

February 2024
INFORMER



**Community
Papers of
Michigan**



Create Your Own Coffee Klatch (or club, if you will)

From The Executive Director,
Don Rush

The economy was shrinking and so were our revenues. Remember back in about 2008 when Michigan's economy fell into the basement? A number of community papers felt the pain as regular advertisers either shrank or cut their print marketing budgets.

Back in the day I was employed at Sherman Publications with papers in Oxford, Lake Orion, Ortonville and Clarkston – relatively wealthy communities in north Oakland County. Guess what, we were not immune to the downturn. We felt the pain like everyone else.

What did we do?

What could we do?

Right after tightening our collective belts, we got back to basics by doing something out of the box. We decided to start building relationships with as many businesspeople as possible by starting our own "coffee clubs." One day a week we invited any businessperson to coffee in Ortonville. Another morning, in Clarkston, the next in Orion. I headed up the Clarkston Coffee Club and usually started each one-hour networking session something like this:

"Welcome to the Clarkston Coffee Club, the greatest hippy networking experience you will have today. There are no monthly dues, no rules, nor regulations (except whatever I think of one whenever I think of one). We just ask you for a dollar donation for the coffee and that you smile and be nice to one another.

"You get one minute to deliver your elevator speech, give a tip of the day, throw out an 'ask' or tell a joke. Make friends and build relationships."

I am happy to report that Thursday morning

Clarkston Coffee Club is still going strong to this day! Our publications became a hub for local business folk to gather, laugh and start off their Thursdays on a great note. Our publications built up a lot of goodwill, picked up some new advertising and news tips. It was a win all the way around.

We basically started our own coffee klatch, which according to the internet: The term "coffee klatch" comes from the German word, "kaffeeklatsch," which translates to coffee (kaffee) + gossip (klatsch). It refers to a group of friends getting together over a cup of coffee.

How we set it up (and you can, too)

It's easy!

We worked with local churches and one restaurant owner to borrow the space for our meetings. (We didn't pay for using their space. We gave them whatever coffee donations collected.) Once a location was secured, we printed up little business cards and scratch pads with times, locations and the names of our publications. We promoted the Coffee Clubs with house ads to start; later we posted meeting times in our "Around Town" section. We also handed out those business cards to regular advertisers.

Since our publications were well established in our communities and our workers well respected, I was able to get keys to open up the church each Thursday at 7. I'd make coffee in the church kitchen, set up cookies, cups and coffee for the meeting which started at 8. Folks would start arriving about 7:30. After opening each meeting, I would remind folks they only had 60 seconds to speak. If a person started getting long-winded, I would

cough loudly and laugh, then touch my watch. "Remember we all want a chance to speak, this meeting ends at 9."

I encouraged business folks to leave a stack of their own business cards and each week I would set them all up on a table for others to pick up. When the meeting ended I would gather them all up for the following week.

We had car salespeople attend, nutritionists, insurance agents, handymen, painters, yoga instructors and even local politicians would grace us with their attendance. We had lots of different types of local businesses represented, some of which I know our sales force had never approached before. We built trust. We built relationships. And, soon we even sold ads to folks who had never advertised before. We sold "Coffee Club" shared pages to club "members," and we sold full blown ad campaigns to others.

It's something to try. Be the "go-to" in your business world. Make friends and grow your business. If you have questions, drop me an email, DonRush@CPapersMi.com.

Direct questions worth answering

By Seth Godin

For everyone on the team...

Do you care enough to do great work?

Can we agree on what great work looks like?

When the world changes, do we have a process to redefine great work?

Do you have the tools you need to reach your goals?

How could we create a system where great work is easier to do?



By
Mark W.
Rummel
Fenton, MI

YOU'D BETTER SHOP AROUND:

In February, our thoughts turn to romance... and we recall "I Love You ads"



When I was growing up, Valentine's Day seemed to be the perfect holiday for youngsters. About Feb. 1, our moms would buy us a box of paper valentines with little pink envelopes. Our job was to add our name and address them, to give to every boy and girl in our classroom.

Of course, we'd keep the sweetest one for that special someone we admired — and we'd give the worst one to the kid we basically liked the least. It was a true democracy, because everybody got a message from every other classmate. On Feb. 14, we placed them on everybody's desk, blushing a little as we did so.

AS WE GREW OLDER, our local community paper's promotions offered a chance to run a 15-word Valentine's ad. Those "romantic ads" cost maybe \$1, but it was an adult-like business transaction! Sometimes we used pet nicknames for our special someone, but now and then we got brave and actually printed their name **FOR ALL THE WORLD TO SEE!** (I'm blushing just thinking about a message sent by a 13-year-old to his special someone "in the last century"... and that happened many years ago!)

Community papers I recall sometimes ran dozens or hundreds of those "Will you be mine?" Valentine's ads in past decades in small towns and cities. Sometimes this actually turned into several pages of those reader-friendly ads — helping to brighten an otherwise gloomy and cold second month of a new year.

THAT'S JUST ONE of the things I've always loved about community papers as we observe this month of Cupid's bow and arrow. Our personal ads didn't have to reach a million customers to be effective... just one. Our special someone.

And Valentine's Day is the perfect time to recall — and appreciate — the impact even little ads can have on readers. (And not just on Feb. 14th.)

Later, candy hearts were added to Cupid's arsenal of messages for special people. Next came chocolates, roses, champagne, dinner reservations and maybe even diamonds — all helping a person tell someone else how they felt. And they weren't the \$1 bargain offered all those years ago in our local papers...

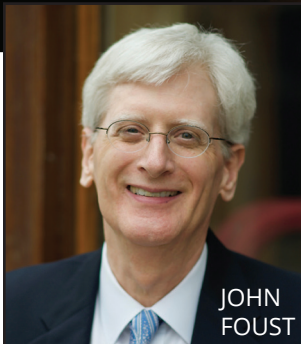


Ad - Libs

BY JOHN FOUST



Treasure Hunt For Ad Ideas

JOHN
FOUST

Some years ago, I attended an exhibit of treasure from the Atocha shipwreck which treasure hunter Mel Fisher had located off the coast of Florida. The Atocha was the most famous ship in the Spanish fleet that sank in 1622 in a hurricane near the Florida Keys. The exhibit was at a jewelry store that had made special accommodations for the display. All of the regular merchandise had been stored away to make room for silver bars, gold coins and jewelry. It was an impressive show, and there was a waiting line outside.

When it was my turn to enter, a representative handed a silver bar to me and asked, "Heavy, isn't it?" As I carefully moved the bar from hand to hand to test its weight, he mentioned that it was worth thousands of dollars. Although I've forgotten the exact amount, it was enough to buy a fancy new car. I told him I was just looking and spent about 30 minutes gazing at display cases and pondering buried

treasure. "Just think," I said to myself, "many years ago, these artifacts were lost at the bottom of the ocean. And here they are today, looking as good as new."

Lost treasures have fascinated people for centuries. But not all treasures consist of gold and silver. For those of us in the advertising business, some are hidden away in file cabinets and company archives.

Take Jessica, for example. She told me about one of her advertising accounts, a local lumber company which has been in business for many years. "For as long as I can remember," she said, "the company had run generic 'look at us, we're in the lumber business' ads. All of the ads featured nondescript illustrations of stacks of lumber, with the headline, 'Three generations of service' and their logo at the bottom. Since a lot of their customers are commercial building contractors, they saw advertising as just a way to keep their name in front of the public.

"I knew there was a better way, so I did a little research on their advertising history. I looked through a file of their old ads, and it didn't take long to find a series on woodworking projects. I suggested that they: (1) update their image ads to offer specific discounts to contractors and (2) revive the woodworking idea

to differentiate their friendly-neighbor philosophy from the big box store across town.

"It was an easy sale, because it was an update of an idea they had previously run. We expanded their advertising to include both approaches – both with the underlying "Three generations of service" theme. The first woodworking ad featured a birdhouse (with building instructions). The second one featured a kids' playhouse (also with instructions). The next ad spotlighted picnic tables, and it went on from there. The campaign was a real boost to their business, and it added an element of personality."

Jessica came up with a real winner. And it all started with a treasure hunt for ideas.

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John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com

I created many small space ads throughout the years... mostly 2 by 2" ads. The most challenging, however, were the 1-column ads. How to get the message across in a tall, skinny format—effectively. Let's explore....

One Column Ads



The horizontal ad format is just plain easier to organize. Small ads can be effective, and usually in the 2x format, there is room to use artwork as a headline or attention-getting device. But it does require planning.

It takes thoughtful organization to make the smaller ads readable and legible. But the most challenging of the small space ads (in my humble opinion) are the one-column ads. Our column width is 9p6.5 picas (1.5903 inches) which is not a lot of space to work with (as you can see, I still use picas and points in my measurements—it's definitely easier than dealing with the clumsy inches).

I digress. So can you really add artwork to something this small? Should you? And once again I can say with the utmost confidence... depends. Yep, it definitely depends.

I went through some old ads and I pulled a few of the one column ads so that you could see they aren't just a box with text stuck inside. Depending on the amount of text—and the depth of the ad—there are a number of different options.

The art used in these ads is of the "dingbat" variety. Those special typefaces that are made up of symbols. I used **DF Calligraphic Ornaments** for the art in the "Hand Painted Murals" ad and either **Gubbins Borders** or **Cattawampus Borders** in the "Schedule of Events" ad (maybe both). I made the border and star shapes to fit the space as needed and then I usually save these into a library.

The "Cleaning Person" ad is just a circle with a gradient with a white outline, drop shadow text on top.

I left the ads black and white because in the past there was usually no money budgeted for color. Some papers had special promos for the addition of color, and any of these sample ads would work well in color—with restraint.

One color would be enough... and keep the contrast strong!

Tilted Type

I revised the "Wanted Boats" ad because tilting type to call attention can be a distraction. The eye just sees "crooked," especially since nothing else in the ad has that same tilt or angle. However, if you choose to angle type, make sure it usually runs up—never down. All it takes is for the type to angle 3–4° to be effective... and readable (see below).

The type, **HWT Slab Antique** ties the words "Wanted" and "Boats" together and distinctive enough to call attention to the heading.

The shape behind the word "Wanted" can suggest water lapping against the side of a boat... or maybe it's just an irregular shape.

It doesn't matter, it helps to highlight the word "Wanted." I also added a very little drop shadow to the shape. Instead of changing type sizes and weights, I kept the typeface the same visual weight and decided to use mostly capital letters to maintain a consistency in leading and make the type look larger than it was. Most of the information was in short "chunks," so there isn't too much text to read within the ad itself.

Help Wanted! This type is tilted at 3°

This type is tilted at 12° and becomes a little more "clunky," not to mention that it takes up a lot of space.

Help Wanted! And please... don't run type down hill. Would you like your stock portfolio to look like this? Always best to end on an upward, upbeat feeling!

A few reminders

- 1] If you don't have a lot of text in an ad, it's not necessary to make the type huge! We read groups of words and the larger the text, the harder it becomes to read comfortably. Rather than bigger type, use a graphic as an attention-getter. They can be large or small, as seen in some of these ad examples.
- 2] The thicker the border, the more space you need between it and the text. The eye will "drift" into the border area if the text comes too close.
- 3] At times a very distinctive typeface can act as your artwork.
- 4] With a lot of text, try to keep type and point size consistent. The information will seem to "flow" better. Too many changes in point size or typefaces add "visual clutter" to an area that already is tight.

Happy Valentine's Day!

I was a student, an art teacher, a graphic designer, a writer and again a student. For info, PDFs of articles, or have ideas or comments, e-mail: hanrahan.ln@att.net Ellen Hanrahan © 02/2024

NURSING

PEOPLE
STRENGTH
COMMITMENT

At Homestead Hospice in West Bend, we've seen how powerful a holistic approach to healing can be through our Special Care Philosophy and how satisfying it is for our Patients and our Caregivers. Join us now and be part of the excitement.

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www.homecare.com
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Monday–Thursday
Early mornings

Apply at
Homemade Chow
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Hand Painted Murals
by Briannon

Call for appointment
1-555-555-4545

➔ *Baby rooms,
rec rooms, etc*

Look for the
Schedule of
Events in the
Out & About
section

For Sale

Macintosh
Computer System

Power Macintosh G3 Desktop Model running OS 9; Internal Zip Drive (with a Floppy Disk Drive!); 320 Megs Memory, 6 Meg Hard Drive; 17" Apple Color Sync Monitor and Extended Keyboard; Apple Laserwriter 4/600PS (100 page capacity) Printer; a Umax Supervista S-12 Scanner; external US Robotics 56k modem.

\$950.00

This is a SCSI system. For more information, please contact Ellen at 555-555-5500. Leave your name and number. Or email: EllyHanrahan@netscape.net

WANTED

BOATS FOR
LIGHTED PARADE
IN HUSTISFORD

\$1,000 First Prize

Lions Club Venetian Night
Saturday, August 23rd (Dusk)

Contact: Lion Curtis Krell
555-555-5958

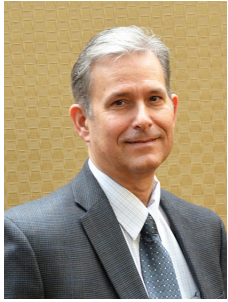
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BUILDING MAIN STREET NOT WALL STREET



How to Destroy a Community in 5 Simple Steps

by John Newby

I have spent years writing about how to revitalize and increase the vibrancy within a community. This week, I want to concentrate on what not to do and provide five simple steps a community can take to assure they fail and continue down the path towards irrelevancy.

Never in the history of mankind, have we been so blessed with so much information, but seem to know so little. I can't even begin to count the number of times people have questioned why they didn't know of an event that happened locally, until the event was over. It used to be everyone knew what was going on because they had a local media company that everyone pointed to for this information, both good and bad. They were the community information hub or informational town square if you will.

The first step in assuring failure is to ignore the importance local media plays in your community. Granted, many local media companies have abandoned their role in the community. But regardless of the situation, if they aren't convinced to reassume this role, or another entity such as a chamber, local leadership team or doesn't step up, the community will fail to reach its full potential as lack of communication will sink most ships.

Make no mistake, local media plays a crucial role in fostering community cohesion by informing residents about local issues, events, and opportunities. Neglecting local media in favor of exclusive reliance on social media platforms may result in misinformation and a lack of awareness about critical community matters. Social media, while a valuable tool, should not replace the role of local journalism in holding authorities accountable and providing accurate, in-

depth reporting on community affairs.

The second step in assuring failure is to have a lack of zoning and permitting. The zoning and permitting processes are vital for organized development. Without proper zoning discussions, communities' risk haphazard construction and incompatible land use, leading to congestion, reduced property values, and decreased quality of life. The absence of a permitting process can result in unregulated development, potentially compromising safety standards and environmental sustainability. Proper permits ensure that structures adhere to safety codes, protecting residents and the community's overall well-being.

The third step in promoting failure as a community is the lack of respect for property rights. Ineffective regulations and lack of enforcement against slumlords and trash generating lots will lead to the deterioration of housing quality, negatively impacting residents' health and safety. Failure to address neglect and substandard living conditions can create a cycle of poverty and despair within the community, discouraging investment and fostering a sense of hopelessness among residents.

The fourth step towards failure is the lack of encouragement to shop and spend locally. Supporting local businesses is essential for the economic vitality of a community. When residents consistently choose online retailers over local businesses, it drains resources from the local economy and contributes to the decline of small businesses. Local businesses are often the backbone of a community, providing employment opportunities, contributing to the tax base, and fostering a unique community

identity. Neglecting to educate residents on the importance of supporting local businesses can lead to a weakened economic foundation.

The fifth step is one many may not think about often, that is the lack of civic engagement. Communities with low voter turnout are a community full of people that have given up, or just plain don't care. I have often said that you can measure the strength and resolve of a community by the voter turnout. Low voter turnout means the residents are not engaged, the residents feel they can't make a difference, the residents are just fed-up, and/or the residents have no faith in the leadership. Do you want to lift your community out of poverty or take it to another level? If that is the case, leaders need to instill hope, they need to instill a sense of pride, belonging and being heard. Bottom-line, they need to reignite the love and passion that people use to have towards their community.

There is a small dose of irony in these 5 steps that lead to failure for a community. That irony is that by addressing these aspects, this will be the quickest way for communities to turn the tide and build a strong foundation for growth, resilience, and a high quality of life for all residents. There is no better time than now to start that journey!

John Newby is a nationally recognized Columnist, Speaker, & Publisher. He consults with Chambers, Communities, Business & Media. His "Building Main Street, not Wall Street," column appears in 60+ newspapers and media outlets. As founder of Truly-Local, he assists chambers, communities, media, and businesses in creating synergies that build vibrant communities. He can be reached at: John@Truly-Local.org.

More or less

Knowing when to use more of something and when to use less

By Kevin Slimp

In late January, I had such a good time visiting with the publishers of the Wyoming Press Association at their annual convention. I spoke on a few of my favorite topics: Growing papers, increasing ad revenue, and redesigning pages, among others. During the last session on the convention's final day, I sat around a large table – actually, several tables moved together in a large square – to meet with the publishers and critique their newspapers.

Meeting with publishers to review their papers has always been one of my favorite parts of my work. The nervousness is palpable in the room as participants begin apologizing for how their papers look before I even get a chance to see them. I'm quick to assure everyone I will be kind in my evaluations, even though I rarely see a paper that looks terrible.

Following my return from Wyoming – where it was 10 degrees warmer than my home in Tennessee as my neighbors enjoyed the most significant snowfall in 30 years – I met online with the staff of an excellent newspaper in South Florida. My assignment was much the same as in Wyoming. The Florida group and I would review their paper for 90 minutes as I suggested changes.

After completing my work with the staff in Florida, it dawned on me that much of what I recommended in Wyoming and Florida came down to knowing when to use less of some things and more of others. The lists I included in my most recent columns have been so popular I'm stretching my luck by including a "More or Less List" this month. I feel confident you will find items in the list that might be helpful with your newspaper. For any editors reading this column, feel free to use your red pen to replace the word "less" with "fewer" when necessary.

Kevin's List of More or Less for Newspapers:

USE LESS words in headlines (this is the first opportunity for editors to use their red pens). Headlines draw attention to a story. Fewer words often do a better job of drawing the readers' attention. Two years ago, I was working on-site with a newspaper in a state where Marijuana had just been legalized. The front page's primary headline had something to do with where

people could make their purchases. Instead, I suggested a much bigger headline with only three words: Cannabis for Sale! **USE MORE subheads.** While the headline draws attention, the subhead draws the reader even closer by explaining the story's main point. Let the headline gain the readers' attention while the subhead explains something about dispensaries in the area.

USE MORE big fonts in headlines. Fewer words leave more room for bigger fonts. While visiting page designers, they often tell me they've been instructed never to use a headline font more than 40 (or 60) points in size. That's ridiculous. If it's a big story, use a big font. Don't let the triple digits scare you.

USE LESS color on pages. This one surprises most publishers and designers. It's also a suggestion that can quickly make your pages much more attractive and draw readers to the stories. Too much color on a page confuses the readers' eyes and leads them to look past the stories. My rule of thumb: Nothing color goes on the page except photos and ads.

USE LESS small photos and MORE big photos. Placing multiple similarly sized images with a story causes most readers to flip to the next page. Small pictures tend to have faces too small to be recognized, darker ink (a result of the reduced pixel size forcing the press to drop more ink onto the page), and confuse the reader. My suggestion: Instead of two, three, or four small photos, determine which is most important and use it as the dominant photo. Perhaps use one or two other smaller pictures with the story if there is room.

USE LESS typefaces and MORE font styles. I know Adobe includes hundreds of typefaces with Creative Cloud, but you probably only need two or three for your news pages (we're not including the ads). One is a serif typeface for your body text. The other is a sans serif that can be used for cutlines, kickers, headlines, etc. The exception to this rule would be to have a second serif typeface, different from the body typeface, for headlines. Instead of using even more fonts for subheads, etc., use the light, semibold, and bold styles of the typefaces you already use.

Use MORE space and Less text. Now I've gone to meddling. It's okay, I'm allowed. I've been a writer for a long time, so I'm preaching to myself. Research continues to indicate most readers don't read entire

The screenshot shows a newspaper page with the following content:

- Page A8** | www.coastalbreezews.com | **January 29, 2014**
- Coastal BREEZE** logo
- EDITORIAL & OPINION**
- Thinking Back on My Traveling Days** - An article by a reader reflecting on their travels.
- MORE STRAIGHT TALK** - A section titled "More 'Blat' Straight Talk" featuring a quote from a reader about a local business.
- LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** - A section containing several letters from readers, including one about a merchant marines deserter and another about a local business.
- US Merchant Marines Deserter** - A short article about a man who deserted the merchant marines.
- Local Business** - A short article about a local business owner's perspective.
- MHP POLICE BLOTTER** - A section listing local news items such as traffic citations, vehicle stops, and noise complaints.

Color elements on the page can draw attention away from the stories and photos. My suggestion was to remove the art on the bottom-left corner and convert the other color elements (not including photos and ads) to black.

stories. Long stories can take up space that could be used to make the stories easier to read. Cutting a few lines of text leaves room for increased font size and leading. Your readers – and local eye doctors (yes, I've gotten emails from appreciative optometrists) will thank you.

I can think of at least ten more items to include in this list, but I'm way past my 800-word limit. I'll save that for another day.



Kevin Slimp is a popular consultant, advisor and trainer in the newspaper industry. From 1997-2018, Kevin directed The Newspaper Institute of The University of Tennessee. He currently serves as CEO of Market Square Publishing and Chief Guru at NewspaperAcademy.com.

Kevin Slimp, "The News Guru"
kevin@kevinslimp.com



Marty Bennett
 CPM President
 Community Shoppers Guide
 117 N. Farmer - P.O. Box 168 Otsego,
 MI 49078
 Phone: 269-694-9431
 Fax: 269-694-9145
 Cell: 269-370-9469
 info@communityshoppersguide.net



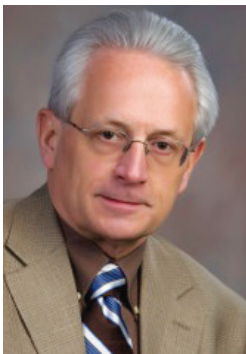
Wes Smith
 Director
 View Newspaper Group
 1521 Imlay City Rd.
 Lapeer, MI 48446
 Phone: 810-664-0811
 Fax: 810-667-6309
 Cell: 810-338-7888
 wsmith@mihomepaper.com



Jon Jacobs
 Secretary/Treasurer
 Buyers Guide
 P.O. Box 128
 Lowell, MI 49331
 Phone: 616-897-9555
 Cell: 269-208-9223
 Fax: 616-897-4809
 Jon@lowellbuyersguide.com



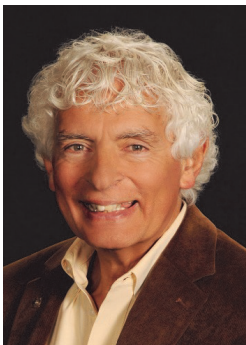
Kara DeChalk
 Director
 Salesman Publications
 102 N. Main Street - P.O. Box 205
 Concord, MI 49237-0205
 Phone: 517-524-8540
 Fax: 517-524-8570
 ads@salesmanpublications.com



Fred Jacobs
 Director
 J-Ad Graphics
 1351 North M-43 Highway
 Hastings, MI 49058-0188 Phone:
 (269)945-9554
 Fax: 269-945-5522
 Cell: 269-838-0881
 fred@j-adgraphics.com



Jeff Demers
 Director
 C&G Newspapers
 13650 11 Mile Road
 Warren, MI 48089
 Cell: 586-291-1874
 Fax: 586-498-9631
 jdemers@candgnews.com



George Moses
 Director
 The Marketeer
 110 E. North St., Suite A Brighton,
 MI 48116
 Phone: 810-227-1575
 Fax: 810-227-8189
 Cell: 517-404-7807
 gmoses@georgemosesco.com



Cindy Gaedert-Gearhart
 Director
 County Journal, Flashes
 Advertising & News
 241 S. Cochran Ave.,
 Charlotte, MI 48813
 Office: 517-543-1099 Ext.225
 Cell: 269-209-3532
 Fax: 517-543-1993
 CGWING@county-journal.com



Don Rush, Executive Director
 donrush@cpapersmi.com



**Community
 Papers of
 Michigan**

10120 Hegel Road, Goodrich, MI, 48438
 Phone/Fax: (800)783-0267 • mifreeads.com



Dana Risner, Business Manager
 danarisner@cpapersmi.com