, said Livernois, are aligned to the Michigan Hot 50 Publication, which highlights top trending high demand, high wage careers that offer a mix of long term job growth, projected annual job openings and median wages. The publication also lists these in-demand careers and STEM occupations by education and training requirements so students can clearly see what will be required of them.

Supplementing this information is an advisory committee

comprised of business leaders, students, parents and post-secondary education partners.

“Our instructors rely on our industry leaders to keep us informed of current trends, equipment and certifications,” said the superintendent. “The committee meets twice per year to brainstorm ways to improve our programs to best meet the needs of the community and current industry demands.”

With this input, Livernois added, Warren educators have a constant pipeline to current community needs and industry trends.

“This partnership allows us to provide our students with the most current knowledge, skills and hands-on training necessary to directly fill the skills gap in our community,” he said.

While classroom knowledge is powerful, so is work-based learning. As students participate in ambulance ride alongs, construct homes and cater community events, they get a realistic view of their chosen career and are in a better position to know if this is an area they wish to continue to pursue or whether they want to switch gears into another employment sector.

More than 700 students participate in CPC classes. They are juniors and seniors from four high schools: Community High, Sterling Heights, Warren Cousino and Warren Mott.

According to Livernois, a work-based learning coordinator pairs second year students with local businesses, providing part time employment, job shadowing opportunities and internships.

“This program allows students practical experiences with highly qualified professionals within their field,” he said.

This commitment to preparing students for future success can be found throughout Warren schools. All Warren Consolidated Schools are accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and by the State of Michigan and 13 of its schools have been awarded the Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School Award. Two are national blue ribbon schools. A blue ribbon school is recognized for achieving a high level of all-around excellence through a quality curriculum, extensive educational opportunities and a solid pathway to success in college or the workplace.





# Focusing on renewal

## Building project in Warren expected to spur development

*By Jane Peterson*

Construction of a new municipal center in Warren — often referred to as Warren Civic Center South — is currently under way and it is generating a lot of buzz in the city's southern sector.

Located on the west side of Van Dyke Avenue north of 9 Mile Road, the nearly 12,000 square foot project includes a secondary city hall that features a police mini-station, library, meeting spaces and a park. It is slated to open in early October.

Mayor Jim Fouts said there has been concern from residents that this area is the “forgotten section” when it comes to municipal projects, but says that he cares deeply about all areas of Warren and expects the development to attract additional investment in the area by private businesses.

The Burnette Branch of the Warren Public Library, which was in need of renovation or re-building, said Tom Bommarito, director of Department of Community, Economic & Downtown Development, will move from its current location on Van Dyke Avenue just south of 9 Mile Road into the new facility.

It will be joined by a police mini-station that will focus on community policing, he said, and an accessible playground and park area.

The construction bid was awarded to the Dailey Company based in Lake Orion. Land for the project was donated by the city's Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA). Its \$5 million price tag is being funded from a variety of sources: \$1.5 million from Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA); \$2.5 from the library department; and \$1 million from the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, said Bommarito.

A second phase of Civic Center South is slated to include an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and fire station. Officials are still working on funding for this part of the development, he said.

Both developments come on the heels of another building project in southern Warren with the opening of a new building for the Busch Branch of the Warren Public Library in 2016, Bommarito added.

These projects are part of an overall strategy to position the city — the third largest in Michigan — for further development and enhance the quality of life for residents in the area. Fouts said city officials are working on making the streets more walkable and that other improvements are being made in mature neighborhoods, like \$150,000 in facade improvement grants for older buildings, new benches, litter cans, flowers on light poles and more than 100 new trees planted along Van

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Dyke Avenue from 8 Mile Road to Stephens Road.

It's an exciting time for Warren, said Fouts.

“I don't know many cities doing as much building as we are,” he said. **M**

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE CITY OF WARREN

**Opposite page:** A concept drawing of the new civic center complex in Warren.

**Top:** The new civic center complex in Warren is currently under construction and slated for an October opening.


**Bottom:** Another concept drawing of the new civic center complex in Warren.

### CONNECT



To learn about future developments and projects in Warren, visit [CityofWarren.org](http://CityofWarren.org) or call city hall at (586) 574-4500. Warren City Hall is located at One City Square in Warren.



*God be in my head,  
and in my understanding.  
God be in my eyes and in my looking,  
God be in my mouth and in my speaking.  
God be in my heart and in my thinking,  
God be at my end and at my departing.*

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# Farm fresh

## Looking for freshly-picked produce? Farmers markets have you covered

*By Jane Peterson*

Visiting a local farmers market isn't just about shopping for food, it's about an experience.

And Macomb County farmers markets have plenty of experiences waiting for residents and visitors this growing season.

Shopping under the blue sky, exploring new vegetable varieties and talking to the vendors who actually grow the food make strolling through the farmers markets or stopping at roadside stands a popular summer pastime in Macomb County.

Farmers markets have skyrocketed in popularity in recent years.

"There is nothing quite like a thriving farmers market full of freshly grown produce, families young and old and sharing between farmers and their neighbors to highlight the quality of life of an area," said Amanda Shreve, executive director of the Michigan Farmers Market Association. "Farmers markets serve as an asset that can make a community feel more appealing and welcoming, thus affecting a sense of place among residents."

Farmers markets and roadside stands are located in many communities throughout Macomb County. Some are open year round. Others are special events on weekends or open one or two evenings during the week for growing and harvest season.

The Mount Clemens Farmers Market was born from a rich tradition called Mount Clemens Farm City Week. From 1958-79, farmers were invited to stand out on the sidewalk and sell their fresh fruit and vegetables. In July 1979, the farmers market first opened and 40 years later it is still going strong.

Vendors attend the farmers market from May through November offering fresh fruits and veggies for sale as well as items like honey, eggs, bakery items, coffee, fresh and frozen fish, pasta and more.

"Farmers markets create economic, community development, and health-related opportunities. They can be thriving marketplaces for local food and farm products which keep money circulating in the local economy. They serve as community gathering places where neighbors interact and connections can be built and sustained. And they improve the health of the community by increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables," said Shreve.

Like many farmers markets, the Mount Clemens Farmers Market is a growers only market, meaning that vendors must grow their own produce or make their own products. There is no re-selling of manufactured items.

Ken DeCock is a third generation farmer who operates Boyka's Farm Market, a farmers market and produce stand in Macomb. The family has been a fixture in the community since the early 1980s, when his parents began selling fresh fruits and



vegetables from wagons on 23 Mile Road.

Everything here comes fresh from the farm, which DeCock said is part of the appeal.

"People like stopping by and being out in the open where you can see the corn growing in the back," he said.

Boyka's grows many varieties of vegetables, including sweet corn, peppers, tomatoes and cantaloupe. Most are harvested in the summer, so produce is generally available mid- to late-July, weather permitting. What he likes is to offer people variety, so instead of just growing bicolor sweet corn, he also plants white and yellow corn. Boyka's also grows several varieties of peppers and pumpkins in many sizes in addition to many other kinds of produce.

"It's satisfying work to produce a good quality product," he said.

His mother is often in the market and enjoys answering questions about produce preparation and canning. Boyka's can





**Opposite page, top:** Like many farmers markets, the Mount Clemens Farmers Market is a growers only market, meaning that vendors must grow their own produce. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MOUNT CLEMENS FARMERS MARKET

**Opposite page, bottom:** The Dodge Park Farmers Market in Sterling Heights brings in local produce, usually from within 200 miles. PHOTO COURTESY OF STERLING HEIGHTS PARKS & RECREATION

**Above, left:** The Mount Clemens Farmers Market opened in 1979 and is celebrating its 40th anniversary milestone this year. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MOUNT CLEMENS FARMERS MARKET

**Above, right:** Vendors attend the Mount Clemens Farmers Market from May through November offering fresh fruits and veggies for sale as well as items like honey, eggs, bakery items, coffee, fresh and frozen fish, pasta and more. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MOUNT CLEMENS FARMERS MARKET

accommodate larger orders of produce for parties and customers who want to can in large batches.

Pearl Romberg, Mount Clemens Farmers Market board member and past president, explained that visitors love being able to talk to the farmers in the booth. They might ask the best way to prepare a vegetable or ask for a recipe. Over time, they become friends.

That's a much different experience than shopping in the produce section of the grocery store.

Many farmers market patrons also like the idea of supporting local farmers and reducing their environmental footprint by purchasing items closer to home that don't have to be trucked across the country.

The Dodge Park Farmers Market in Sterling Heights brings in local produce, usually from within 200 miles, said Recreation Supervisor Troy Nowotny. The market, now in its fifth season, offers produce and products crafted by artisans.

The market connects people with those who put in the work growing and picking food for their tables, he said, and gives them a glimpse of the creative side of the community by talking with artisan vendors.

One of the best parts about visiting a farmers market is the special events. Seasonal events at the Mount Clemens Farmers Market include Strawberry Social, Corn Roast, Family Day and Soup Day. Held in October, Soup Day started 10 years ago and has grown every year since, said Romberg. Soup is made with ingredients available at the market. Last year 80 gallons of soup was prepared — enough to fill 600 mugs.

The Dodge Park Farmers Market includes a Kids Korner where children can complete an activity or craft while learning more about food and nutrition. The market also features a cooking demonstration once a month.

Visit [MIFMA.org](http://MIFMA.org) to find a farmers market in your area. **M**

## BENEFITS OF FARMERS MARKETS

- They support Michigan farmers and the local economy
- They increase the selection of fresh, locally grown products
- They foster a sense of community
- They provide a way for consumers to learn more about how food is grown
- They offer a fun, family-friendly environment for nutrition awareness
- They encourage healthy eating habits
- They expand access to fresh produce for eligible participants through programs like Double Up Food Bucks and Senior Project Fresh

## CONNECT



The Mount Clemens Farmers Market is open from 7 a.m.-1 p.m. Friday and Saturday through Nov. 23 at 141 North River Road in Mount Clemens and 1-5 p.m. Wednesday July 24-Sept. 25 downtown at 125 Macomb Place in Mount Clemens. For more information, call (586) 493-7600 or visit [MountClemensFarmersMarket.com](http://MountClemensFarmersMarket.com).

Boyka's Farm Market is located at 20555 23 Mile Road in Macomb. It is open 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday during market season. For more information and seasonal updates, call (586) 286-1886 or visit [BoykasFarmMarket.com](http://BoykasFarmMarket.com).

Dodge Park Farmers Market is open from 3-8 p.m. Thursday through the end of September in Dodge Park, 40620 Utica Road, Sterling Heights. For more information, visit [Sterling-Heights.net/1236/Dodge-Park-Farmers-Market](http://Sterling-Heights.net/1236/Dodge-Park-Farmers-Market).



# Looking to the next 100 years

Sustainability study to help Selfridge and its neighbors plan for the future

*By Jane Peterson*

**M**acomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development is seeking grant funds for a Sustainability Study designed to identify existing and potential future land use conflicts between Selfridge Air National Guard Base (SANGB) and its neighboring communities.

The goal is to avoid potential encroachment issues that could potentially cause safety, economic and environmental harm to either civilian or military operations. The Sustainability Study would be used as a planning tool, coordinating efforts between the civilian community and military installation so both can mutually continue to thrive.

“Selfridge is an important partner in driving our economy,” said Jeff Schroeder, program director, planning and mapping services group for Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development.

The Sustainability Study is referred to as a Joint Land Use Study by the Department of Defense. However, unlike a previous study in the 1990s, this one does not propose any joint military and commercial use for the airfields, said Schroeder.

“What this does is takes a look at the plans of neighboring communities and mitigates potential issues with future uses of Selfridge,” said Vicky Rad, director of Macomb County Planning and Economic Development.

With assistance from the Office of Economic Adjustment, the county submitted a scope of work document on May 1. This document outlined the tasks that need to be completed and the intended outcomes of the Sustainability Study. Before submission, it was reviewed by leaders of communities that will be impacted by the study, including Chesterfield Township, Clinton Township, Fraser, Harrison Township, Macomb Township, Mount Clemens, New Baltimore, Roseville and St. Clair Shores. These communities have also expressed support for the proposed Sustainability Study by passing resolutions or writing letters.

If grant funding is approved, plans call for a consultant to be hired by the end of summer so work group and data review can get under way in the fall. Macomb County Planning and Economic Development officials would continue to assist with the project, said Schroeder, by utilizing its Geographic Information System (GIS) portals to bring all of the elements together in one central data collection.

A final report is projected to be complete during winter 2020, he said. Notice of the grant award was scheduled for June after press time.

When founded more than 100 years ago, the nine communities surrounding Selfridge reported a population of 38,000. As the



population and development continues to increase, the Sustainability Study would be designed to promote economic planning that is compatible with land uses, minimalizes impacts of the environment and supports the missions of both Selfridge and local communities.

Having a completed Sustainability Study may also put SANGB in a stronger position to be considered for future defense projects. Last year, when making a bid to host one of two F-35 fighter jet units, Macomb County officials partnered with Selfridge leaders to put together a presentation package. Although Selfridge wasn't selected that time, it was one of five being considered and state, county and local officials are still hopeful that Selfridge will receive a future F-35 mission.

If grant monies are approved for the Sustainability Study, there may be opportunities to apply for additional grants to address building solutions identified in the study, said Schroeder. **M**

## CONNECT



Selfridge Air National Guard Base (SANGB) is a joint Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security installation that

houses nearly 7,000 personnel members and 44 tenants. All five branches of the uniformed armed forces — Army, Navy, Marine Corp, Air Force and Coast Guard — are housed there, a very unique aspect of the base.

It is also one of the oldest continuously operated military airfields in the nation, having been established in Harrison Township in 1917.

SANGB continues to be a significant economic driver, contributing more than \$850 million to the local economy.





PHOTOS COURTESY OF MACOMB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Left:** Col. Scott P. Champers, Deputy Director for Installations speaks to the crowd. Leaders from all surrounding communities were invited to be a part of the Selfridge Sustainability Study.

**Right:** Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel addresses the gathered crowd.



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# A cause for celebration

Anton Art Center marks 50th anniversary

*By Jane Peterson*

**A**nton Art Center isn't just getting older, it's getting better. For 50 years, it has connected people with powerful and thought-provoking paintings, sculptures and performances. In the process, the center has introduced the community to diverse backgrounds and a variety of cultural experiences.

"The arts are a powerful tool to bring people together," said Executive Director Phil Gilchrist.

Located in Mount Clemens, Anton Art Center is one of two nonprofit art centers in Macomb County. Both bring a variety of visual and performing arts to the community, enriching the lives of Macomb County residents and visitors alike.

While in its early days, people were invited to come and view art, today visitors are encouraged to engage with it, tapping into their own creativity and expressing their feelings not through just speech, but by manipulating clay, experimenting with paint or working with fabric.

This year Anton Art Center is offering a variety of classes, including loom weaving, ceramics and acrylic flow paintings. The Center constantly adapts, providing instruction in styles of art that incorporate traditional methods as well as current fads.

"Art is for everybody," he said. "Trends attract those who might not know they have an interest in art."

According to Gilchrist, Anton Art Center was formed in 1969 by three women who were actively involved in the Mount Clemens Art Association. These ladies, often referred to as the Center's "founding mothers," were Bea Wright, Gretchen Thompson and Phyllis Wickens.

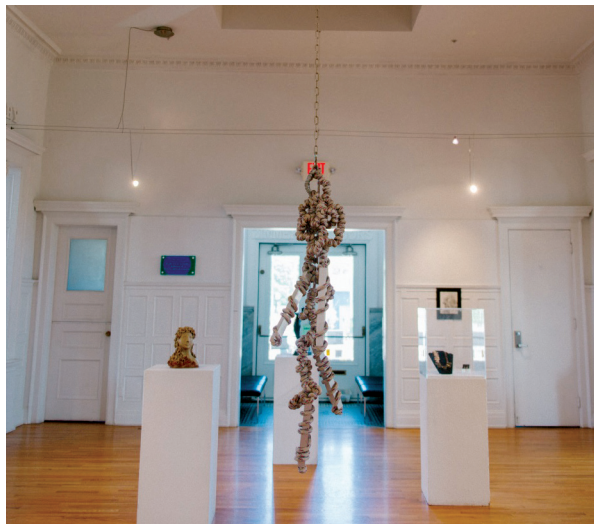
After moving into the former Carnegie Library and undergoing renovations, the center's first art exhibit opened in 1970. It centered around a portrait titled "Mother and Child," which was on loan from the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Since then, Anton Art Center has displayed a huge breadth of work from local artists as well as those from across the region, state and country thanks to partnerships with local arts groups, open-call art exhibits and curated shows.

Events like Anton's annual Holiday Market also serve as an outlet for local artists to sell their work through consignment.

Anton Art Center has always been located in the same building, which is just as much a work of art as the pieces inside. It was one of more than 2,500 free public libraries built by Andrew Carnegie, who agreed to pay the \$15,000 needed to build the facility





if the city guaranteed it would spend 10 percent of that amount, or \$1,500, each year to support it. Designed by a local architect the structure was completed in 1904. It is a neo-classical design that debuted with its iconic red clay tile roof, unique stonework and interesting architectural aspects.

“So much care was put into this building and it remains timeless today,” said Gilchrist.

The library eventually outgrew the space and moved out in May 1969 and the art center has been operating in it ever since. The interior was converted to three galleries, a gift shop and offices on the main floor with an art studio/meeting area and a pottery studio and kiln room in the lower level.

A successful capital campaign was launched in 2006 to fund renovations to the Center, expanding exhibit and classroom space and creating a new gift shop area and administrative offices. Improvements also made the building accessible for individuals with wheelchairs and mobility issues.

Anton Art Center typically hosts more than 20 exhibits each year, with a variety of additional programs including artist talks, opera and dance performances and a full schedule of classes year round. It once hosted a Van Gogh exhibit featuring a painting on loan from the Detroit Institute of Arts.

However, some of its most popular exhibitions continue to be student displays. Since the 1970s, students in grades K-12 enter their art for show. It has become a huge draw, with approximately 1,000 pieces entered, but only 350 accepted. The show is separated into a primary exhibition for younger students and a secondary juried student competition and exhibition for teens and young adults.

In September, Anton Art Center will feature a powerful exhibit in conjunction with Turning Point. It will highlight 20 quilts crafted by survivors of sexual abuse. The traveling project is a way for the voices of survivors to be heard while bringing awareness to the issue of sexual violence.

Events are scheduled throughout the year to mark the Center’s milestone anniversary. Recently, Anton wrapped up Postcarded, marking its 50th anniversary with mini masterpieces of original works of art using different mediums.

On June 8, it held a community Super SatARTday. The day featured free art activities, performances, an art tour through downtown Mount Clemens and birthday cake. In September the 28th annual Art Party is planned as a fundraising event. It will be held under a tent and include food tastings. **M**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANTON ART CENTER

**Opposite page:** A historical photo showing preparations for a performance at Anton Art Center.

**Left, top:** The Anton Art Center as it appears today.

**Left, bottom:** The main gallery at Anton Art Center.

**Right:** An open house at the Anton Art Center in the late 1960s.

## CONNECT



Admission is free to the Anton Art Center, located at 125 Macomb Place in Mount Clemens. Gallery hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday. For more information or to check out the event and class schedule, visit [TheArtCenter.org](http://TheArtCenter.org).



# Hometown hero

## Volunteer hotline supports Macomb's military families during deployment

By Jane Peterson

**W**hen couples get married, there is a reasonable expectation that they will be taking on whatever life throws at them together.

Whether a job loss, illness or even the birth of triplets, most people can face any challenge as long as they know that they have the love and support of their partner behind them. However, at times in their married life, couples will be separated from each other and this can be stressful for both of them.

"I know that when I go out of town, something always seems to go wrong and my wife is calling me on the phone to let me know what happened," said Shelby Township resident Steve Remias.

As an executive board member and current president of the Selfridge Air National Guard Base Community Council, Remias realized that these situations must be particularly hard on military families. Selfridge Air National Guard (SANG) is an integral part of the Macomb County community, contributing to the health of the economy, employment of citizens and overall quality of life.

Located on the western edge of Lake St. Clair in Harrison Township, SANG is the only reserve forces base to have permanently assigned units representing all five of the armed services: Air National Guard, Army, Navy, Marine Corp and Coast Guard as well as Border Protection and Border Patrol.

The communities surrounding the base and Macomb County in general have been supportive neighbors of SANG for 100 years, so when word came a year ago that there would be deployments, county residents rallied around its military neighbors.

One way they are doing this is through the Hometown Hero Hotline.

The hotline was started because during times of deployment, military couples not only struggle with missing their loved one, but with the realization that their partner is not by their side to lend a helping hand as needed. Having enough on their plate already, when things happen around the house, like the garage door getting jammed, toilet overflowing or the family vehicle not starting, these every day stresses can turn into overwhelming situations.

"Couples are used to solving problems together," said Remias, "but when one spouse is serving far away, it can be difficult for everyone involved. We don't want the deployed spouses worried about what is happening at home while the other takes on the responsibility of unexpected home repairs and maintenance by themselves."

In an effort strongly encouraged by Brig. Gen. John D. Slocum, former commander of the 127th Wing at Selfridge, now retired, the Selfridge Air National Guard Base Community Council, along with military, state and local organizations, committed to stepping up and helping during a military family's time of need by



providing emergency support. This network, always on standby, is comprised of the Selfridge Base Community Council, Macomb County Chamber of Commerce, Macomb County Executive office and a wide variety of community organizations.

So now if a furnace goes out on one of the coldest nights of the year, plumbing issues happen or snow needs to be removed, Selfridge spouses can call the Hometown Hero Hotline for assistance. Manned 24 hours a day seven days a week during deployment, callers identify their need and then community partners are engaged to find the appropriate resource.

Remias said businesses called in to assist are not required to donate their services, but many have taken care of minor repairs free of charge or offered discounts for materials.

While having home and car repairs made definitely provides relief, just knowing that the Hometown Hero Hotline exists provides peace of mind for both spouses and reminds them that the Macomb County community is part of their extended military family.

"It's one way we can say thank you for their sacrifice and service," said Remias. **M**

PHOTO BY TERRY L. ATWELL, COURTESY OF THE U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD

**Above:** Airmen from the 127th Wing prepare to board a Boeing 727 on April 9. The service members are deployed on mission to support the U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility. During times of deployment, military families at home can receive help with household issues thanks to the Hometown Hero Hotline.

### CONNECT



When an issue arises, military families call the Hometown Hero Hotline and explain the problem. Base commanders then activate the community network of partners, which pinpoints the appropriate resource based on location and other factors.

The community organization, like a chamber of commerce, for example, then puts the call out to its members to see who is available to help. They connect the two parties and work is completed as needed in a timely manner.



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# ‘Walking kids right up to success’

Business leaders, communities create manufacturing education program

*By Jane Peterson*

Last fall, Fraser educators and Macomb County business leaders launched SME Partnership Response In Manufacturing Education (PRIME), an initiative that created an advanced manufacturing education program at Fraser High School.

In just nine short months, the results have already exceeded expectations, said Fraser CTE Director Brent Brasure.

“As educators, we always wait for kids to have that ‘aha’ moment,” he said. “Through work-based learning, students go from talking about an idea to seeing a product being built. That’s where students make a real connection between education and a career.”

The district chose to focus its efforts on four Career & Technical Education (CTE) program training modules: Information technology (IT), including cybersecurity and computer programming; welding; mechanical design; and electronics. These are areas where employers have the greatest needs and where young people can make a seamless transition from student to employee.

An important component of the PRIME program is involvement from the business community. PRIME is guided by a coalition

of professionals from five Macomb County-based industries: General Motors; Fori Automation, Inc.; Dominion Technologies Group, Inc.; I F Metal Works; and Oakley Industries. Each month the coalition meets to review progress and discuss upcoming student engagement activities.

“The commitment of our partners can’t be questioned,” he said. “They provide thoughtful leadership.”

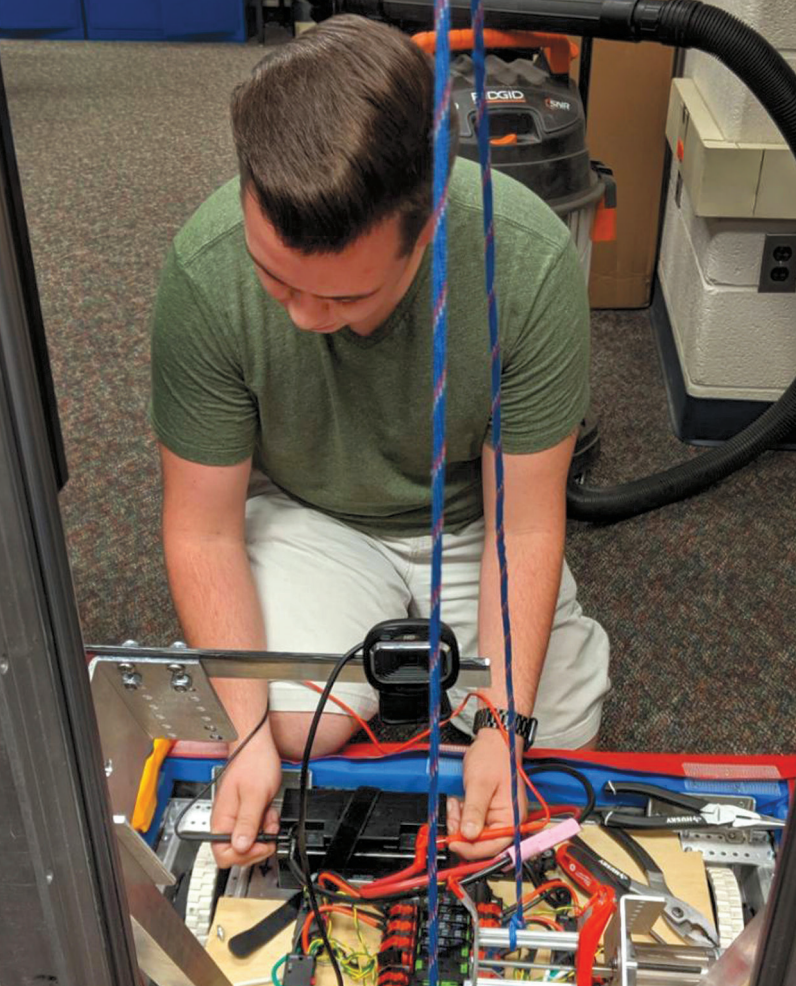
The coalition has also pledged to invest \$450,000 over three years to build state-of-the-art facilities for students to learn automobile, aerospace, automation and defense concepts in a hands-on manner. The first installment of \$125,000 was used to purchase Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machinery as well as welding and robotics equipment and software.

“This is industrial grade equipment,” he said.

Funds are also being used for Computer-Aided Design (CAD) software and teacher training.

The effort jumpstarts students on the path to success, said Brasure. Last fall, the district rolled out the PRIME initiative at the Fraser Family Tailgate. School leaders continue to encourage students and families to take a long-term approach to education





and career planning.

“We’re walking kids right up to success,” said Brasure. “At Fraser every student is a CTE student because every one of them will have a career.”

In October, students attended Manufacturing Day activities, visiting Fori Automation and General Motors to see careers in action. Other work-based learning visits are made to other coalition partners throughout the year. This gets students asking questions, identifying what they like and maybe more importantly don’t like about specific jobs, eventually arriving at their “professional purpose.”

This process starts early on from offering Makerspaces activities in elementary schools to career exploration activities in the middle school. In its first year participating in the FIRST Robotics, high school participants proudly took home some rookie hardware, but that wasn’t the best part, said Brasure.


“The biggest return was sharing that success with the elementary schools,” he said.

Center Line Public Schools is in the process of evaluating the initiative, looking at developing coalition partners to adopt the SME PRIME program as well, said Superintendent Eve Kaltz.

Along with Armada Area Schools, Center Line and Fraser formed the Macomb Classroom to Careers Readiness Talent Consortium and applied for Michigan Marshall Plan grant monies last year. The goal of the partnership is to develop a system that integrates career experiences and preparation throughout preschool through adult education through close partnerships with post-secondary institutions and employers.

The consortium was awarded \$1.5 million. According to Kaltz, district leaders are working with a consultant to coordinate

career navigators. The goal is to expose students to a variety of career choices with a focus on technical programs in the skilled trades.

The consortium is also currently implementing educational programs in the health science sector. This summer 75 incoming freshmen will attend Camp Scrubs to explore career paths in the medical field and possible certification options alongside consortium partners Rochester College and Macomb Community College. 

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FRASER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Opposite page:** Fraser Public Schools chose to focus its efforts on four Career & Technical Education (CTE) program training modules: Information technology (IT), including cybersecurity and computer programming; welding; mechanical design; and electronics.

**Middle:** Through work-based learning, students make a real connection between education and a career.

**Right:** The PRIME initiative jumpstarts students on the path to success.

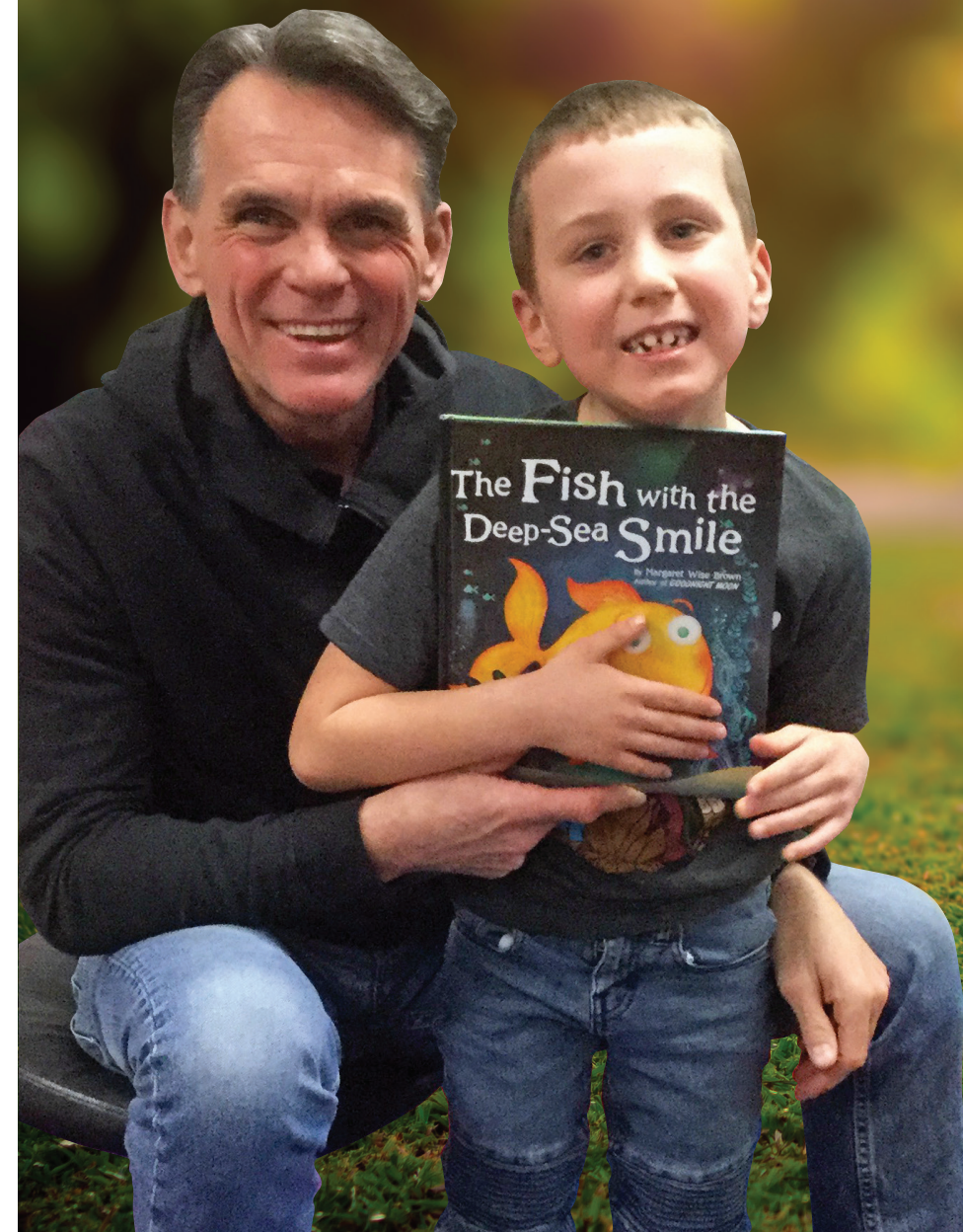
## CONNECT



Fraser Public Schools serves nearly 5,000 students in nine schools and one early childhood center. The district encompasses the entire city of Fraser and portions of Clinton Township and Roseville. For more information, visit [Fraser.k12.mi.us](http://Fraser.k12.mi.us) or call (586) 439-7000.



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# Building blocks

Robotics center to inspire young people to consider careers in tech industries

*By Jane Peterson*

It's no secret that Macomb County has made a very concerted effort to diversify its economy. Today, there are many sectors that are particularly strong, including aerospace, defense, manufacturing and automotive.

With the Robotics Collaboration and Innovation Center, the county is seeking to add another piece of the pie.

According to Kim Rustem, senior consultant at Public Sector Consultants (PSC), stakeholders engaged in the process, including those from industry, local government, FIRST® Robotics teams, K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions, determined that the center will focus on the development of a talent pipeline through support for:

- FIRST® Robotics teams
- Robotics in K-12 education
- Postsecondary robotics education and training
- Robotics entrepreneurship

The center will provide engineering entrepreneurs with access to the tools, programs and experts in an open, collaborative environment. It will feature a tooling and fabrication shop, individual workstations, co-shared work spaces, computers and software in addition to engineering and computer science assis-

tance, business development support and access to mentors for top automotive, defense, manufacturing and technology firms.

It will be focused on increasing awareness and opportunity within the robotics field, particularly for young people.

"This is going to be a major opportunity to integrate industry and education," said Luke Bonner, CEO of the Bonner Advisory Group. His business assisted with the strategy and feasibility phases of the project.

Some schools in Macomb County already have active FIRST® Robotics programs in place. FIRST® (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), is an intensive afterschool activity where students in grades 9-12 spend weeks building robots designed to perform specific tasks. Then they put their robot to the test against other schools at popular FIRST® Robotics Competitions.

In April, more than 17,000 students ages 6-18 from around the world traveled to Detroit, putting their innovation skills to the test at the annual FIRST Championship Presented by Qualcomm Incorporated, held at the Cobo Center and Ford Field.

The four-day Detroit event was attended by more than 43,000 people, including more than 700 robotics teams from





37 countries that competed and exhibited in FIRST programs: FIRST®LEGO® League for ages 9-16; FIRST Tech Challenge, ages 12 to 18; and FIRST Robotics Competition, ages 14 to 18. In addition, 60 teams participated in the FIRST® LEGO® League Jr. World Festival Expo, for students in grades K-4, ages 6 to 9. This year, Macomb County's Utica ThunderChickens took first place in the FIRST® World Championship.

Macomb County wants to build on this success and involve more students. Vicky Rad, director of Macomb County Planning and Development, said out of the 28 high schools in Macomb County, there are 16 established FIRST® Robotics teams and four new high school rookie teams. The Robotics Collaboration and Innovation Center seeks to increase this number and provide additional opportunities for students by providing practice fields and space for participants to build their competition robots and work alongside with mentors from business and industry.

"We're building a talent pipeline, especially those engaged in these activities, and showing them a career pathway. The students who participate in FIRST receive hands-on skills that make them truly marketable for the next generation of high-tech careers we have available here in Macomb County," said Rad.

Macomb County, the City of Sterling Heights, Macomb Intermediate School District and Macomb Community College entered into a partnership, established a nonprofit organization and hired Public Sector Consultants and Miller Canfield as consultants to help operationalize the center.

Sterling Heights officials offered space at the Velocity Collaboration Center for the first year as an in-kind donation, said Bonner, who also serves as a senior economic development advisor for the city. Operating costs are projected to be

\$300,000 per year.

PSC and Miller Canfield have formulated a business plan and hosted an advisory team meeting. At this meeting, Rustem said participants have been sharing their vision and priorities for the center and learning about the enthusiasm students have for robotics during break-out sessions.

The project is at the point now where it is ready to bring in stakeholders, additional board members and mentors, said Bonner. The nonprofit is also looking for companies to offer internships.

The Robotics Collaboration and Innovation Center is slated for an Oct. 1 opening. **M**

IMAGES COURTESY OF MACOMB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Opposite page:** The Robotics Collaboration and Innovation Center will be focused on increasing awareness and opportunity within the robotics field, particularly for young people.

**Above:** A rendering of a classroom in the Robotics Collaboration and Innovation Center.

## CONNECT



A \$1.5 million fundraising campaign is currently under way to support the Robotics Collaboration and Innovation Center. The center, to be housed in the Velocity Collaboration Center, will use the monies for start-up funding, materials and programming. For more information, contact the Macomb County Planning and Economic Development at (586) 469-5285.



# Cool clear water

## Grants seek to help address local invasive species challenges

*By Jane Peterson*

Nature is a balancing act. When everything is in its proper place, the ecosystem hums along, but if one aspect gets out of whack, the entire ecological community can suffer.

Taking a pro-active approach to the issue, Macomb County, along with a couple dozen other communities, is seeking to improve the natural value of lands in southeastern Michigan by pursuing funds that can be used to help manage the challenges faced by invasive species.

Six Rivers Land Conservancy, the fiduciary for the Lake St. Clair (LSC) Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) in Macomb and St. Clair counties, was recently awarded two grants totaling \$120,000 from the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program. Funds will be used to manage issues caused by invasive species, such as Phragmites, Garlic Mustard, Dames Rocket, Parrot feather Watermilfoil, Curlyleaf Pondweed, Black Swallow-wort, Japanese knotweed, European frog-bit and Flowering rush.

These are plants that are not native to the region so when they thrive where they are not supposed to, they pose a huge threat to natural vegetation. Ultimately, they can impact the quality of life for everyone who enjoys activities on the water, including boating, swimming and fishing.

“Invasive species impair access to resources by reducing fish and wildlife populations,” said Christopher Bunch, executive director for the Six Rivers Land Conservancy. “What they do is choke out good sources for breeding and resting grounds.”

The effects can be devastating for a community. If left unchecked, invasive species can eliminate views of the water, close beaches, push up concrete on highways and plug drains, he said.

Invasive species are a problem in almost all communities across Michigan, including the Lake St. Clair Watershed. The Six Rivers Land Conservancy used each \$60,000 grant to hire two CISMA coordinators, one in Macomb County and the other in Oakland County. Funds will also support their efforts to address invasive species through education, outreach and other activities.

McKenzi Bergmoser was hired as the CISMA coordinator for the Lake St. Clair CISMA in November 2018.

“I’m thrilled to be part of the efforts to control invasive species in the Lake St. Clair region,” she said. “By coordinating our efforts, municipalities and nonprofits can share best management practices and gain an economy of scale.”

Continuing to expand the reach of the program and inform the public about invasive species is a critical component in controlling, managing and eventually eradicating them, said Bunch, because they don’t only grow on public lands. Homeowners, especially those who live along a lake or river, need to be able to identify invasive species on their private land so they can treat



and remove them in ways that won’t adversely affect the environment.

Bergmoser will work with local municipalities to address Black Swallow-wort and European frog-bit, two invasive species that grow in bodies of water and suck oxygen out of it.

She will also coordinate efforts with the Macomb County Department of Roads when it comes to Phragmites, a large weed that grows in wetlands, bodies of water and rights-of-way. During 2018, the Lake St. Clair CISMA and its partners successfully managed over 1,000 acres of invasive species - Phragmites alone accounted for more than 500 of those acres.

The Lake St Clair CISMA plans to continue Phragmites treatments along road rights-of-way in Macomb County in 2019. Pending additional funding, LSC CISMA hopes to expand their control efforts to county drains using a non-chemical approach. Grant funding would be achieved through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA).

Most people in Michigan enjoy outdoor recreation. Without knowledge of invasive species, some may unintentionally purchase ornamental plants like Garlic Mustard for their landscapes or inadvertently transport invasive species in or out of Macomb County on the hull of their boat if they don’t wash it after taking it out in an inland lake before putting it in Lake St. Clair, said Bunch. Birds and animals can also transport invasive species through droppings and carrying seeds.

The problem, he said, is once invasive species are here, there are no predators to stop them from expanding uncontrolled. **M**





PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SIX RIVERS LAND CONSERVANCY

**Opposite page:** People work to pull garlic mustard during a work day at Burgess-Shadbush Nature Center in May.

**Above:** Two grants from the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program provided funds to two CISMA coordinators, one in Macomb County and the other in Oakland County. The coordinators address invasive species issues through education, outreach and other activities.

## CONNECT



The goal of the Six Rivers Land Conservancy, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit located in Oakland Township, is to preserve land to keep it in its natural state. Its mission is to conserve, sustain and connect natural areas, lands and

waters. To date, the organization has protected over 2,000 acres in Oakland, Macomb, St. Clair, Lapeer, and Genesee counties. Property owners can learn more about invasive species identification and suggestions for control by visiting [SixRiverslrc.org](http://SixRiverslrc.org).

The Lake St. Clair Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (LSC CISMA) is a partnership of local and state governments, nonprofits and property owners founded in 2015. United in their goal to prevent, detect and control priority invasive species, the CISMA operates within the boundary of the vast, 2,100 square mile, Lake St. Clair Watershed.



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# Say aloha

## Tiki boats bring a touch of Hawaii close to home

By Jane Peterson

With its scenic sunsets and miles of sandy beaches, Lake St. Clair is one of the most active — and attractive — lakes in southeastern Michigan. Of its coastline, 32 miles fall in Macomb County, luring residents, visitors and businesses to its shore.

Now, in addition to paddle boarding, sailing and fishing, beach lovers can board a tiki boat for a one-of-a-kind cruise. Aloha Tiki Tours is a new charter boat service that takes all the fun of a tiki bar and puts it on the water.

For owners Nick and Jody Blaszczyk, the tiki boats were a natural extension of their other businesses, The Detroit Rolling Pub, which opened in 2015 and Detroit Cycle Boats, which opened in 2017. Both offer a unique way to enjoy the Detroit River with a view of the downtown skyline.

Now the Blaszczyks are bringing their tours to Lake St. Clair. Each tiki boat can entertain six guests, but two boats can be taken out into the harbor to accommodate parties up to 12 people.

There is a lot of excitement for this new experience. Before Aloha Tiki Tours even opened Memorial Day weekend, Nick said they had more than 300 bookings.

The Blaszczyks were delighted by the response and warm welcome to Macomb County, especially since people haven't spotted the boats on the water yet to see what they look like. On the other hand, Nick wasn't completely surprised, because once the weather breaks, everyone is looking for ways to spend time outdoors.

"People are always looking for something to do with their friends and family," he said. "The tiki hut atmosphere is something different and fun."

Cruises last for two hours and the tiki boats operate from 10 a.m.-9:15 p.m. At dusk, boats are illuminated by strings of party lights.

Guests are welcome to bring their own food and drink aboard, including alcoholic beverages. The tiki hut top is covered so if it rains, everyone is protected.

While Lake St. Clair was an obvious choice for the Blaszczyks, the water wasn't the only reason that brought them to Macomb County. They liked that there are many new businesses opening in the area and that St. Clair Shores is a vibrant community with a real boating vibe about it. Plus, there are various amenities in the area for their customers to take advantage of before and after tours, like restaurants, breweries and music.

Since the tiki boat trip is chartered, a Coast Guard captain does go out on the water. Boats have been inspected for safety and lifejackets are available, but not required to be worn. The other rules are fairly simple: Don't bring any glass containers and don't jump off the boat. Swimming is absolutely not allowed during



the trip.

"We worked closely with the Coast Guard on the logistics and safety aspects of the boats, so everything is 'smooth sailing,'" he said. **M**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALOHA TIKKI TOURS

**Top:** Each tiki boat can entertain six guests, but two boats can be taken out into the harbor to accommodate parties up to 12 people.

**Bottom:** With its scenic sunsets and miles of sandy beaches, Lake St. Clair is one of the most fun lakes in southeastern Michigan.

### CONNECT



For more information about Aloha Tiki Tours, call (586) 980-1619 or visit [alohatikitours.com](http://alohatikitours.com). The business is located at the Saint Clair Shores Public Dock behind Blossom Heath at 24800 Jefferson Ave. in St. Clair Shores. Hours are 10 a.m.-9:15 p.m. daily.



# The Michigan City of Center Line

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Center Line is re-developing from the ground up and is poised for future growth with an effort to transform its downtown district from 9 ½ Mile to 11 Mile to be a more walkable, pedestrian friendly community. An ongoing economic strategy to redevelop the downtown district has been created that applies mixed-use concepts through the use of form-based codes. This is one of the many ways that Center Line excels as a unique and progressive city in Macomb County while retaining its core identity as a close-knit, charming community.

The City Center Redevelopment District at Van Dyke and 10 Mile Road is being designed to foster a business friendly climate that will encourage pedestrian use, connect people to the adjacent neighborhoods and strengthen the public right-of-wayspace. The city's Master Plan will dovetail with the Economic Development Vision to:

- Create a sense of place and identity for Center Line through unique streetscape elements, pedestrian oriented design and attractive architectural and pedestrian spaces.
- Improve the economic development potential of the district by permitting mixed-use development and utilizing place-making strategies to include the ongoing Independence Festival, now in its fourth year, a new 5K run to benefit the K9 Foundation and the creation of Center Line's own slow roll in the cyCLers Bike Club.

Building entrances and storefronts will be oriented to the street to add visual interest, increase pedestrian traffic and create memorable outdoor spaces where people can safely interact with their environment. The goal to draw small and family owned businesses such as a brew pub, restaurants and more will help to visually distinguish the City Center core at Van Dyke and Ten Mile.

These projects, along with the implementation and vision of the city of Center Line's Master Plan, will transform the city center and make Center Line a unique and welcoming destination in Macomb County.

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# Grand slam

## Jimmy John's Field is in a league all its own

By Jane Peterson

**D**riving past Jimmy John's Field today, one would never guess that just four short years ago the property was a vacant lot, an old capped landfill that sat virtually untouched for years and years.

Today, the space is a vibrant business – a place where couples go for date night, families spend a weekend afternoon and business managers entertain clients and employees.

"Baseball is great entertainment," said Andy Appleby, chairman and chief executive officer of General Sports and Entertainment, LLC. General Sports created the United Shore Professional Baseball League (USPBL) and is the owner of Jimmy John's Field in historic downtown Utica.

The ballfield's seating capacity is nearly 4,500. It is the home of the USPBL's four teams: Utica Unicorns, Birmingham Bloomfield Beavers, Eastside Diamond Hoppers and Westside Woolly Mammoths.

The play at the ballfield is outstanding. In just three short seasons, 27 players have already been signed to Major League baseball organizations.

The layout of Jimmy John's Field was built with both families and the local business community in mind. Lawn seat tickets are priced at an affordable \$6 each while diamond tables and suites are at a price point that works for both local businesses as well as large corporations.

"We have premium suites that are very affordable for companies and we make it the best possible experience for them," he said.

At the ballpark, the level of engagement is very strong. The energy level is high, kids are smiling and fans can't wait for the first pitch. In this relaxed setting, it is easy to meet clients for the first time or continue to build relationships with regular customers.

"Everyone is so scheduled these days, but when you have a suite, it's easy to incorporate everyone's families into the fun," said Appleby.

In all, there are 26 suites and 24 exclusive diamond tables. Each single-game suite includes 16 suite tickets, three VIP parking passes, a 25 percent discount at the team merchandise store and its own server. The suites are located in different areas of the park:

- Seven Founder's Level Suites are on the third level behind home plate, providing amazing views of the ballfield. These are spacious and can accommodate up to 25 guests
- Five Dugout Suites are on the ground level behind home plate. These offer lots of up-close action as well as comfortable seating
- Twelve are Private Patio Cabana Suites located on top of the home and away dugouts. These open-air suites feature a fire pit

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and high-back ballpark bar stools and drink rails

- Two premium suites are located inside the home and away team dugouts. These provide a behind-the-scenes experience with the same sightlines as the players, a dugout bench and access to the warning track between innings

All are designed to provide unique experiences for companies and organizations. While some business leaders use them as a fun way to entertain clients, others invite employees as a reward for reaching sales goals or to host an event as part of a team-building experience.

While suites are open for single games, Park View Diamond Tables are purchased as full and half season packages. The half-moon table and four swivel chairs encourage conversation while comfortably watching the game with inclusive ballpark food, soft drinks and water. These tables also come with numerous other perks perfect for impressing business associates, such as exclusive batting practice for 20 people, autographed team memorabilia upon request, four invitations to a Meet the Teams practice, autograph session and cookout and five first pitch kids opportunities per season. Table naming rights are another fantastic perk.

Either in a suite or at a diamond table, being able to kick back at the ballfield is a welcome change of pace from the normal work day and it engages everyone in a fun experience that they will never forget.

With thousands of positive impressions, Jimmy John's Field





could be considered a brand ambassador for Macomb County. It draws fans from around the Detroit metro area as well as around the state. The USPBL and Jimmy John's Field employs more than 400 people throughout the season and is an economic driver, attracting additional developments around the ballpark.

It was the location that first appealed to Appleby. With an average of 150,000 cars a day driving past the corner, building Jimmy John's Field there was a no-brainer for him. The ability to reach out directly to the public is an amazing way to notify fans of upcoming games and special events.

The high visibility is also perfect for securing corporate sponsorships with Macomb County businesses, providing local and regional exposure as well as creating thousands of positive impressions and possible new business connections.

Partnership opportunities at Jimmy John's Field include: Scoreboard signage, outfield wall signage, program advertising, promotions and contests, giveaway nights and more. All these are designed to share the success of Jimmy John's Field and the USPBL with corporate partners to increase brand recognition, boost community involvement and reach potential new customers. **M**

**Opposite page:** The ballpark prides itself on being kid-friendly. PHOTO BY TARA MACDONALD, COURTESY OF THE UNITED SHORE PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE

**Top left:** Businesses have an opportunity to be a fireworks sponsor at Jimmy John's Field. PHOTO BY KYLE FIELDS, COURTESY OF THE UNITED SHORE PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE

**Bottom, left:** The Westside Woolly Mammoths mascot. PHOTO BY MATT CRIPSEY, COURTESY OF THE UNITED SHORE PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE

**Top, right:** At the ballpark, the level of engagement is very strong, perfect for an outing with clients. PHOTO BY MATT CRIPSEY, COURTESY OF THE UNITED SHORE PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE

**Bottom, right:** Attending a game at Jimmy John's Field is great fun for families. PHOTO BY MATT CRIPSEY, COURTESY OF THE UNITED SHORE PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE

## CONNECT



Jimmy John's Field is located at 7171 Auburn Road in Utica, adjacent to the beautiful Clinton River and conveniently located off of M-59 near the corner of Auburn and Utica roads. For more information, call (248) 601-2400 or for the box office call (248) 759-5278. For details on the

game schedule or to purchase tickets, visit [USPBL.com](http://USPBL.com).





# Sweat equity

Vacant space in Warren revitalized as Allegiant Nonstop opens new location

*By Jane Peterson*

When a retail store closes, it's difficult to look at the bright side. After all, employees lost their jobs, communities reel from the loss of tax revenue and residents are often burdened by a vacant building left behind.

As some retail stores continue to struggle to keep their doors open in the age of online shopping, it's becoming abundantly apparent that communities have to reinvent themselves and attract diverse types of businesses. That's why many are excited by the opening of Allegiant Nonstop family entertainment center.

This 101,000-square-foot complex offers an experience. People can buy clothing and home goods, for example, just about anywhere. However, in order to get the rush that comes from participating in laser tag, go-karting and bumper cars, you have to be there – in person.

That's where Allegiant Nonstop comes in. The business, owned by the Allegiant Travel Co. and Allegiant Air, which offers commercial airline service to airports in Flint and Toledo, transformed a former Value City furniture store to create a unique gathering spot for families, couples and teens.

Its more than 150 employees operate 13 major attractions. Among them are a 647-foot go-kart track with 28 go-karts (20

single-seaters, 8 two-seaters); a two-story laser tag arena; a climbing wall with six different courses; Riot VR simulator; Hurricane VR simulator; 10 lanes of string bowling; laser maze; three-point shoot-out game; and spin zone bumper cars. There are also two 9-hole blacklight miniature golf courses with different themes: Racing and Honey-I-Shrank-the-Kids. There's even a soft-play area with a three-story structure and obstacle bounce house for little ones.

Among the 102 arcade games are video games, redemption games, VR games and crane games.

"Warren is a good location for us when you look at its proximity to the airports we fly out of Flint and Toledo," said Lexie Keogh, branding, marketing and social media manager for the Las Vegas-based company. "It is also an area with a lot of families."

Allegiant Air is a popular destination airline that primarily flies travelers to Orlando and other Florida cities. As it seeks to diversify its business assets, the company is expanding its business offerings. After opening its first Allegiant Nonstop in Clearfield, Utah in January, the company found a warm welcome in Macomb County.

Keogh said working with city and county officials, the planning





and construction process moved quickly.

“It was easy to work with everyone,” she said. “The communication was great and everyone worked in a timely manner. We couldn’t have been more pleased.”

Warren Mayor Jim Fouts and other city dignitaries toured the facility in March.

With the opening of Allegiant Nonstop, the company has chosen to invest in Macomb County as well as its families, and neighborhoods.

It was a more than \$9 million investment in renovations and equipment, but Keogh said Warren’s location and healthy economy were attractive assets. Since the company likes to be involved in the community, being near several schools was also a draw, she said.

“We are community oriented and offer programs like report card rewards,” she said.

A pleasant surprise for adults is the full bar. It serves craft beer, liquor and “the whole nine yards,” said Keogh. This alone makes the entertainment center more than a place for toddlers and teens to play.

“We see couples coming here for date night,” she said.

Food options include a build-your-own pizza restaurant and a snack bar with hotdogs, pretzel bites, Dippin’ Dots, ICEE and more coming soon.

It’s clear that this isn’t your average parent-tolerated, over-priced, sub-par pizza place and arcade – and that people are craving these experiences. Since Allegiant Nonstop opened April 12, it has been very well received, said Keogh, drawing people to Warren and Macomb County from across the metro Detroit area.

Keogh said it’s fun to see people hang out together. Every-

one puts down their phones and focuses on conversation and the game at hand. For those celebrating special events there are three party rooms and three party bays. Groups can gather in a 1,400-square-foot conference room and a banquet room in the back, which isn’t finished yet, but will hold up to 200 people.

And Allegiant Nonstop isn’t done yet. A VR lounge was not open as of press time, but was expected to open in May. Escape rooms are also not open yet, but will be most likely by the end of July. **M**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALLEGANT NONSTOP

**Opposite page:** Head over to Allegiant Nonstop family entertainment center in Warren to try out the 647-foot go-kart track with 28 go-karts; a two-story laser tag arena; a climbing wall with six different courses; 10 lanes of string bowling; three-point shoot-out game; spin zone bumper cars; and laser maze (pictured).

**Above:** The redemption center at Allegiant Nonstop family entertainment center in Warren has many options.

## CONNECT

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Allegiant Nonstop is located at 28300 Dequindre Road in Warren. For more information, call (586) 510-1666 or visit PlayNonstop.

com. Check out the company on social media at Facebook.com/playnonstopwarren, Instagram.com/playnonstop and Twitter.com/playnonstopeta.



# A hoppin' good time

Fun, food and lots of craft beer on tap at local breweries, brewpubs

*By Jane Peterson*

If you get thirsty in Macomb County, you don't have to look that far for a pint of local beer to quench that thirst.

Thanks to a booming craft beer industry in Michigan, the county has seen its fair share of new breweries and brewpubs. The newest, Starr Craft Brewery, is preparing to open its doors in Richmond in early July. Others dot the landscape in Shelby Township, Clinton Township, Warren, St. Clair Shores, Washington and many other communities.

Indeed, there are plenty of craft beer choices for those who love their IPAs, lagers, stouts, porters, saisons, pilsners and more.

The good news is that brewery owners say there is plenty of room for everyone. That's because craft breweries are not chain stores – each one is unique whether their focus is on small batch brews, handcrafted food or a relaxed, neighborhood atmosphere.

So what's the appeal of craft beer? Well, there's the taste, of course, then there's the fun beer names, the original flavors, seeing where the beer is brewed and checking out what's on tap that night.

Beer lovers can check the status of the homebrewed taps at Brown Iron Brewhouse in Washington online. This will let them know if a keg has just been tapped or if their favorite beer is running low since beers are rotated regularly. The brewpub always has American crafted beers and six to eight of its own brews for a total of nearly 70 beers on tap. It also has a variety of ciders, mead, wine and cocktails available.

What makes Brown Iron Brewhouse special is attention to details and its focus on great food.

Husband and wife team Tim and Patti Eisenbraun opened the brewpub in 2015 after spending nearly a decade saving and planning for their dream. Homebrewers since 1994, Tim attended the Siebel Institute in Chicago to gain more knowledge about the brewing process.

"You can't get beer any fresher," said Patti. "You're getting beer at its peak and seeing where it's made."

With so many beer choices and a full lunch and dinner menu, servers are well trained to help guests make the perfect pairing of beer and food. Staff samples each new beer every day and they are familiar with every item on the menu so they can guide guests to good choices based on their preferences.

The menu includes smokehouse favorites like slow smoked BBQ pork, Texas beef brisket, beer can chicken and St. Louis cut spareribs with all the fixings, like pit smoked beans, crispy mac and cheese balls and vinegar slaw. There's a variety of sandwiches, salads, small bites and appetizers, too.



They have their own smoker and make every item from scratch, including sauces and dressings. Hamburger is ground fresh each day. Brown Iron also features an extensive gluten-free menu.

Brown Iron Brewhouse is currently in the process of opening a second location in Royal Oak.

The Washington location has been very good to the Eisenbrauns, who both grew up in the area and raised their daughters in their home about a mile away from the brewpub. Patti added that local, county and state officials were very supportive in their efforts when they were working toward opening the business.

In return, Brown Iron Brewhouse has given \$100,000 back to the community since 2015, thanks to fundraising events on Mondays, donations to local organizations and sponsorships of community events.

"What we have is a very community feel," said Patti. "It's a casual, relaxed environment. What we create is an experience for our guests."

Over in St. Clair Shores, buddies Evan Feringa, Joe Vandermarliere and Joe Dowd opened Baffin Brewing Company seeking to create a unique environment where friends and neighbors could come to hang out. They have done just that.

In fact, when they first opened, they were so overwhelmed with community support that they ran out of beer and had to close for nearly two weeks to brew some more.

"I like to say we 'were strangled with love,'" laughed Feringa. "People were super hungry for a place to call their own."

They have that with Baffin Brewing Company because the





owners know what good service and friendship is all about. Feringa and Dowd, who were college roommates, started home brewing in their apartment back in 2009. The marketing majors brewed quite frequently as they perfected their recipes and soon attracted quite a following among fellow college students in the apartment complex.

From there, the idea grew to start their own brewery. Feringa became a trained brewer and it all moved quickly from there as they worked with city and Macomb County officials to open their doors. They knew they had a great idea when they were still building and people kept walking through their doors asking about opening day.

At Baffin Brewing Company, guests are greeted with brews that run from traditional to surprising. Feringa likes to brew with fruit, so there are beers like Baffin Mango Unchained, an IPA that is the perfect mix between west coast and east coast IPAs brewed with fresh mangos and Baffin Macho Man Shandy Savage, a wheat blonde ale blended with fresh lemonade made with organic, fresh lemon juice. He also likes using cherries and blueberries in brews when in season, always doing it the right way and using fresh fruit.

While Feringa doesn't typically go for wild beer combinations, he has created beers with a few surprises. One in particular that generated some buzz was made on Fat Tuesday with 144 paczkis brewed into the beer.

Baffin Brewing Company continues to grow. It is now canning its handcrafted beer and will soon start distilling spirits to create craft cocktails.

"We have a huge drink local focus," said Feringa, "and are very excited about these new developments."

Many in the microbrewery industry started out in their homes brewing small batches. That was certainly the case for Darrell Starr and his three sons, Darrell Andrew, Aaron and Phillip. The family is preparing to open Starr Craft Brewery, where they plan to build flavors with a focus on quality.

They are brewing right now, working on recalculating their home brewed recipes for larger batches in the brewery. The Starrs plan to have six different beers on tap to roll out by opening day, with a good variety of stout, IPA, amber blonde, bourbon stout, porter and dark lager. Darrell said they also want to have a summer shandy on tap for Good Old Days, a Richmond festival tradition.

The Starr family has been working hard on renovating their space for nearly two years. They purchased a building that previously housed Busch Heating and Plumbing on the corner of For-

est and Water streets and with a background in construction, have done almost all the work themselves, including the roof, siding, flooring and plumbing. It's been a real labor of love for the family, who are all equal partners in the business. As of press time, the business was slated for a July 6 opening.

"What I'm most proud of is that we are family-owned and operated," said Darrell. "There is always at least two of us working together when we are at the brewery. We do it because we like brewing beer."

They have worked hard on remodeling the business, fitting it into their schedules as they work other jobs and take care of their families. Darrell said they feel like they are meant to be in their location as Darrell Andrew first found the building, but then it went off the market. Months later, the family called back to inquire about it and was told it was available.

They like being in a smaller community and Darrell said they have really felt the support from city and county officials. He said Camille Silda, a project manager with Macomb County Planning and Economic Development, helped the family navigate the process and set up meetings to keep the project moving forward.

"We could have worked as hard as we wanted to, but without Camille's help and support from the city, we wouldn't be here today," said Darrell. **M**

**Opposite page, top:** Baffin Brewing Company owners Evan Feringa, Joe Vandermarliere and Joe Dowd have started canning their handcrafted beer. PHOTO COURTESY OF BAFFIN BREWING COMPANY

**Opposite page, bottom:** Starr Craft Brewery is planning a July 6 opening. PHOTO COURTESY OF STARR CRAFT BREWERY

**Above:** Brown Iron Brewhouse is styled after a large, open German beer hall. There is communal seating or private tables available as well as plenty of space for large groups and weddings. Pictured is the patio at night. PHOTO COURTESY OF BROWN IRON BREWHOUSE

## CONNECT



### Craft your own beer flavor tour:

You can check out **Brown Iron Brewhouse** at 57695 Van Dyke Road in Washington. Hours are 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Sunday; 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 11 a.m.-midnight Friday and Saturday. For more information, visit [BrownIron.com](http://BrownIron.com) or call (586) 697-3300.



**Baffin Brewing** is located at 25113 Jefferson Avenue in St. Clair Shores. Hours are noon-midnight Monday-Thursday and Sunday; and noon-1 a.m. Friday and Saturday. For more information, call (586) 218-7990, email [info@baffinbrewing.com](mailto:info@baffinbrewing.com) or visit [BaffinBrewing.com](http://BaffinBrewing.com). The brewery is also active on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



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# And the winner is ...

Business leaders, organizations recognized for contributions to communities

*By Jane Peterson*

**B**usiness and community leaders who made a tremendous impact on Macomb County residents were honored for their outstanding contributions.

It was part of the 7th annual Macomb Business Awards held at the Sterling Inn Banquet and Conference Center in Sterling Heights in April.

"This was a premier event," said Vicky Rad, director of Macomb County Planning and Economic Development. "We had more than 470 people in attendance and most nominations ever received."

Macomb County Executive Mark A. Hackel joined Rad to recognize the following award winners:

- **Champion of Work/Life Integration (sponsored by MetroPar-**  
**ent magazine):** Godlan, Inc. Godlan is a leading professional manufacturing services company that has been implementing integrated technology solutions since 1984. With two locations and more than 60 employees, it implements hundreds of enterprise manufacturing systems and performs countless data conversions while simultaneously committing to quality of life for each of its team members

- **Corporate Citizen:** CARE of Southeastern Michigan. CARE

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of Southeastern Michigan strengthens resiliency in people and their communities through prevention, education and services that improve quality of life. CARE is a nonprofit organization with a 42-year history of serving the residents of Macomb County. Each year, the organization impacts the lives of 40,000 people in southeast Michigan by providing person-centered care that ensures each individual's unique needs are met and their defined success is achieved

- **Hidden Gem:** Great Lakes Pickling Company. Great Lakes Pickling Company is a family owned and operated pickle making business. Each batch uses farm-fresh cucumbers, spices and pure Michigan water that gives their product an incredible flavor with 42 percent less salt than that found in typical jars using traditional recipes

- **Manufacturer of the Year:** Drake Enterprises. Drake Enterprises, Inc. was founded in 1952 by Benny Stemple and today is run by his two grandsons, Nathan and Keith Stemple. The company is a manufacturer of high-quality machined parts for major Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) in the heavy truck, agriculture and automotive markets. The company specializes in torque transferring products such as gear shift





levers and transmission components for the heavy-duty truck and automotive markets

- **Model of OneMacomb:** PACE Southeast Michigan. For 25 years, PACE of Southeast Michigan has cared for low income, chronically ill seniors by helping them remain independent and engaged in the community. It opened a center in Warren in 2015 when a study showed that Macomb County had a high concentration of seniors who could benefit from its services. By December 2017, the Warren center was at full capacity. Knowing there were more seniors to be served, it opened a center in Sterling Heights in 2019.

- **Trailblazer of Future Talent:** L&L Products. L&L Products is a technology-driven, international business with more than 1,300 global employees, 15 global locations and eight manufacturing facilities. The company actively creates opportunities for Macomb County residents through apprenticeship programs at Macomb Community College, future talent initiatives like Manufacturing Day and internship and mentorship opportunities

- **Economic Development Partner of the Year:** Macomb Intermediate School District.

- **Beacon of Economic Development:** Glenn Wynn, director, Shelby Township Planning and Zoning Department

- **Beacon of Economic Development:** Grace Shore, former CEO, Macomb County Chamber of Commerce

Fox 2 Detroit's Huel Perkins and Charlie Langton served as co-emcees of the Macomb Business Awards while Mark Ostach, the event's keynote speaker, discussed digital health and well-being.

The 7th annual breakfast was sponsored by Henry Ford Macomb Hospitals, the MEDC, First State Bank, the Sterling Heights Chamber of Commerce, Consumers Energy, DTE Energy, the Macomb Intermediate School District, Macomb Community College, Dominion Technologies Group, Macomb/St. Clair Michigan Works!, Ascension Macomb-Oakland, KEO by ARCH Cutting Tools and Jarvis Property Restoration. **M**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MACOMB COUNTY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Opposite page:** Macomb Business Award winners gathered after the breakfast ceremony.

**Top, left :** The 7th annual Macomb Business Awards held at the Sterling Inn Banquet and Conference Center in Sterling Heights in April was a sold out event.

**Top, right :** Mark Ostach, the event's keynote speaker, discussed digital health and well-being at the 7th annual Macomb Business Awards.

## CONNECT

*Seventh Annual*  
**MACOMB**  
**BUSINESS AWARDS**

Nominees for the Macomb Business Awards must be based in Macomb County. Past recipients are not eligible for consideration in the same category until three years have passed since the award was

last given. For more information, visit [www.business.macombgov.org/business-mba-nominate](http://www.business.macombgov.org/business-mba-nominate).



# A long-term growth mindset

Opportunity Zones work to bring redevelopment to neighborhoods

*By Jane Peterson*

**W**hen large businesses close, they often launch a recovery effort for the community left behind. One closing can cause nearby businesses to struggle, creating a chain reaction that all too often leads to derelict buildings, lost tax revenue and unemployed residents.

To spur economic development in these areas, Macomb County Planning and Economic Development professionals and local leaders have embraced a new federal program that identifies specific areas as Opportunity Zones.

Opportunity Zones, created by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, are low income census tracts identified by state governors and then certified by the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, said Gary Heidel, acting executive director of the Michigan State

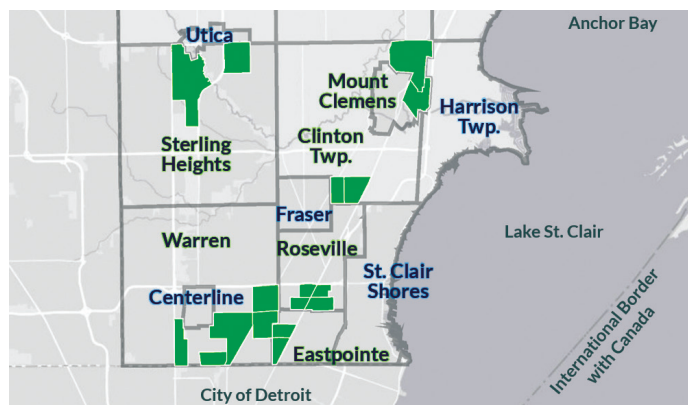
Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).

Investors who make long-term investments in these areas receive tax incentives that range from deferment of capital gains taxes to permanent exclusion from capital gains tax on the profits/growth in an Opportunity Fund depending on the length of time the investment is held, he said.

Valerie Grunduski said clearly the intentions are to help communities and as a real estate tax specialist, it's another tool she can offer to her clients who are looking to invest.

"It's one of the more exciting incentives to be offered in a long time," said the senior associate and firm leader of Plante Moran's Opportunity Zones practice.

Statewide, there are 288 Opportunity Zones. These are listed



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on the Michigan Opportunity Zone website, which includes a number of useful tools like an interactive map and Michigan Opportunity Zone referral form, said Heidel.

Macomb County has 17 Opportunity Zones in six communities: Clinton Township, Eastpointe, Mount Clemens, Roseville, Sterling Heights and Warren.

Macomb County is attractive to many investors because of its population growth, higher than average household income and number of good-paying jobs. Leaders expect Opportunity Zones to bring fresh economic development to the pockets that need it the most.

The program is promising, said Vicky Rad, director for the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development. What her office does is leverage its economic development tools to make it as easy as possible for potential investors to identify the right projects in Macomb County for them.

The county's GIS mapping tool, for example, clearly outlines the Opportunity Zones. Investors, many of whom are out of state, can view the zone's relation to nearby cities, check out traffic counts and see current infrastructure.

"These are things that matter with site selection," she said. "It's live data that they can use."

The Planning and Economic Development department also offers counseling for investment incentives and financing programs, makes connections to hiring, training and retraining resources, provides market research reports and hosts local work-

shops and networking opportunities. It's important to note that all capital must flow through an Opportunity Fund to be eligible for the tax incentive. So far, there are at least six Opportunity Funds established in Michigan, said Heidel.

Grunduski has been working with developers, investors and funds that want to invest in Opportunity Zones and learn more about the incentive. She has been speaking at local and national events helping to clarify the parameters of Opportunity Zones and how the incentive can best be utilized.

"Investors are eager to get involved," she said. **M**

IMAGE COURTESY OF MACOMB COUNTY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Opposite page:** The 17 Opportunity Zones in Macomb County are highlighted in green.

## CONNECT

# OPPORTUNITY ZONES IN MACOMB COUNTY, MI

Opportunity Zones were created by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Maps of the 17 Opportunity Zones in Macomb County are available at [MacombBusiness.com](http://MacombBusiness.com). To speak with the

Macomb County Planning and Economic Development office, call (586) 469-5285.

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# Phil Gilchrist

## Providing opportunities to bring out the artist in everyone

By Jane Peterson

Every day Phil Gilchrist walks into his office, he is surrounded by great works of art. Some created by world-renowned artists, others by Macomb County schoolchildren, but all hold a special place in his heart.

As executive director of the Anton Art Center, Gilchrist spends his days helping to bring out the creativity in people. Whether he is inviting them to attend an art show at the center, participate in a class or submit one of their own works for an exhibition, his goal is to make sure art is not forgotten as everyone goes about their busy daily lives.

Gilchrist's enthusiasm for art began early on in life. A graduate of Mount Clemens High School, today Gilchrist can practically see his childhood home from his office window. He always called Mount Clemens his home, leaving briefly to attend Northern Michigan University, where he studied ceramics and photography, earning his fine arts bachelor's degree. He returned to the metro Detroit area to complete his education, earning a master's degree in Public Administration from Wayne State University.

Gilchrist stayed on at Wayne State for a number of years, working first in the housing department and then transferring to the School of Medicine. When he left in 2014, he was serving as director of operations at the Kado Family Clinical Skills Center.

He spent the next year doing contract writing, focusing on his art and was working part-time at the Anton Art Center as a grant coordinator. When the executive director's position opened up in late 2015, he knew the timing was right to make a career move.

"The arts are really what I'm passionate about," he said.

Ultimately, he decided to stay in Macomb County not only because it's home, but because it's a place where he can make a difference.

"It's an exciting time watching people's attitudes change about the importance of the arts," he said.

**Q** What is Anton Art Center's history in Macomb County?

**A** This year, Anton Art Center is marking its 50th anniversary. Located in Mount Clemens, it is one of two nonprofit art centers in Macomb County and was formed in 1969 by three women who were actively involved in the Mount Clemens Art Association. These ladies, often referred to as the Center's "founding mothers," were Bea Wright, Gretchen Thompson and Phyllis Wickens. The Anton Art Center has always called its current space home after the former library outgrew the building



Phil Gilchrist

and moved out in May 1969. After renovations to convert the area into three galleries, a gift shop, offices, art studio/meeting area, pottery studio and kiln room, the art center hosted its first art exhibit in 1970.

**Q** Why is Macomb County a good place for art and artists?

**A** It's good because there is a lot of opportunity for growth. While we know there are many artists and creative people here, there isn't as much in the way of art infrastructure, like galleries, art centers and art supply stores beyond the big box chain stores. This is an area we can work to expand while continuing to bring a variety of visual and performing arts to the community and offering a place for people to explore their creative side.

**Q** How is Anton Art Center contributing to Macomb County's business and economic growth?

**A** Art supports the community in a number of ways, including health, education and economic betterment. Anton Art Center provides a number of free offerings designed to engage the community and involve residents in creative pursuits. More than 16,000 people visited the center last year and studies show the economic impact is nearly \$1 million when you factor in our staff, contracts and the money visitors spend on dining and other activities when they are in the area.

**Q** How is Macomb County contributing to Anton Art Center's success?

**A** Anton Art Center enjoys a very good relationship with Macomb County Planning and Economic Development. We are involved with the OneMacomb initiative, which promotes multiculturalism and inclusion through arts and community affairs.

In fact, OneMacomb undertook a wide-ranging survey that included a question about whether the arts were an effective means of communicating cultural norms and values. The overwhelming theme was yes. This theme became one of the significant underpinnings of OneMacomb's strategic direction.

OneMacomb also has introduced us to other organizations in Macomb County, which strengthens our community connections. In addition, the initiative promotes our classes and other events that draw more people to the center.

**Q** What does the future hold for Anton Art Center in Macomb County?

**A** We are excited about some new initiatives. One is our SatARTdays program, featuring different types of art activities on the second Saturday of each month. Typically these activities are interactive in nature, but have included performances by the Michigan Opera Theatre and Detroit Children's Choir.

Also, our recent partnership with Advancing Macomb, the Macomb Family YMCA, City of Mount Clemens and Cherry Street Mall will result in the completion of four new art installations this summer — two large murals and two smaller painted-side-walk installations throughout downtown Mount Clemens.

We hope that these types of projects and programs will enrich and inspire people of all ages for years to come as we continue to grow during the next 50 years and beyond. Art is important and we want to continue to better engage our community and increase accessibility to art for everyone. ■



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# Kelley Lovati

## Looking to help businesses grow throughout Macomb County

By Jane Peterson

Since obtaining her bachelor's and master's degrees from Central Michigan University and a Ph.D. in management with a specialization in leadership and organizational change from Walden University, Kelley Lovati has carved out a unique career path.

She utilized her education in public health to work on worksite wellness, community health outreach and public education. Then, she went back to her management roots, working in marketing at the Macomb County Chamber of Commerce and teaching business courses online for 15 years. Afterwards, it was right back to healthcare where she worked as the community outreach specialist and coordinated Volunteer Services and Spiritual Care at McLaren Macomb.

Now she is bringing her wealth of experiences in the corporate sector, public health, marketing and management to the Macomb County Chamber of Commerce once again, this time as its CEO. Lovati began her position on Jan. 14, taking over the reins from her mother, Grace Shore, who worked at the chamber for four decades.

**Q** What is the history of your organization in Macomb County?

**A** The Macomb County Chamber of Commerce is a business professional organization. We look at ways to be the voice for businesses in our community and to be a strong beacon of business integrity. The chamber tackles issues that affect businesses at the local, state and federal level and works closely with the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development. We also host numerous networking opportunities and events that bring businesses together and create conduit to share business and develop strong outreach connections.

**Q** Why is Macomb County a good place for businesses?

**A** Macomb County keeps growing and it is a very dynamic community. We have so many diverse sectors of industry, including cybersecurity, defense, healthcare and manufacturing that continue to thrive and keep our economy strong. Additionally, our natural resources such as Lake St. Clair and our parks attract many businesses and communities to Macomb County as it enhances the quality of life for residents and employees.

**Q** How is your organization contributing to Macomb County's business and economic growth?

**A** The Macomb County Chamber of Commerce assists businesses in a variety of ways. We connect companies to different opportunities that are available to help grow their businesses through networking events, signature events and member-to-member discounts. We work to meet the needs of growing businesses by providing professional development seminars and events. And we offer access to business building



Kelley Lovati

resources throughout the county. In addition, we keep business leaders informed of what is happening in government by staying on top of legislation, letting members know about potential laws that could impact them. We advocate for businesses and contribute to creating a healthy, diverse community.

**Q** What Macomb County organizations are you involved in both personally and professionally?

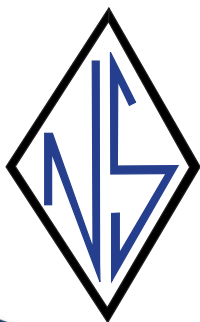
**A** I am involved in a couple of organizations that mean a lot to me. The first is Macomb ACT (Active Culture Togetherness), an initiative of OneMacomb that addresses diversity and inclusion in Macomb County and creating it to be a Welcoming County. I believe that when we embrace our differences, the community is richer as a whole.

The other organization I would like to mention is A Beautiful Me, which fosters self-esteem building in young girls to create confident, empowered women. As a chamber, it is our hope that these young women will remain and thrive within Macomb County.

**Q** What does the future hold for your organization in Macomb County?

**A** We have 1,100 members and 90 percent of them are small businesses. We will continue to focus on their needs, connecting them with resources that help their businesses thrive. We will also focus on the millennials and capture the unique talents and ideas they bring to workforce. **M**





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# Steve Remias

## Sharing his enthusiasm for Macomb County with others

By Jane Peterson

**Y**ou can say that Steve Remias is a cheerleader of sorts. A lifelong resident of Macomb County, everywhere he travels, without fail, he seems to be able to work the affection he has for the area into the conversation one way or another.

"I'm very pro-Macomb County," he said. "Anyone should consider being a part of this county. We have many assets, including the military, small businesses and the lake. People enjoy helping each other and it's just a great place to be."

Remias should know. He built a business and a lifetime of memories in Harrison Township as CEO and president of MacRay Harbor, a premier harbor offering all the amenities boat owners need to make the most of their investment.

MacRay began construction in 1988 and what could have simply been a place for people to dock their boats developed into a destination where people can not only enjoy their boats, but a boating lifestyle that includes meeting friends for dinner at North 42, relaxing in the heated pool and spa and attending member-only exclusive events. The harbor, located a mile north of the Clinton River on Lake St. Clair, serves more than 500 seasonal boaters annually in addition to hundreds of short-term visitors that dock overnight or stay for a weekend.

"I enjoy promoting Lake St. Clair as a tremendous asset," he said. "Macomb County is a great place to live, work and play."

MacRay Harbor and its related companies, which include a marina, banquet center, restaurant, retail store and fuel retail operation, have been nationally recognized for its customer service and amenities as well as for its contributions to local charities and public partnerships.

The company plays a huge role in the county, employing more than 300 full- and part-time staff members and serving more than 100,000 guests in its restaurant and banquet facilities each year.

Remias worked at MacRay Harbor from 1988- 2017 and for 20 of those years, he led the company as its CEO. He is now retired, but you won't find Remias on the golf course every day. He has a small consulting firm and remains active in many boating organizations and charities.

**Q**What organizations are you involved with personally and professionally?

**A**s I previously mentioned, I enjoy promoting Lake St. Clair. So many of the organizations I am involved in have to do with the water and boating.

I am a past chairman of the Michigan Boating Industries Association, an organization that represents over 300 Michigan based marinas, boat dealers and other marine related businesses. I have been a board member since 2001 and served in many other positions as well.

I am a charter member of the Michigan Clean Marina



Steve Remias

Foundation Operating Committee, which shares information to help marinas and other boating ventures to manage profitable businesses without harming the quality of Michigan waterways; served as president of the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative, which focused on the economic vitality and growth of the Lake St. Clair region; and a member of the Macomb County Water Resources Advisory Council, a private/public sector panel to support clean water, tourism, recreation and economic development along Lake St. Clair and the Clinton River.

In addition, I was elected as a board member to the Macomb County Chamber in 2013; am a member of the executive board and current president of the Selfridge Air National Guard Base Community Council; a former board member for the Macomb County Water Quality Board; and a former member of the Destination District Project.

**Q**How have you benefitted from living and working in Macomb County?

**A**I'm a Macomb County kid. I grew up here and never left the county. After earning a Business Administration degree from Wayne State University, I worked at Plante Moran CPA and then McMachen Sea Ray. There are many great things about living here. We live in a diverse community with wonderful assets like Lake St. Clair, Selfridge Air National Guard Base and Macomb Community College. We have many small businesses and everyone is very receptive to new businesses.

**Q**What are you personally proud of?

**A**I am proud to be a lifelong resident of Macomb County and my family. I have been married to my wife, Bobbie for 38 years and we have three children: Jenny Gunckle, Kate Remias and Stephen Remias and two grandchildren, Evan and Emma.

I am exceptionally proud that all three of my children work in downtown Detroit. **M**





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