

West Coast Way

A Publication of the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce

One Million Moments of Positive Impact

Reflecting on a year of momentum while looking ahead to an ambitious vision for West Michigan.

ON THE COVER

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Scott Lubbers

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Premier Partners

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COMMUNITY CHAMPION PREMIER PARTNER



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ABOUT THE CHAMBER

The Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce exists to be a trailblazing organization that creates tidal waves of positive impact. 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 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 Chamber is proud to be named a 2025 Chamber of the Year by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE).

THE WEST COAST WAY

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One of my favorite things about Chamber work is that you don't always know how far the impact of one moment will travel.

An introduction turns into a business opportunity. A conversation sparks an idea. A student meets someone who helps them see a future they hadn't imagined. A leader says yes to getting involved, and our community is better because they did.

Those moments happen every day. And as we begin a new fiscal year at the West Coast Chamber, we're setting an ambitious new goal: to create 1,000,000 moments of positive impact over the next 10 years. One million sounds enormous. And it should! We believe in setting BIG goals that can lead to BIG impact.

But this isn't really about reaching a number. It's about being more intentional about the ripple effect we can create when businesses, leaders, students, partners, and community members come together. You'll see plenty of those ripples throughout this issue, from investments in education and spaces that bring people together to celebrating individuals who give their time and talents to our community.

We've always believed that our work should create positive impact. Now we're challenging ourselves to recognize it, celebrate it, and create even more of it. One moment at a time. So here we go: one community, 1,000,000 moments, and endless possibilities for the impact we can create together.

Jodi Owczarski
President & CEO

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A Look Inside Holland's New Recreation Center

By Andy Kenyon

Parks and
Recreation
Director,
City of Holland

A Vision Becoming Reality

For decades, the Holland Parks and Recreation Department has been very fortunate to have supportive partners, largely our local schools, throughout the community. They have allowed us to enter their buildings in the evenings and on the weekends to host a wide variety of programs, including dance, basketball, volleyball, art, special events, and music. Right now, on any given night, our participants are traveling around town to one of our many wonderful partners' gymnasiums, classrooms, or even cafeterias to participate in these activities. However, this fall, a long-held dream and plan of the City is finally coming to fruition, with work beginning on our very own Recreation Center.

I believe that the Holland Community, especially our youth, deserve to have a dedicated space that can host all of their practices, games, classes, and events,

and with the new Recreation Center that is exactly what they will get. We've been working closely with Integrated Architecture and Lakewood Construction to design a high-quality, beautiful, and very functional 83,000 square foot space that keeps the City's budget at top of mind. The building will be located at the north end of Smallenburg Park, with plans to maintain the neighboring Hope College facilities, the skate park, and Bouws Pool. Construction is scheduled to begin this fall with a build time of just over one year.

The greater Holland area is privileged to have a few community centers that serve the area; however, this new space will be uniquely different and offer exciting opportunities that don't currently exist.

Take a Look Inside

Inside, the new Recreation Center will have dedicated space for the Parks & Recreation Team offices, including





a conference room for planning our next great program or event. For our participants, there will be four full-sized basketball courts overlayed by eight volleyball courts with striping for pickleball and badminton. There will be a dance studio, an art room, and a small gymnasium for our littlest participants. There will even be room for activities such as spinning, and more! We'll be able to host coaches' meetings and have dedicated spaces for families to congregate while waiting for a practice or game to be completed. Event spectators will have an amazing upper-level seating area to view all of the activities happening on the courts. In between games, they can head over to the concession stand to grab a quick bite and drink.

Built for the Community

This new Recreation Center will be a huge asset for our community, and we cannot wait to see you there in just

a few short months.

Soon, families will gather to cheer from the upper level, young artists will discover new talents, neighbors will reconnect between games, and children will create memories that last a lifetime. More than a building, the new Recreation Center will become a place where the Holland community comes together.



Andy Kenyon is the Parks and Recreation Director at the City of Holland. He began his career at the City as Parks Supervisor in 2001, was promoted to Parks and Cemetery Superintendent in 2007, and has been in his current role since 2014. Andy holds a bachelor's degree in Parks and Recreation Administration from Eastern Kentucky University. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for Tulip Time. Andy has a passion for the out of doors and enjoys hunting and beekeeping.



Staff Spotlight



Bonnie Couch

PROGRAM COORDINATOR



Months with the Chamber: 4

What's something people might not know about you?

Something that people might not know about me is that I was in an episode of HGTV's House Hunters.

What excites you about the work you get to do?

One of the things I enjoy most about the work I get to do is watching everything that happens behind the scenes to prepare for our programs come to fruition. There's

something incredibly rewarding about seeing all the planning, collaboration, and attention to detail come together to create a remarkable experience. My favorite part, though, is watching the relationships and genuine connections that develop at our programs. Seeing people meet and build lasting connections reminds me of the impact of my work and continually excites me.



YOUR STORY OVER YOUR STATEMENT

People before money.



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Building a More Affordable Healthcare System for Michigan Businesses and Families

By Joe Hune
Vice President
and President,
West Michigan
and Upper
Peninsula



Healthcare affordability has become one of the biggest challenges facing Michigan employers and families. Rising medical and prescription drug costs are increasing pressure on businesses, employees and the healthcare system as a whole. Last year alone, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan experienced a \$2.6 billion increase in medical and pharmacy claims, reflecting the broader cost pressures affecting healthcare across the country.

At Blue Cross, we're committed to addressing these challenges by partnering with providers, investing in innovative care models and strengthening communities to improve health outcomes while helping make healthcare more affordable across Michigan.

Driving Better Value Through Healthcare Innovation

Creating a more affordable healthcare system requires paying for value instead of volume. That's why Blue Cross continues to lead Michigan's transition from fee-for-service reimbursement to value-based care, aligning provider payments with quality outcomes rather than the number of services delivered.

Through partnerships with physicians and hospitals across the state, we're helping improve patient outcomes, reduce unnecessary care and slow the growth of healthcare costs.

One example is our Patient-Centered Medical Home program, which supports physician-led teams focused on preventive care, chronic disease management and early intervention. Since 2009, participating providers have helped prevent more than \$800 million in medical costs by reducing avoidable emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

Addressing Prescription Drug Costs

Prescription medications continue to be one of the fastest-growing drivers of healthcare spending. In 2024, pharmacy claims increased nearly 15 percent, far exceeding the three percent inflation rate.

To help improve affordability, Blue Cross is expanding the use of biosimilars and other lower-cost treatment alternatives when clinically appropriate. In 2025, these efforts helped save \$80 million while expanding access to effective treatment options.

Investing in Healthier Communities Strengthens Michigan's Economy

Affordable healthcare begins long before someone enters a hospital or doctor's office.

For more than two decades, Blue Cross has invested in programs that improve access to preventive care, reduce avoidable healthcare costs and strengthen communities across Michigan.



Through the Strengthening the Safety Net program, Blue Cross has invested \$17.8 million to support clinics serving uninsured and underinsured residents. Since 2005, the program has helped more than 250,000 people access essential primary care services, preventing nearly 400,000 unnecessary emergency department visits and saving Michigan's healthcare system approximately \$200 million.

Blue Cross is also investing in the next generation through its Building Healthy Communities initiative. Since 2009, the program has reached more than 1,400 schools, encouraging healthier eating, and physical activity and mental wellness to help reduce chronic disease and improve long-term health outcomes.

Looking Ahead

Healthcare affordability cannot be solved by any one organization. It requires collaboration among health plans, healthcare providers, employers, policymakers and communities.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan remains committed to partnering with Michigan businesses to build a healthcare system that delivers better outcomes, greater value and more affordable care—helping employers remain competitive while ensuring families have access to the care they need.



Get to Know GRCC President, Dr. Rogalski

By Kathryn A. Rogalski, Ed.D.

President, Grand Rapids Community College

When I was selected as the 12th President of Grand Rapids Community College, I felt an incredible sense of honor and responsibility. It is a privilege to lead an institution with a 111-year history of serving students and our communities. It is also meaningful to become the first permanent woman to serve as president. While I don't think about that distinction every day, I recognize what it represents. I hope it encourages others to see that leadership is possible and that our different experiences help make our organizations and communities stronger.

As I reflect on my own journey, I realize there is one theme that has shaped both my career and my leadership: people who believed in me before I fully believed in myself.

I was the first in my family to graduate from college. I returned to school as a young mother, balancing work, family, and classes while trying to create new opportunities for my family. Faculty members encouraged me to think beyond earning a bachelor's degree and challenged me to pursue a master's degree, something I had never imagined for myself. Eventually, that journey led me to complete a doctorate. Their encouragement changed the trajectory of my life. More importantly, it changed how I think about leadership.

People are capable of far more than they often believe, and one of our responsibilities as leaders is to help them see that potential.

That experience drew me to community colleges nearly 27 years ago. Throughout my career as an academic advisor, adjunct faculty member, dean, and

Vice President of Academic Affairs and Workforce Development, I have been fortunate to work with students, employers, and communities that reminded me every day why this work matters.

Community colleges do much more than educate students. We help build vibrant communities. We create opportunities for individuals to build meaningful careers, partner with employers to develop the workforce they need, and strengthen the communities we all call home. That connection between education, workforce, and community has become one of the greatest passions of my career.



One lesson has consistently shaped my leadership: people are capable of far more than they often believe, and one of our responsibilities as leaders is to help them see that potential.

Early in my career, I supervised a student employee named Ana. She hoped to earn her bachelor's degree while balancing school, work, and helping her mom



to raise her brothers. We talked about her future, and I introduced her to one of my own faculty mentors so she would have another person encouraging her along the way.

Today, Ana is the director of the very office where I began my own community college career. She has earned her doctorate and is now mentoring others herself. Her story reminds me that leadership is about more than achieving organizational goals. It is about investing in people by opening doors, offering encouragement, and helping others see possibilities they may not yet see for themselves. Those investments have a ripple effect that extends far beyond one individual.

That philosophy has also shaped the way I think about community colleges. Every day we invest in students who will become nurses, teachers, skilled trades professionals, entrepreneurs, business leaders, and engaged citizens. We partner with employers because the success of our students and the success of our businesses are interconnected. When those partnerships are strong, our communities become stronger.

As I have spent my first months at GRCC, I have intentionally spent much of my time listening and learning. Whether meeting with students, faculty, employers, nonprofit organizations, or community leaders, I have been reminded how collaborative West Michigan truly is. I have especially enjoyed getting to know the Holland community and learning more about the employers, organizations, and civic leaders who care deeply about the future of the Lakeshore.

What excites me most about GRCC is the opportunity to continue building those partnerships. I believe our future depends on continuing to invest in people, responding to the needs of employers, expanding educational opportunities, and working together to build vibrant communities across West Michigan.

Looking back, I can clearly see that my own journey was shaped by people who took the time to encourage me, challenge me, and believe in my potential. I hope to do the same for others. To me, that is what leadership is about, and it is why I feel so fortunate to serve as President of Grand Rapids Community College.



Dr. Kathryn A. Rogalski is a student-centered higher education leader with more than 25 years of experience serving learners at community and technical colleges. As the 12th president of Grand Rapids Community College, she is focused on expanding access to education, strengthening student success and building partnerships that support students, employers and the community.

Dr. Rogalski began her career in Institutional Research before moving into academic advising, and throughout much of her career, she also taught Psychology as an adjunct faculty member. These experiences continue to shape her collaborative leadership style. Prior to joining GRCC, she served as vice president for academic affairs and workforce development at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, where she advanced transfer pathways, expanded workforce partnerships and supported innovative academic and training programs.

She is passionate about the transformative power of community colleges and creating opportunities for all learners to thrive.



One Million Moments of Positive Impact

**By Scott
Lubbers**

Corporate
Banking Director,
SVP, Old
National Bank

A New Season of Leadership

Ready or not, another West Michigan fall is upon us. Over the years, I've come to appreciate the changing seasons more and more. Summer is wonderful—especially along the Lakeshore—but fall has become my favorite. The comfortable weather, cider donuts, football, and the return to routines for many families all make this season special.

The Power of Showing Up

This fall, I have the honor and privilege of serving as Chair of the award-winning Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside Jodi, her talented team, and our dedicated Board of Directors as we continue making a positive difference throughout our community.

Many thanks to my predecessor, Patti VanDort, whose leadership over the past year has been marked by wisdom, grace, and consistent optimism. I am thankful that Patti will continue to lend her insight and experience as Past Chair, serving on both the Board and Executive Committee in the year ahead.

I have been fortunate to work in West Michigan since

2002. As a young banker, the Chamber was one of the first organizations I became involved with to learn, connect, and build relationships. I still remember walking into Early Bird Breakfasts on the second Tuesday of the month, intimidated by a room full of unfamiliar faces. Despite my discomfort, I kept showing up. Over time, I built meaningful relationships, expanded my network,



and gained valuable insight into the issues and opportunities shaping our region.



Looking back, I can confidently say the West Coast Chamber played an important role in shaping the business community I still engage with every day.

The Chamber serves as a positive force, helping to raise the tide for our entire region.

We are fortunate to have a high-quality chamber that listens to its members, evolves to meet changing needs, and consistently delivers value to our business community. The Chamber serves as a positive force, helping to raise the tide for our entire region.

Building What's Next

Our Chamber team has been exceptionally busy over the past year. Guided by member feedback, the Chamber launched a bold talent development initiative. Together with community partners, we are helping students discover their strengths through data-driven aptitude and career guidance, experiential learning opportunities, and personalized pathways to college and careers.

In addition, the Chamber Career Center at the Next Center in downtown Holland officially opened earlier this year. This dynamic space now serves as a hub for career exploration, development, and connection. Aligning students' skills and interests with the needs of local employers is important and rewarding work—work that will strengthen our economy and our community for years to come. You can expect to hear much more about this initiative in the coming year.

Highlights from the Past Year

It certainly has been a productive and impactful year for the Chamber. While this list is not all-encompassing, a few additional notable accomplishments include:

- Welcoming Holland Young Professionals (HYP) into the Chamber family through full integration into Chamber operations and oversight, creating even more opportunities for young professionals to engage and grow.





- Leading another successful Community Impact Day, bringing together volunteers, nonprofits, and businesses to serve our community and inspiring other chambers to launch similar efforts.

Community Impact Day Nationwide Stats

Total Volunteers: 4,547
Volunteer Locations: 347
Hours of Work Completed: 13,641
Value of Work Completed: \$492,985

- Establishing a new home on the third floor of the Next Center, creating an exciting and collaborative space for our team and members.
- Continuing to provide high-quality programming, tackle important issues, and deliver consistent thought leadership on behalf of our business community.

One Million Moments

Looking back, it is easy to see the tremendous impact our Chamber has had on the communities we serve. Every success has been driven by a shared commitment to excellence, collaboration, and purpose. Yet as proud as we are of what has been accomplished, we remain energized by the opportunities that lie ahead. Recently, the Chamber launched an ambitious 10-year goal: to create one million moments of positive impact. These moments may come through a conversation, a

solution, an act of service, a meaningful connection, or an opportunity that changes the trajectory of someone’s life or business. When multiplied across our members, volunteers, partners, and communities, these moments become transformative and can create extraordinary impact.

I am deeply honored to have the opportunity to serve and lead the Board of Directors for this remarkable organization in the year ahead. Working together, I am confident we will continue to achieve great things, strengthen our mission, and create countless moments of positive impact throughout West Michigan.



Scott has worked as a commercial banker since 2002 and currently leads corporate banking efforts for Old National Bank in West Michigan.

Scott is an active community leader with a passion for coaching youth sports. He is currently serving on the Board of Directors for Lakeshore Advantage and Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce in addition to committee engagement at the Community Foundation of Holland/Zeeland Area. He is also involved in his church as board member at the Fearless Family of Churches. Previous board positions include the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Holland, Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity, and Good Samaritan Ministries.

He earned his Bachelor of Business Administration and MBA from the Seidman College of Business at Grand Valley State University.

Scott lives in Hamilton, Michigan with his wife and two sons.

Building West Michigan's Future

By John Parker

Vice President of
Project
Development,
EV Construction

At EV Construction, we've always believed that while we build facilities, our greatest investment is in people.

For more than 80 years, EV has partnered with clients to construct spaces where people live, learn, heal, work, and gather. From healthcare and manufacturing to education, senior living, and commercial construction, our work shapes communities throughout West Michigan and beyond. Since 1945, our commitment has remained the same: to be Built Around People.

West Michigan continues to grow, bringing new opportunities for businesses, families, and communities. That growth depends on having a skilled workforce capable of building the hospitals, schools, factories, housing, and infrastructure our region needs. Workforce development isn't just a construction issue. It is an economic development issue.

The construction industry is navigating rapid technological advancements, increasing project complexity, and a significant generational shift in its workforce. Industry projections estimate that approximately 41% of today's construction workforce will retire by 2031, while hundreds of thousands of new workers will be needed each year to keep pace with demand. As an industry, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to inspire the next generation to see construction as a rewarding career.



At EV, that investment starts early and continues throughout a person's career. Our annual Future Builders event welcomes the children of our employees, trade partners, and clients to an active jobsite where they participate in hands-on building, engineering, and safety activities while learning about the many career opportunities available in construction. As careers grow, so do development opportunities. Our Rising Stars program equips emerging leaders at EV with the skills, knowledge, and mentorship needed to grow professionally and help lead the future of our company.

EV employs one of the largest in-house trade forces in West Michigan, with eight self-performed trade divisions. By investing in our craft professionals through mentorship, continuing education, technical certifications, and ongoing safety training, we're creating rewarding career opportunities while helping ensure the construction industry has the skilled workforce needed for the future.

The future of our industry also depends on attracting a new demographic of workers to the industry. Women make up just over 11% of the U.S. construction workforce, but they make a significant contribution to leadership, innovation, and expertise in every facet of the industry. At EV, women represent approximately 23% of our workforce, more than double the national average, and serve in leadership, field operations, project management, finance, marketing, human resources, and many other essential roles.

Our commitment extends beyond our own organization. EV is proud to support the West Michigan Construction Institute through involvement and investment in construction workforce development. We also encourage our employees to continue growing their skills and knowledge by participating in WMCI courses and training opportunities. In addition, EV offers internship opportunities for college students, providing hands-on construction experience.

The buildings we construct will stand for decades, but the people who build them will shape our communities for generations. Solving the workforce challenge isn't something any one company can do alone. It takes collaboration among employers, educators, trade partners, parents, and community organizations. Together, we aim to inspire the next generation of builders who strengthen our communities and ensure West Michigan continues to thrive.

Celebrating the Chamber Ambassador Award Winners



At the West Coast Chamber, our Chamber Ambassadors serve as a vital extension of our team. These dedicated volunteers play a key role in enhancing member value and retention through planned activities that support our members and the broader community. Each year, we recognize outstanding individuals in this group for their significant contributions to the Chamber. Meet this year's award winners below.

Kickstarter Award



Jess Berens, Yellow Lime Creative
Ambassador Since 2025

What do you enjoy most about being a Chamber Ambassador?

I have always been a natural cheerleader, so being a Chamber Ambassador feels like the perfect fit. I love celebrating the people and businesses that make our community thrive, and there is nothing better than attending ribbon cuttings and milestone celebrations to share in their excitement.

What does receiving this recognition mean to you?

Receiving this recognition during my first year as an Ambassador means so much to me. It is encouraging to know I have found a role that is such a great fit, and I am grateful to be part of a group that is passionate about supporting our local business community. I look forward to continuing to celebrate and champion others for years to come.

Catalyst Award



Tricia Cranmer, Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity
Ambassador Since 1996

What do you enjoy most about being a Chamber Ambassador?

What I enjoy most is building relationships and helping others make meaningful connections. It's rewarding to welcome new members, celebrate milestones with local businesses and nonprofits, and be part of an organization that genuinely cares about the success of our community. I also love being an advocate, not only for the Chamber but for the incredible businesses and organizations that make the lakeshore such a great place to live and work. After many years as an Ambassador, it's been a privilege to watch relationships grow into partnerships and friendships, knowing that even small connections can make a lasting impact.

What does receiving this recognition mean to you?

Receiving the Catalyst Award is truly an honor. It means a great deal because it recognizes something I genuinely enjoy doing - bringing people together, building relationships, and helping others engage with our community. The Chamber is filled with incredible leaders and dedicated Ambassadors, so to be recognized among them is both humbling and encouraging. Over the years, I've had the privilege of seeing simple introductions grow into meaningful partnerships and friendships, and that's what being an Ambassador is all about. This recognition inspires me to continue serving, making connections, and helping create positive momentum for our local business community.



Convener Award



Marco Rios, West Michigan Works!

Ambassador Since 2021

What do you enjoy most about being a Chamber Ambassador?

What I enjoy most about being a Chamber Ambassador is the opportunity to connect with like-minded professionals who are passionate about promoting, celebrating, and supporting local businesses. I am driven by listening to our business community, building relationships, and networking at Chamber events. Whether it's attending a ribbon cutting, making introductions, or meeting businesses where they are, I intentionally strive to show support and learn more about the challenges and successes of our business community.

What does receiving this recognition mean to you?

Receiving the West Coast Chamber's Convener Award is truly an honor. Being recognized by my fellow Ambassadors makes this award especially meaningful because it comes from individuals I deeply respect and admire. To be described by my peers as "honest, authentic, and vulnerable," and as someone who "finds ways to build bridges and connect people," is incredibly humbling.

This recognition affirms what I value most: building genuine relationships, fostering connections, and bringing people together. Being part of this group has been a rewarding experience, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to a chamber that works so hard to strengthen our community.

Champion Award



Jill Schutte, Hungerford CPAs + Advisors

Ambassador Since 2022

What do you enjoy most about being a Chamber Ambassador?

I enjoy the opportunity to support the businesses, organizations, and people who make our community such a great place to live and work. One of the most rewarding aspects is celebrating ribbon cuttings and milestone events with local businesses and helping recognize their achievements and growth. I also enjoy that our monthly meetings are hosted at a variety of locations, giving us the chance to learn more about the businesses in our area, build meaningful connections, and actively support the local community.

What does receiving this recognition mean to you?

I am truly humbled to receive the Champion Award. As a Chamber Ambassador, I enjoy connecting with local businesses, building relationships, and helping promote the people and organizations that contribute to our area's success. Being an ambassador has encouraged me to become more engaged in the community, and I am honored to be recognized for something I genuinely enjoy.

Upcoming Programs

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



Power Hour

SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM | West Coast Chamber

Build your network, one afternoon and one conversation at a time.

Program Sponsor: ChoiceOne Bank

Advocacy in Action: State of the County

SEPTEMBER 11, 2026

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

Civic engagement and updates from your county clerk, Justin Roebuck.

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

Wake Up West Coast: Becoming Future Fluent

SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

7:30 AM - 9:00 AM | Haworth Hotel

Start your morning with fresh ideas and meaningful connections, featuring a presentation by Jason Kehrer.

Program Sponsor: Redwater

West Coast YPs: NetWALKING

SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

12:00 PM - 1:15 PM | West Coast Chamber

Join fellow young professionals for a lunch break walk to the Holland Farmers Market.

Program Sponsorship Available

Annual Awards Celebration

SEPTEMBER 24, 2026

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM | The Venues at Third Coast

Celebrating the people and organizations shaping our lakeshore community.

Program Sponsor: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

Maximize Your Membership

SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

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

Learn about the programs, resources, and opportunities that make your membership valuable.

West Coast YPs: Rooftop Trivia Takeover

SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM | Tulyp Hotel

Enjoy a little friendly competition during this social night out designed for YPs.

Program Sponsorship Available

Workshop: AI Visibility for Your Business

OCTOBER 1, 2026

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM | Virtual Program

Dave Burnett with AOK Marketing will share practical strategies to improve visibility and help businesses show up more often in AI-generated answers.

Advocacy in Action: State of Affordable Housing

OCTOBER 2, 2026

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

An update on Lakeshore Advantage's housing work, presented by Chris Marco.

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

Social Hour with the Chamber

OCTOBER 7, 2026

4:30 PM - 6:00 PM | Bowerman's Farm Market

Connect, unwind, and experience a local favorite during this casual networking program.

Program Sponsorship Available

HAPPENINGS



Interra Homes opened their Prairie Winds West community in Zeeland.



Summer interns enjoyed a NetWALKING experience through downtown Holland.



The West Coast YPs gathered on the Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge rooftop for a social hour.



Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity and Jubilee Ministries hosted a ribbon cutting in honor of the completion of the Vista Green community.



Members made connections during Social Hour with the Chamber at The Parlor by House of Flavors.



Patrick Clark of Connect Public Speaking led an interactive workshop about the art of thinking on your feet.



Workplace Office Suites hosted a summer celebration for their new shared office experience.



Skin Huis celebrated the grand opening of their medical spa and wellness practice in downtown Holland.



The Salvation Army and Community Action House cut the ribbon on the new home of the Community Kitchen.



Carolyn Stich Studio celebrated their move to a new location with a ribbon cutting.



New & Renewing Members

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

A&M Cleaning, LLC

Aron Venegas
(616) 228-3008
amcleaningservices.pro@gmail.com

Acme Pallet, Inc.

Meaghan Machiele
(616) 738-6452
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info@acmepallet.com

Anna's House

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Clover Commercial Office Center

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Coastal Collective Construction

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Graceful Growth Co.

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NetNerd Ventures

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Outboard Tech

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Portal Solutions LLC

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Rachel Baggech Coaching

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rachelbaggech@novus.global

Renewed Clean LLC

Brandi Heykoop
(231) 340-3561
www.renewedcleanllc.com
renewedclean@gmail.com

SoBar Recovery Community Center

Carrie Nyenhuis
(616) 403-9437
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sobardirector@sobarrco.com

The Back Nine Golf - Holland North

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www.thebackninegolf.com
hollandnorth@thebackninegolf.com

Wardian

Ryan Hoffman
(630) 881-7926
www.getwardian.com
ryan@getwardian.com

We appreciate our members who recently renewed their memberships:

* indicates years of membership.

4Front Credit Union
 Acoustical Installations -**20***
 Addington Place Of Lakeside Vista
 Advanced Architectural Products
 Advanced Time -**5***
 Alliance Retirement Plan Solutions a division of Gasaway Investment Advisors
 Anne Rae Design
 Astro Wood Stake Inc. -**30***
 Axis Machine & Tool, Inc.
 Baumann Building Inc.
 Baymont Inn & Suites
 Bearded Dutchman Meats
 Beauty ReNew, LLC
 Beechwood Grill & Catering -**50***
 Beechwood Photo Organizing -**10***
 Benjamin's Hope
 Biggby Coffee Zeeland
 Blue Rocket Marketing
 Bowerman's on 8th
 Branding Projex
 Brownson Properties (JBBBC.com fund)
 Bunte's Pharmacy -**5***
 Butch's Dry Dock -**40***
 Butternut Event Center
 Calder Capital - Parker Schaap
 Caroline's PEACH Foundation
 Carolyn Stich Studio, LLC
 Cherry Republic
 City of Holland -**50***
 City of Zeeland -**25***
 ClimateGuys.com
 Collective Idea
 Cornerstone Caregiving
 Cornerstone University - SOAR
 Cottage Arts & Eats
 Courtyard by Marriott
 Craig's Cruisers Family Fun Center
 Cusack Manufacturing
 Custer Insurance Agency and Custer Financial Advisors
 Ditto Upscale Resale
 Dog Obedience College
 Edge Benefits Group LLC
 Eighty-Six West Asset Management
 Elisabeth Marie Photography LLC
 Empowerment Journey
 Engedi Salon - Zeeland
 Engineering Supply & Imaging
 Escape Ministries
 Estella Rose Fashion

Evergreen Commons
 Express Employment Professionals
 Extol, Inc.
 Faith Reformed Church
 Flex Fitness Center
 Foundation Systems of Michigan
 FOX 17
 Friends of Felt Estate
 Gary's Automotive Volkswagen
 GHSP
 Good Ink
 Goog's Pub & Grub -**5***
 GRCC Lakeshore Campus
 Greg Maybury Consulting LLC
 Hamilton Mobil
 Heritage Homes, Inc.
 Hog Wild BBQ
 Holland Cat Cove
 Holland Civic Center Place - Sports Facilities Management
 Holland Concert Jazz Orchestra
 Holland Indoor Golf & Driving Range
 Holland P.T. Corp.
 Holland Quality Monument Company
 Howard Miller Library & Community Center -**20***
 Hughes Integrated
 Impact Fab, Inc.
 Intext Concepts, Inc.
 ITC
 JMS of Holland
 Johns Dozing Service Inc. -**25***
 Jonker's Garden
 Joy Family Health
 JP Morgan Chase Bank, N.A.
 Kenowa Industries, Inc.
 Kerri Bosma City2Shore/ Impressions Group
 Key Personnel, Inc.
 Lakeshore Habitat For Humanity, Inc.
 Lakeshore Scale, Inc.
 Laketown Township
 Lankheet Pool & Spa, Inc.
 Latin Americans United for Progress
 Laurel & Co.
 Let's Get Wings
 LG Energy Solution Michigan
 Light Lounge
 Lighthouse Title Group -**5***
 Lincolnshire Party Store
 LVS CPAs & Associates -**25***

Mac Adventures LLC -**5***
 Macatawa Bank
 Marigold Family Dentistry
 Michigan Certified Development Corporation
 MillerKnoll
 Modales Wines
 Morrison Industrial Equipment
 Motus Integrated Technologies
 Nelson Builders, Inc.
 Next Generation Services, L.L.C.
 NuVescor
 OEO Energy Solutions -**5***
 Olive Exxon
 Ottawa Insurance Agency Inc. -**25***
 P.I.E. Management, L.L.C.
 Planet Fitness - South Holland
 Plascore Inc. -**25***
 PlaybookBuilder
 Precision Tooling Technologies, LLC
 Preferred Employment and Living Supports
 Preferred Machine, LLC
 Quincy Place Senior Living
 Redwood Holland
 Rodgers Creative Group, LLC
 Salon Cheveux
 Sarah Moneybrake Interior Design
 She Plans Travel Co
 Site Work Solutions
 Sloothaak Farms LLC
 Soils & Structures, Inc.
 Sonscreens
 Sperry's Moviehouse
 Starbuck Machining, Inc.
 Studio G Inc.
 Summit Point Roofing -**5***
 Sure-loc Aluminum Edging, Inc.
 Sybesma's Auto -**20***
 TelDesigns Inc.
 The Bridge Youth Center
 The First Tee of West Michigan - Holland
 The Hirdes Group, LLC
 The Learning Experience - Holland
 The Lost City, LLC
 The Promo Agency
 The Salvation Army
 Trigon Steel Components, Inc.
 Tropical Smoothie Café
 Tru by Hilton Holland

Tulip City Exxon
Turning Pointe School of Dance
Unity Christian High School
Vander Lugt Capital Management
VanSlambrouck Family Dentistry
VantagePointe Financial Group/Nate Volkema
Velo City Cycles -20*
Vriesland Country Store
Waverly Stone Gastropub
WelchDry -25*
Wellness Co.
West Michigan CPAP Alternatives
West Michigan Lakeshore Association of Realtors
West Michigan Psychological Services

West Michigan Works!
West Ottawa Public Schools
Western Michigan Fleet Parts Inc. -25*
Westside Service Center - Zeeland -25*
WGVU
Woodward Inc. -25*
Worden -5*
Workforce Employment Specialists
Xylem
Zeeland Board of Public Works
Ziggi's Coffee

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Education Without Barriers:

How SOAR™ is Redefining Learning for Working Adults

By Keith Mitchell

Partner Development Manager, SOAR™ by Cornerstone

For decades, earning a college degree often meant putting life on hold. Working adults had to choose between advancing their education and meeting the demands of work, family, and financial responsibilities. Today, that no longer has to be the case.

SOAR™ by Cornerstone University was created to remove those barriers and make higher education accessible to everyone, regardless of where they are in life or their career.

What is SOAR, and what inspired its development?

SOAR is the nation's first fully accredited, smartphone-first degree platform designed specifically for working adults. Students can earn Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's degrees, as well as Professional Certificate Programs, entirely through their smartphones at their own pace.

The inspiration behind SOAR was simple: millions of talented people never complete a college degree—not because they lack the ability, but because traditional higher education often doesn't fit their lives. Fixed class schedules, long commutes, expensive textbooks, and balancing work and family responsibilities create obstacles that prevent many adults from pursuing their educational goals.

Cornerstone University asked a different question: What if education adapted to students instead of asking students to adapt to education?

That question became SOAR.

Removing barriers and expanding opportunity

SOAR was intentionally built around flexibility and accessibility. Students complete one course at a time through engaging, bite-sized learning experiences that

Providing opportunities for professional development has become one of the most effective ways to attract top talent while improving employee engagement and long-term retention.

include short videos, podcasts, readings, and interactive activities. Because everything is delivered through a smartphone, learning can happen during a lunch break, while waiting to pick up the kids, or after work from the comfort of home.

Students are also supported by dedicated Success Coaches who provide encouragement, accountability, and guidance throughout their educational journey.

Affordability is another critical part of SOAR's mission. Through partnerships with employers, organizations can offer annual tuition scholarships to employees and their immediate family members at no cost to the employer and with virtually no administrative burden.

Why continuing education matters more than ever

Today's workforce is evolving at an unprecedented pace. Advances in technology, automation, artificial intelligence, and changing business demands mean employees must continually develop new skills to remain competitive.

Organizations are also facing increasing challenges recruiting and retaining talented employees. Providing opportunities for professional development has become one of the most effective ways to attract top talent while improving employee engagement and long-term retention.

Recognizing these workforce needs, SOAR recently expanded its offerings beyond degree programs by launching Professional Certificate Programs in high-demand areas such as Organizational Management, Operations Management, Human Capital Management, Strategic Communication, Organizational Leadership, and People & Culture. These certificates allow employees to quickly build practical skills while creating pathways toward future degree completion.

Investing in people strengthens organizations

When employers invest in education, everyone benefits.

Employees gain confidence, leadership skills, and opportunities for career advancement. Organizations benefit from improved retention, stronger internal leadership pipelines, increased employee engagement, and a workforce better prepared to meet future challenges.

Many of our employer partners have shared that offering SOAR has become a meaningful differentiator

in recruiting while reinforcing a culture that values growth and lifelong learning.

Changing lives one student at a time

The most rewarding part of SOAR is seeing students accomplish goals they once believed were impossible.

Many learners are the first in their families to attend college. Others are returning to school after years or even decades away from the classroom. Some are balancing full-time jobs, raising children, or caring for aging parents while pursuing their education.

One of the most inspiring stories comes from a working parent who believed earning a degree simply wasn't realistic. Through SOAR's flexible, smartphone-based platform, they were able to study during breaks at work and after their children went to bed. Today, they are on track to graduate while continuing to support their family full time.

Stories like these remind us that education changes more than careers—it changes families, builds confidence, and opens doors to opportunities that can last a lifetime.

At SOAR, our mission is simple: make high-quality, accredited education available to every working adult who is ready to take the next step.



Keith Mitchell brings more than 25 years of executive leadership experience spanning business development, strategic partnerships, sports technology, higher education, and athlete development. A former NCAA Division I student-athlete, he combines firsthand recruiting experience with a career spent building organizations, forging high-impact partnerships, and creating growth strategies that connect people, organizations, and opportunities.

Throughout his career, Keith has held leadership roles in higher education, entrepreneurship, and technology. He helped expand strategic partnerships at Cornerstone University, founded the athlete technology platform PlayBooked, and developed business relationships for Cinevee, a leader in digital display and visual communication solutions. His work has consistently focused on building collaborative ecosystems that drive measurable growth and long-term success.

Known for his ability to unite vision with execution, Keith brings a unique perspective shaped by experience in athletics, business, education, and technology. He understands recruiting and relationship-building from every angle: the athlete in the locker room, the family in the living room, and the executives in the boardroom. His passion for developing people, building strategic partnerships, and creating sustainable growth has been a defining thread throughout his career.





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