

Industry | Innovation | Technology | Opportunity | Community | Diversity

# MOMENTUM

Uniquely Macomb County, Michigan  
Volume 7, Issue 2

## Macomb made

Local manufacturers play  
vital role in historic  
Artemis mission

*Page 14*

### CORE CONNECTIONS:

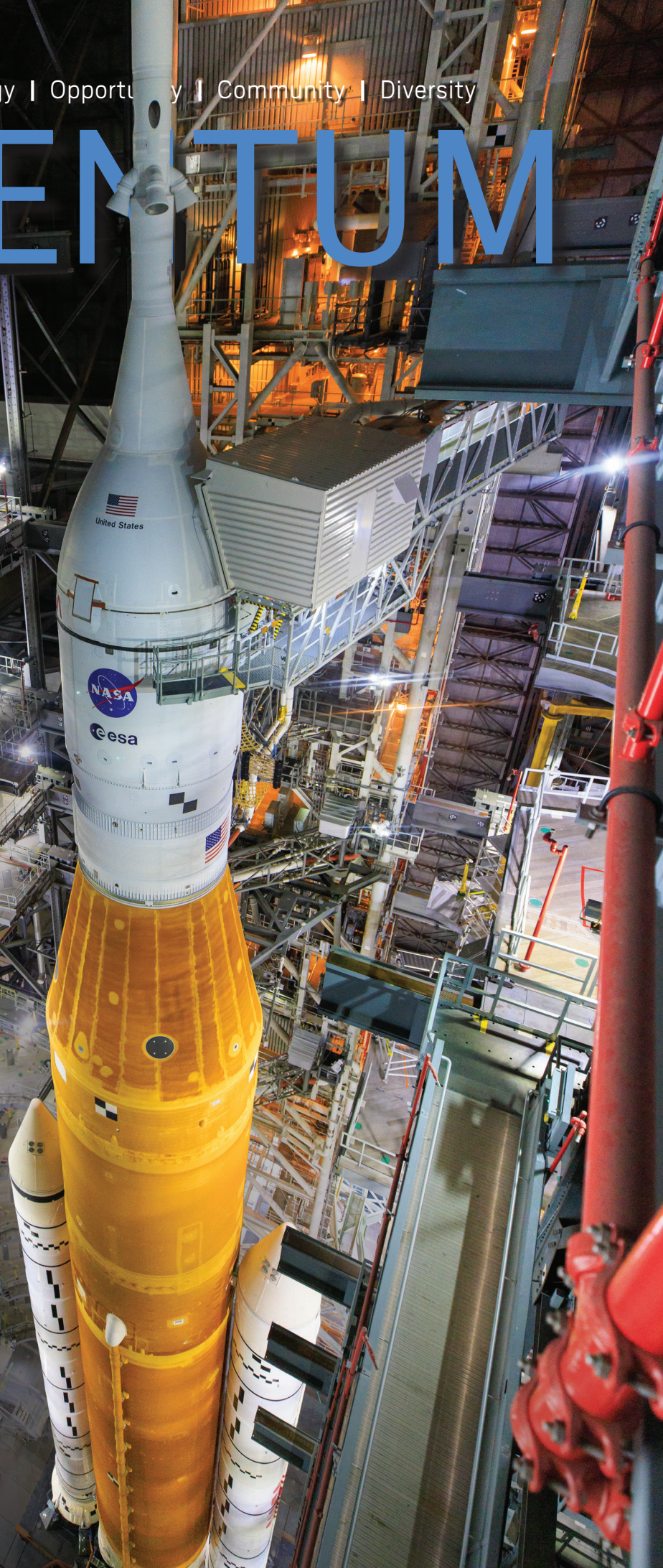
Schools, businesses  
unite to prepare  
students for future  
employment

*Page 23*

### PASSING THE TORCH:

Lanzen Inc. creates  
life-changing  
opportunity for  
young workers

*Page 44*





**MICHELLE DAVIDSON** always knew her medical assistant career wasn't the right fit. Then she discovered her career calling in social work. Her pursuit to finish her degree drove her to OU. The mother of two accomplished her goal at 38 in 2018. She now enjoys a rewarding and fulfilling career working for We the People Michigan — collaborating with community leaders on initiatives to empower Michigan residents.



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# MOMENTUM

Uniquely  
Macomb County, Michigan  
Volume 7, Issue 2

Momentum is a publication of the  
Macomb County Department of Planning  
& Economic Development

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Students from Romeo schools take a tour of Lanzen Inc.'s manufacturing facility as part of Macomb County Manufacturing Day 2022. Lanzen is one of many companies participating in the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development's Fueling the Talent Pipeline initiative.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LANZEN INC.

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**Elizabeth Duran**, MSU Extension 4-H program coordinator in the *Children and Youth Institute*  
**Jennifer Weot**, outreach specialist for the *Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development*

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**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:** NASA's Space Launch System and Orion spacecraft atop the mobile launcher at the agency's Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Tuesday, Aug. 16, 2022. The first in a series of increasingly complex missions, Artemis I will provide a foundation for human deep space exploration and demonstrate our commitment and capability to extend human presence to the Moon and beyond.

PHOTO BY FRANK MICHAUX — NASA

# One giant leap for Macomb

From the ground level to places far, far away, Macomb County industry, business and education prove nothing is out of reach

*By Mark A. Hackel*



NASA's Space Launch System rocket carrying the Orion spacecraft launches on the Artemis I flight test, Nov. 16, 2022, from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Macomb County manufacturers are playing a significant role in the Artemis missions, contracting with NASA to build and supply aerospace components for the space project.

PHOTO BY JOEL KOWSKY — NASA

**G**reetings Readers!  
I am pleased to present the 14th edition of Momentum, a bi-annual magazine published by the Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development and MediaNews Group/The Macomb Daily.

In each issue, we celebrate stories about the people, places and businesses that make Macomb County a great place to call home. In this issue, we learn more about local companies that are contributing to the success of



NASA's Artemis I, the breadth of Career Technical Education programs offered at Macomb County school districts, and highlight a few of the many local businesses helping to fuel the talent pipeline in Macomb County.

As always, please visit our website and follow us on social media to stay informed about the latest developments in Macomb County.

Be Well,

Mark A. Hackel  
Macomb County Executive

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# Hatchlings

## Women small business owners find growth, exposure at The Nest

*By Natalie Broda*

**W**hen Andrea Plummer started her sensitive skincare business Scrupulous Soaps in 2018, she had no idea that her products would be on retail shelves in less than a year.

But that's exactly what happened thanks to The Nest Collaborative, a women-only business incubator space and shop located at 66 Macomb Place in the heart of downtown Mount Clemens.



Plummer was only a teenager when she first began experimenting with skincare recipes. Her own issues with sensitive skin led her to grow that hobby from a passion to a business. After attending several craft shows, she was approached by

The Nest to sell her soaps, bath treats and moisturizers.

"I've had a ton of real world retail exposure there and that has been so valuable for me as a small business owner," Plummer said. "Knowing that it's a collaborative that's full of other women following their dreams, there's a little bit of magic there when you walk in."

The Nest opened its doors in 2018 with two goals in mind, according to Pam Schlaff, manager of the store: Create a space where small, women-owned businesses can thrive and help others reach their goals of opening up shop.

"People love this store. Everyone who walks in here always says it's such a great concept," Schlaff said. "It's amazing to be able to help women on a day-to-day basis with hatching their business, educating them and helping them become more successful."

There's currently 37 vendors in The Nest offering a wide variety of products. Home decor, clothing, jewelry, kitchen wares, teas, spices, handmade paints – The list goes on and is always rotating as new creators join the collaborative. Schlaff herself even sells her floral art and signage at the shop, just a few feet away from a stand of pearl necklaces made by a local 10-year-old.

"We have a few kids who sell in our shop and it's just wonderful to be able to help young girls," Schlaff said. "The look on their face when they see their first paycheck is priceless, their eyes are like half-dollars."

It costs only \$125 per month to rent space at The Nest. Businesses can secure space on a month-to-month basis in the shop, which is open six days a week and also holds its own special events.

New this year at the collaborative was a six-week Women's



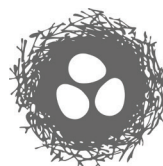
**Above:** Pam Schlaff, manager, adjusts a display of her handiwork at The Nest Collaborative.

PHOTO BY NATALIE BRODA — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

### CONNECT

#### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Nest Collaborative, 66 Macomb Place in Mount Clemens, is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays; 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursdays; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sundays. If you're interested in becoming a vendor in the space, a full application is available on the homepage of the collaborative's website. To find out more, visit [nestmountclemens.com](http://nestmountclemens.com).



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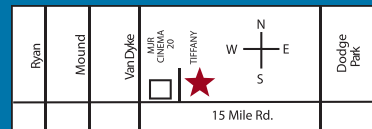
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New this year at the collaborative was a six-week Women’s Retail Bootcamp Monthly Cohort. Every Thursday, the cohort would meet next door to The Nest to hear from different speakers and coaches, share their products and work on their business plans. Sister Sprout, a business-building nonprofit focused on uplifting women, helped create the bootcamp.

“We talked about everything from accessing capital to how to pitch your business. Women brought in their work and we could all sit and critique things together like their packaging, and share challenges and lessons learned,” said Dusty Welsh, director of Sister Sprout.

The bootcamp was supported by Comerica Bank with speakers from organizations like the Macomb Community College Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. There’s no set plans for another bootcamp in 2023, but Welsh and The Nest believe it’s a program that will go on at the collaborative for some time to come.

Plummer was one of the women to experience all six weeks of the workshops. She called the bootcamp enlightening and a great resource for those looking to level up their business. In fact, from the knowledge she gained during the courses, Plummer is planning to apply to two different pitch competitions this year. It will be a first for her small business.

And that’s just part of what makes The Nest such an extraordinary place, explained Welsh.

“When women are starting a business, they need to know they are not alone. It’s a hard process. Sometimes we can feel like we aren’t smart or good or empowered enough,” Welsh said. “So it’s really important to connect women with the resources they need, like The Nest. We want to support them emotionally and give them every resource to be successful.” **M**



**Above:** Various goods displayed at The Nest Collaborative include pearler keychains made by 10-year-old small business owner Emma (top) and handmade fabric gnomes (middle).



**Bottom left:** Pam Schlaff, manager, stands behind the counter at The Nest Collaborative. To the left, Andrea Plummer’s Scrupulous Soaps sit displayed.



**Bottom right:** There are nearly 40 vendors in The Nest offering a wide variety of products, from clothing, jewelry and home decor to kitchen wares, teas and spices.

PHOTOS BY NATALIE BRODA — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP





# CENTER LINE BUILDS PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL FOUNDATION



The Center Line Festival Foundation is a non-profit organization created in August 2016 to raise funds towards festival type events in the City of Center Line. The foundation was formed from a committee of city employees, business owners, and residents led by a volunteer board.

The festival foundation hosts three annual events throughout the year: Center Line Independence Festival, Beer Fest, and Halloween Town. These events provide opportunities for our residents to be more active in the community and brings people from all walks of life together in a small town like Center Line. At the festival foundation we celebrate and promote talented artists in a variety of forms from arts and crafts to music and dancing. These events help bolster economic growth while instilling a sense of community pride.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CENTER LINE FESTIVAL FOUNDATION CHAIRMAN

*"Since 2016, the Center Line Festival Foundation, a 501(c)3 non-profit community organization, has been on a mission to provide the very best culturally inviting, entertaining and fun events for all! With our business partners, volunteers, residents and the City of Center Line, the Center Line Independence Festival and Fireworks display began to entertain the masses the first weekend of June each year at the city's Memorial Park. Since then, and in partnership with the Warren Chamber of Commerce, the City of Warren and the Warren Community Foundation, we added "Cruisin' 53" car cruise and car show to that weekend's activities. Tens of thousands of people visit each year, to enjoy live free music from some of the Metro-Detroit area's best bands; local craft breweries offerings; carnival and the area's best fireworks display. It is our hope that as the Center Line Festival Foundation grows, we will provided people from all over the region with family fun and entertaining events such as the Center Line Independence Festival, Beer Fest, Cruisin' 53, and much more that will be forever remember by those who visit Center Line's "Small-town Lifestyle in the Heart of Metro-Detroit".*

*Your financial support of the Center Line Festival Foundation is welcome and appreciated!  
We look forward to seeing you in Center Line soon!*

Robert Binson, Chairman  
Center Line Festival Foundation  
Mayor, City of Center Line



For more information regarding the Center Line Festival Foundation and its events, please call 586-757-6800 or go to <https://centerlinefestival.org/>

# Big plans

## NorthPoint Development prepares 700,000 sq. ft. of industrial space

By Jane Peterson

**W**ith 700,000 square feet of industrial property coming back online in early 2023, Macomb County's manufacturing sector continues to grow.

NorthPoint Development, based in Kansas City, Mo., has been renovating the former GM Warren Transmission plant for the past year. The company invested \$180 million in the redevelopment project, which is located on Mound Road near Nine Mile Road. It received additional tax increment financing for environmental remediation and demolition.

"There's been a lot of interest in this space because of the strong industrial corridor where it is located, with a strong labor force and good access to major freeways," said Tim Conder, vice president of development. "We expect this to have a huge, favorable impact on the local economy."

Called the Mound Road Industrial Park, ready to come online are two structures that have been under construction since demolition began in January 2022. Prospective tenants have already been identified, although Conder said he could not name the companies before this issue went to print. The first building is anticipated to be completed by year end with the second building completed by October 2023.

Two additional buildings were included in the original plan,



An aerial view of the former GM Warren Transmission plant, which is being converted into new industrial space.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTHPOINT DEVELOPMENT

### CONNECT

#### LEARN MORE

NorthPoint Development is a private commercial

real estate developer that specializes in industrial and multi-family development. Its projects are in 26 states and the company operates nine office locations. More than 300 employees work in-house, providing engineering, construction, logistics, labor and incentive knowledge. To learn more, visit [beyondthecontract.com](http://beyondthecontract.com).



but Conder said NorthPoint Development made the decision to put them on hold for now. The company wants to ensure there will continue to be sufficient demand for the space considering an increasingly uncertain economy.

In all, there will be 1.5 million square feet of new commercial and industrial space utilized for light industrial, manufacturing, subassembly work and distribution industries. Construction also included improvements to the parking lot and added attractive green space on the 117-acre site. The project is expected to generate nearly 600 new jobs.

"We've taken an old, blighted, concrete and metal building and turned it into an asset, with state-of-the-art, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-certified buildings that represent new investment and create additional jobs," said Conder.

Throughout the demolition and revitalization process, NorthPoint Development has worked extensively with the Michigan Strategic Fund, Macomb County and the City of Warren.

"The City of Warren has been fantastic to work with," said Conder, "and so has Macomb County and brownfield authority officials. We're pleased with the direction of this project and are proud to be a part of the Warren community."

The GM Transmission plant has a rich history in Warren, having opened in 1941. Much of its history includes making six-speed transmissions for GM passenger vehicles, many of which have since been discontinued.

Shuttered in 2019, the plant reopened briefly in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the country and there was a critical need for face masks to help protect workers providing essential services. GM launched a rapid-response project to produce masks, selecting the Warren facility because of the building's ISO Class 8-equivalent cleanroom. Since even a small speck of dust can upset a transmission build, this cleanroom with massive wind tunnels and air exchangers provided a clean space needed to produce medical supplies.

NorthPoint Development may sound familiar to residents because the company has invested in other projects in the region, including approximately 1,000,000 square feet of industrial space in Harper Woods at the site of the former Eastland Mall and two other projects in Detroit. ■



## Richmond

### Big city amenities with small town charm

Nearly 6,000 residents call the City of Richmond home, and the community is continuing to grow.

The city is linked by the I-94 Expressway, M-19, and the Gratiot Avenue corridor, offering easy access to the Detroit/Flint/Port Huron metropolitan areas. Richmond is also conveniently located near some of the finest recreational amenities in the state, providing nearby access to inland lakes, Lake St. Clair and the Great Lakes.

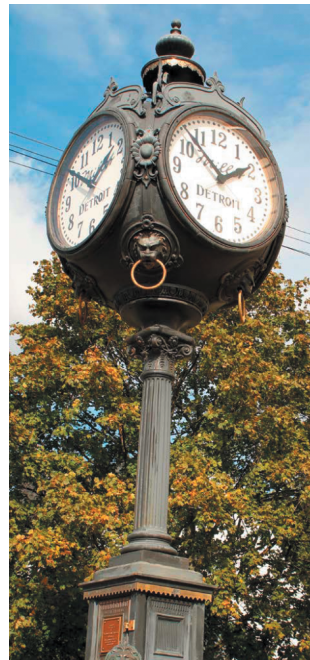
Richmond is a community where families truly flourish, with a wide-variety of housing options in various price ranges for everyone — from old beautiful historic homes on tree-lined streets to newer developments offering the latest in single family living. In fact, the city just finalized plans on the new Richmond West subdivision in the south-west portion of the city that will add 54 new homes to the community.

For the outdoor enthusiasts, Richmond offers a wide variety of recreational activities through its many municipal parks as well as a comprehensive sidewalk system throughout the city. The Macomb Orchard Trail, a 23.5-mile linear park, begins in Richmond and connects to a network of trails. The trail is an integral part of the Great Lake to Lake Route 1 trail, which will span from Port Huron to South Haven.

Some might say the best thing about the City of Richmond is its community events. The annual Richmond Good Old Days Festival is the highlight of summer for many, drawing well over 80,000 people to the city annually the weekend after Labor Day. The festival features several different events throughout each of the four days, including the state's largest marching musical parade, motorsports events, musical entertainment and more. There is also a winter festival held the first Saturday of February. For more information, visit [richmondgoodold-daysfestival.org](http://richmondgoodold-daysfestival.org).

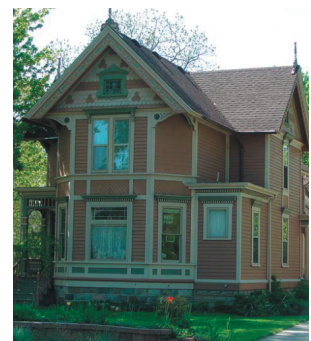
Richmond's small town feel doesn't stop there. Its retail business districts offer turn of the century charm and unique modern Main Street architecture. The pedestrian friendly downtown is the perfect location for shopping and services. Special events are held year round to promote local businesses. Additionally, the city is working with private property owners on the development of prime industrial property.

For more information on the City of Richmond, visit the city's website at [cityofrichmond.net](http://cityofrichmond.net) or call (586) 727-7571. **M**



#### FAST FACTS

- Founded:** 1879
- Population (2010 census):** 5,735
- Square miles:** 2.92



"A lot of people aren't fans of harsh winters, but whether it's a mild winter or not, we see very good attendance numbers at all our parks, especially after the pandemic," said Gary Hopp, park manager and eastern district superintendent at Huron Clinton-Metroparks. "I would encourage everyone to take some time to get out in nature and enjoy some of the beauty of our Michigan winters."

PHOTO COURTESY OF HURON-CLINTON METROPARK

# Winter wonderland

Activities abound this season in Michigan's great outdoors

*By Natalie Broda*

---





**W**hether you're looking to stay in shape, or just looking to get outside and enjoy all that Michigan's winter wonderland has to offer, there's plenty to do these colder months in your local parks. "We have ice fishing, sledding, Christmas tree farms, tons of different trails both paved and unpaved to explore," said Gerard Santoro, program director for Macomb County Parks and Natural Resources. "There's the beautiful Lake St. Clair when it freezes over and so much more that's very unique to Macomb County."

Those who grew up in the county likely already have their favorite sledding hill. But if you're new here or searching for a fresh hill to enjoy with the family, Santoro recommends checking out the websites of each municipality.

"Each local government has a list of every single community sledding hill," he said. "Some of the more well known ones are definitely in Shelby Township and Sterling Heights."

Ice fishing is likely the most popular winter activity in the county, according to Danielle Mauter, chief of marketing and communications at Huron-Clinton Metroparks. More than 18,837 vehicle entries were recorded at Lake St. Clair Metropark in February 2022.



**Top:** Ice fishing is likely the most popular winter activity in the county, according to Danielle Mauter, chief of marketing and communications at Huron-Clinton Metroparks.

**Above:** Those who grew up in the county likely already have their favorite sledding hill. But for those less familiar or new to the area, many local governments list community sledding hill locations on their city's website.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HURON-CLINTON METROPARK

## CONNECT

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Want to stay informed of all the winter activities around the county? Visit [metroparks.com](http://metroparks.com) and check out each park's event calendar or visit living.

[macombgov.org/living-getoutdoors](http://macombgov.org/living-getoutdoors) for more information on trails, waterways and parks. Cross country ski rentals are available for adults, \$15, and children, \$9, at Stony Creek Metropark. Some trails are also open for snow-shoeing this winter. Guests to the parks are encouraged to check trail information beforehand to find which trails are groomed for skiing and which are not.



“If the temperatures get cold enough and the lake freezes over, ice fishing has always been and will always be popular here due to the amount and types of fish. We see fishermen flock to Lake St. Clair summer and winter,” Mauter said. “The park also offers ice skating, either on the lake if the ice is thick, or at our man-made ice rink that’s built in the park every year.”

If you’re looking for a classic holiday experience, Wolcott Mill Metropark has you covered. The Historic Center, which dates back to the mid-1800s, and the fully operational Farm Center both hold events throughout the winter season. Guests are welcome to tour through the barns to meet the horses and cows who call the farm home, while the center also holds scheduled events like story time with the animals.

“Leading up to Christmas, the entire farm is decked out in thousands of holiday lights. It’s truly that quintessential holiday experience. Usually, Santa pays a visit too, and we’ll bring out school choirs to sing. It’s a popular event for our local families,” Mauter said.

Another well-loved winter pastime across the county’s parks and trails is cross country skiing. Stony Creek Met-

ropark is a favorite for many, said Gary Hopp, park manager and eastern district superintendent at Huron Clinton-Metroparks. Many of the trails are groomed for cross country skiing, meaning the snow is compacted to make gliding over rough patches easier.

“All of our trail maps are color coded by difficulty, so if you’re a beginner or an expert you’ll be able to find the right trail for your ability,” Hopp said. “And if you’re not much into skiing, fat tire biking is another prominent activity we’re seeing more of these days.”

The Shelden Trails at Stony Creek Metropark underwent heavy renovations over the past three-years and are open to hikers and bikers. Outside of the Metroparks, the paved 10-mile Freedom Trail is also a popular option for sport and leisure. It runs parallel to 16 Mile Road/Metro Parkway through Sterling Heights, Clinton Township and Harrison Township, ending at the shoreline of Lake St. Clair.

“It’s funny,” said Hopp. “A lot of people aren’t fans of harsh winters, but whether it’s a mild winter or not, we see very good attendance numbers at all our parks, especially after the pandemic. I would encourage everyone to take some time to get out in nature and enjoy some of the beauty of our Michigan winters. **M**”

Many of the trails at Stony Creek Metropark are groomed for cross country skiing, meaning the snow is compacted to make gliding over rough patches easier.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HURON-CLINTON METROPARK



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# FUTURAMIC

## MADE IN MACOMB COUNTY

According to NASA's website, numerous Michigan companies are named as Artemis partners, with some of them headquartered in Macomb County.

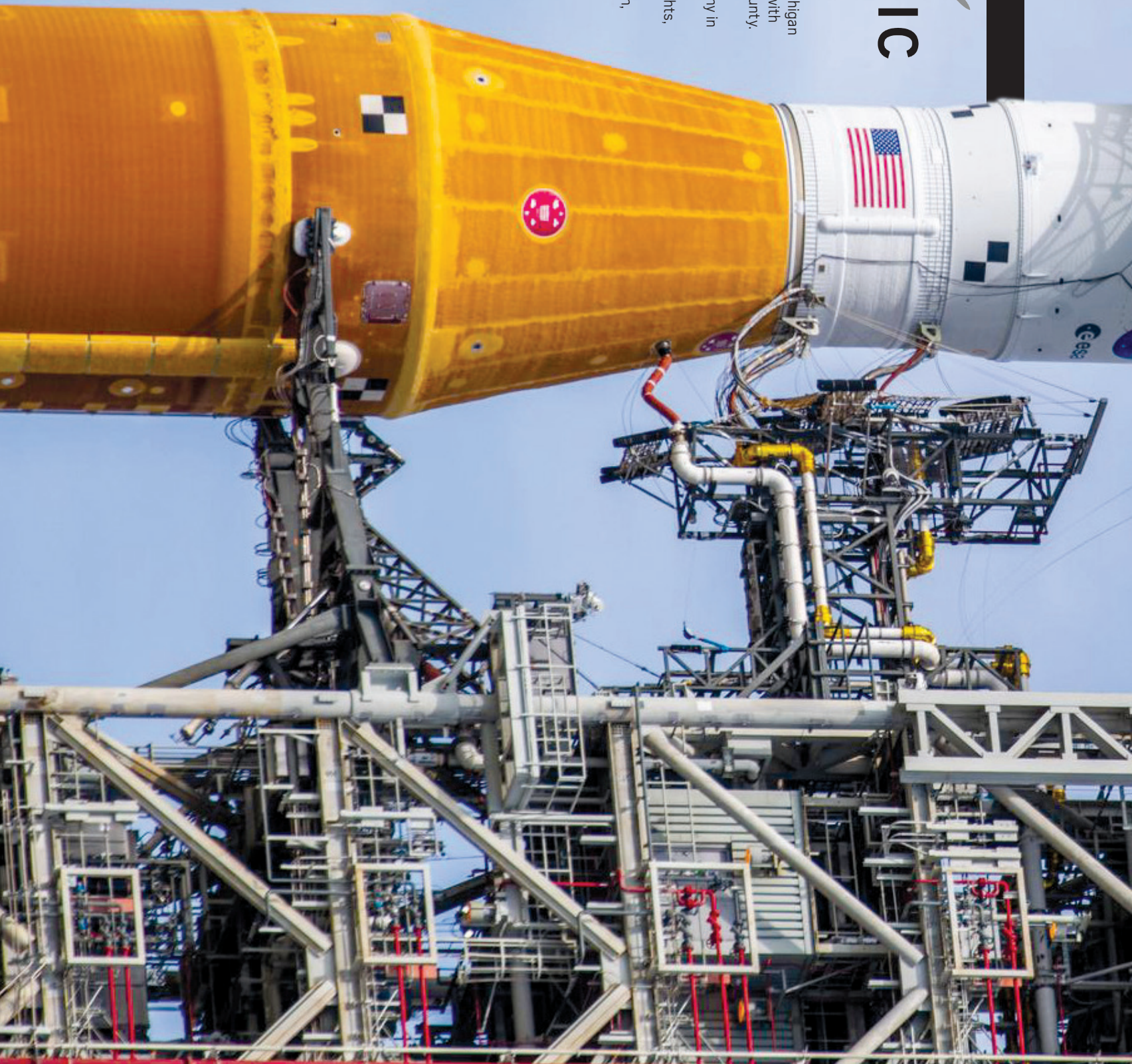
They include:

- Baker Industries, a Lincoln Electric Company in Macomb, SLS
- DM Tool & Fabrication, Inc. in Sterling Heights, SLS
- Futuramic Tool & Engineering Co. in Warren, SLS
- Global Tooling Systems, LLC in Macomb Township, SLS
- Models & Tools, Inc., Shelby Township, Orion project
- Sharp Tooling Solutions, Inc. in Bruce Township, SLS
- Ultimate Hydroforming, Inc. in Sterling Heights, SLS
- Weldaloy Products Co. in Warren, SLS

For more information, visit [nasa.gov](http://nasa.gov).

A close-up view of the Artemis I Space Launch System (SLS) and Orion spacecraft on Launch Pad 39B at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida on April 21, 2022. Artemis I mission is the first integrated test of the agency's deep space exploration systems: the Space Launch System rocket, Orion spacecraft, and supporting ground systems.

PHOTO BY BEN SMEGELSKY/NASA





# Macomb made

## Local manufacturers play vital role in historic Artemis mission

*By Jane Peterson*

As the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) prepares a series of missions that will eventually send explorers further into space than ever before, they are receiving some help from companies residents are familiar with a little closer to home.

Macomb County manufacturers are playing a significant role in the Artemis missions, contracting with NASA to build and supply aerospace components for the space project, with some focusing specifically on the agency's deep space rocket, the Space Launch System (SLS) and others on the Orion spacecraft.

The Orion spacecraft is designed to take astronauts further in space than previous missions. Designed to meet the evolving needs of America's deep space exploration program for decades to come, it consists of a crew module, where the crew will live and work; service module that provides power, propulsion and mission supplies; and launch abort system, which can be activated in the event of an emergency during launch or ascent to orbit and pull the spacecraft and crew to safety.

The SLS is a sophisticated launch vehicle that will be used in a series of Artemis missions. A powerful rocket, it will be the backbone of the Artemis missions, which will begin with an unmanned lunar flight followed by a manned mission to the moon and finally, a manned mission to Mars for extensive deep space exploration.



Baker Industries, a Lincoln Electric Company, in Macomb is working with numerous nationally recognized contractors to design, build and install a fixture used to hold the SLS liquid oxygen (LOX) tank during hydrostatic pressure testing as well as design and build core location templates for the body of the SLS, said Sean Schaefer, Baker’s marketing manager.

“It’s been great to work with them,” he said. “All design and manufacturing is being completed right here at our Macomb facilities. I think Macomb County is in a good position for aerospace work as our local supply chain is unparalleled.”

The first mission, Artemis I, was first scheduled for lift-off on Aug. 28, 2022. After other attempts that were scrapped due to weather concerns and technical issues, Artemis I officially launched on Nov. 16 from Kennedy Space Center. It is the first flight for the SLS rocket and the Orion spacecraft.

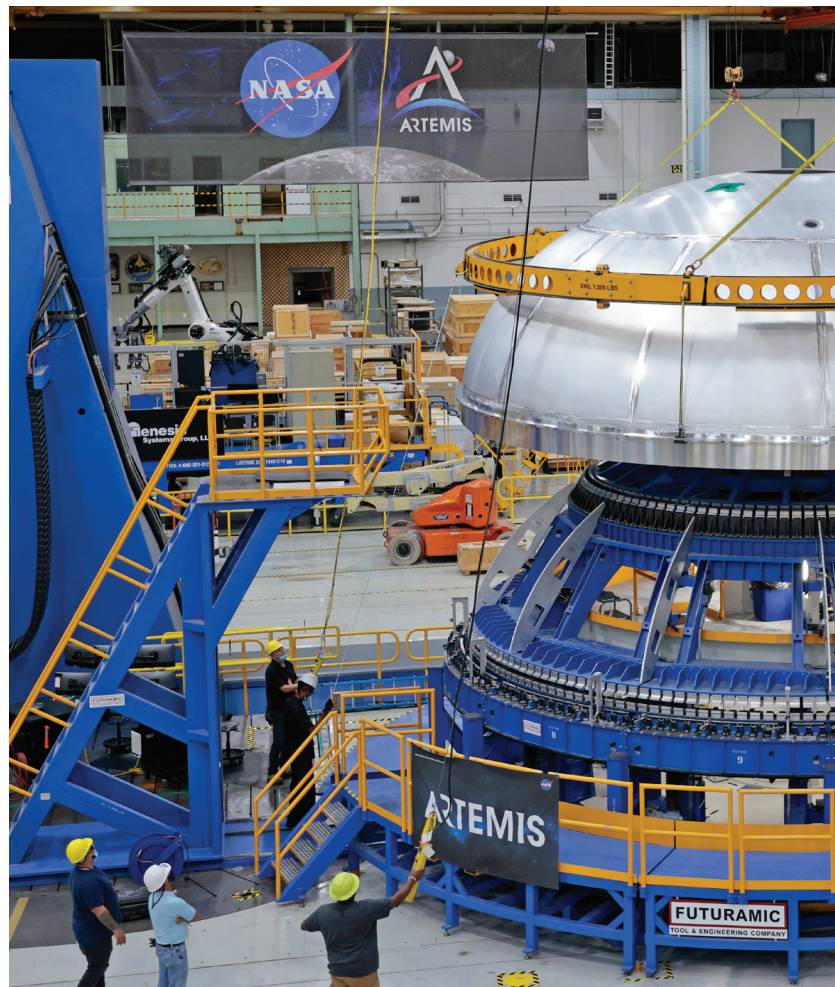
The launch was an exciting one for Futuramic Tool & Engineering Vice President John Couch. The company, based in Warren, has worked with NASA since 2005, when it began work on the Ares mission. When the Constellation program Ares was a part of was canceled in 2010, Futuramic turned its attention to the evolving Artemis mission, developing the design of a new 60,000-pound tool that helped NASA speed up production of some of the largest rocket structures ever manufactured. The tool holds the 130-foot-long liquid hydrogen tank in a stable position so it can be joined with the core stage.

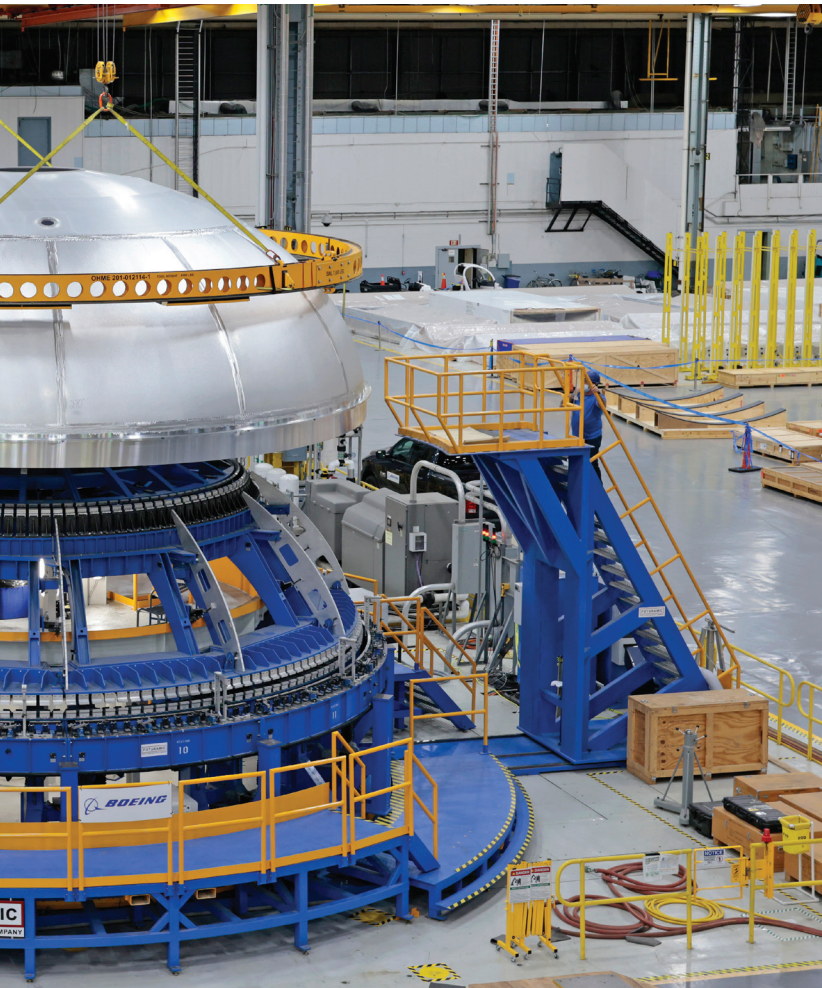
In all, Futuramic’s nearly 250 team members designed, built, installed, calibrated and maintain the bulk of the tooling used to construct the liquid hydrogen- and oxygen-fueled core stage. This is the part of the rocket that lifts the crew capsule and service module from the surface of the earth to high earth orbit.

In addition to Futuramic, numerous other Michigan companies are involved with the Artemis mission, with several of them headquartered in Macomb County. This isn’t surprising to Curt Chowanic, senior economic development specialist for Macomb County, who works with the aerospace industry, but it could be to others.

“Macomb County is well known for its automotive prowess, but lesser known for its strong and growing aerospace industry,” he said. “It’s important to realize the strength in the automotive (industry) is what provides Macomb County with its strength in aerospace. The type of jobs and professions related to the aerospace industry demand higher education levels and result in higher compensation. Fortunately, the education and skillset required by the aerospace industry align with those required by the auto industry. This allows both industries to thrive, create opportunities and encourage investment.”

Like many Macomb County manufacturers, Baker Industries was founded to serve the automotive industry. When it opened in 1992, the company had three employees and three small used machines that they used to complete jobs. When the auto makers struggled mightily in 2008, Baker expanded further into the aerospace and defense industry, using advanced five-axis machining technology that was the perfect fit for aerospace. The company continued to grow and in 2019





**Left:** Futuramic's tooling for NASA's Space Launch System (SLS) was used to complete the welding of the Artemis III core stage liquid oxygen tank dome at NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans. Many Futuramic tools helped complete this job.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL DEMOCKER — NASA

**Below:** Northrop Grumman Motorized Tilt Fixture supporting the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) space missions. The fixture will go on the NASA GSFC centrifuge, which simulates the increased feeling of gravity's pull during a launch.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FUTURAMIC



was acquired by Lincoln Electric. It continues to serve both automotive and aerospace industries, among others, with a wide variety of projects.

“Macomb County is where our roots are, where we grew to be very successful,” said Schaefer. “Today, we have approximately 175 employees and the majority of them live in the county.”

Futuramic also exclusively served the automotive industry from the time it opened its doors in 1955 through the early 2000s. At that time, the company began diversifying into other areas, like aerospace, aircraft and defense projects. Today, said Couch, nearly 100% of its business is generated from the defense and aerospace sector.

This has allowed Futuramic to expand its customer base and facilities, most recently opening a new facility in Florida in addition to its four existing Michigan locations in Warren and Detroit. It has 674,000 square feet of manufacturing, assembly and office space with more than 200 employees employed in Macomb County and another 100 associates in nearby Wayne County.

Futuramic is committed to its Warren headquarters, said Couch.

“We depend on our trained and educated workforce that we have here in Macomb County,” he said. “Macomb County has unique capabilities well suited for the aerospace industry.”

Chowanic added that given the concentration of electrical and mechanical engineers in Macomb County, it's no surprise

After scrapping multiple launch attempts due to weather concerns and technical issues, Artemis I officially launched on Nov. 16, 2022, from Kennedy Space Center in Florida. It is the first flight for the SLS rocket and the Orion spacecraft.

PHOTOS BY JOEL KOWSKY AND KEEGAN BARBER (BOTTOM LEFT) — NASA



that more than 100 companies in Macomb County specialize in the aerospace industry.

“These companies operating within the aerospace industry are well-aware of the talent and capabilities of our workforce and have intentionally decided to make Macomb their home. This talent and expertise is the reason Macomb County companies continue to design and manufacture for NASA, Blue Origin and SpaceX,” he said. “Michigan is consistently ranked as one of the best states for aerospace manufacturing attractiveness, which

is a testament to the area’s exceptional engineering, advanced manufacturing and research and development capabilities.”

A small crew of Futuramic team members were proud to represent Macomb County at the launch of Artemis I.

While the Artemis I launch is exciting, the work continues. Futuramic has manufactured large scale structural flight hardware using a unique process they developed for Artemis II and subsequent missions. Artemis II will be a manned mission where astronauts will return to orbit the moon in 2024. **M**

# Retaining talent

International company sets up shop in Sterling Heights creating over 125 defense jobs

*By Jane Peterson*

An international integrated technology group has established a new North American facility and state-of-the-art lab, creating more than 100 new jobs over the next three years that will support the U.S. Army’s modernization programs in Macomb County.

American Rheinmetall Vehicles LLC (ARV), a developer of defense vehicles, is wrapping up renovations on a 46,669-square-foot facility in Sterling Heights this winter. The company is a subsidiary of Germany-based Rheinmetall AG, both designing and developing next-generation tactical wheeled and tracked combat vehicles and systems for state and local law enforcement and the U.S. Department of Defense.

Inside the new facility on Mound Road, a state-of-the-art digital engineering, prototyping and system integration lab



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**Right:** Employees at American Rheinmetall Vehicles chat in the hallway of the company's new office space, lab and manufacturing facility in Sterling Heights.

PHOTO BY NATALIE BRODA — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

**Previous page:** A Lynx Optionally-Manned Fighting Vehicle designed and developed by American Rheinmetall Vehicles.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RHEINMETALL

will be built alongside manufacturing and office space. Operations at the facility will support the design and development of combat vehicles such as the Lynx Optionally Manned Fighting Vehicle and the HX3-Common Tactical Truck.

“Our new Sterling Heights location is a demonstration of the business’ continued investment into the U.S., bringing new technologies and highly skilled jobs into the region in support of a number of the U.S. Army’s modernization programs,” Daniel Brasile, director of industrialization and capture at ARV said. “The new lab will enable deep customer engagement into every stage of vehicle development.”

The company was awarded a \$1.5 million Michigan Business Development Program performance-based grant, an economic development incentive offered by the Michigan Strategic Fund in coordination with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Over the next three years, the new location is expected to create 125 to 150 high-paying jobs. Some of the positions available will include engineers, project managers, IT professionals, those with experience in manufacturing and more.

“We’ll have a huge mix of skills represented in this building, from core functions like finance and accounting to specific, high-skilled engineering jobs,” Matt Warnick, managing director at ARV said. “We have several positions still open and we highly encourage those interested to check out our website, because we’re always looking for talent. This is a hotbed for technology in the U.S. with people who have expertise to pull from.”

The Sterling Heights location was chosen over 40 to 50 other competing sites, according to Brasile.

“We’re excited to grow in Michigan. The availability of engineering, program management and professional talent, the proximity to the U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command, and support from the MEDC made Sterling Heights the ideal location for expansion,” he said.

It was in 2019 that Rheinmetall AG first brought ARV to Macomb County through the Defense Corridor Center for Collaboration and Synergy. Also located in Sterling Heights, the center assists new or existing businesses with procuring aerospace and defense contracts through the different branches of the U.S. Department of Defense. Todd Seibert, senior economic developer in the Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development, said ARV’s desire to stay in Sterling Heights speaks to the current strength of the local defense industry.



## CONNECT

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Germany-based Rheinmetall was founded in 1889 as “Rheinische Metallwaren- und

Maschinenbaufabrik Aktiengesellschaft.” Today, the company employs approximately 25,000 people across 133 locations and production sites worldwide. American Rheinmetall Vehicles LLC, located at 33844 Sterling Ponds Blvd. in Sterling Heights, is currently hiring for numerous positions. For more information, visit [rheinmetall-defence.com](http://rheinmetall-defence.com).



“This is one of the largest new job creators we’ve seen this year, and it shows that our defense industry is continuing to grow,” Seibert said. “Macomb County is home to military installations, 700 defense companies and highly skilled talent. Investments like these make sure that talent is retained locally and in our state, all while driving up the median salary of household income with high wages.”

As ARV continues to build out the new facility and attract new employees, Warnick explained the company has some big goals over the next decade — Primarily, becoming what he calls the third provider of combat vehicles and trucks in Michigan.

“The big dream is to be fully centered into southeast Michigan, to be an additional ground vehicle provider for the U.S. Army and to truly add value to the industry,” Warnick said. “We can provide competition, which like any other market drives innovation in technology for the men and women who use this equipment.” **M**



# Gather 'round the table

Macomb residents enjoy an abundance of good neighborhood restaurants

*By Jane Peterson*

**W**hile having excellent restaurant options may not be a dealbreaker when deciding where to live, it certainly doesn't hurt.

Residents from across Macomb County are discovering culinary gems in their own backyards thanks to the popular grassroots Facebook group Eat Local Macomb (ELM).

The brainchild of Will Daniels, the group has developed a loyal – and passionate – following of nearly 23,000 members. These aren't restaurant critics, but rather lovers of good food, great service and exceptional dining experiences provided by others who live in their community. Members share their favorite food finds,

make recommendations and give shoutouts to local restaurant owners and staff.

All posts are kept positive by a team of volunteer moderators, but the reviews are most definitely honest. If a diner ate at an outlet that offered a less than stellar experience, members feel there is no need to amplify it to everyone through ELM.

After all, many of these establishments are still recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, labor shortages and soaring operational costs. As a result, many owners and managers stepped into multiple roles and at the end of the day, were too busy to focus on marketing efforts that attract more customers.

Through ELM, Daniels simply wanted to show local eateries some love.

“Anyone can have a bad day, but restaurants deserve a lot of credit,” he said. “They are very supportive of their communities and do everything on their own, including hiring local people.”

ELM connects residents to the food and flavors available throughout Macomb County. Many share their experiences and post photos of their meals, but others just want recommendations of where to go for authentic German food, for example, or the best place for a girl’s night out that’s not too loud or even a place to go for great oatmeal for breakfast with a vegan friend.

ELM members are not shy about providing their feedback, which often reveals the diversity of food offerings, and the depth of what restaurants mean to a community.

There’s no doubt that food brings people together and Daniels quickly learned that he wasn’t alone. Before he knew it, his passion project was an overnight success with the zeal ELM members have for food — evident in their frequent postings.

“Clementine’s Pastries has some of the best macarons I’ve ever had! Can’t wait to try the November flavors!!! Their chai tea from this month was probably my favorite to date!” wrote one user.

“Stopped at Thee Old Fashioned Gentleman for a yummy Friday breakfast. It was SO good! I ordered the bacon, egg and cheddar bagel on asiago. Dan had the chocolate chip muffin and loved it. Coffee was great as usual. I just found out we can order ahead, too! LOVE this place and highly recommend it!” scribed another.

One of ELM’s most prolific – and clearly amusing members – is Rob Markus, whose good-natured, humorous posts have transformed him into somewhat of a local celebrity.

“Listen, I just like good food,” he said. “I’ve eaten all my life and know a little bit about food. I found the group, wrote a review and never stopped. It makes me feel good helping a mom and pop restaurant and it doesn’t cost me anything to help them spread the word.”

Since then, the local barbershop owner and former youth pastor has penned nearly 100 ELM reviews. People recognize him when he’s out with his family and love engaging him in conversation. He is one of five group moderators and never tires of sharing his love for food and family.

So, let’s get to the heart of the food scene in Macomb County. Where are places that Daniels and Markus like to frequent the most?

For both, Regale Craft Food & Drink in Macomb never disappoints. Daniels said its small plates are meant to be shared, so patrons can enjoy a wide variety of appetizers, entrees and desserts like stuffed piquillo peppers, wild mushroom croquettes and potato dauphine, otherwise known as fancy French tater tots with herbs, Parmesan, sri-rancha and romesco dips.

After spending seven years in Texas, Daniels also has an affinity for Jayell Smoke House’s creative offerings in Romeo and Bud-

## CONNECT

### HELPING THE COMMUNITY

Eat Local Macomb (ELM) Facebook group members are having such a good time exploring local dining establishments, that they are taking it to the next level by meeting their virtual fellow foodies in person.

This fall, ELM moderators organized a blind cider and donut taste test. Along with Khom Fai Thai Dining Experience Chef and Owner Isaiah Sonjeow, moderators Anne Abramczyk, Rob Markus and Will Daniels sampled cider and cinnamon sugar donuts from Blake Farms, Yates Cider Mill, Verellen Orchards and Cider Mill and Hy’s Cider Mill. Their overall blind taste test favorite? It was Blake Farms in Armada. The fun didn’t stop there. The group decided to open the blind taste test to all, with Khom Fai hosting and serving a special fall cocktail utilizing Blake Farms’ cider. Donuts were also provided. Guests brought canned goods, new hats or new socks that were donated to Lighthouse Food Center and Salvation Army in Clinton Township.



**Will Daniels**

dy’s Detroit-style Pizza in Shelby Township. For sandwiches, he is keen to Angela’s Italian Deli and Bakery in Macomb and Ventimiglia Italian Foods in Sterling Heights.

Markus can often be found at Orange Peel Restaurant or Avi’ari Cuisine, both in Shelby Township, savoring breakfast or at The Pantry Restaurant in Washington devouring an apple pancake that’s cinnamon glazed and topped with fresh apples – one of the restaurant’s specialties. For lunch or dinner, he is partial to Luciano’s Italian Restaurant in Clinton Township for Italian fare and Hong Kong Café in Shelby Township for Chinese flavors.

Khom Fai Thai Dining Experience in Macomb made both men’s lists for its authentic Thai dishes, signature cocktails and warm, friendly atmosphere.

If residents find themselves stuck in a rut, ordering their favorite dishes time and time again at familiar eateries, Daniels has some words of advice: Be more adventurous with your food.

“Don’t set expectations. Have an open mind. Order based off the specialty of the restaurant. Talk to the waitstaff. Ask the owner what they like to eat,” he said. “Above all, don’t stick with what you’re comfortable with.” **M**

**Previous page:** Rob Markus’s popular reviews on Eat Local Macomb have transformed him into a local celebrity. He enjoys helping mom and pop restaurants and spreading the word about good food throughout Macomb County. PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROB MARKUS



# Core connections

Schools, businesses unite to prepare students for future employment

*By Jane Peterson*

**C**ompanies need employees. Graduating high school students need employment. Connecting the two needs are Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

Macomb County educators work with their local business leaders to identify, develop and implement courses of study that match the needs of the community. The result is a win-win for all — graduates leave high school with employable skills, employers fill jobs and the community retains young talent as workers put down roots and begin to raise their own families.

CTE students from Stevenson High School's Center for Manufacturing, Automation and Design Engineering (MADE) program participate in the Innovative Vehicle Design Challenge competition.

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL



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For more information about Macomb Schools, go to [www.misd.net](http://www.misd.net)

## OPPORTUNITY

Richmond Community High School has an active CTE program that includes 10 career pathways. Among them are the first-year Computer Programming and Video Game Development program.

“We surveyed students and found that this was a huge interest,” said Renee Stapels, executive director of curriculum at Richmond Community Schools. “There’s a common misperception that there are no career pathways in video games, but that couldn’t be further from the truth. There is currently a huge need for coders and even if students don’t choose a career in the industry, learning about computer science, video game development and participating in e-sports teaches other skills like creative thinking and strategy.”

Computer Programming and Video Game Development, she said, is an introduction to Python coding and game design. Using a variety of platforms and programs, students recently created their own “Choose Your Adventure” video games. They’re also planning a visit to Oakland University to explore the different elements of video game programming.

At the end of the school year, the community will be invited to play at Richmond High School’s own arcade featuring original video games developed by students.

This year, 31 students were enrolled in the program. Students from grades 9-12 were involved, including 25 boys and six girls.

“We may end up expanding next year,” said Stapels, “and we are adding Esports as part of the master coding curriculum for second semester. Esports is the fastest growing sport/activity in the nation.”

CTE pathways are typically geared toward juniors and seniors, but many districts are engaging in the academy-style learning or offering pre-CTE courses that make lessons relevant to specific career paths for younger students – in some cases, even at the middle school level. This allows students to see how they will use algebra, science and even literature in careers of interest to them.

Many CTE pathways offer certifications, so students can also opt for entry-level employment or apprenticeships following graduation. This is the case with a firefighting CTE pathway at Center Line Public Schools. Once students achieve the certification, they can obtain a job in the field – and seven Center Line students have done just that.

One of them is 18-year-old Jeff Dunne, a recent graduate of Center Line High School. He serves as a paid on-call firefighter for Center Line Public Safety and at press time was preparing to take his Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) test.

When he registered for the CTE class, he knew he wanted a career where he could help people and saw himself working at a hospital. He had already taken the district’s EMT CTE class



**Above:** Stevenson MADE (Manufacturing, Automation and Design Engineering) students work on various capstone projects throughout the year that aim to mimic on-the-job experience.

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL

**Below:** Center Line’s firefighting CTE is intense, with students participating in all firefighting activities they need to master in order to pass their certification test.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CENTER LINE HIGH SCHOOL

and thought firefighting would be a nice complement. Many students who opt for training in the medical field study a variety of job fields as a way of familiarizing themselves with others they will collaborate with on the job.

The Center Line CTE course is taught by two experienced firefighters; David McGee, who works in Macomb County and Dave Watts, who works in Oakland County. McGee said he wanted to be a part of teaching the next generation of firefighters because there is a critical need for firefighters across the nation.

“It’s good to do my part to slowly close the gap to get the people we need,” he said. “To become a firefighter, you have to have a mindset to serve and these students have that.”

Dunne said it was the class instructors who really made him passionate about firefighting as a career.

“I feel like it’s the place where I can help the most people,” he said. “I felt very well prepared after completing the class.”

McGee said young people today are inquisitive and the students in his class are dedicated and work hard every day. They spend hours in class during the week and on Saturdays will often visit neighboring fire departments to work with some of

their equipment.

Christine Akroush, Academy Coach at Center Line High School, agreed that the CTE course is intense, with students participating in all firefighting activities, including climbing rooftops and extracting instructional dummies from vehicle crashes.

“The certification is provided by the state and required by all fire departments for employment,” she said, “and involves both written and skills tests.”

## CONNECT

## LEARN MORE

For Richmond Community Schools and the Computer Programming and Video Game Development program, visit [richmond.k12.mi.us](http://richmond.k12.mi.us) or call (586) 727-3565

For Center Line Public Schools and its firefighting CTE program, visit [clps.org](http://clps.org) or call (586) 510-2000

For Stevenson MADE, visit [uticak12.org](http://uticak12.org) or call (586) 797-1900



McGee said there are more than 100 skills students have to know and perform well to receive their certification. This includes cutting a hole in the roof with a chainsaw, using the jaws of life and performing CPR.

Students bond during the demanding training exercises, even forming tutoring groups on their own to keep up with classwork.

“They become a true family like you see in a firehouse,” said Akroush.

With manufacturing such a strong part of Macomb County’s economy, Utica Community Schools’ Stevenson High School established The Center for Manufacturing, Automation and Design Engineering (MADE) program in 2018. Referred to as Stevenson MADE, this four-year course of study begins with younger students being exposed to all aspects of the industry, including fabrication, mechatronics, 3D printing, welding and CNC machining. Then, students select a major and a minor within the career pathways and immerse themselves in project-based learning that emphasizes problem-solving skills, said Geoffrey Clark, director of Career and Technical Education.

“In the 11th grade, students do career exploration with job shadowing and as 12th graders, they work directly with industry partners,” he said.

Two groups of seniors last year worked on a project for a company partner where they were asked to design shipping carts for the company, said MADE Academy Coach Mark LaCombe. They presented their designs, created a bill of materials, fabricated their carts and delivered the carts to the company for testing. Carts from both groups are now being used on their facility floor.

Alison Hildebrand, MADE Academy administrator and associate principal, said the district works closely with local business partners. Some even volunteer their time to guest teach. Through their discussions, she said, district leaders discovered that there is sometimes a disconnect between engineers and fab-

ricators as neither understand the scope of each other’s work.

“Yet engineers need to work with fabricators and vice-versa,” she said. “We make sure students are exposed to both areas and students must complete capstone projects that require them to work with another career pathway in order to mimic that on-the-job experience.”

Student studies in core areas like math, science, social studies and English directly link to the Advanced Manufacturing field.

“Today’s students want to make that connection with learning,” said Clark. “They take core classes together as a cohort so while they are reading traditional material in English classes, they also may be writing a technical essay as a project. Students feel very connected to the subject matter.”

Approximately 80-90 students per grade participate in Stevenson MADE each year. Clark said it provides students with a richer academic experience as students understand why they are learning specific concepts and are able to develop deeper relationships with teachers and classmates that they spend a lot of time with throughout their four years in the program. As graduation nears, they have a clear pathway to college or career.

LaCombe said this past year, the district sent nearly 20 students into jobs in the manufacturing field, some of which have the potential to be a lifelong career. He said many are also working in tuition reimbursement programs with those companies as they work towards a degree or certification.

“We had 36 junior and senior students complete a year-long internship at Lawrence Tech University. Students in our program receive a 50% tuition reduction at LTU. Seven of our senior students accepted that scholarship and are currently attending Lawrence Tech,” he said. **M**



There are more than 100 skills students have to know and perform well to receive their certification upon completing Center Line’s firefighting CTE class.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CENTER LINE HIGH SCHOOL

# Print the future

## SAE, Army join to augment advanced defense manufacturing

*By Natalie Broda*

As technology in manufacturing continues to lurch forward, The U.S. Army and its partners are seeking to develop standardized production processes and bolster the amount of advanced manufacturing throughout the defense industry.

Which is why the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) Ground Vehicle Systems Center (GVSC) Materials Division has partnered with SAE Government Technologies (SAE GT) to establish a new Advanced Manufacturing Commercialization Center in Sterling Heights. The Troy-based SAE GT is an affiliate of SAE International, a global leader in standards development for the aerospace, commercial vehicle and automotive engineering industries.

The newly renovated 45,000-square-foot facility on Center Drive will support the U.S. Army Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois in its mission to implement advanced technologies into the defense manufacturing space. One such technology that will be explored to be standardized is a large metal additive 3D printer capable of producing identical parts in mass volumes for combat vehicles.

“The Army is going to demonstrate capability at the Rock Island Arsenal to print a jointless combat (vehicle) hull at scale. But before that, they’re going to rely on the AMCC to develop the manufacturing process, recipes, and standards development,” said Mark Pickett, technology transfer program manager for the SAE Industry Technologies Consortia. “So the AMCC will be a pilot facility that has machines similar to the larger ones going in at Rock Island, but with a smaller print

volume that we’ll use to dial up the process.”

A significant portion of the research and development at the AMCC will delve into standards and specifications of material types, such as aluminum, to better understand which materials are best for additive manufacturing. Alongside metal additive 3D printing, the center will also look to explore the applications of powder metal-based 3D printing.

“The work at the AMCC will revolve around what material types and processes need to be developed in order to enable advanced manufacturing to become leveraged by the industry at scale,” Brandon Card, president of SAE GT said. “If you want to use a new technology to produce parts in volume at scale, and to be able to print the same part over and over again, you need reliable standards and specifications to make sure every part is going to meet the quality requirements.”

The possibilities of additive manufacturing offer tremendous value across the defense industry, according to Pickett. The technology opens a futuristic rapid path for prototype development of new parts and can help mitigate risk in the supply chain. If a company that manufactures a specific part for the U.S. Department of Defense closes down, additive manufacturing could be used to recreate the part without disrupting ongoing manufacturing processes.

As the center gets up and running this winter, SAE GT and its military partners will begin to develop a business model to open the AMCC to process partners, commercial industry leaders and members of academia.

“We see this as a resource for the industry and the community. There’s going to be technology in our center that’s difficult for many organizations to acquire themselves,” Card said. “So the concept and vision behind the AMCC that GVSC put out there is, if a company wanted to come and use the equipment, how would that work in practice? We’re just getting started but we’d like the center to be open to those who want to get trained on the equipment, for academia to come and do some research and so forth.”

With future partnerships in mind, the center was intentionally established outside of the nearby U.S. Army Detroit Arsenal to improve accessibility.

“I think the most important part to me is that the AMCC will be this community collaboration resource,” Card said. “We have a clear vision of this being a rising tide that lifts all ships.”

Macomb County and the City of Sterling Heights both assisted with the company’s site search, according to Vicky Rowinski, director of Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development. SAE GT declined to comment on the cost to build out the new AMCC inside what was previously an automotive company industrial site. The majority of the facility will be shop space with about 6,000 square-feet of office space.

“This type of investment is truly an opportunity to showcase

### CONNECT

#### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

SAE Government Technologies expects hiring to begin at the new Advanced Manufacturing Commercialization Center, 6775 Center Drive in Sterling Heights, in early 2023. Available positions will range from shipping and receiving, material handling, inventory management, administration, technicians and engineers. SAE Government Technologies is an affiliate of the SAE Industry Technologies Consortia, which specializes in enabling collaboration between public, private, academic and government organizations. For more information, visit [sae-itc.com](http://sae-itc.com) or [sae.org](http://sae.org).





our efforts in action. When we look at our targeted industries, the various technologies in play, this is on the cutting edge of all of that innovation coming together in one building,” Rowinski said. “The work at the AMCC is a game-changer for Department of Defense manufacturing and the industry as a whole – and our workforce is ready and willing to be a part of this major technology transition.” **M**

SAE GT’s newly renovated Advanced Manufacturing Commercialization Center in Sterling Heights contains state-of-the-art metal processing capabilities.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SAE INTERNATIONAL



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# Help is on the way

## Online referral tool changing the game for human service agencies

*By Natalie Broda*

A 10-question needs assessment survey backed by 11 well established human service agencies is guiding much needed assistance to thousands of individuals experiencing hardship in Macomb County.

It's called Macomb's Access To Resource Information Xpress, or MATRIX for short, available through an online portal on the county's main website. The brainchild of the Macomb County Human Services Coordinating Body, the online tool was developed over the course of several years by an inter-agency plan-

ning group, according to Laura Rios, chief veteran service officer and chair of the Macomb Veterans Action Collaborative.

Each section of the survey is designed to drill down to a client's specific needs, offering a multitude of options to choose from. For example, the first question on the survey asks about basic living needs. Respondents are given the option to check all that apply such as food, medical insurance assistance, utility shut offs, housing and foreclosure prevention.

Other sections of the survey cover issues like services for seniors, access to medical resources like immunizations, mental health or substance use support, employment opportunities, resources for young families and more.

Once completed, the responses are sent to the 11 partnered agencies as a referral for service. Those partnered agencies are: Community Mental Health, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Health Department, Macomb Community Action, Macomb Intermediate School District, Martha T. Berry MCF, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Michigan State University Extension, Michigan Works! and Veteran Services, which oversees the promotion of the tool.

"The goal was to create a system where we can share data with the customer's consent and know they're getting help here, and there, and all of the other places they might need it from," Rios said. "If someone comes through my door and they need help with veteran services, they might also need food stamps. But because our agencies have separate

encrypted systems, those sys-





**Left:** Lisa Marie Duncan Edwards (left) and Sarah Moore chat about Veteran Services with local residents at the 31st annual Senior Fun Festival, hosted by the Macomb County Office of Senior Services this fall at the Lorenzo Cultural Center in Clinton Township.

**Opposite page:** Residents explore resources at this fall's Senior Fun Festival. To help reach a larger audience in need of human services, the county plans to print QR codes leading to its 10-question needs assessment survey designed to drill down to a resident's specific needs. The codes will be available in places like local libraries, laundromats and senior centers.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MACOMB COUNTY

tems can't talk to each other. MATRIX was our solution for that."

By giving consent to have their information shared at the start of the survey, the online tool is able to disseminate each respondent's answers to the appropriate agency. No sensitive information that could violate HIPAA compliance is shared.

The county is currently working to promote MATRIX and expand the amount of human service agencies involved. One such way this is being accomplished is through the county's free tax services program for low income residents and veterans.

"We did 2,200 tax returns this year and my goal during that was to also have them fill out this survey. We're taking a 'no wrong door' approach to this. If they come through our door, we're going to get them immediate help from wherever they need it."

Since its launch in 2018, over 1,928 surveys have been completed. That equates to over 5,200 responses (answers to each individual question on the survey) thus far.

Madeline Habib was one of the members of the Macomb County Human Services Coordinating Body to help build MATRIX from the ground up. She's now retired, but previously served as a community mental health prevention coordinator for the county.

"Over the years we found there was always a certain level of distrust and resistance from clients to approach the agencies themselves for help," Habib said. "They don't know the system and it can feel like they're going down a blind alley. This causes frustration and anger. MATRIX gives them the tools to be able to say what their needs are and we can speedily get them services."

The next steps for MATRIX will include expanding the amount of zip codes the service is offered to as well as a significant marketing push. The county plans to print QR codes that lead to the survey available in places like local libraries, laundromats and senior centers.

"This program matters so much to the residents that it's helping, we're connecting people to where they need to be to resolve their emergent needs," Rios said. "MATRIX is making a difference." **M**

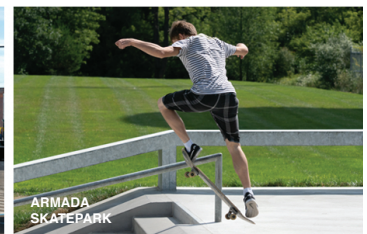
## CONNECT

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

To utilize MATRIX, visit [hcs.macombgov.org/hcs-matrix](https://hcs.macombgov.org/hcs-matrix) or type MATRIX Macomb into your web browser's search bar. Five physical kiosks to take the survey are also located around Macomb County at:

- Macomb County Family Resource Center, 196 N Rose St., Mount Clemens
- Robert A. Verkuilen Building, 21885 Dunham Rd., Clinton Township
- Max Thompson Family Resource Center, 11370 Hupp St., Warren
- Macomb County Southeast Family Resource Center, 25401 Harper, St. Clair Shores
- Macomb Veterans Food Bank at Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 154, 18025 15 Mile Rd., Clinton Township

Respondents typically receive assistance within 48 hours of completing the survey.



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Denise and John Davis lay down for some tube time with their retro television at Sarge & Red's Vintage Toys in Utica. The annual Shop Local Macomb program gives residents who shop local a chance to win some holiday cash for themselves and their favorite local businesses.

PHOTO BY NATALIE BRODA — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

# Holiday cheer

## Say cheese at your favorite local shops for a chance at some cash

*By Natalie Broda*

**T**he annual Shop Local Macomb program returned for the holidays last month, giving residents and their favorite local businesses a chance to win some cash.

The contest, which ran from Nov. 17 through Dec. 4, is quick and easy to participate in each year if you frequent one of the county's 1,600 independently owned and operated stores within its 27 communities. All you have to do is snap a photo while you're out shopping, submit it online, and keep your fingers crossed. Ten winners are chosen at the end of the contest period, each winning a \$150 gift card and a \$1,000 grant for the store featured in the photo. This year's winners were announced after press time.

"Our small businesses are competing not only against big box stores, but also the online market," said Vicky Rowinski, director of the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development. "Shop Local is one way we're encouraging residents to think about all the unique businesses that make our downtowns and communities flourish."

Like Sarge & Red's Vintage Toys in Utica, a 2,400-square-foot dreamland of collectables and retro toys from all eras. Owned and operated by husband and wife duo John and Denise Davis, Sarge & Red's is literally packed to the brim with thousands of throwback toys, rare vintage finds, gag gifts and an infinite amount of nostalgia.



Ten winners are selected at the end of the Shop Local Macomb contest period, each winning a \$150 gift card and a \$1,000 grant for the store featured in the photo. This year's winners were chosen after press time.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MACOMB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



CONNECT

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

A full explanation of contest details can be found at [makemacombyourhome.com](http://makemacombyourhome.com). No purchases are required to enter and you must be 18 or older to submit. Participants are allowed one entry per store. Marketing materials for interested retailers and businesses, including a poster with a



QR code to the contest, are also available on the county's website. Submissions must also be accompanied by a social media post on either Twitter or Facebook using the hashtag #ShopLocalMacomb. The 2022 Shop Local Macomb contest period ended Dec. 4.

“The Shop Local program is really motivating for us, it gives us something to talk about with our customers even though we’re already very engaged,” Denise Davis said. “We also have a bit of a competitive streak, so it’s fun to encourage people to take photos in our store if they aren’t already.”

The pair have won in the past and used the \$1,000 for marketing materials, driving even more business to their shop and to downtown Utica.

Gerard Giacoma, owner and vintner of Filippo Marc Winery, is also no stranger to winning the random Shop Local drawing. He’s the second generation owner of the winery on Gar-

field Road in Clinton Township, taking over the business from his father when he retired. Alongside a sprawling selection of wines, the shop also offers private tastings, custom labels and the opportunity to make your own wine.

“We’ve won three times and continue to try and have the highest participation we can. Shop Local has given us some of our best retail to consumer interaction in years, which is a big deal for a business like ours,” Giacoma said. “It was tremendously hard at times during the pandemic losing out on big customers like weddings, but year after year this amazing program keeps coming back and helping out.”

**Right:** Denise and John Davis show off the bell they ring when a customer finds a particularly sentimental toy at Sarge & Red's Vintage Toys in Utica.

**Below:** Gerard Giacoma, owner, pours a glass of wine from a tasting the previous night at Filippo Marc Winery.

PHOTOS BY NATALIE BRODA — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP



To enter the contest, the photo submission can be taken inside the store, in front of the store or even with an employee. Entries for this year's contest had to be submitted online prior to 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4, and shared on social media using the hashtag #ShopLocalMacomb.

The program is sponsored by First State Bank in partnership with the county and the Macomb County Chamber, the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber, the Anchor Bay Chamber, the Eastpointe-Roseville Chamber, the Greater Romeo Washington Chamber, and the Richmond Chamber of Commerce.

"Shop Local shows a sense of community within our county," said Kelley Lovati, president and CEO of the Macomb County Chamber. "It can be hard sometimes to market yourself as a small business. When you get two or more larger entities involved, like the county and the chambers, it's synergistic and really does promote sales in our local community. If any business is looking to participate, we encourage you to reach out to your local chamber and we'll help you get involved as a recognizable participant." **M**

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# Lifelike

## Human Patient Simulator marries tech, training for med students

By Natalie Broda

**A**t Macomb Community College (MCC) students in the medical field are training in a new lab that's so realistic, those who pass by may need to do a double-take.

The newly refurbished Human Patient Simulation Lab is leveraging the latest technology in health care to prepare future nurses, respiratory therapists and paramedics for their careers serving the public. The lab features responsive anatomical mannequins that blink, dilate their pupils, breathe and even speak, situated in authentic hospital beds. Simulations are run with a combination of augmented reality and 3D modeling, creating a lifelike hands-on learning environment.

With guidance from their professors, students at the lab are given the opportunity to test their knowledge, learn vital skills and practice techniques. A two-way mirror overlooks the lab where professors can create and change the simulation parameters at will. For the more advanced high-fidelity simulation mannequins, instructors can replicate the exact needs and conditions of an actual patient while communicating with the students as the patient via a speaker system. Some of the mannequins can even bleed or have fluids injected into them.

The mannequins are designed to seamlessly work with vital monitors and can also assist in teaching medication charting. From birth to death, the lab houses infant mannequins to pregnant mannequins that can simulate full birth, pediatrics, adults and seniors.

"This lab gives our students the opportunity to experience what they will really see in a clinical setting," said Andrea Shaw, associate dean of Health and Human Services at MCC.

### CONNECT

#### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Human Patient Simulation Lab was first constructed in 2015, undergoing significant advancements and reopening in its current state in August 2022. It's also supported by a new advanced materials 3D printer at Macomb Community College, which can create models of organs and bones using realistic materials. The college is currently looking to expand and capitalize on that program throughout other departments and industries. To find out more about the college, its programs and news, visit [macomb.edu](http://macomb.edu).



**Top:** Andrea Shaw, associate dean of Health and Human Services at MCC, inside the immersion room. Featuring wall-to-wall projections of real life scenarios, the immersion room gives students the opportunity to experience what they might see in an actual clinical setting.

**Above:** An infant mannequin rests in the baby unit of the MCC Human Patient Simulation Lab. From birth to death, the lab houses mannequins that can simulate full birth, pediatrics, adults and seniors.

PHOTOS BY NATALIE BRODA — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP



**Left:** A student leans over an infant mannequin beside Laurie Niemer (right), clinical coordinator for the Respiratory Therapy Program at MCC.

**Middle:** A range of responsive anatomical mannequins pictured inside the Human Patient Simulation Lab.

**Bottom left:** 3D printed models sit beside an augmented reality set-up.

**Bottom right:** Laurie Niemer, clinical coordinator for the Respiratory Therapy Program at MCC, shows off how instructors can change the pupil size, eye color and more on a mannequin to replicate real life conditions.

PHOTOS BY NATALIE BRODA — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP





**Left:** Inside the immersion room at the lab, a subway scene is projected on the walls to mimic the environment of working on a patient in public.

**Bottom left:** Ashley Herty, a 2021 graduate of the respiratory therapy program, works on a pediatric mannequin.

**Bottom right:** Ashley Herty (left), a 2021 graduate of the respiratory therapy program and Ashley Glazer (right), a second-year respiratory therapist student practice intubating a patient with their instructor.

PHOTOS BY NATALIE BRODA — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

“They build a new confidence here. These students will go on to see patients at their worst, and our lab gives them a chance to experience that stressful environment, and learn from each other.”

One of the more unique aspects of the lab is the new immersion room. Tucked in the corner of the lab, it features wall-to-wall projections of real life scenarios and the ability to pipe certain odors into the room. A mannequin designed to perfectly resemble a senior citizen, including wrinkled skin, sits on a bed in the center. During simulations, instructors can play images and sounds through the room such as a rocking ambulance and sirens, or the roar of a sports stadium.

Laurie Niemer, clinical coordinator for the Respiratory Therapy Program at MCC, explained that one significant benefit of the lab is the opportunity to teach students as they make mistakes.

“We can change the simulation on the fly based on what’s happening in the room with our students,” she said. “And if they start going down a rabbit hole, we can redirect them. And they can talk to each other and figure out for themselves what went wrong.”

In addition to hands-on skills, there’s also a social-emotional learning component to the lab’s courses. Instructors will of-

ten play the role of a distraught family member, like a mother bringing in her sick child, to prepare students for how to deal with emotionally-charged situations in their work.

“At first, this can all be a little scary,” Ashley Glazer, a second-year respiratory therapist student said. “This has helped me get a lot of the nerves out before getting into real life situations. We get to practice intubating patients, work with x-rays and vitals. I learn a lot better hands-on and when you’re here in the lab, you’re really connecting the dots.”

It’s that convergence of technology and classroom knowledge that makes the lab so successful, Shaw agreed. On average, the lab is serving approximately 300 nursing, 30 respiratory therapy students and 150 public safety institution students annually. The college is also working to develop new relationships with local school districts, like Fraser high school and middle schools, to introduce young kids to the ever evolving world of medical science.

“For us to be able to learn in this lab is amazing. It makes the whole story come to life, giving us the whole picture in a safe and controlled environment. The learning here is endless,” Glazer said. **M**



# And the envelope, please ...

## Local leaders honored during 10th annual Macomb Business Awards

*By Jane Peterson*

**M**acomb County is home to many unique and diverse businesses which are celebrated annually as part of the Macomb Business Awards. Recognizing that the past two years have been particularly rough for small businesses in general, county leaders focused on a theme of strength as businesses successfully navigated the COVID-19 pandemic and other substantial challenges to continue to provide economic support and enrich the quality of life in communities across Macomb County.

The 10th annual Macomb Business Awards were presented at the Emerald Theatre in September, with County Executive Mark Hackel and Vicky Rowinski, director of Macomb County Planning and Economic Development (MCPED), assisting emcee Nick Monacelli of WDIV Local 4 with distributing the awards.

Telva McGruder, General Motors chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer, was the keynote speaker. She emphasized the importance of diversity in growing a business and helping Macomb County continue to thrive. Angela Thompkins with Consumers Energy also spoke during the ceremony. Consumers Energy was a sponsor of the event.

In all, nine award winners were named in eight categories, including two non-juried categories that gave a nod to those who helped foster economic growth in Macomb County.

Recipients were selected from among a solid field of more than 130 nominations. Each nomination was scored by a panel of judges based upon a 300-word submitted essay. The categories garnering the largest number of nominations were Hidden Gem and Small but Mighty, with more than 30 nomina-

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The 10th annual Macomb Business Awards were presented in September at the Emerald Theatre in Mount Clemens. After the winners were announced, the award recipients posed for a photo with Macomb County officials. PHOTO COURTESY OF MACOMB COUNTY

tions each.

The Hidden Gem category typically attracts a large field of entries as it was added to bring awareness to businesses that contribute an offering unique to Macomb County.

“It’s always hard to judge since each business brings their own unique story and approach. We encourage many of these businesses to resubmit if they don’t win the first time around and try our best to help promote and highlight all the nominated businesses throughout our program,” said Rowinski.

So, without further ado, let’s learn more about the 2022 Macomb Business Award winners:

#### HIDDEN GEM AWARD

### FLASH STEELWORKS WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP

Flash Steelworks is a research and development firm specializing in maximum strength, high performance metal for lightweighting in the automotive and defense industries. Founder and Chief Technology Officer Gary Cola said he was surprised to be chosen for the award among a field of impressive nominations. He said the steel industry is a quiet supporter of the community, helping people get to where they need to go in their mostly steel vehicles.

“Also, let’s not forget that lighter, stronger steel means better fuel economy and less gasoline to buy,” he said.

Flash Steelworks has been an innovator since 2002, when it began testing combinations of rapid heating and quenching of commercially available steel to create a product that was stronger than titanium and lighter than aluminum. The result is a high-performing, room temperature weldable armor plate that was initially used for defense purposes but is now being utilized for civilian projects as well.

#### HOMETOWN HERO

### HEALTHMARK INDUSTRIES FRASER

A third-generation family company, Healthmark Industries is a manufacturer and distributor of products related to the cleaning, disinfection and sterilization of surgical instruments and other healthcare products. The company markets and distributes to the entire United States and exports to more than 50 markets globally. Much is manufactured right in its Fraser location, where most of its 300 U.S. team members also work.

“Being a family business is very important to our ethos and our culture. We seek to promote a feeling of family for all our employees. That extends to the community at large,” said Vice President Ralph Basile. “Part of being a good family is contributing to the ‘neighborhood’ and we have sought to do this by being active in events and good works that hopefully benefit our neighbors. These include many activities, such as staffing soup kitchens, participating in cancer awareness walks and other events, recognizing our veterans and contributing both sweat equity and funds to area charities, including the healthcare providers in our area that we all rely upon for keeping us healthy.”

He said Macomb County and southeast Michigan in general is a great place to do business because of the people. According to Basile, there is a very skilled pool of talent with skill sets that are key to a business like Healthmark and a strong work ethic.

“I think in general, we are humble, hard-working and dedicated to the idea that good work will lead to improving outcomes and a better life for all. That very much fits the culture and mission of Healthmark. We are lucky to be located in Macomb County.”

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR

RAVE COMPUTER  
STERLING HEIGHTS

RAVE has manufactured innovative computer solutions for 34 years. In 2019, with a vision to empower people to overcome challenges through innovation, RAVE Computer increased its research and development efforts to support emerging technology in the immersive virtual reality category. In 2021, it became a woman-owned business and continued thriving.

Partnering with Varjo and HTC, RAVE Computer created a RenderBEAST bundle, which consists of a portable plug and play immersive starter kit. Its RenderBEAST XR Zone opened earlier this year, providing a dedicated space for on-site client demonstrations.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY AWARD

ANTON ART CENTER  
MOUNT CLEMENS

Despite only employing five staff members, Anton Art Center maintains an impressive presence in the Mount Clemens community, offering a variety of programming in arts, education, community and economic development. In recent years, the center has expanded its outreach programming while developing community partnerships and working with local organizations, said Executive Director Phil Gilchrist.

“For a long time, you had to come to the art center to participate in activities,” he said, “but now we’re out in the community in front of people where they don’t expect us.”

Through hands-on classes, art exhibits, off-site art-making programs and large-scale public art projects, the center engages Macomb County residents and continues to expand its impact to the benefit of all.

“The arts support life almost across the board,” said Gilchrist. “The arts have been known to have a positive impact on self-esteem, confidence, performance, economics and overall health.”

Recently, the Anton Art Center’s historic facility in downtown Mount Clemens received a National Register designation.

Phil Gilchrist, executive director of the Anton Art Center in Mount Clemens, accepts the center’s Small But Mighty Award.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MACOMB COUNTY

TRAILBLAZER OF FUTURE TALENT

RCO ENGINEERING  
ROSEVILLE

RCO Engineering is a product, development and manufacturing company that serves the automotive, aerospace and defense industries. Because the nature of its business is heavily reliant on skilled labor, RCO Engineering maintains several strategies with local university and high schools to promote career pathways, including:

- Having key staff serve as members of college advisory boards, offering valuable industry information to instructors and insight into the curriculum
- Participating in Manufacturing Day, where students are invited to tour the grounds and learn about job shadowing opportunities
- Sponsoring First Robotics teams
- Donating to events like Women in Defense scholarship fundraisers to encourage high school and university students to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM)
- Promoting its paid apprenticeship programs at the college, high school and job fairs



WORKFORCE CHAMPION

AGS AUTOMOTIVE SYSTEMS  
STERLING HEIGHTS

AGS Automotive Systems is a full-service automotive supplier that continues to grow its operations across the United States. As a result, the company needs to recruit and hire a considerable number of employees, a task that has proved challenging in today's competitive and challenging job market.

As part of its hiring efforts, the company has implemented several initiatives that have resulted in a turnover rate of less than 5% for hourly employees, making it a workforce champion. Among the company's strategies are:

- A competitive wage structure
- An early hire program that resulted in a 70% retention rate of 130 employees over the past 18 months
- A commitment to employees, with more than 45 internal promotions made in the past three years
- Formal internal leadership training
- Employee activities to cultivate a fun work environment
- A diverse workforce with nearly 55% of the company's hourly workforce represented by the local Middle Eastern community
- A continued dedication to diversify labor by tapping into the Bengali population, and more recently Afghan refugees

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNER OF THE YEAR

MACOMB COUNTY MSU EXTENSION

Michigan State University Extension has worked in partnership with Macomb County for more than 100 years, delivering all types of programming from 4-H to Master Gardeners to planning and land use through its Citizen Planner program, said Edward N. Scott III, District 11 director - Macomb & Oakland counties.

Part of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and established in 1914 through the Morrill Act, the Extension's mission is to help people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses. For the past approximately 30 years, this work has been carried out locally by Terry Gibb, one of extension's staff members with a focus on government and community vitality. Scott said her dedication and hard work as well as her passion for Macomb have really cemented this partnership with the county.



**Top:** Samantha Berden with Healthmark accepts the Macomb Business Award for Hometown Hero.



**Bottom:** Angela Thompkins with Consumers Energy speaks during the Macomb Business Awards ceremony. Consumers Energy was a sponsor of the event.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MACOMB COUNTY

“We are ecstatic about receiving this award from Macomb County Planning. We have worked alongside them for decades now and have made solid strides in helping them make Macomb County a great place to live, work and play,” he said. “We are probably most closely associated with our Citizen Planner program where we provide training for elected officials and community leaders on planning, land use and understanding zoning. We have also provided leadership to the county's efforts at suppressing the invasive spongy moth which can sometimes make it very difficult for residents to enjoy the outdoors.”

Macomb County Planning was also recognized as one of the MSU Extension's key partners this year at its Fall Extension Conference.

BEACON OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**GENE LOVELL**  
 CHAIRMAN, FIRST STATE BANK

**JAMES AHEE**

RETIRING PROGRAM DIRECTOR  
 FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
 MACOMB COUNTY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This award is given to those who help advance economic goals for the benefit of the community. To that end, Gene Lovell believes First State Bank receives the credit for its role in helping the community through good times, bad times and the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout it all, Lovell was there. Now retired, he spent 31 years at First State Bank, joining as an internal audit manager, then being named Chief Financial Officer and finally Chief Executive Officer.

“It was a really wonderful place to work,” he said. “The bank is a very community-focused, family-based institution. Everyone does their best to make an impact in a positive way.”

Lovell has spent some time judging the Macomb Business Awards in the past and said he was always astounded by the number of nominations received and impressed by the quality of the nominated organizations.

“This award is more reflective of the bank than me personally, but I take this as an honor and a compliment,” he said.

Jim Ahee has spent his career bringing business investment into Macomb County as manager of the Economic Development team. While he never thought about the impact he was having on local communities much when he was working, after his retirement earlier this year, he took stock of his work – and the numbers were staggering.

Along with other team members, it is estimated that Ahee helped to bring in \$4.5 billion in investment, totaling 35,000-40,000 jobs. The last few years have been especially fruitful as out-of-state and overseas companies have expressed interest in tapping into the county’s excellent supply chain and notable talented workforce.

“You want to see these companies grow and prosper and add jobs,” he said. “I’m extremely honored and flattered to receive this award. It was a surprise and a capstone to a really nice career.” **M**

Gene Lovell, retired president and CEO of First State Bank, was named one of the winners of the Beacon of Economic Development award.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MACOMB COUNTY

CONNECT

GETTING READY FOR THE 2023 AWARDS

Who will win Macomb Business Awards in 2023? While that remains to be seen, planning is already underway for the annual award ceremony. Typically, nominations begin in the fall. Businesses can nominate themselves or be nominated by residents, customers and other interested persons.

Vicky Rowinski, director of Macomb County Planning and Economic Development, said to stay tuned to future announcements by visiting the Macomb Business website landing page at [macombbusiness.com](http://macombbusiness.com).



# Passing the torch

Lanzen Inc. creates life changing opportunity for young workers as part of county program

*By Natalie Broda*

**L**ike so many other defense suppliers in the area, Lanzen Inc. exemplifies both what it means to be a family business and to strengthen the talent pipeline.

The company manufactures welded fabrications and metal assemblies from a variety of materials including carbon and alloy steel, armor plate, aluminum, titanium and copper. Founded 44 years ago by Joe Lanzen, father of the current president Terry Lanzen, the business now boasts three locations in Romeo, Mancelona and Harbor Springs.

With 175 employees on staff, Lanzen continues to grow as Macomb County's defense industry expands – Yet as time passes, so do employees age and look forward to retirement. The story at Lanzen is much the same as it is everywhere else in the manufacturing industry.

“I have a significant age gap of people wanting to retire and those who are starting out to fill the positions,” Anne Nicolazzo, vice president of HR and Community Outreach at Lanzen said. “It’s hard to recruit talent, that’s why we’re going straight to the high schools.”

Lanzen is one of many companies participating in the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development’s Fueling the Talent Pipeline initiative. The program works to connect local businesses with school districts to facilitate learning opportunities that will eventually lead to careers within said businesses. Lanzen’s main partner is Romeo Community Schools, from which they’ve trained over 20 high school students since 2019.

Five of those students have since become full-time employees at Lanzen, like 20-year-old Anthony Isrow, a 2020 graduate from Romeo schools. With a lifelong interest in engineering, Isrow found himself in a machining class at 17 years old in high school. Through the Fueling the Talent Pipeline initiative, his teacher at the time was in contact with Nicolazzo, who had an open position for the teen.

“I sent in my resume, came for a tour and was told on the spot that I was hired,” Isrow said. “It was such a cool experience to be 17 and have my first job be in the field that I want to work in. I started in receiving and now, I’m filling in for my current supervisor on days he needs help.”

Isrow plans to stay with Lanzen and continue to grow his career, as does Bennett Smith, a 22-year-old graduate from Romeo’s class of 2019. Smith is training and working as a CNC machinist while also pursuing a degree at Macomb Community College.

**CONNECT**

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

The Fueling the Talent Pipeline initiative focuses on five targeted industries – Automotive and Mobility, Defense and Aerospace, Distribution and Logistics, Robotics and Automotive and Agriculture. Macomb County is currently seeking local employers who are interested in creating programs within the initiative. To find out more, visit [business.macombgov.org/business-fuelingtalent](http://business.macombgov.org/business-fuelingtalent). Lanzen Inc., based at 100 Peyerkt Ct. in Romeo, supplies defense industry customers such as the U.S. Government, BAE Systems, General Dynamics, Raytheon and AM General. For information about job opportunities, check out [lanzen.com](http://lanzen.com).





“It’s been great to learn new things every day and how to work under pressure,” Smith said. “It’s so satisfying to be at a place in my work where I don’t need to ask for help anymore. This opportunity has set me up for the rest of my career, and I get to start my life without any student debt.”

Lanzen offers full tuition reimbursement for its employees that choose to further their education in the field at Macomb Community College. It’s a practice that’s been in place long before Fueling The Talent Pipeline, and an opportunity Nicolazzo herself took advantage of when she was just starting out.

“We believe in educating everyone. It helps us to add value to our employees and promote from within,” Nicolazzo said. “We’re very flexible with our students and believe education comes first. They’re always so passionate, full of fresh ideas and on a quest for knowledge. Everything about them as an employee is great.”

Every year, Lanzen also participates in the county’s Manufacturing Day and Career Fairs at local schools. Opening the

doors for students to see the ins and outs of the industry is one sure-fire way to find teens who are interested in manufacturing, Nicolazzo said.

Vicky Rowinski, director of the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development, said that Lanzen is the perfect example of how Fueling the Talent Pipeline can work for businesses who participate.

“So many companies say they have an immediate need, 20 people tomorrow, and we have to have a heart to heart telling them it doesn’t happen that easily,” Rowinski said. “Lanzen has really embraced the culture of learning and providing opportunities where kids can see a successful career plan ahead of them.”

And for young workers like Isrow and Smith, those opportunities are making the difference of a lifetime as they prepare to graduate from higher education and take up the mantle of the next generation of workforce. **M**



**Top:** Students from Romeo High School tour Lanzen’s Macomb County facility on Manufacturing Day, held the first week of October. MFG Day, helps showcase the appeal of modern manufacturing careers.

**Left:** Lanzen employees host a table at a Career Day this fall at Romeo High School. The company participates in Career Days and Manufacturing Day each year.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LANZEN INC.

# Diane Banks

## Comprehensive community building, cementing cross-sector partnerships

By Natalie Broda



**Diane Banks**

You may not know her name, but if you've resided in Macomb County over the last few decades, your life has in some way been impacted by Diane Banks.

Throughout her over 20-year career, Banks has transformed her passion for connecting communities into grass-roots and high-level work to improve the quality of life for Macomb County residents. She's currently the executive director of Advancing Macomb, a relatively new nonprofit composed of industry and local leaders. Its purpose is multifold, focusing on areas like co-

operation in economic development, creating identity and culture within local communities, supporting youth, nonprofits and more.

Banks, who received her master's of Public Administration from Central Michigan University, spent the first chunk of her career entrenched in environmental science. In 2002 she joined the Macomb County Health Department as an environmental health specialist. She worked primarily with the area's beaches and Lake St. Clair while also traveling to different schools across the county to educate youth on environmental health and Michigan's waterways.

Banks spent nine years in her role as a scientist and educator before transitioning into her next calling in the nonprofit space.

Through her work at the county, Banks was introduced to Leadership Macomb. Founded in 1996, the organization runs an annual core program that informs and connects leaders across all sectors on various assets, issues and systems that make up Macomb County. Banks would ultimately become program director of the organization.

In 2019, in partnership with other members of Leadership Macomb, Banks set out to create Advancing Macomb – A new nonprofit that would bring together resources, funding, volunteers and communities to create widespread change.

**Q** What is Advancing Macomb?

**A** Advancing Macomb works to strengthen Macomb County by connecting community challenges with high impact solutions, cementing cross-sector partnerships and initiatives, and in-

creasing the visibility of Macomb County communities. We've convened over \$1 million for community projects so far from philanthropic efforts, private funds and some state and federal dollars.

**Q** How did Advancing Macomb assist the community through the coronavirus pandemic?

**A** We helped to distribute the \$1.5 million in federal CARES Act grants that went out to nonprofits throughout the county. Everyone saw an increase in the need for services but a decrease in fundraising, so we worked with the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University to gather data and author a report comparing Macomb nonprofits to the region and state. What we found was a disparity of philanthropic investment. That report has helped us to identify areas to increase investment over the past few years.

**Q** What other sorts of programs does Advancing Macomb support?

**A** We're also focused on culture, arts and entertainment that goes beyond creating community identity in place. We want to bring things to communities that make people feel included and welcome, and that bring together different backgrounds, perspectives and lived experiences. That includes events that celebrate different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities, and supporting youth and nonprofits in those communities. We also believe that education and youth development is our future, and that if we're going to continue to grow jobs, we need to be investing in youth.

**Q** What's next on the horizon for the organization?

**A** Right now, the state of community development in Macomb County is untapped. Historically we've seen community development talked about at the government level, and we're really working to expand that ecosystem and bring in businesses and nonprofits to the conversation to increase overall quality of life in the area. We also want to reach out to communities and create a database of visioning sessions for what communities want to see happen. What are those amenities they feel like they aren't able to access? In early 2023, we'll be going from community to community to host those sessions with everyone from residents to business owners to youth. We want to have a good understanding of what will improve quality of life in Macomb County, and it's going to be very dependent on the community itself. My dream is to have as much visibility around community enhancement as we see with traditional economic development and one way we can accomplish that is by having more voices at the table.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DIANE BANKS

# Elizabeth Duran

## Inspiring youth with 4-H for all

By Natalie Broda



Elizabeth Duran

One Macomb County resident was recently honored with an award that only 12 others have ever been recognized for in the history of Michigan State University.

Elizabeth Duran, a MSU Extension 4-H program coordinator in the Children and Youth Institute, was recognized this year with one of the university's most prestigious awards – The Ruth Jameyson Above and Beyond award. Samuel L. Stanley, president of MSU, presented the award to Duran this summer for her ongoing work to build up and bring awareness to 4-H programs in un-

derserved communities.

The award was created to honor support staff whose contributions to the university exceed expectations while also pursuing a graduate degree. Duran is in the midst of completing a master's in Educational Leadership and Administration.

From her main office at the Community Action Center in Warren, Duran works with local educational institutions to establish and operate 4-H programs for kids ages five to 19. She's been in her role for over 10 years building up Macomb's programs to see on average 400 to 600 children and teens annually. 4-H programs connect youth with experiential learning opportunities like leadership service, animal sciences, life skills and outdoor education.

Before she joined MSU Extension, Duran's career ran the gamut from living and working on a dairy farm, to small business owner, to hospitality and food service and finally to an adjunct instructor and librarian position at Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College. It was there she said that her love for higher education was born.

After two years, she would move on to serve as an adult recruitment and education specialist with the Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan from 2009 to 2011.

Over the next year, Duran said she searched for the right community that might need her talents and conclusively landed on Macomb.

**Q** What led you to Macomb County?

**A** There were about seven or eight counties in Michigan I could have gone to at the time. I chose Macomb County because it's so diverse. And I don't just mean in culture, it's also economically

diverse, geographically diverse with both urban and rural areas. I saw real potential to be able to serve the community in Macomb County, so I came here specifically to be an extension coordinator. Like with Girl Scouts, it takes about a year to start understanding 4-H. After that, it took about five years to really build the relationships that make the program run. But now if people need things for kids or teens to do, they know where to go. I really feel like everything has come together over the past few years. We exploded during the pandemic and we just kept growing.

**Q** What's the 4-H program like on a day-to-day basis?

**A** It's definitely not a day care. Every hour is very intentionally programmed. From arts to nutrition, everything we do is based on a curriculum that's been researched and peer edited. So the kids are having fun, but they are learning. We do things like gardening with the kids, growing vegetables and all kinds of herbs alongside our butterfly garden. This year we were able to have them track five kinds of butterflies as part of a learning lab. We're also very proud of our teen counselor program. We train them how to work with youth at all ages and stages on risk management, conflict and life skills – Which gives them professional development while also fulfilling community service requirements needed to graduate.

**Q** Why do you choose to work with youth?

**A** They're our future, and we have to support them if we want to see real change in the world. And in their worlds and ours, so much has changed over the last five to 10 years. I want them to grow up to be healthy and equipped to make kind and honest decisions, to give back to their community. We need to prepare them to make real decisions for themselves, like if they want to pursue higher education or trade school. We work with a lot of underserved populations because the kids who have been exposed to certain things in life need resilience training. They need opportunities, and fun memories, that they'll remember for the rest of their life.

**Q** What are your goals for the program in the coming years?

**A** I'm in seven school districts now and would love to expand that to two more this upcoming year. I'm also working on more adult recruitment and rebuilding out the teen counselor program from the dip we saw during the pandemic. The more teens we have, the more programs we can offer as those teenagers reach back and work with the elementary schools. My big goal is to have 4-H in every school in Macomb County in some kind of way. It's such a valuable, free resource for kids and families that truly gives them life skills.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELIZABETH DURAN



# Jennifer Weot

Guiding industry to the workforce,  
one student at a time

By Natalie Broda



Jennifer Weot

At the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development, there's a new face greeting business leaders who are looking to grow their workforce.

Jennifer Weot stepped into her role as senior outreach specialist for the county's Fueling the Talent Pipeline initiative this June. She brings a wealth of experience along with her having worked in recruitment and training positions since the mid-90s.

Starting with Troy-based Electronic Data Systems, Weot was a lead corporate recruiter and trainer

for various high-volume General Motors customer service accounts. She would go on in the early 2000s to work in higher education, spending nearly two decades as an assistant director of recruitment with Baker College in Clinton Township.

"That was my favorite job I've ever had besides this one. I was there 17 years working with high school kids trying to figure out what they want to do next," Weot said. "I particularly love what I'm doing now because I saw so many juniors and seniors graduate and not know what they wanted to do, or know what was out there."

The Fueling the Talent Pipeline initiative is one of several ways Macomb County is seeking to bolster its local workforce. The county, with Weot at the helm, acts as an intermediary between employers and education institutions to connect students with potential career paths. Weot meets with local industry leaders to assess their talent needs, bridging the relationship with the schools that offer training for students who could one day fill that gap.

"If it's an 11th grader who wants to do a job shadow experience or a senior is looking to get an internship, my job is to recruit the businesses that want to help with those experiences," Weot said.

Programs like the county's involvement in Manufacturing Day, where kids of all ages tour facilities in the manufacturing industry, also fall under the initiative's umbrella.

**Q** What does your role entail as an outreach specialist for the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development?

**A** My job is to get out there and talk with businesses about their needs, limitations and goals for the future. And, it's also to explain to them what the county is doing with these school districts. Without a doubt, I've had a 100% yes from every business I've talked to about getting involved. From big to small, everyone wants to start yesterday. That's not how it always used to be, but now we're in a situation where everyone has open positions. So we're here to tell them that Fueling the Talent Pipeline might not be able to fill those positions immediately, but it is how we're working to build and connect the next generation of workforce.

**Q** What do you do on a day-to-day basis?

**A** Most of the time it really is all about communication. I'm on the phone, I'm going out to various businesses and touring their facility. Like with manufacturing, I'm asking questions like: "is this a modern type of experience?" We want to introduce kids to technology and show them that manufacturing isn't dark and dangerous, so much of it is automated now. I talk with a lot of business owners about the fact that they need to think outside the box instead of simply waiting for someone to come into the door and apply, and that's where Fueling the Talent Pipeline can help.



**Q** What are some of your big goals for the initiative?

**A** Honestly, I have two. The first would be to make every single district in Macomb County a Ford Next Generation Learning district. It's based on an academic model that's all about career exploration, and it's an absolute game changer for students. Right now we have it in two districts, Romeo schools and Center Line Public Schools. The students are guaranteed at least one career exploration and exposure experience before the end of ninth grade, when they can choose an academy related to their career interests. Like learning dosages as a math class twice a week if they're in a career track geared towards the medical field. My second goal is for someone to one day come up to me and say: "Congratulations on your retirement, but please don't leave - We're fully staffed and have expanded our business, and it's all because of Fueling the Talent Pipeline." **M**

PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNIFER WEOT



A spot on my lung.  
A shot at a second chance.

# I AM HENRY

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