

West Coast Way

MARCH/APRIL 2026

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GENERAL MANAGER,
HOLLAND BOARD
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Innovation and Sustainability in Service

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CATALYST, CONVENER, AND CHAMPION

The Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce serves as a catalyst for business growth, a convener of leaders and influencers, and a champion for our thriving community. The Chamber serves its 1,200 members by building businesses, advocating for issues that matter, developing leaders, and supporting initiatives to build an inclusive community where all feel welcome.

The West Coast Chamber has been recognized with **the U.S. Chamber's prestigious Five Star Accreditation**. Less than 1% of Chambers in the country receive this distinction.

THE WEST COAST WAY

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Spring always brings a renewed sense of energy, and as we head into March and April, that momentum is easy to feel across our business community.

New ideas are taking shape, new leaders are stepping forward, and there's a shared focus on how we continue to grow in ways that are both thoughtful and forward-looking.

What continues to stand out to me is how connected this work really is. Preparing our workforce, investing in innovation, strengthening community well-being, and navigating emerging technologies are not separate efforts. They're deeply intertwined. When businesses, educators, nonprofits, and local leaders come together around a common purpose, the impact is meaningful and lasting.

We're also in a season that invites curiosity. Change is happening quickly, and whether we're exploring new tools, recognizing organizations that are leading with vision, or supporting the people and places that make our region feel like home, staying open and engaged matters. That balance of progress and purpose is what positions our region for long-term success.

Thank you for being part of the West Coast Chamber and for the many ways you invest in this community. I'm grateful for your partnership and excited for what's ahead as we move into the months to come.

Jodi Owczarski

President & CEO

Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce

Hope Students Help Power the Career Center's Next Steps

By Austin Gerdes

Hope College Student

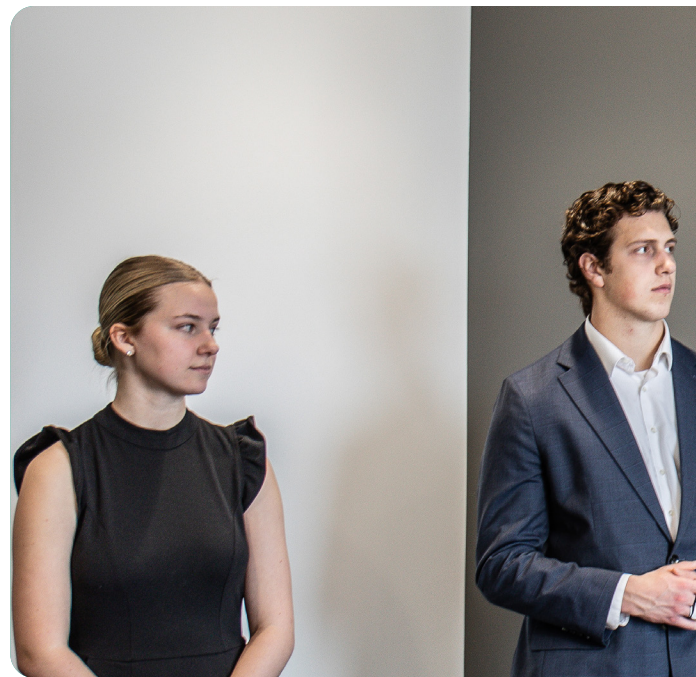
Over the course of the Fall 2025 semester, three distinguished Hope College student consultants from the Hope College Center for Leadership Student Consulting program had the opportunity to create a new strategic initiative for the West Coast Chamber.

The students, Austin Gerdes (2026 Mechanical Engineering), Christian Herrema (2028 Economics & Mathematics), and Natalie Richards (2028 Exercise Science), were advised by subject-matter expert Shonn Colbrunn (Executive Director of the Boerigter Center for Career and Calling at Hope College) and coach Daimian Zikakis (distinguished career coach).

Project Scope and Goals

As described in the statement of work for the project, the team was to:

- Identify student needs: gather insights directly from high school and college students
- Engage local employers to understand the current skill gap, identify the attributes they seek in young talent, and explore existing or potential programs to support students in their career pathway exploration
- Develop ideas for potential Career Center resources
- Outline a strategic plan to increase visibility of and engagement with the Career Center, with a focus on reaching students and young individuals



High School Student Insights and Recommendations

Exercise Science student Natalie Richards led the high school student analysis, conducting surveys, interviews, and research in order to gain insight into what high schoolers are currently provided and what they are missing. Through her work, she determined students wanted more hands-on learning opportunities like shadowing, internships, in-class projects, and experiential learning. Through these findings, Natalie formed her recommendations, including the Chamber connecting with the school community. By getting in the classroom and showing up at school events, not only will students learn about the Chamber, so will their parents.

This included classes like INCubator, capstone courses, and community challenges based on the structure and experiences she had at her high school, Naperville Central High School. She expressed how the opportunities she was provided have helped shape her career and college trajectory, and how important she feels it is that organizations and groups like the Chamber help to foster them for students.

College Student Findings and Engagement Ideas

Mechanical Engineering student Austin Gerdes looked into the college student analysis side of the project. Surveys were conducted as he spent lots of time emailing students and learning more about their interests and needs when it came to college and career readiness. Valuable insight was found



Career Center Ideas

- Get students to interact with the Chamber on their level
 - Implement Student workers to talk about their experiences and the opportunities offered at the Chamber
- Push YouScience opportunity
 - Intrigued by the idea of learning more about themselves that is unknown
 - "You can't be what you can't see"
- Increase Presence / Student & Parent Awareness
 - Hope College weekly email, pop up tents, high school games, engage parents, pens or little trinkets, etc.
 - Let students know the Chamber is downtown and has resources for them
- "Adulting" and Professionalism Workshop
 - Drawing in students by proposing brief work sessions revolving around "adulting" and Professionalism

"I used to be part of a program called future leaders @ The West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. A lot of the alumni that were extroverts got the most help and or attention. When it came to present the projects realized we never got a workshop about public speaking, how to sell yourself, and how to have "corporate how to dress business casual etc.; professionalism in general"

through his studies, with evidence that displayed students' interest in beginner-friendly, real-world work within their specified industries, as well as increased networking opportunities with the soft skills to advance conversations and connections in a meaningful way.

Austin then identified recommendations for the Chamber, including a Summer Career Fair, a College and Career Readiness Boot Camp, and a Reverse Career Fair. Austin expressed that his work on this project has been very meaningful, as it has opened up more doors and challenged him to think in ways that he was unable to before. It has also provided him with many experiences to draw on in the future, and he is grateful for the opportunity to have worked with the West Coast Chamber.

Employer Feedback: Workforce Needs and Skilled Trades

Economics and Mathematics student Christian Herrema took the lead on the employer-side analysis, and through extensive surveying and interviews with local Holland employers, was able to find valuable insights that drove his recommendations. Communication, as revealed by survey results, was the leading personal attribute identified in successful new talent. Being able to develop this communication ability as early as high school could improve the overall readiness of the Holland-area workforce when they begin to seek employment and was addressed through

a recommendation for Holland-area communication workshops in local high schools.

Another notable area of insight found and addressed by the team was the increasing difficulty of acquiring talent for skilled trades. As recommended by Christian and the team, a West Coast Chamber skilled trades database, with collaboration from Careerline Technical Center and GRCC Lakeshore, could streamline West Michigan's skilled-trades talent into employment opportunities.

Next Steps

The team's recommendations were presented at the new West Coast Chamber Career Center in the heart of downtown Holland and were met with excitement for this next chapter in the West Coast Chamber's service to Holland, Zeeland, and beyond. The CFL team's work will begin to drive new engagement in the local community from both students and employers alike, and the Chamber is eager to leverage these insights as they move forward with Career Center resources and tools.

If there are further questions on the strategic project presented by Austin, Christian, and Natalie, please reach out directly to West Coast Chamber Vice President of Strategic Initiatives Britt Delo at britt@westcoastchamber.org. If you or your business are interested in CFL Consulting at Hope College, please see the firm's website at hope.edu/academics/center-leadership/student-consulting or contact program director Mary Battle Stump at battlestumpm29@hope.edu.



Sheltering Hope

Why This Project Matters to Me—
and to Our Community

**By Jen
Self-Aulgur**

Executive
Director, Harbor
Humane Society

As Executive Director of Harbor Humane Society, I've had the privilege of witnessing countless happy endings.

I've also seen, firsthand, the very real limitations of a facility that was never designed for the scope of care we provide today. As our programs have grown and the needs of our community have increased, it has become clear that our current adoption center can no longer fully support the animals—or the people—who rely on us. The Sheltering Hope Campaign was born from a simple but urgent question: What would it look like if our space truly reflected the level of care we strive to give every animal?

This new adoption center represents our long-term vision—one grounded in compassion, intentional growth, and quality of care. One year after opening, success looks like healthier animals, reduced stress, shorter lengths of stay, and stronger, more thoughtful adoption matches. If I had to describe

this project in one sentence, I would say this: it's about creating a calm, intentional space where animals and people can truly connect—and where hope has room to grow.

At its core, Sheltering Hope is about improving life for the animals in our care. The new building will significantly reduce noise, overcrowding, and stress—factors that directly impact an animal's health and behavior. With improved air flow, quieter spaces, and more room to decompress, animals will be better able to rest, heal, and show their true personalities. Lower stress doesn't just mean better welfare—it means animals are more adoptable and better prepared for their next chapter.

Today, our facility prioritizes capacity out of necessity. The new adoption center shifts that focus to quality of care by design. Fewer animals per room, purpose-built spaces, and thoughtful separation of high-traffic areas will allow us to

provide individualized care without sacrificing lifesaving impact.

For adopters, the difference will be immediate. When someone walks into the new front-facing adoption center, I want them to feel welcomed, calm, and confident. The space will be open and inviting, allowing visitors to move comfortably, engage meaningfully with animals, and make thoughtful adoption decisions without feeling rushed or overwhelmed. My hope is that every visitor leaves feeling connected—not just to an animal, but to our mission.

To every donor and supporter: Sheltering Hope is possible because you believe animals deserve more than just shelter.

Behind the scenes, our organizational growth has pushed staff space, storage, and daily operations to their limits. This new center will support our team with improved medical areas, better workflow, and functional spaces designed for sustainability. When staff have the right tools and environment, they can provide better care—and continue doing this work for the long term.

For Olive Township, this project represents a meaningful investment in animal welfare and community wellbeing. Approval from the Olive Township Board of Trustees is a critical step in

moving forward responsibly. Community support has already helped shape this vision, and I'm grateful for the trust and collaboration we've experienced so far.

This \$3.6 million investment will support construction, animal housing, medical and adoption spaces, and infrastructure built to serve our community for decades. Pending approvals, we anticipate opening within the next year, with continued opportunities for the public to follow progress and support the campaign.

This project matters to me because I've stood in overcrowded spaces, watching stressed animals struggle—and knowing we could do more for them. To every donor and supporter: Sheltering Hope is possible because you believe animals deserve more than just shelter. This is our promise to them, and to our community, that we will continue to lead with compassion, intention, and hope.

If you interested in learning more about the Sheltering Hope Project, please feel free to reach out to Jen Self-Aulgur at executive@harborhumane.org.



Jen Self-Aulgur has led Harbor Humane Society since 2016, bringing nearly two decades of animal welfare experience and a commitment to gold-standard sheltering. She holds a Master of Public Administration in Nonprofit Management and is a Certified Animal Welfare Administrator (CAWA). Outside of work, Jen enjoys life with her family and many rescue animals, proving her passion for animals extends far beyond the office.



Get to Know Your Zeeland Mayor



Meet Zeeland's new mayor, Rick Van Dorp III — a familiar face in local leadership with deep roots in the community.

Continue on to learn what motivated him to run, his vision for Zeeland's future, and a surprising personal connection to Zeeland's mayoral history.

What motivated you to run for Mayor?

Being involved and giving back to our community has been an important aspect of life in my family for as long as I can remember. Many members of my family that have come before me and called Zeeland home have served the community in a variety of different ways.

I have served on the City Council for the past 21 years along with various other boards and committees within the community such as the Zeeland Education

Foundation Board, Zeeland Recreation Advisory Board, and The Bridge Youth Center to name a few.

One hope I have had for as long as I can remember is to serve as the Mayor of Zeeland. When Kevin Klynstra decided to retire, I saw an opportunity and decided it was the right time for me to take the next step in my public service career. Thankfully, the citizens of Zeeland thought it was the right time as well and elected me as their next Mayor in November.

What advice would you give to someone who hopes to serve in public office someday?

Around 2 years ago the City of Zeeland implemented a Citizens Academy which is a 6-session course that covers the structure and functions of our city government. Sessions include an in-depth look at

the fundamentals of the City's administration and library, finance, IT, streets, parks, cemeteries and utilities, public safety, community development, downtown and marketing. Additional topics covered include the basics of local government, elections, and local history. This is a great first step for someone interested in public service.

Zeeland has long prided itself on being an extremely safe community to work, live, and raise a family.

Another easy step would be to attend a City Council meeting to get a feel for some of the important projects the city is working on right now.

How would you describe your vision for Zeeland's future?

As your Mayor, I will continue to support sustainable industrial, commercial, and housing developments which will keep Zeeland moving forward in a positive direction. I will do this while also making sure we do not lose the small town feel that has made Zeeland such a desirable place to call home.

Zeeland has long prided itself on being an extremely safe community to work, live and raise a family. I have and will continue to support policies which maintain this high standard for our community.

More specifically the city recently completed a study of our Washington Ave. corridor, and I would like to begin implementing some of the aspects of this study over the coming years.

I believe it is important to have engagement from the community in the decision-making process. The city has always been very transparent in how we conduct our business, but there is always room for improvement. I would like to explore some innovative ideas to make sure the citizenry stays engaged as we, as a city, move forward.

What's something that people might not know about you?

The house I live in with my wife and three children was once owned by my great Uncle Robert DeBruyn and it is where he and his wife Martha raised their three children. During the early 1950's, while living there, Robert served as the Mayor of Zeeland as well, making me the second Mayor of Zeeland to live in this house.

What do you love most about Zeeland?

Of course I am biased, but there is so much to love about our "small" town, but if I must choose just one it would be the people. Even though the city has changed in a variety of ways since I grew up here there is still a powerful sense of community and that starts with many of the great people that call Zeeland home.

About Rick

Along with serving as Mayor of the City of Zeeland, Rick is a third-generation member of his family to work at Michigan West Shore Nursery, a Zeeland-based wholesaler of Christmas trees and greenhouse grown flowers. When he is not serving the citizens of Zeeland or working in his day-to-day role, Rick enjoys spending time with his family and friends, traveling, and coaching his children's various sports teams.





Holland Board of Public Works

Innovation and Sustainability in Service

By Julie DeCook

Communications
Manager,
Holland Board of
Public Works

About Holland Board of Public Works

Holland Board of Public Works is the community-owned utility serving the City of Holland and surrounding townships. We supply reliable electric, water, wastewater, and broadband services. Since our founding in 1893, our organization has been built on innovation. At that time, the citizens of Holland voted to create a public electric utility—an extraordinary decision because electricity was just becoming available in Michigan cities.

We are committed to delivering dependable and community-centered services. We constantly look for ways to innovate and improve the services we provide to our community. Sustainability ties into our commitment to safety and our foundational purpose, to provide essential services and infrastructure in ways that help Holland thrive. In 2010, the city developed a Community Energy Plan,

and since then, we have taken meaningful steps to reduce carbon emissions locally. Our mission is to be responsible stewards of the resources entrusted to us, as we provide reliable and affordable utilities that allow our community to thrive.

Bold Ideas Driven by Community Engagement

Our community focus motivates us to take risks and make bold moves. We believe that connecting with stakeholders is essential for making big decisions and that community engagement leads to the most innovative solutions. Through community engagement, we built Holland Energy Park (HEP) and expanded the community-owned fiber network. We also asked for input about the future of the area where the James DeYoung coal plant once stood, taking part in Waterfront Holland—a visioning

HEP features an interactive visitor center where Holland BPW continues to nurture that vision through engaging programs that welcome 3,000 students and community members each year.

process focused on improving waterfront access in the downtown area.

Using our community engagement framework, we do more than just identify needs, we create a collective vision inspired by our shared passion with stakeholders. Prior to constructing Holland Energy Park, a combined-cycle natural gas facility, we applied this framework to reveal Holland's enthusiasm for its future. This process not only shaped our decision about what sort of power plant to build, but it also defined what Holland Energy Park would represent as a resource, destination, and gateway. Reflecting this purpose, HEP features an interactive visitor center where Holland BPW continues to nurture that vision through engaging programs that welcome 3,000 students and community members each year.

Innovative Projects and Local Impact

Many of our forward-thinking projects show our dedication to innovation. Holland Energy Park, our state-of-the-art power plant, and the anaerobic digester at the Water Reclamation Facility demonstrate our commitment to using advanced technologies for the benefit of the community. While these facilities play essential roles, the Holland City Fiber project creates a strong sense of connection and impact for the community members who use it.

For many years, local stakeholders expressed the need for access to Holland BPW's fiberoptic infrastructure, which played a crucial role in shaping the direction and progress of what became Holland City Fiber. This ongoing dialogue led to the development of pilot projects, such as Downtown Shared-Gig internet service, and the formation of a dedicated taskforce and advisory board to guide initial stages of the initiative. The decision to invest in community-owned fiber infrastructure was made with collaborative involvement, and ultimately, a public vote. In 2022, City of Holland residents voted to expand the community-owned fiber network, marking a significant milestone in the Holland City Fiber project.

By the end of summer 2026, every resident in Holland will have access to Holland BPW Fiber high-speed internet.

We are proud to expand the community-owned fiber network, providing a foundation that ensures Holland is prepared for the future. The availability of the fiber network has an immediate impact on our community by offering a choice of high-speed internet providers, expanding local access to reliable, fast, and affordable internet service. The



need for high-quality internet services is driven by how people work, learn, access healthcare, and play. By the end of the summer 2026, every resident in Holland will have access to Holland BPW Fiber high-speed internet. Interested City of Holland residents can choose from our 2,000 mbps plan for \$45/month or an ultra-fast 10,000 mbps plan for \$125/mo. We look forward to the new opportunities this will bring to our community!

Our organization consists of dedicated problem solvers who are united by a set of core values.

The Value of the Innovation Award

The Innovation Award serves as a meaningful acknowledgment of the collective spirit within our community. It reflects the pride we share in being part of a community that places a high value on innovation and collaboration. Our organization consists of dedicated problem solvers who are united by a set of core values. Among these, continuous improvement most directly pushes our drive to innovate forward. By embracing continuous improvement, our team naturally fosters innovation. We consistently seek new opportunities to enhance the way we work, and we approach challenges as chances to grow and excel.



Julie DeCook advances transparent, accessible communication that helps residents and businesses understand essential local utility services. She focuses on building trust through education and leading engaged, enthusiastic teams. Julie earned a Master of Strategic Communications from Michigan State University (MSU) and a Certificate in Organizational Communication for Leadership, grounding her work in proven communication principles. She pairs neighbor-minded empathy—an approachable, community focused style—with strategic clarity, making complex topics simple and keeping teams energized. Under Julie’s leadership, HBPW has earned awards for communication, which she credits to her focus on listening and collaboration. Her contagious laugh and love of a good brainstorm keep teamwork lively. She is a proud mom who treasures the family and friends that anchor her life.



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Journey Carpet Cleaning

By Jeremy Gonsior

Journey Carpet Cleaning Owner Paul Klokkert has solved difficult problems for customers his entire career.

He was trained as a school counselor, serving both high school and college students in North Carolina, Florida, and Michigan. In various roles as either a resident hall director or high school counselor, he listened closely to the needs of students and offered practical solutions to help them succeed.

Eventually, Klokkert moved into school maintenance leadership and high school coaching at Holland Christian Schools. For a decade, he built trust among staff and students as he ensured both the buildings and golf teams ran smoothly.

Now, in his latest full-time venture, Klokkert solves problems for business owners and homeowners who are struggling to maintain their floors. He has undergone extensive training and dedicated his career to the art of carpet cleaning.

Journey Carpet Cleaning specializes in low-moisture carpet cleaning that provides impeccable cleanliness and allows for your carpet to dry within 90 minutes. This permits companies and residents to resume business as normal in no time. His company also offers floor cleaning after 5 p.m. during the week so that operations aren't disrupted during normal business hours.

Plus Klokkert is an expert in spot and stain removal, a service he backs up with a 100% satisfaction guarantee and a 30-day no spots return guarantee.

"We're pretty confident in what we can do," Klokkert said about his services.

Growing With the Chamber

Journey Carpet Cleaning celebrated a ribbon-cutting with the West Coast Chamber of Commerce in January. During the interactive event held at Ditto Upscale Resale in Holland, guests watched closely as Klokkert demonstrated how quickly and effectively his stain treatment is. Within minutes, the spot was nearly gone.

Klokkert answered questions, gave away prizes, and talked about the company's history.

In addition to commercial and residential carpet cleaning, he shared that the company offers:

- Upholstery cleaning
- Tile and grout cleaning
- Hardwood, laminate and vinyl floor cleaning/polishing
- Pet enzyme treatment/deodorizer
- UV light inspection for urine
- Carpet/fabric protector

The company continues to grow and recently added a part-time employee, David Solis, to keep up with demand. Solis loves the work because he said the company is committed to doing what's best for its customers and always striving to learn new techniques.

Solving Problems Everywhere

Besides providing solutions for his customers, Klokkert has also committed to solving problems in the community, region, and abroad.

Journey Carpet Cleaning has donated cleanings to West Michigan residents in need through its Light for the Journey program. His customers also helped raise more than \$5,000 to provide clean water for kids across the world through World Vision. Finally, the company sponsored a hole during the Par for the Peach golf fundraiser last August. The important event supports Caroline's Peach Foundation to fund research for childhood cancers.

Klokkert's problem solving skills continue to pay off because the community has responded with positive feedback. The company has a 5.0 rating on Google with nearly 200 reviews to date.

"Absolutely wonderful experience. Paul and crew really brought our old carpets back to life, even getting out some old set-in stains," Allie McCaw wrote.

So if you have problems with your flooring, let Klokkert and his team solve them. Call Journey Carpet Cleaning at **(616) 209-9128** or email at **paul@journeycarpetcleaning.com**.



The AI Inflection Point

By Taryn Kutches

Founding Partner,
Regenerous Labs

Change is constant, but revolutionary change only comes along every few decades. We're in the midst of a revolutionary change right now, and for business leaders, this is a pivotal moment. An inflection point.

This isn't just about automating tasks with AI, or being able to analyze large amounts of data, this is about re-orchestrating the way your people, process, and data work together to maximize the value you create.

An industrial revolution is categorized as a series of technological and organizational changes that restructure production, reorganize labor, and trigger broad economic and social transformation.

Since the 1800s, there have been four widely recognized "industrial" revolutions. The first driven by steam and mechanization, the second by electrification and mass production, the third by

digital computing and automation, the fourth by cyber-physical systems and connected technologies. We are now entering the fifth, centered on regenerative and sustainable collaboration between humans and intelligent machines.

Each revolution was driven by an innovation that changed the way we worked. The innovation driving the 5th revolution? Generative AI.

And this is where the most common leadership misstep is happening right now. The confusion is thinking AI is the transformation. It isn't. AI is the catalyst, and the transformation is the ecosystem: your workflows, your decision-making, and your data foundation. That's what has to evolve for technology to create real value.

When factories adopted electric power, they did not simply swap a steam engine for an electric motor and carry on as before. They redesigned

plants, reconfigured assembly lines, and reinvented management and production practices. In the same way, AI is not something we merely bolt onto current workflows, it is a force that demands that those workflows, and the systems around them be fundamentally redesigned.

Many teams are making the same mistake. They treat AI as “low-hanging-fruit” automation for quick wins, when in reality it is a transformative capability that demands intentional reengineering of how work gets done.

At the highest level, this is about Business Evolution: The continuous process through which an organization adapts to the needs of its people, stakeholders, and environment, using modern technology to realize its potential and live its values authentically.

This kind of evolution requires focus on what we call the Business Architecture and the Behavioral Architecture of an organization. The Business Architecture includes your organizational chart, process and workflows, data & analytics, and technology & tools. The Behavioral Architecture is made up of your team’s mindsets, behaviors, leadership, innovation culture and joy.

The more out of balance these two architectures are, the lower your success rate of impactful business evolution will be.

This is the moment to choose evolution over impulse, and architecture over add-ons.

However, this work isn’t for the faint of heart. It’s visionary, intentional, patient, gritty, and at times messy. It requires a deep belief that evolution is necessary as we enter this revolution, and a commitment to creating an informed and intentional plan to change.

And it requires leaders to stop treating AI and new technology as an add-on, or a quick fix for existing operations. If your workflows are unclear, your data is messy, or your decision-making is fragmented, layering AI on top is like bolting a turbocharger onto an engine that’s already misfiring. You might feel a burst of speed at first, but you’re really just accelerating wear, errors, and failure.

So, at this critical inflection point business leaders are facing; do you embrace the hard work, or let this moment pass and risk being disrupted?

This is the moment to choose evolution over optimization, intention over impulse, and architecture over add-ons. To treat AI not as a tool you sprinkle on top of the way you’ve always operated, but as a catalyst to re-orchestrate how people, process, and data work together so you can empower your people and deliver on your organizational value promise.

We already know our industry is being disrupted. The question is whether we respond deliberately or react later under pressure. A proactive response looks like this: we clarify the outcomes we’re driving, we redesign the workflows that produce them, we strengthen the data and decision systems underneath, and we invest in the mindsets and behaviors required to sustain change.



Taryn Kutches is an innovator, entrepreneur, founding partner of Regenerous Labs, and Co-Founder of Joyn Collective where she helps organizations create, adapt and thrive in fast-changing environments. As an entrepreneur, she knows what it takes to build a company from the ground up and brings that mindset to her work with clients. She specializes in designing human-centered, AI-powered solutions and experiences that empower teams to innovate and grow. Taryn is passionate about thinking creatively and boldly to drive new value and thinking with everyone she works with.



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DISHER ENGINEERING

Nurturing an Environment of Innovation

By Tim Ullrey,
PMP

Engineering
Manager at
DISHER
Engineering

No matter the industry, innovation is critical to long-term survival.

Organizations that bring unique products or services to market tend to stay ahead of competitors. They also pivot faster when major disruptions occur, whether that's a global pandemic, tariffs, or supply chain challenges.

From a small bakery to a multinational manufacturer, every organization must adapt to changing markets, customer needs, and constraints. Companies that respond quickly with creative solutions are far more likely to endure than those focused on preserving the status quo.

Innovation Looks Different in Every Organization

Last fall, DISHER Engineering hosted the West Coast Leadership Innovation Day, bringing together 25 local business leaders to explore what innovation really means. With our technical roots, we often associate innovation with new technology, such as AI or advanced batteries. However, these conversations reinforced an important truth: innovation doesn't always look like a new device or piece of software.

For service-based organizations, innovation often shows up as new ways of engaging customers or identifying underserved communities. Sometimes the biggest breakthroughs come from improving experiences or processes, not inventing something entirely new.

Three Ways to Build a Culture of Innovation

Because innovation varies by organization, creating it requires intentional effort.

1. Foster curiosity and psychological safety

Innovation depends on people feeling safe to ask questions and challenge assumptions. When teams have psychological safety, they're more willing to investigate problems and surface opportunities without fear of backlash.

In DISHER Engineering's Innovation Workshops, we start by learning as much as possible about the challenge and clearly defining the opportunity. As outsiders, we can ask the "obvious" questions. If no one can clearly answer, "Why do we do it this way?" that's often a sign innovation is needed.

2. Encourage diversity of thought

With curiosity and safety in place, innovation accelerates when multiple perspectives are involved. Diverse viewpoints help teams see problems from new angles and uncover simple, elegant solutions.

One example comes from monitoring municipal water quality. Traditional sensors couldn't reliably detect certain pollutants, so the organization brought in experts from outside its core discipline. Biologists and ecologists pointed out that mussels naturally respond to contaminants. Instead of inventing a new sensor, the team placed mussels in the water and monitored their behavior. When the shells closed, pollution was present. Without diverse expertise, this simple and elegant solution may never have emerged.

3. Test early and often

Generating ideas is exciting, but deciding which ones to pursue can be overwhelming. The solution is to test quickly and simply. Rough prototypes, mock-ups, or early user feedback can provide valuable insights without heavy investment.

Just as important as finding winning ideas is eliminating weak ones early. Testing early allows teams to learn faster, save resources, and strengthen the ideas that truly have potential.

If your organization can foster curiosity, psychological safety, diverse thinking, and a willingness to test and learn, you'll be well on your way to building a lasting culture of innovation.

Upcoming Programs

To register, and for an up-to-date list of all upcoming events, scan the QR code or visit westcoastchamber.org.



Lakeshore Women Connect

MARCH 5, 2026



4:30 PM – 6:00 PM | Haworth Corporate

Connect, celebrate, and be inspired at Lakeshore Women Connect. Enjoy networking, refreshments, and a special program recognizing women stepping into new roles and leadership positions. All are welcome to attend and support the honorees.

Tickets are limited—reserve yours today.

Program Sponsorship Available.

Advocacy in Action with Wendy Block

MARCH 6, 2026



7:45 AM – 9:00 AM | West Coast Chamber

Advocacy in Action means having access to elected officials, being informed about issues that impact our community, and advocating for a business-friendly environment. Join us this month as Wendy Block, Senior Vice President of Business Advocacy with the Michigan Chamber, shares updates from Lansing.

Lead Advocacy in Action Sponsor: Blue Cross Blue Shield Blue Care Network of Michigan

West Coast YPs – Networking 101 Workshop

MARCH 18, 2026



4:00 PM – 5:00 PM | West Coast Chamber

Networking doesn't have to feel awkward — and it definitely doesn't have to feel forced.

Join a high-energy, hands-on workshop designed to help you feel more confident, more comfortable, and more yourself when making connections — whether it's your first Chamber event or your fiftieth.

Program Sponsorship Available.

Power Hour

MARCH 31, 2026



8:00 AM – 10:00 AM | West Coast Chamber

Start your day with purpose — and powerful connections. Our morning edition of Power Hour delivers the fast-paced, structured networking you know and love, paired with open conversation, and complimentary light refreshments. Exposure Opportunities Available.

Lead Sponsor: RedWater Group

Wake Up West Coast with Jennifer Owens

APRIL 14, 2026



7:30 AM – 9:00 AM | Haworth Hotel

Wake Up West Coast brings together Chamber members every month for networking and to hear and learn about business best practices from fascinating leaders from around the country and within our own community.

Program Sponsor: Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge

Please note the West Coast Chamber's new address is:
**65 E 7th Street, Suite 300,
Holland, MI 49423**

HAPPENINGS



Dutch Winterfest officially kicked off with a ribbon cutting celebrating the Delft Downtown art exhibit.



Members enjoy networking at Espresso Books & Beans during a Social Hour sponsored by 4Front Credit Union.



Heartland Builders celebrated the grand opening of their new design studio and office in Holland.



Community Action House & the Dwelling Place officially broke ground on the start of a new Kollen Park Housing Development.



The official launch of West Coast YPs welcomed almost 80 young professionals from across the Lakeshore.



Kindel & Company Home has now expanded to Holland with their new Haberdashery on 8th street.



U.S. Congressman Bill Huizenga of Michigan's 4th Congressional District shared updates from Washington, D.C. with Chamber members during a morning of advocacy and conversation.



Journey Carpet Cleaning officially celebrated the launch of their full-time operations with a ribbon cutting ceremony at one of their long-term client's location.



The West Coast Chamber officially celebrated the grand opening of its new home on the third floor of The Next Center.



Jase Bolger of the West Michigan Policy Forum joined Chamber members for the January Advocacy in Action program.



Chamber members enjoyed networking before hearing insights on the year ahead during the Economic Forecast program.



New & Renewing Members

Asha Leena Photography
Ashaleena Lamarand | (313) 715-1144
ashaleena.com
info@ashaleena.com

Coastal Collective Real Estate
Mike Ewing | (616) 758-1392
CoastalCollectiveMI.Com
mike@coastalcollectivemi.com

Dekkers Jewelry
Lee VanKampen | (616) 772-4146
dekkeersjewelry.com
Dekkers1882@gmail.com

Dogology University
Matthew Lamarand | (616) 935-6815
dogologyuniversity.com
info@dogologyuniversity.com

Dunewood Technology Solutions
Kirby Chittenden | (616) 259-5360
dunewood.com
contact@dunewood.com

Garrett Senters Group - Real Estate Sales & Marketing
Garrett Senters | (616) 298-6222
garrettsenters.com
garrettsenters@gmail.com

Gielow Groom Terpstra & McEvoy
Charles Murray | (231) 747-7160
ggtmlaw.com
chuck@ggtmlaw.com

Keep. A Cleaning Company
Maxwell Tendo | (616) 727-7232
keepacleaningcompany.com
info@keepacleaningcompany.com

Welcome to these new members who recently joined the West Coast Chamber!

LivingStrong
Lara Livingston | (616) 836-6703
livingstrongtraining.com
lara@livingstrongtraining.com

Mike's Gifts, LLC & Krista's Krafts
Michael Cerka | (423) 790-6658
mikesgift42.com
mikesgifts42@yahoo.com

Neighbors Plus
Jessica Lynch | (616) 928-0303
neighborsplus.org
jessica.lynych@harderwyk.com

Peppino's of Holland
Francesca Dileonardo | (616) 399-2966
peppinospizza.com/holland
fran@peppinospizza.com

Rebuilt Physical Therapy
Amber Bauer | (616) 287-9949
rebuiltmovementrehab.janeapp.com
amber@rebuiltmovementrehab.com

Secure and Go Storage
Missy York | (616) 392-8628
secureandgostorage.com
myork@gclcmgmt.com

Your Numbers Gal
Elizabeth Quakkelaar | (616) 239-2453
yournumbersgal.com
elizabeth@yournumbersgal.com

Zeeland Nutrition
Leanne Schimke | (616)-741-9485
zeelandnutrition.com
leannesmith0882@gmail.com



Michigan
West Coast Chamber
of Commerce

Community Impact Day Returns May 13, 2026

Sponsored By:

 **LG Energy Solution**
Michigan, Inc.



We appreciate our members who recently renewed their memberships:

* indicates years of membership.

3Sixty	DeLong & Brower LLC	Conference	Michigan First Credit Union	Salubrity Vida Day Spa
Above & Beyond Catering	Disability Network/ Lakeshore	Holland Engineering, Inc.	Midwest Construction Group, Inc./Geerlings Development Company	Saugatuck Center for the Arts
Accurate Engineering & Manufacturing, LLC	DISHER	Holland Free Health Clinic	Mission Design & Automation -5*	Scholten Fant
American Medical Response	Distilled Detail Co.	Holland Litho Printing Services	MOKA	Schreur Printing & Mailing
American Red Cross of West Michigan	Dutch-Touch Window Cleaning	Holland Pallet Repair	Movement West Michigan	Scott Aerator Co., LLC
Anchorage Marine Service	Eastbrook Homes	Holland Public Schools -70*	MVS Ventures Corporation -5*	Scrapyard Climbing Collective
And Then Write	Eckhoff & DeVries Painting	Holland Ready Roofing Company -70*	My House Ministry -10*	Semco Energy -70*
Apothecary Gift Shop -70*	Edward Jones Gualtiere	Holland Tasting Tours	Nathan Bowers Farmers Insurance	SERVPRO of Allendale and Greater Holland
Arrowaste	Edward Jones Jungling	Hope College -70*	Nelis' Dutch Village -70*	Sharp Construction LLC
Berends Hendricks Stuit Ins. Agency, Inc.	Edward Jones Lesperance	Hope Pkgs	Nestlings Diaper Bank	softArchitecture
Big Dutchman, Inc. -50*	Edward Jones Pedersen	Hungerford CPAs + Advisors	New Harvest Ministries International Inc.	Teerman Lofts
Blain's Farm & Fleet of Holland	Edward Jones Zylman	HYK Consulting LLC. -5*	New Holland Brewing Company	Tennant Company
Boers Transfer & Storage, Inc.	Elite Dental -30*	Innovation Education Services	NewCNC.com	The Avalune Group
Boileau & Co -20*	Embrace the Journey Travel	Ivy House	NFP	The Employers' Association
Bowerman's on 8th	Engedi Salon - Holland	James Parker	Northgate Appliance, LLC	The Frame & Mat Shop
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Holland	Evolve	Jason Howe	Out of the Box - Zeeland	The trU Group
Brenner Oil Company	FITIN24 GYM	Jean Marie's	PADNOS -70*	The Village at Appledorn -20*
Brewer's City Dock, Inc. -70*	IN HOLLAND (24 FITCOUNTRY FITNESS, LLC)	JHensley Consulting	Park Theatre Foundation	The Window Center
Bunte's Pharmacy -5*	Five Star Real Estate Lakeshore Dawn Van Kampen	Kammeraad Financial Group	Park Township	Thermotron Industries
Camp Blodgett	Flagstar Bank	Koops Automation Systems	Parkway Electric & Communications LLC	Transnation Title Agency of Michigan
Camp Sunshine Inc	Foster Swift Collins & Smith, PC	Lake Trust Credit Union	Perrigo Company	United Federal Credit Union
Championship Martial Arts	Globe Design & Vision	Lakeshore Commercial Real Estate -5*	Perspective 3-D -10*	Urban Plank
City on a Hill	GO Riteway Transportation Group	Lakeshore Memorial Services, Inc.	PlaybookBuilder	Vacuum Headquarters & Supplies
Coldwell Banker Woodland Schmidt	Great Lakes Furniture Supply	Lakeshore Property Management, Inc.	Price 4 Limo Grand Rapids	Van Hill Furniture -50*
Commercial Flooring & Installation	Hampton Inn of Holland -30*	Lakewood Construction	PSG, Inc.	Warehouse 6 Events
Compaan Door & Operator Company	Haveman Electrical Services, Inc.	Leading by DESIGN	Radius Advisory Group	Waverly Meadows
Compassionate Heart Ministry	Health Alliance Plan (HAP)	Lean Resources (Lr)	RE/MAX Lakeshore	West MI Plumbers, Fitters & Service Trades Local
Cran-Hill Ranch	Herrick District Library	Liberty Plastics, Inc. -25*	Reckitt -50*	West Michigan Airport Authority (WMAA)
Crestview Golf Club, LLC	Holland Area Convention & Visitors Bureau	Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates	RedWater Group -20*	West Michigan Whitecaps
Crown Motors Chrysler/ Dodge/Jeep/Ram	Holland Board of Public Works -70*	Little Red Pediatric Dentistry	RepcoLite Paints Inc. -70*	White Pine Design
Culture Cheese Shop	Holland Christian Schools -70*	Living Lark	Residence Inn by Marriott	WHTC -70*
Cunningham Dalman, P.C. -70*	Holland Community Chorale	Lucky Strike Holland	Restoration 1 of the Lakeshore	WZZM - 13 & 13 ON YOUR SIDE
Davenport University	Holland Deacons'	LVZ Financial Planning	Rhoades McKee	Zeeland Historical Society-Dekker Huis Museum
		Macatawa Strategies	Rohde Construction	Zordan Industries LLC
		Merle Boes, Inc. -70*	Russ' Restaurants/Bre LLC -70*	
		Metal Flow Corporation		

Sponsored Content



Find Restful Sleep Without CPAP

Discover Dr. Vandervelden's Personalized Solutions at West Michigan CPAP Alternatives

How a Sleep Dentist's Empathy and Innovation Are Changing Lives for Sleep Apnea and Snoring Sufferers

Are you tired of restless nights, loud snoring, or the daily struggles of using a CPAP machine? You're not alone—and there's a better way to achieve restful sleep without cumbersome masks or noisy devices. At West Michigan CPAP Alternatives, Dr. Vandervelden offers a patient-centered approach to treating sleep apnea and snoring that prioritizes comfort, effectiveness, and your unique needs.

Meet Dr. Vandervelden: The Sleep Solution Specialist Who Truly Understands

Dr. Vandervelden is more than an expert—he's personally experienced sleep apnea. After finding traditional CPAP therapy uncomfortable and disruptive, he discovered the benefits of custom oral appliance therapy. This life-changing solution inspired him to dedicate his practice to helping others find restful, CPAP-free sleep.

Why Choose West Michigan CPAP Alternatives?

What makes Dr. Vandervelden's Holland, Michigan, practice unique is his blend of empathy, innovation, and precision. As a Diplomate of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine, he provides comprehensive oral appliance therapy tailored to each patient. These custom-fit oral appliances, resembling a retainer, gently reposition the jaw to open the airway, relieving snoring and sleep apnea—without the discomfort and hassle of CPAP machines.

Who Can Benefit?

Dr. Vandervelden's approach is designed for:

- Those diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea
- People who struggle with or prefer an alternative to CPAP
- Anyone whose snoring affects relationships or daily energy
- Professionals like truck drivers and pilots needing DOT-compliant solutions

Precision, Comfort, and Outstanding Results

Dr. Vandervelden's process goes beyond a "one-size-fits-all" solution. He uses several nights of home sleep testing at different jaw positions to find the best fit for each patient. This personalized, data-driven method maximizes comfort and effectiveness, ensuring your treatment is safe, sustainable, and tailored to your needs. Recent studies show that the newest, cutting-edge oral appliances Dr. Vandervelden provides surpass CPAP in sleep quality, overall effectiveness, and patient satisfaction. The newest cutting-edge oral appliance Dr. Vandervelden provides features an oximeter chip and allows patients to track their sleep via an app on their phone.

Real Compassion and Lasting Support

As someone who knows firsthand the challenges of sleep apnea, Dr. Vandervelden is committed to providing genuine, empathetic care. Each appointment and follow-up reflects his personal understanding and dedication to practical, real-world solutions. Patients consistently report that his thoughtful, comprehensive care has transformed their sleep and improved their lives.

Take Control of Your Sleep—Today

Ready to move beyond the frustrations of CPAP and experience peaceful sleep? Schedule your free CPAP alternative consultation with Dr. Vandervelden at West Michigan CPAP Alternatives. Conveniently located in downtown Holland—just thirty minutes from Grand Rapids—the practice is prepared to help you and your loved ones enjoy quiet, restful nights again.

Call (616) 741-9035 or visit 31 East 8th Street, Suite 330, to start your journey to CPAP-free sleep with a doctor who truly understands your experience.



By Dr. Karel Vandervelden
West Michigan CPAP Alternatives

Premier Partner Spotlight



Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge (SHRR) provides strategic, client-focused legal services to businesses, individuals, and families across Michigan and beyond.

Our experienced attorneys deliver practical solutions for today—while helping clients plan for tomorrow.

Our Services Include:

Family and Estate Services

- Wills, trusts, and estate planning
- Probate and trust administration
- Probate litigation
- Business succession planning

Business and Real Estate

- Business formation, mergers and acquisitions
- Contracts, construction, and risk management
- Labor, employment and intellectual property
- Commercial and residential real estate transactions
- Nonprofit and charitable planning
- Real estate development, easements and use agreements

Trial and Litigation

- Appellate law
- Construction, employment, and insurance litigation
- Medical malpractice and professional liability defense
- Personal injury and wrongful death

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