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September 5, 2020

Moody on **The Market**



Pat oodu

If you love living in this glorious place called Michigan's *Great* Southwest, just minutes away from

orchards, vineyards, fields and farms, do yourself a favor and pay close attention to where the food on your table is coming from. Southwest Michigan growers are in a world of hurt for a wide range of reasons including the ravages of the pandemic, and need your support. Read this story carefully. Hear the words of some of the key players in the world of agriculture here in our own backyard, and if you have come to expect ready access to the finest and freshest fruits and vegetables, make plans to demand they appear on your grocer's shelves so they can land in your food basket. Dr. Ron Goldy is Senior Extension Educator at the Michigan State University Extension Center on Hillandale Road in Benton Harbor. He'll be the first to tell you, "In the best of times, farming is a risky business." These are clearly not the best of times, and in recent years, especially in light of COVID-19, he says, "It has been increasingly difficult for farmers to be economically sustainable," and adds, "That's especially true for fresh fruit and vegetable farmers that rely on a seasonal labor force," and on more normal market conditions with regards to restaurants and other food service businesses. Fred Leitz is a 4th generation fruit and vegetable farm operator in Sodus here in Southwest Michigan. His great grandfather started Fred Leitz Farms in 1903, but he says that farming in this 117th year in the business, "is like drinking out of a fire hose, with lots coming at us." At Leitz Farms they grow blueberries, cucumbers, grape tomatoes, round tomatoes, Roma tomatoes, and apples. All of their produce is grown within 7-miles of the original family farm and all are packed and sorted at the original location under the None Better label. The "fire hose" Fred and his brothers, Dave, James and Everett face, starts with the fact that, as he bluntly puts it, "Mexico is killing our industry with cheap imports." By way of explanation, he notes, "They pay \$9-a day and I am paying \$14.40 per hour. Plus, they are only two days away from the same U.S. markets that I serve." Dr. Goldy concurs, saying, "Competition from both Mexico and Canada are undercutting U.S. producers substantially by those differences in labor costs," adding, "Workers in Mexico make about \$8 to \$10 a day, while workers here are pushing \$18 per hour when all costs are included." Another example he offers is

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Regional Chamber held our 60th Annual Golf Outing and Steak Fry event at the Harbor Shores Golf Club in Benton Harbor. This outing has long been one of our signature opportunities for members to showcase their business, golf with their clients and associates, and network with some of the area's other leading business professionals. As such, we

This past week, the Southwest Michigan did not want to see it join the many other cherished community events that have been cancelled due to the coronavirus. We worked diligently to move forward as safely as possible and I'm quite proud of the result

Those that attended will tell you the outing looked different than in years past. Some of the Continued on page 2

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Your Chamber Update

BRONSON POSITIVITY

Page 2 September 5, 2020 **Arthur** Continued from cover

notable changes included the implementation of a strict admittance protocol for participants that comprised of both a symptom screening and temperature check upon arrival; a voluntarily cap on attendance below the allowed limit on outdoor gatherings; a reduction in potential touch points by eliminating cornhole and other contact-dependent games; a mask requirement indoors and whenever social distancing could not be maintained, and a complete sanitization of the tent, tables, and chairs for the steak fry portion of the event. In fact, for the first time ever, we made our steak dinners completely to-go, reducing the size of the post-outing gathering even further.

While initially daunting, planning this event and implementing all the necessary precautions turned out to be a breeze thanks to team at Harbor Shores' dedication to safety and service. In fact, I'd like to specifically recognize and thank their Director of Service and Engagement **Christine Clayton** and Executive Chef **Calie Jean** for helping us brainstorm the creative solutions that made holding this event possible. Their commitment to excellence and willingness to innovate made them both amazing to work with and indispensable to our success.

Similar shoutouts are owed to WHFB radio's very own **Ric Federighi** and **Dynamite Dave** Schaub for providing the necessary sound equipment and lending their 'on-air' skills as emcees of the event; the talented **Andrew Fisher** who provided our guests with wonderful live-music as they enjoyed their meal (please look into the Andrew Fisher Quartet or the Backstage Lounge hear his incredible vocal abilities and piano skills if you aren't already familiar!); the legendary **Pat Moody** who served as our official photographer for the day; our devoted team of **Chamber Ambassadors**, who's smiling faces are always ready to greet you -

even behind masks; and of course, all of the attendees who joined us for an overdue day of safe socialization at one of our area's premier golf courses!

Thank you to our title sponsor, **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan;** putting contest sponsor, **United Federal Credit Union;** cart sponsor, **The Northern Indiana Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association;** entertainment sponsor, **JellieFish Productions;** fastest hole sponsor, the **South Bend International Airport;** and the rest of our other generous hole sponsors: **The Inn at Harbor Shores, Pipestone Indoor Country Club, Meridian Title Company, Berrien Dental, 102.5 FM/AM 1060 WHFB, Honor Credit Union, Spectrum Health Lakeland, Diamond Factory Service, and Fully Alive Chiropractic.** We especially appreciate your support and partnership during such an unusual year.

Last but not least, I have to extend my sincere gratitude to our Chamber's very own **Sarah Spoonholtz**. As our Director of Membership and Events, Sarah pours her heart and soul into making events like this Golf Outing and Steak Fry a meaningful experience for our members. Even with the new protocols, she managed to once again pull off a fun, safe, and enjoyable day for all those who joined.

Beyond the 60th anniversary's significance to us, we believed holding this event would also be a symbolic victory for the community. Together, we must find a safe path forward in this new COVID world and Monday's outing was a major step in the right direction. I'm proud of our Chamber for once again driving progress in a positive direction.

Arthur Havlicek is the President & CEO of the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber of Commerce, a member-based organization working to achieve economic prosperity throughout the region.

Read more at www.MailMaxOnline.com







Prebloom Moonflower Photo by Chris Loose-Randall

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Stu Olllld Baseball Digests never fail to amuse! Am I right?! I sure hope so (gulp!), 'cause here're some more tidbits from 'em: Item: Pitcher and

notorious night-owl Bo Belinsky was nabbed many times violating curfew. One night, his manager caught him and fined him \$100. Belinsky replied dreamily, "That's OK Skipper. This night was worth it."

[Question about "night-owl"; is there a corresponding opposite expression, like, "She's a real day-owl"?]

Item: Long ago, there once was a minorleague player named Woody Bottoms. Sounds uncomfortable, yes, but that's not the gag. Each time that he went to the plate for an at-bat, the public address announcer would cheerfully call out, "Bottoms up!"

Item: Dizzy Dean was a colorful pitcher in the 1930s, always quick with a quip, or, because he had a penchant for mangling the English language, a malaprop. After his playing career he became a broadcaster, and one night, he signed off with the following confounder: "Don't fail to miss tomorrow night's game!"

Item: In an early 1968 BBD, Virginia Kay of the Chicago Daily News wrote about the 1967 American League champion Boston Red Sox and their star outfielder Carl Yastrzemski, aka "Yaz." Kay opined that "One good thing about Boston winning the pennant. It taught a lot of people how the heck to spell Yastrzemski."

A couple chuckles here from a 1960s journeyman named Rocky Bridges:

"I'm unique in baseball history; I'm the only guy who started his career in a slump and never came out of it."

"I got traded a lot (seven times in 11 seasons). My wife had eventually had to write to me in care of the baseball Commissioner. He was the only one who knew where I was.'

Item: Dizzy Dean strikes again! One day, Ol' Diz is broadcasting a game and just can't seem to pronounce a visiting player's name correctly; the young man was from Mexico, and was named Jesus, which in Spanish is pronounced "Hay-soos." But Dizzy said it just like he had all his life - Jee-zuss. Well, at one point Jesus in on the basepaths, and attempts to make it home, and Diz describes it: "He's tagging up! He's gonna try it! Here he comes! It's a good throw! He slides! And Jee-zuss, he scores!'

Item: Gee (not short for "Gesus," as far as I know) Walker was a player in the 1930s and 40s known for occasionally making bad base-running decisions. After one particularly bad gaffe, his manager told him the next time he got tagged out between two bases, he'd have to pay a \$50 fine. Well, in that same game, he managed to get hung up between first and second. Reluctant to part with fifty bucks, Gee hollered to the second baseman, "Drop the throw and I'll give you \$25!"

Item: One gloomy day a ballgame was interrupted by a rain delay. A father and son were listening on the radio at home, and heard the announcer mention every 10 minutes or so "The Pirates-Dodgers game is being delayed by rain, with the score tied at 5-5 and Bob Elliott on second base." After the fifth such announcement, the kid earnestly asked his dad, "Geez, why are they keeping poor Elliott on second base during the whole rainstorm?"

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The September is "Suicide Month." Prevention According to the Disabled Veterans National Foundation www.dvnf.org/ (see september-suicide-

prevention-month-spread-word), approximately 22 military service members and veterans take their lives every day. They go on to state, "Some research has shown that the military and veteran suicide rate is 50 percent higher than that of civilians." One of the largest amounts of claims we file in Veterans Services are for PTSD. Feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness, depression, guilt, shame, anger, irritability, behavioral changes, and thoughts of hurting yourself or others following traumatic episode(s) can be telltale signs of having PTSD. The mental health crisis from the current COVID-19 pandemic has certainly in and of itself and/or exacerbated the situation for all of us. Many veterans experiencing PTSD have sadly had suicidal ideations or attempts at suicide before seeking help from family, friends, social workers or physicians. The Department of Veterans Affairs divides PTSD into two categories with regards to service connecting PTSD. The first is combat related PTSD which will be discussed today. The second is PTSD related to personal injury/trauma which will be discussed next week. A veteran, of course, can and has experienced and filed for both as a result of service. One of the best VA resources for managing PTSD is located at www. healthquality.va.gov/ guidelines/MH/ptsd. One of the resources on the website, "Understanding Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" is very helpful in not only identifying and understand PTSD but

month of it also helps the veterans and others in coping with PTSD. PTSD is also very common among individuals who never served in the military The resource states, "About 60 percent of men and 50 percent of women face at least one traumatic event in their lifetime" which can result in PTSD. In my opinion, I believe these numbers to be much higher, however, whatever the numbers it is very serious and widespread. You don't necessarily need to have been awarded a Combat Infinitary Badge or Combat Action Ribbon to file for combat related PTSD. Being in a warzone where you experienced all the carnages of warfare can be enough to identify a stressful situation called a stressor. PTSD is a two-prong process. First, you need to have a stressor that occurred in service (during warfare) and later the VA will order a Compensation and Pension (C&P) Exam. Second, a veteran needs a diagnosis for PTSD. The stressor from service must connect with the PTSD diagnosis or the claim will be denied. The C&P exam accomplishes this and determines the severity of the PTSD with a rating scale https://vaclaimsinsider.com/ptsd-rating-(see scale). We cannot file a claim for PTSD unless the veteran can identify a stressor that occurred in service Many veterans receive a diagnosis for PTSD only to find out it doesn't qualify for a claim because it wasn't related to service. If you were in combat operations while in service and believe you have PTSD, please contact our office for additional information.

Lee Lull is the Veterans Affairs Administrator for Berrien County. He has served in that position since May 2012. You can contact Berrien County Veterans Services at (269) 983-7111 Ext. 8224, via e-mail at veterans@berriencounty.org or visit their website at www.berriencounty.org/veterans. Read more at www.MailMaxOnline.com



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Life That is Truly Life



Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. ~ 1 Timothy 6:17-19

you earn? The things you have? A good job? Plenty of friends and family? A full stock portfolio? That is what the world calls rich.

But what happens when a virus comes and pops those balloons one by one?

You learn in whom to really put your hope. If you think wealth in this present to be rich in good deeds, to be generous world makes you truly rich, give it time, it will disappoint you. Why? Because it is what the Bible calls uncertain-it cannot be depended on. Just look at how a few months of disease and isolation have evaporated so much. A life built on the uncertain will ultimately fail you.

So life that is truly life has to be built on something other than earthly riches. It has to be built on the God who provides you with everything.

You are so important to God that he richly provided his perfect Son to pour

What makes you rich? The money out his precious blood to free you from sin. Then God raised him to life again to leave no doubt in your mind that you will live forever with him in the coming age. Because of Jesus, you have "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade...kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). That's certain!

> That certainty frees you to do good, and willing to share. In other words, you get to be a shining light of God's goodness in this world. And you do it with the certainty that your eternal riches are completely secure. What a life!

Prayer: God, thank you for richly providing everything I need. Amen.

Submitted by:Pastor Glenn T. Rosenbaum Administrative Pastor Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Joseph Originated by: www.What AboutJesus.com Read more at www.MailMaxOnline.com



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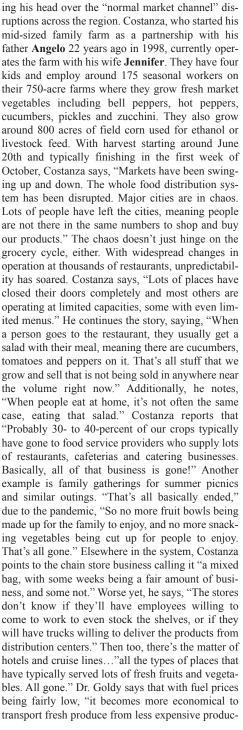
MOODY Continued from Cover

that the labor that goes into a package of tomatoes in Mexico is about 40-cents while it is about \$5.50 in the U.S., and Canadian growers make money on our dollar exchange rate being so different. Leitz says that the coronavirus crisis "has put the whole industry into a tailspin." He tells us, "Regular marketing channels have been disrupted," and adds, "When we saw fruits and vegetables rotting in fields in the spring, we didn't know if we should even plant things." However, he says that the offices of Congressman Fred Upton, and Senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters contacted growers like him and said there would be a program to help out the markets if the markets failed to materialize. He says, "They said the American public would really hoard food if U.S. growers wouldn't plant." He notes, "The CFAP Farmers to Families program has helped, but it hasn't replaced normal market channels." Brett Costanza from A&B Costanza

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Farms, LLC on River Road in Sodus is still shak-

tion areas," and bemoans the fact that "most federal assistance programs are designed for grain farmers, not fruit and vegetable farmers." He also notes that in addition to the restaurants, cruise lines, and hotels that Costanza talked about losing, are institutional markets including schools and universities where service has faded dramatically due to virtual and distance learning. Goldy, who works around the clock with growers in the region, says, "Fresh fruit and vegetable producers also have to deal with a plethora of labor, water, pesticide, immigration, housing, food safety and other regulations that add to their costs, but they are not able to recoup." Leitz says that the Farmers Aid Program "has some money in it for specialty crop growers like myself if we have major market disruptions, but it was only for late winter and spring crops." He argues, "It needs to be expanded to cover the summer months." Don't even get these guys started on the Executive Orders from Governor Gretchen Whitmer. Leitz says, "We had to have a COVID Preparedness Plan in June, and we were inspected for that plan literally four days after the order." The latest one has really rankled the agriculture industry, even resulting in lawsuits to stop it from happening. By way of explanation, Leitz says, "The latest one (Executive Order) to affect us is forcing us to test all migrant and seasonal workers for COVID. She gave us less than a week to come up with that plan, and then if one person is found positive, they have to quarantine. If they have been working closer than 6-feet for more than 15-minutes, that person has to quarantine also." He points out, "We all work closer than 6-feet. That would shut me down!" He contends you should have to at least be symptomatic to have to undergo a test. Leitz also reports, "We have nobody with symptoms. We are taking all the safety precautions that are recommended. Masks, gloves, sanitizing often, temperature checks daily, and training, training, training." Over at A&B Costanza Farms, Brett Costanza admits, "We normally have to be prepared to deal with Mother Nature and volatile markets. but this year we had no idea what to expect with the pandemic." He'll be the first to tell you, "It has been a challenge to say the least," adding, "We started out with not knowing when our H2A migrant workers would be able to come or how many of them," plus the concern as to whether they would be healthy enough to work once they arrived. He says, "Most have arrived with the exception of a handful that were not able to cross the border due to required interviews that were not able to be completed due to the virus." Regarding federal assistance, Costanza says, "The government came out with the Farm to



INSIDE, OUTSIDE, OR CURBSIDE?

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Table box deal which was good for some growers. It was supposed to help American families and American farmers, the only problem is that most of the contracts were awarded to produce brokers, not family farmers like us. So, they make their cut on the deal, leaving the farmer with a lower-than-costof-production type of return. That does nothing to help the American farmer." At Leitz Farms, they proudly stand on tradition, while continuing to embrace new and innovative technology designed to make them better farmers from trickle irrigation that reduces water use to GPS for spot and accurate use of all crop inputs.

Both farms continually reinvest in their farmlands, people and technologies, but that costs money, too. Brett Costanza says, "We knew going into this season it would be difficult and different, and that it has." He strongly encourages every one of us, "Be aware of your food supply. Know where it is grown, and how it is grown. Ask the produce manager at your favorite grocery store where it is coming from" And he reminds us all "Remember Food comes from farms, not from grocery shelves." He genuinely warns, "If the family farm is gone, this country will be in trouble. We have to be able to feed ourselves. Demand American Grown!"

The all new Campus for Creative Aging online class lineup has been released, and they have added a new class to the rotation, Health and Happiness Hour, where you can join the host, Chris Flood of Healthy Cooking with Chris, as she answers your burning questions about health and wellness. That first class will focus on questions related to nutrients we need as we age. Bring your favorite beverage and join in for an hour of healthy information, smiles, laughs and fun. The class dates, descriptions and links to register are all online at www.campusforcreativeaging.org. On Wednesday, September 9th, from 2:00-3:00 pm it's a unique Q&A session with the host of Healthy Cooking with Chris, focusing on nutrients and aging. They can't wait to hear your questions, comments, and what you do to stay well. That group is limited to 20 guests, so act fast. On Wednesday, September 16th from 2-3pm, come learn how to cook for one or two and tips for eating healthy from Bronson's Health Educator and author of the Empty Nest Eats blog, Chris Flood. This class features Kitchen to Table in 15 Minutes. Sometimes you just don't feel like cooking, right? Watch Isabel prepare a healthy, nutrient-packed dinner you can put on the table (and have plenty of leftovers) in just 15 minutes. Next is a one hour free class to teach you the basics of Zoom, plus more! They will cover polling, breakout rooms and virtual backgrounds so your friends and family will be envious. Join in on Tuesday, September 29th from 2:00-3:00 pm to take your Zoom skills to the next level. Up next on Wednesday, September 30th, 2:00-4:00 pm ask yourself, "Have I ever thought about who might speak for me if I couldn't speak for myself? If so, do those people know what you would want, if you were to have a sudden accident or illness? Having that conversation and getting an Advance Directive in place is one of the biggest gifts you can give your family. This is something everyone 18 and up should have in case of emergency. Southwest Michigan's program Speak for Yourself, Plan Your Care offers tools and resources to help you get a good plan in place and to communicate that plan to your loved ones. Join Spectrum Health Lakeland's Julie Griffin as she helps you navigate the Advanced Directive process. All materials will be emailed before the class.

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Next is What is a Podcast and why should I listen? On Monday, October 5th from 2:00-3:00 pm, join in as they explain an increasingly popular form of entertainment. From politics to food to science you will learn where to find the different genres and the most popular podcasts in each one. Next for foodies, the class: All About Lentils. Did you know lentils are one of the least expensive - and healthiest foods you can eat? Learn all about lentils and watch Chris make Easy Lentil Tacos - in less than 30 minutes on Wednesday, October 7th from 2-3pm.

On Tuesday, October 13th from 2:00-3:00 pm you are invited to come learn what an app is, where to find them and the very best free app's out there, for both Android and iPhone apps which will be presented. Finally, the class: Plenty of Pumpkin! There's good reason to eat more pumpkin. It's a superfood for everyone - especially older adults. On Wednesday, October 21st from 2 to 3pm, learn why you should eat more pumpkin, and watch Isabel and Chris make three healthy, tasty dishes, all made with a humble can of pumpkin.

That's it for this week, folks. See you Saturday right here in MailMax!

Pat Moody Morning Radio Personality WSJM Radio moody@wsjm.com (269) 925-1111 Read more at www.MailMaxOnline.com



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The Dementia Journey – Education, Imagination, Understanding

Diane **Genovese,** ^{Owner}

When caring for a loved one diagnosed with Dementia, it is important to educate yourself on the facts of this disease. The word 'dementia' is an umbrella term for the symptoms caused by memory loss, confusion and personality change. Highly important as well, learn of the changes that increase in time in an effort to deal appropriately with your loved ones many behaviors. Encourage yourself to be patient, to remind yourself that mom/dad did not choose to have their mind challenged. Demonstrate your love, your support by listening with kindness so they know they are not alone. You may feel your world has been turned upside down. It is important for your own well being that you take care of yourself as well. There are local dementia support groups where you can spend quality time with others walking this journey.

Now **imagine** each day in the lives of those diagnosed with dementia. It is not an easy task as the "unknown" takes over in a mind once clear, knowledgeable and capable to function normally. Witnessing the ongoing changes can leave us feeling helpless as we desperately wish to comfort and reassure that they are still the same person, when indeed they are not feeling in control. People with dementia often prefer to spend more time at home where they feel safe, but at times that too has its challenges. In an advanced stage, a list of "what to do next" can be helpful if posted in a place they can see each day. It is hard to imagine the feeling of not being capable to think through the daily tasks of living. This list serves as a great tool for you to refer to each time your loved expresses confusion on their daily tasks. Often, they can have items in front of them, such as food in the refrigerator, products on the bathroom vanity and even forget which order to put their clothing on. You may witness mood swings. Just imagine the feeling of despair, agitation and loneliness surrounding your loved one as they wonder "what is happening to me."

www.MailMaxOnline.com

It is often said, that until we walk in another's shoes, we cannot fully **understand** their journey. If you walk in your loved ones shoes with them, showing love, patience and understanding of this illness, it will at least give comfort in "the moment". It is up to family and caregivers to reassure with kind words, respect and encouragement that we are there for them throughout this journey not chosen.

"We remember their love when they can no longer remember."

— Unknown



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OFF FALL 2020 TUITION

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Homebuyers in 0 the SWMI housing market unleashed res their pent-up demand again in July with astonishing increases in the number of

houses sold from June to July and year-to-date. Last month the selling prices were startling and record-setting. In July, the selling prices again set records in the year-over-year comparison that dates back to 2006.

A key factor besides demand was that buyers experienced an inventory that was down 24 percent from July 2019 during the prime selling season. There were 1399 homes for sale at the end of July versus 1840 in July 2019. The number of listings for sale includes homes for sale across Allegan, Berrien, Cass, and the westerly 2/3 of Van Buren counties.

At that level, the market a 6.6-months supply of houses for buyers. In June 2020, the level was 6.7-months supply with 1500 houses for sale. For comparison, in July 2010, there were 3821 houses for sale.

The number of houses sold increased 51 percent from June 2020 (479 vs. 318) and increased 51 percent from July 2019 (479 vs. 317). At 479 houses, July 2020 set a staggering record in the year-over-year comparison. The second best year was July 2018, with 390 homes sold.

Year-to-date, the number of houses sold was down 12 percent to 1748 from 1986 sold in July 2019.

The average selling price at \$337,697 was 12 percent higher than the \$300,418 average selling price in June 2020 and 34 percent

higher than the \$251,423 price in July 2019. The July average selling price raised the yearto-date, average selling price 14 percent (\$268,934 vs. \$236,199).

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The median selling price rose to \$230,000 from \$200,000 in July 2019 for a 15 percent increase. From June 2020 to July, the median selling price decreased by 2 percent. In June, the median selling price was \$234,950. Yearto-date, the median selling price rose 15 percent (\$200,000 vs. \$174,700).

The median price is the price at which 50% of the homes sold were above that price, and 50% were below.

With the record-setting number of houses sold, the total dollar volume sky-rocketed 103 percent in July (\$161,756,996 vs. \$79,701,398). The year-to-date total dollar differed by less than a percent (\$470,098,082 vs. \$469,092,976).

July's boost caused the number of bankowned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions to remain at 1 percent in July, the same as in June. This was the lowest percentage reached since 2009. The highest percentage in previously in July was 35 percent in 2009.

Locally, the mortgage rate was 3.108 down slightly from 3.253 in June. Last year in July, the rate was 3.961. Nationally, the Freddie Mac mortgage rate in July was 2.99 down from 3.13 in June for a 30-year conventional mortgage.

This data reflects home sales across Allegan, Berrien, Cass, and the westerly 2/3 of Van Buren counties and should not be used to determine the market value of any individual property. If you want to know the market value of your property, please contact your local REALTOR®.

When Selling a Home...

Want to price your home to sell fast? Here are some key factors to keep in mind.

Start by kicking your emotional attachment to the curb. You aren't selling your memories; you're selling a house. You're the one who will set your listing price, but your REALTOR® has the expertise and local knowledge to advise on how to price your house, so it doesn't languish on the market.

You think your house is great. So you want to list it higher than comps suggest. Doing so may cause you to lose your most crucial leverage and timing because it's new on the market. Your REALTOR® looks at all of the comp prices and knows what the competition is like in your market.

Just because you put \$65,000 into your kitchen renovation doesn't mean you can list your home for an additional \$65,000. Your REALTOR® can help you assess the market value of your upgrades and answer the big question, What is the value of my home?

Having an idea of what you want to earn from your house sale is fine because you're looking at your home as the giant investment that it is. But pricing your home so that you will make a certain amount of money is the wrong approach.

The number you have in your head may not be in line with the market. This is where doing research on the housing market comes in handy, as well as listening to your REALTOR®.

When Buying a Home...

The market is running at a fast pace right now, and as a buyer, you face a lot of competition for a limited amount of houses for sale. Just remember to do your homework and

discuss all aspects of a purchase agreement with your REALTOR® in advance.

Especially, do not overlook contract contingencies - provisions that must be met before the transaction can go through. For example, if an offer says, "This contract is contingent upon a home inspection," If something is wrong with the house, the buyer can request the seller to make repairs. But most repairs are negotiable; the seller may agree to some, but say no to others. Or the seller can offer a price reduction, or a credit at closing, based on the cost of the repairs. This is where your REALTOR® can provide real value and counsel on what you should ask the seller to fix

Other common contingencies include Financing contingency, Appraisal contingency, and Clear title contingency.

Select contingencies carefully. When going up against multiple offers, making an offer with fewer contingencies can potentially give you an edge over the competition.

To view properties that are for sale in your local area, go to www.swmar.com and click on "Property Search". The Southwestern Michigan Association of REALTORS®, Inc. is a professional trade association for real estate professionals who are members of the National Association of REALTORS®, and ancillary service providers for the real estate industry in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. The Association can be contacted at 269-983-6375 or through their website at www.swmar.com

Read more at www.MailMaxOnline.com



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When it comes to Veterans Benefits, many veterans and dependents don't know what they don't know. Nationwide, less than 10% of those eligible apply. Let us help to educate and navigate you thru the maze of what is available from discharge to death. Here are some of the many benefits:

★ Disability Compensation benefits for prior conditions, diseases or injuries that occurred in service or many years later as a result of service (e.g. Agent Orange Exposure, Camp Lejeune Contaminated Water, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder - combat or personal trauma) to name a few.

 \star PTSD Counselors from the South Bend Vet Center that comes to Berrien County twice a week.

 \star Non-Service Connected Veterans Pension and Survivors Pension benefits (House Bound as well as Aid and Attendance) for low income veterans over age 65 or prior to age 65 that are disabled and have at least one day of wartime service (additional means tested restrictions apply).

 \star Free transportation at designated stops for veterans enrolled in the VA Health Benefits Program to the VA Medical Center in Battle Creek and the VA Health Care Center in Mishawaka

★ Financial assistance thru the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund for wartime veterans or peacetime veterans who earned an expeditionary medal (additional means tested restrictions apply).

★ Free financial coaching from an Accredited Financial Counselor and Financial Fitness Coach Counselor as well as ongoing Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University Military Edition classes.

★ Please read our weekly "The Veterans Voice" article in MailMax Newspaper to learn more about additional benefits for veterans and dependents. Let us be of service to you for your service.



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all the resulting economic problems, do you have any advice for what a young person can do to prepare for the future?

Kyle Dear Kyle,

Dave

Regardless of the coronavirus or any economic situation that might arise, there are always a few smart, simple things people can do to protect themselves financially. The number one thing is to live on a written, monthly budget. When you give every dollar a name, and write it down on paper, you're telling your money what to do, instead of scratching your head and wondering where it went.

Staying out of debt and saving as much money as possible are two other great ideas. Remember, your income is your biggest wealth building tool. If you're saddled with a bunch of debt, your money goes to creditors—not into your pocket. Saving prepares you for the future and all the unexpected things, both good and bad, life will throw at you.

Even though you're young, investing is a key component in creating a stable financial outlook for yourself. In your twenties, just \$100 a month invested properly in good growth stock mutual funds can make you a millionaire by the time you're ready to retire.

Like I said, these are all simple things. But they'll make a huge difference in your financial situation now and in the years to come!

—Dave

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www.MailMaxOnline.com **Dave Says**

Pay that thing off!

My only debt right now is a car payment. I still owe \$12,000 on the vehicle, and currently I have \$25,000 in savings. I'm in a very stable line of work, but my income can vary somewhat from month to month. Should I hang on to my savings, or pay off the car?

Erik

Dear Erik,

Debt is a bad thing to have in your life, especially when your income can vary from paycheck to paycheck. You're in good shape, except for the car note, though. It's like a ball and chain around your neck.

TIREE SERVICE

crlawn21@yahoo.com

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You'd still have \$13,000 left if you paid off the car. And with the money you'd free up, you could rebuild your savings in no time. Pay off the car, dude!

-Dave

*Dave Ramsey is a seven-time #1 national best-selling author, personal finance expert, and host of The Dave Ramsey Show, heard by more than 16 million listeners each week. He has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, Today Show, Fox News, CNN, Fox Business, and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people regain control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for Ramsey Solutions.



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