



## 2021 Elections in Lansing

BY MELANIE JONGSMA

LANSING, Ill. (March 2020) – In preparation for this year's local elections, The Lansing Journal gathered information about the races and candidates that directly impact life in the Lansing community. Early Voting begins on March 22, and Election Day is April 6. Those voting opportunities will give Lansing residents occasion to make choices in the following races:

1. Village President (Mayor)
2. Village Trustees

3. Village Clerk
4. Lan-Oak Park District Board
5. Lansing Public Library Board
6. District 215 School Board
7. District 158 School Board
8. District 171 School Board
9. District 510 Community College Board
10. Township-level officials

Many of these races are uncontested—the people who filed for candidacy are running unopposed. The Lansing Journal still worked to gather information from the candidates to share

with voters. We are also providing information about the entities listed above, so voters have a sense of how the people they choose impact community life.

Contested races include Bloom Township elections, District 171 School Board elections, and Village Trustee elections. The Lansing Journal focused extra resources on interviewing the Village Trustee and District 171 School Board candidates, and those stories are featured on the first few pages of this issue. The roster of

Bloom Township candidates begins on page 6, followed by the list of candidates in our other local races (all but District 510, simply because of space limitations).

Even in a small town, a complex network of people and systems work together to build community in a way that attracts new families and businesses. This 2021 Lansing Voter Guide is intended to clarify those roles.

To stay informed about local elections as well as other local news about local schools, businesses, parks, and local government, sign up for the Daily

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## The race for Village Trustee: Meet the candidates



**Brian Hardy**

VILLAGE VOICE PARTY



**Micaela G. Smith**

VILLAGE VOICE PARTY



**Leo Valencia**

VILLAGE VOICE PARTY



**MAUREEN GRADY-PEROVICH**

INDEPENDENT

## Fiscal responsibility, public safety, protecting businesses—Village Trustee candidates share their priorities for Lansing

BY JOSH BOOTSMA

LANSING, Ill. (March 13, 2021) – During the April 6 elections, voters will see four names under the heading "Trustee, Village of Lansing": Brian P. Hardy, Micaela G. Smith, Lionel Valencia, and Maureen C. Grady-Perovich. Three of those candidates will be chosen to represent Lansing residents' interests on the Village Board for the next four years.

The trio of Hardy, Smith, and Valencia represents the Village Voice Party's slate in 2021, along with Mayor Patty Eidam and Village Clerk Vivian Payne, who are running for those positions unopposed. Candidates Hardy and Valencia are trustee incumbents. Hardy was elected to the Village Board in 2017 after unsuccessful attempts in 1997 and 1999. Valencia was appointed by Mayor Eidam to the Board in August of 2020 after Trustee Mike Manno passed away in June. The appointment resulted in the forfeiture of Valencia's chairmanship of the Lansing Human Relations Commission, a position Mayor Eidam had appointed him to in 2018.

Rounding out the VVP slate is Smith, who is currently serving as a commissioner on both the Lansing Human Relations Commission and the Lan-Oak Park Board. She will resign both those positions if her bid for Village Trustee is successful. Smith will be the only person on the ballot who does not have experience on the Village Board.

The fourth and final candidate, Grady-Perovich, is running as an independent. Grady-Perovich is a current trustee,

elected to the position in 2017 after an unsuccessful bid in 2015.

### COVID-19 AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

A nursing professor at Prairie State College, Grady-Perovich is the only current trustee in the medical field. As COVID-19 has forced public bodies around the country to make difficult decisions, Grady-Perovich feels the Village of Lansing has done well in supporting its residents and businesses during the pandemic.

"The Village has met every opportunity that the county or the state has offered," she said, adding that she is particularly proud of how the Lansing fire and police departments have adapted safety protocols to keep firefighters and officers safe while still maintaining their high quality of service to residents.

Grady-Perovich does, however, think that the Village should have considered not increasing its tax levy this fiscal year, a move that some surrounding municipalities made in light of the financial difficulties COVID has placed on residents. She was the only Village Trustee to vote against the current tax levy in December of 2020, citing the increase as her reason for doing so.

Grady-Perovich has also vocally opposed other items brought before the Village Board, including a pay raise for the positions of trustee and mayor, a proposition that was presented by Village administration but never brought to a vote. She also spoke out against the Village's consideration of hiring former Country Club Hills

Mayor Dwight Welch as a Fox Pointe sponsorship coordinator due to questions surrounding his management of the Country Club Hills Theater.

### STREET MAINTENANCE

A more recent topic of discussion at the Village Board has been street maintenance, one that the Village has thoughtfully addressed through the lens of fiscal responsibility.

Results from a recent pavement survey conducted on all 92.9 miles of Lansing streets revealed the following:

- 39.5 miles of the Village's pavement is in good or better condition
- 31.2 miles is in fair condition
- 22.2 miles is in inferior condition or worse

Estimations offered in a January board meeting suggested the Village would need to increase its spending from \$1.1 million per year to \$5.3 million per year for five years to get all Village streets to at least a fair condition.

Hardy thinks that with a reasonable priority given to both resurfacing and sealing, the Village can continue to maintain its streets without breaking the bank.

"Right now, getting out and sealing these [streets] with sealcoating and crack filling ... staying on top of this and spending a little bit of money [will help us] get a lot more life out of our streets," Hardy said. He also praised the Village for "aggressively" seeking out grants and pursuing alternative ways to raise funds for street maintenance and development.

### CONNECTING WITH YOUTH

The youngest candidate in the race, Smith hopes she can connect with Lansing's millennial generation and Generation Z, today's youth. Smith has connections with Building Strong Millennials, a group focused on empowering millennials and minorities, and she wants to bring her passion for helping young people to the Village Board. She also has a connection to State Representative Marcus Evans Jr., as she served as Chief of Staff in his office from 2012 to 2019.

"It's things as simple as listening and asking what their interests and desires are and then offering that platform for them to do it," Smith said. "They don't feel heard, and I want to be that younger candidate that says, 'I understand. I'm with you. I was your age too when I felt ignored.'"

### KEEPING BUSINESSES IN LANSING

As Smith has made a point to connect with youth, Hardy has connected with Lansing business owners in the face of increasing property taxes. Hardy, the longtime owner of Chicago's Finest Ironworks in Lansing, is facing a potential 160% increase in property taxes this year as a result of the Cook County Assessor's triennial property reassessments. Many Lansing businesses have spoken out against the widespread increases—some of which are considerably worse than Hardy's—and Hardy has heard them.

Hardy and other business owners met

See "TRUSTEES," page 2

**“TRUSTEES,” from page 1**

virtually with Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi and some members of his staff to share their concerns about this year's tax bills. “He hears what we're saying, and he said he'd be getting back to us,” Hardy said, adding that Kaegi's communication officer has been in touch with Hardy since that conversation, but no significant changes have yet come about.

Hardy has mentioned the reassessments at some recent Village Board meetings, and Village Administration has set up an online portal for residents to submit their reassessments to the Village. The Village also drafted a resolution in opposition of the Assessor's drastic increases that Hardy hopes many public bodies will sign. He also hopes other local municipalities will follow suit.

“Businesses are the fabric of a community,” Hardy said. “I love our residents, and I want to make sure their property taxes stay down, so the way to do that is you have to make sure you have commerce. So let's keep the businesses here, and let's try to make that grow instead of increasing these property taxes where it's not sustainable.”

**REFORMING BUSINESS LICENSING**

Another relevant topic of concern for Lansing businesses is the business licensing process. Both Grady-Perovich and the Village Voice Party have expressed a desire to reform some parts of the business licensing process.

“We need to clean it up,” Grady-Perovich said. “We need to have an exact policy in place as to what goes first. Do you apply first? Do you go to the Building Department first? We need the steps that these people can follow so as not to skip a step.” Grady-Perovich said throughout her current term she has repeatedly asked Village admin-

istration about formalizing the process.

She also expressed the need for the Village to be more consistent about enforcing professional licenses such as those granted to hair salons, nail salons, and other service businesses. Grady-Perovich raised questions about the Special Use permit granted to Health Foot Massage, for example, noting that not all employees were properly licensed at the time of the request.

A platform item for the Village Voice Party, as explained on their website, is to “establish an annual business license program to improve inspections and provide updated information on Village businesses.”

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

Another way to protect residents and businesses, says Smith, is through a continuing and evolving focus on public safety, especially in light of the recent carjackings in the Chicago area. Smith is an advocate for community policing in Lansing, which she says emphasizes residents' roles in looking out for each other and noticing what's going on in their neighborhoods. According to her, something as simple as starting a block club could help with public safety.

“We do need to get more people to be active in calling the police because one or two from a block is not enough, but if seven or eight from a block call for the same issue, then that response will be more of a priority,” she said.

Increased police visibility helps achieve a greater sense of public safety as well, says Smith, who suggested parking empty police cars in high-crime areas, or doing more ride-throughs in these areas.

**DIVERSITY ON THE VILLAGE BOARD**

Current trustee Saad Abbasy served as the only racial minority on the Village Board until Valencia was appointed last summer. Abbasy is Jordanian while Valencia is Latino.

Valencia expressed his desire to continue using his connections in the Latino community to benefit Lansing, saying, “As a Spanish speaker, I can help bridge communication gaps that may exist. I have spoken to many of our Hispanic business owners and want to continue to seek ways to incorporate their existing needs as well as potential new business owners into village economic planning.”

If elected, Smith would be the first Black trustee in Lansing's history, a reality that is exciting for her given its historical significance, but also daunting for the same reason. She said public office often feels insider-friendly, and to be a part of the Village Board as a Black woman would be “a big deal.”

Smith does not want to make her race the primary issue of her campaign, however. “I don't want to say [of myself], ‘Black person running!’” she said. “I am bringing value. I want to represent the growing population that's in Lansing, and I have a duty and responsibility to show people that good government can happen.”

*Editor's note: All four Village Trustee candidates filled out The Lansing Journal's candidate info form in January. The above story is based on subsequent interviews between The Lansing Journal and the candidates. Lionel Valencia did not respond to The Lansing Journal's interview request.*



Trustee Brian Hardy (right) organized a meeting with realtor Cathy Hallow (center) and property tax attorney Bill Sandrick in October 2020 to discuss options for business owners in Lansing. Hardy owns Chicago's Finest Ironworks, so he empathizes with others facing significant tax spikes this year. (Photo: Melanie Jongsma)



Trustee Maureen Grady-Perovich (right) is a veterans advocate and honorary member of Lansing's American Legion Riders. She and her German Shepherd Pas attended last summer's Blessing of the Bikes. Denise Scholte (left) is the Membership Chair of the Legion Riders. (Photo: Melanie Jongsma)



Trustee candidate Micaela Smith (center) was appointed to the Lan-Oak Park Board in 2017, their first Black commissioner. If she is elected as a Village Trustee this year, she will have to resign her Park Board seat to become the first Black trustee in Lansing's history. (Photo: Melanie Jongsma)

**Notice the envelope**

BY MELANIE JONGSMA, PUBLISHER

LANSING, Ill. (March 12, 2021) - We've included a giving envelope in this print issue for people who want to support the quality community coverage The Lansing Journal provides.

In this issue we are reporting on local candidates in our local races, so Lansing voters can make informed choices. If that kind of news is helpful to you, will you make a contribution?

In addition, you'll find other important community news within these pages—

- Local vaccination information (p. 17)
- Local business news (especially pp. 12, 13, and 18)
- Local events and opportunities for families (pp. 19 and 20, for example)
- Local Easter observances (p. 11, plus all the ads from Lansing churches!)
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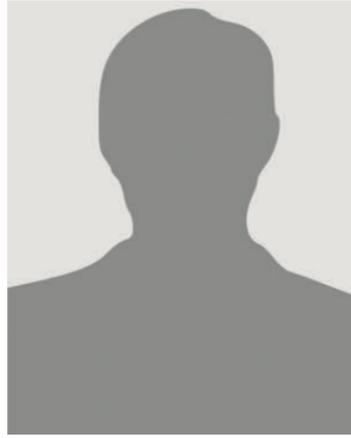
# The race for D171 School Board: Meet the candidates



Cassie Hill



Kenisha LeSure



Timothy Terrell (no photo provided)



Nicole Thompson



Elissa Veloz

## Raising scores, closing gaps, improving communication—District 171 School Board candidates share their priorities

BY JIM MASTERS

LANSING, Ill. (March 5, 2021) – A global pandemic has created new realities for educators across the country. Will the way we teach our kids ever fully return to the pre-pandemic models? Given that learning in the pandemic world is uncertain at times, there's a lot riding on the upcoming Sunnybrook District 171 School Board elections.

Board members will determine the way learning is delivered in the short and long term at Heritage Middle School and Nathan Hale Elementary School. This year, voters will choose from a roster of five District 171 candidates seeking election to the seven-member board.

Seeking office are incumbents Timothy Terrell and Kenisha LeSure, the current president and vice president, respectively.

Nicole Thompson, Elissa Veloz, and Cassie Hill are eyeing their first term on the board. Board member Desiree Ambrose is not seeking another term.

### LEARNING IN THE PANDEMIC WORLD

District 171 students are currently engaged in a hybrid of virtual and in-person learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When they can return to full classroom participation is unknown. Whether or not any instructional gaps can be traced to virtual learning, several of the District 171 candidates believe that standardized test scores need improvement.

Terrell, a clinical researcher, said that he is keenly focused on raising standardized test scores for students, with greater focus on science and math education.

"We have to make sure our kids are ready for the next level," he said. "I want them to continue their education beyond high school."

LeSure, a paralegal, is concerned that a learning gap may in fact have been created through virtual learning. For that matter, she believes it's important that any deficiencies in student performance are addressed on a case-by-case basis.

"We need more student support programs to close any gaps in learning," LeSure said. "Our focus should not be so much providing support across the board, but addressing the needs of individual students."

Thompson, an occupational therapist, believes one of the keys to addressing educational challenges lies in more open dialogue between teachers and parents.

Moreover, the schools should place greater emphasis on teaching subjects on standardized tests over "teaching how to take the test." She added that she would focus on securing grants to fund school library and technology labs.

"My main goal is to make sure we're not only performing well on standardized tests, but excelling beyond those benchmarks," Thompson says. "I've seen our scores steadily declining."

Veloz, president of the Sunnybrook District 171 Parent-Teacher Association, says that education in general will ascend with more parental involvement, as well as by boosting morale among faculty.

"We lost a lot of teachers a couple of years ago, and I believe that had a lot to do with morale," Veloz said. "I'm not saying there's a problem now, but our teachers are paid lower than what they are

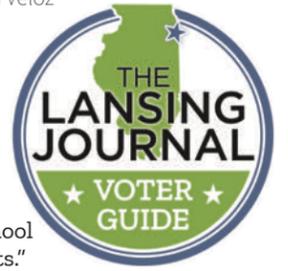
in surrounding school districts."

Hill, a pharmacy technician, said that she would endeavor to "create a template to ensure to track progress and checking in on meeting educational goals." Relative to COVID-19, she wants to focus on keeping safety guidelines in place to protect all people in the building from the spread of illness. Working with local health department officials and designating staff for decontamination purposes will help ensure the overall health of students and staff, she says.

### CONTRACTUALLY SPEAKING

One key item District 171 candidates can put into the rear-view mirror—until its expiration

See "SUNNYBROOK," page 4



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The Area Agency on Aging of Southeastern Cook County

“SUNNYBROOK,” from page 3

on June 30, 2023—is the teacher’s contract that was approved in January after six months of sometimes difficult negotiations.

LeSure points to her role serving on the contract negotiations committee, which she described as a “fair agreement to all teachers, district staff, and school support staff.” She adds that she enhanced her base of knowledge by completing classes that certified her as a “master” school board member.

Referencing board policies and district-wide rules and regulations, Veloz believes there needs to be more transparency in decision-making. For her, it’s a matter of improved communication and clarity involving all stakeholders.

“I was part of the district’s strategic planning initiative, and I want to make sure that it’s fully implemented,” Veloz said.

Terrell sees some unfinished business with the new contract, and he hopes to address them the next round of negotiations. That issue, he says, concerns teachers’ daily planning period, which the faculty chose not to relinquish in lieu of more classroom teaching time.

Thompson believes the contract will be only as strong as the communication and collaboration between the board, teachers, administrators, and parents. She intends to be proactive in seeking input beyond the dialogue among board members, and she believes they should be more collaborative and present with other local governing bodies, such as the Lansing Village Board.

Hill also regards communication as a key issue, particularly when the next round of contract negotiations begins. “We had a rough time before,” she said.

**MORE ABOUT THE CANDIDATES**

The financial solvency of the district and fair wages/salaries are high on Terrell’s list of key issues, as is the pursuit of new and progressive teaching methods, be it virtual or in-person learning.

“My kids went through this school district, and it was a wonderful experience for them,” Terrell says. “I want to give back and make it even better.”

Thompson describes herself a “cheerleader” for parental involvement. She says she will be accountable for her performance as a board member.

“I am a very involved parent,” Thompson says. “I believe that children should choose their own destiny, but it’s up to us to show them they can be successful in life.”

Citing a common refrain—“It takes a village to raise a child”—Veloz said she has seen from school hallways the

impact that fully engaged teachers and parents can have on overall student success.

“As PTA president, I spend a lot of time in the schools,” Veloz said. “I’m always looking for ways to improve things for our kids. I see what’s going on in our district.”

LeSure wants to see Heritage Middle School return to a grading system of quarters rather than the current trimester system. She added, “Designing ‘sensory hallways’ at Nathan Hale will provide ‘high-energy’ students with movement breaks that will help prevent disruptive behaviors from occurring in the classroom.”

Hill, whose three children attend District 171 schools, notes her ability for “sound decision making” and a “reputation for working with integrity, honesty, and reliabil-

ity” as qualifying attributes to serve on the board.

“I’m ready to give back to the community and want our school district to flourish,” she said. “Any decision I make as a board member will be done with the best interests of our students first and foremost.”

Timothy Terrell and Nicole Thompson are running against each other for an unexpired two-year term on the school board. Kenisha LeSure, Cassie Hill and Elissa Veloz are unopposed in the election for a full four-year term.



Where and when to vote

BY MELANIE JONGSMA

LANSING, Ill. (March 6, 2021) - Lansing voters will have their first opportunity to vote when Early Voting opens on March 22. This year, the closest Early Voting locations for Lansing residents are:

- Calumet City Public Library  
660 S Manistee Avenue  
Calumet City, Illinois
- Lynwood Senior Youth Center  
21460 Lincoln Highway  
Lynwood, Illinois

**ELECTION DAY VOTING**

Election Day is April 6, and voters will then be required to visit their own polling places. Polling places are determined by address. Voters can find their polling place using address-based search tools at the Cook County Clerk’s website:

- [www.cookcountyclerk.com/service/your-voter-information](http://www.cookcountyclerk.com/service/your-voter-information)

Top photo: The Calumet City Public Library is located at 660 S Manistee Avenue in Calumet City, just north of the Calumet City Police and Fire Departments. (Photo: Melanie Jongsma)

Bottom photo: The Lynwood Senior Youth Center shares an address with the Lynwood Municipal Center but is in a building just east and south (circled in yellow in the photo). The parking lots connect, so voters who enter from Lincoln Highway near the Municipal Center sign will be able to access the unmarked building that is the Lynwood Senior Youth Center. (Photo: Melanie Jongsma)



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 Robert Parrent  
 Bob Paswinski  
 Libby and Tom Pasztor  
 Vivian Payne  
 Julie Peddy  
 Moira Peterson  
 Kat Podgorski  
 Richard Podgorski  
 Rosemarie Polgar  
 Jennifer Polley  
 Jay and Chris Popp  
 Robin Pottinger  
 Dave Price  
 Joanne Pritchard  
 Rosalie Prystalski  
 Lorraine Przybyl  
 Donna Pyritz  
 Jean Qualls

Anonymous Friend  
 Background Supporter  
 Janet Rehak  
 Penelope Rellis  
 Clarence and Joan Ridder  
 Jim Ridder  
 Mike and Kathleen Ridder  
 Dan and Bethany Roels  
 Bonnie Romanowski  
 Charles Roseen  
 Jane Roseen  
 Jeff Rosinia  
 Jennifer Saia  
 Dolores Samples  
 Priscilla Sanchez  
 Beverly Sanders  
 Jenny Scanland  
 Carol Schaap  
 Rich and Jan Schaeffer  
 Rudy Schaser  
 Ann Schenkel  
 Roberta Schopp  
 Paul and Carol Schultz  
 Sandy Schultz  
 Schultz Insurance Agency  
 Dave Schurman  
 Pete and Shirley  
 Schurman  
 Barb Schwarz  
 Beverly Schweitzer  
 Roberta Scobbie  
 Carolyn Scofield  
 Patricia Seibel  
 Irene Sepiol  
 Robert Sharer  
 Stephanie Sharp-Przekwas  
 Jim Siergy  
 Tanja Simic  
 Tom Simnick  
 Connie Simon  
 Elvis Slaughter  
 Slaughter & Associates  
 Micaela Smith  
 Michelle Smith  
 Rich and Frieda Smits  
 Sons of the American Legion  
 Kelsee Stallinga  
 Tom and Terri Stallinga  
 Kirstin Stellfox  
 John Stewart  
 Tara Stewart  
 Stony Tire Incorporated  
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 Martha Vargas  
 Gerrit Veenstra  
 Tim Vermeer  
 Jeri Villa  
 Peg Vlietstra  
 Karen Vrdolyak  
 Bill and Sandy Vree  
 Norm and Char Vugteveen  
 Gary Warfel  
 Phyllis Warsen  
 Waters Edge Aquascaping  
 Jerry and Pat Wayman  
 Paul West  
 Jeff White  
 Josie Whiting-Smith  
 Dave Wilford  
 Maureen Williamson  
 Ron Wolford  
 Dana Wood  
 Robert Wood  
 Jennifer Yos  
 Tish Yos  
 Deborah Zadrozny  
 Chris Zdanowski  
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**2021 GOOD FRIDAY PRAYER WALK PARTICIPANT**

**Palm Sunday**  
 WORSHIP SERVICE  
 March 28, 9:45am

**Good Friday**  
 PRAYER WALK ON RIDGE ROAD  
 April 2, 12:00pm  
 Meet at St. Ann Church  
 (3010 Ridge Road)

**Easter Sunday**  
 CELEBRATION SERVICE  
 April 4, 9:45am

# Other local races

CANDIDATE BIOS GATHERED BY JOSH BOOTSMA

**BACKGROUND:** The Lansing Journal made efforts to contact all candidates in the April 6 election to gather information to share with Lansing voters. Using a "candidate info form," we asked the same questions of each local office seeker. Answers were prepared and submitted by the candidates. We have been sharing the info online race by race in a series of "Voter Guide" posts.



## TOWNSHIP ELECTIONS

TOWNSHIPS exist to provide services to residents. Both Bloom and Thornton Township offer their constituents food assistance, voter registration assistance, help with filing property tax appeals, and more. Both townships also offer family and youth programs, such as counseling and after-school activities. Townships are also responsible for overseeing roads in unincorporated areas.

Lansing residents south of 186th Street are in Bloom Township; those north of 186th Street are in Thornton Township.

### Bloom Township Supervisor

Three candidates running for one position

#### OCTAVIA ALTHEIMER (INDEPENDENT)

No information available

#### TJ SOMER (KEEP BLOOM STRONG)

**Residence:** Chicago Heights

**Occupation:** Attorney, Corporation Counsel, City of Chicago Heights

#### Resumé highlights:

- I have served as Bloom Township Supervisor since 1997.
- I am an attorney for over 30 years concentrating in municipal and government law. I have served as Corporation Counsel since 2006.
- I am a lifelong resident of Bloom Township acutely familiar with its communities, residents, and the issues that confront us.

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- My team is dedicated to ensuring the continued operation of Bloom Township in a professional, responsible, and HONEST manner as it has been. Hence, our slate name "Democrats working to...KEEP BLOOM STRONG!!"
- Under current conditions, we must continue to address the needs of our seniors and residents with pre-existing medical conditions as it relates to COVID-19 prevention and treatment through education, provision of masks and sanitizers, assistance with registration, and distribution of vaccines and well-being checks.
- We must continue to expand our food pantry services to the growing population facing food insecurity. We now serve approximately 1,500 persons monthly and the need is growing. Nutritional health is an important factor in developing COVID immunity.
- In our next term, the KEEP BLOOM STRONG team intends to assume the role as the regional leader in developing a plan and multi community commitment to addressing the homelessness issue.

#### LORI WILCOX (DEMOCRAT)

No information available

### Bloom Township Clerk

Two candidates running for one position

#### CARLA MATTHEWS (KEEP BLOOM STRONG)

**Residence:** South Chicago Heights

**Occupation:** Orthodontic Assistant, Dr Lisa Eckenstein, Orland Park, IL

#### Resumé highlights:

- Served as Township Trustee 16 years
- Lived in Bloom Township my entire life
- Have always had the desire to help the needy and senior populations

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- Our incumbent Democratic slate of township officials running as the 'KEEP BLOOM STRONG' has provided professional, responsible, honest government to the people of Bloom Township and we will continue to do so.
- We here at Bloom Township are committed to help the needs of the growing senior population along with further expansion of the food pantry to feed the needy and the needs of our homeless population.

#### KELLEY NICHOLS (DEMOCRAT)

No information available

### Bloom Township Assessor

Two candidates running for one position

#### NORA GOMEZ (KEEP BLOOM STRONG)

**Residence:** Chicago Heights

**Occupation:** Village Administrator, Village of South Chicago Heights

#### Resumé highlights:

- I am a Certified Illinois Assessing Officer (CIAO). I earned my designation over eight years ago.
- Prior to being appointed and later elected to office, I held my Real Estate License.
- I understand the importance of property taxes and have helped Bloom Township constituents with questions, concerns, filing exemptions, and holding informational workshops.

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- It is important to have experienced elected officials that understand our community's needs. We are the KEEP BLOOM STRONG team! Throughout the years we have assisted our constituents with the professionalism and honesty they expect and deserve. It is extremely important, as an elected official, to carry myself with pride and dignity which in turn is a reflection of who and how I will represent my Bloom Township Assessor's Office and constituents.
- My goal is to continue to serve Bloom Township resident with their property taxes. My office is staffed with qualified and experienced individuals that have the knowledge to assist our residents. If elected to another term, I will continue to work hard for our taxpayers. I stay involved and committed but, most importantly, informed along with other townships and at the county level through the Cook County Township Assessor's Association (CCTAA) where I also serve on the Executive Board as secretary.

#### LARECIA TUCKER (DEMOCRAT)

No information available

### Bloom Township Highway Commissioner

Two candidates running for one position

#### FRANCISCO 'FRANK' PEREZ (DEMOCRAT)

No information available

#### JOSEPH STANFA (KEEP BLOOM STRONG)

No information available

### Bloom Township Trustees

Eight candidates running for four positions

#### ROBERT BENAVIDES (DEMOCRAT)

No information available

#### CHERYL FRANKLIN (KEEP BLOOM STRONG)

No information available

#### DON GARCIA (KEEP BLOOM STRONG)

No information available

#### RICARDO LEON JR. (DEMOCRAT)

No information available

#### LEONARD MORGAN (DEMOCRAT)

No information available

#### MICHAEL NOONAN (KEEP BLOOM STRONG)

No information available

#### LESHAWN RIDLEY (DEMOCRAT)

No information available

#### JACQUELENE STEWART (KEEP BLOOM STRONG)

**Residence:** Steger, IL

**Occupation:** Senior Investigator (Financial Service Industry)

#### Resumé highlights:

- Steger/South Chicago Heights Library District Trustee (Board Member) 2009-present — Currently Vice President
- Long-time Steger resident with years of service to the community including Friends of Library, Boy Scouts of America, Girls Scouts of America, School District #194, and Steger Recreation.
- Member of Faith Movers Church (non-denominational) located in University Park.

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- KEEP BLOOM STRONG
- Service focus TO the people within Bloom Township and not the other way around.
- Commitment to being professional, maintaining honesty, and preserve Bloom Township democratic integrity.

### Thornton Township Supervisor

Uncontested

#### FRANK ZUCCARELLI

No information provided

### Thornton Township Clerk

Uncontested

#### LORETTA WELLS

No information provided

### Thornton Township Assessor

Uncontested

#### CASSANDRA HOLBERT-ELSTON

No information provided

### Thornton Township Highway Commissioner

Uncontested

#### GEARY DEPUE

No information provided

### Thornton Township Trustees

Four uncontested positions

#### DARLENE GRAY EVERETT

No information provided

#### CHRISTOPHER GONZALEZ

No information provided

#### GERALD JONES

No information provided

#### JOYCE WASHINGTON

No information provided

## LANSING PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD ELECTIONS

LANSING'S Library Board oversees the Library Director and is responsible for reviewing and approving the library's budget and approving all expenditures. In recent years, the board has provided oversight for a number of remodeling projects for the Lansing Public Library, the most recent of which is a remodel of the youth section in the basement. Trustees serve a six-year term. This year three candidates are running for reelection.

### Library Board Trustees

Uncontested

#### BONNIE CUTHBERT

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Retired from various positions with the Village of Lansing

#### Resumé highlights:

- Co-head of circulation at Lansing Public Library for over 5 years
- Appointed to fill a vacated Library Board position in April 2014, and then elected to that position in 2015
- Current Library Board Treasurer

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- Continue advocating for the library as a community center
- Continue to inform the community about all the resources available
- Continue to support our Library Director as she casts vision for the library
- Whatever the future holds in terms of the pandemic, the library will offer ways for the community to gather safely and cheerfully. We have managed to stay open since July 2020, and will continue to serve in any way we can while preserving the safety of our staff and the general public.

#### SHARON NOVAK

No information provided

#### JERI VILLA

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Retired from teaching at St. Ann School

#### Resumé highlights:

- I love reading, and I love engaging with people through reading
- I'm never without a book
- Years of education always necessitated using a library

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- Maintaining current information for students and adults
- Providing adults with a place to learn how to look for jobs, update their resumes, apply online, etc.
- Enriching the lives of Lansing residents through concerts, speakers, and programs that broaden our understanding and appreciation of the world around us
- The Lansing Public Library will always be a place that people love to come and learn and engage with each other. A library should be a center of community. We are fortunate to have a Library Director with a large vision, and the Board needs to support that vision.

## LAN-OAK PARK BOARD ELECTIONS

PARKS and community spaces are important to local residents. As a taxing body, the Lan-Oak Park District uses tax money from the community to upkeep and maintain parks and facilities throughout Lansing. The Lan-Oak Park Board is responsible for policy decisions in the park district, as well as establishing a budget for how money should be spent. Park Board commissioners serve a six-

year term. Though there are two open six-year terms in this year's election, only one person is running. The vacant seat will be filled by appointment.

In addition, two current Lan-Oak Park District Board members—Jim Long and Micaela Smith—are running for other public office. If they win those elections, they would resign their positions on the Park Board, potentially leaving two more openings to be filled by appointment.

John Kelly and Robert Tropp are the two remaining Lan-Oak Park Board commissioners who would be responsible for appointing new commissioners to any open positions.

## Park Board commissioners

Two open positions, one candidate

### JOHN KELLY

No information provided

## LANSING SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

THREE school districts serve Lansing residents—District 215 is the high school district; District 158 is the elementary school district serving families who live north of 186th Street; District 171 is the elementary school district serving families south of 186th.

School boards establish vision, adopt budgets, vote on tax levies, set calendars, approve curriculum, and hire the Superintendent, who oversees the schools in the District. School Board members serve a four-year term. Only one of this year's school board races is contested—District 171.

## District 171 School Board

Five candidates running for four positions (Two candidates—Timothy Terrell and Nicole Thompson—are running for one two-year term; three candidates are running uncontested for four-year terms. See the story on page 3 for more detailed information about these candidates.)

### CASSIE HILL (4-YEAR TERM)

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Cpht Pharmacy Technician, Cardinal Health

#### Resumé highlights:

- Sound decision making
- Make critical decisions
- Ability to set priorities
- Conscientious
- Working well with persons of diverse backgrounds
- Reputation for working with integrity, honesty, and reliability

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- Ensure that no child is left behind due to changes in education administration by working with staff, students, and families to identify any educational needs, create a plan of action to meet those needs, create a template to ensure to track progress, and check in on meeting educational goals.
- Ensure safety guidelines are in place to protect staff and students from spreading illness by working closely with the local health department to make sure we are up to date with recommended standards of care, have staff designated for decontamination purposes, continued education of staff and families.

### KENISHA LESURE (4-YEAR TERM)

**Residence:** Lynwood

**Occupation:** Paralegal-Tom Vaughn Chapter 13 Trustee

#### Resumé highlights:

- Current Board Member, fiscally responsible with the knowledge and passion to assist Sunnybrook 171 by appropriately sustaining its mission, visions, and goals highlighting

“What's Best for the Students”

- IASB Master Board Member
- Policy Committee Member

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- Prior to the start of the pandemic, our district had already been approved for eLearning. We are now attempting to fill the academic gaps left by the disruption of COVID, which must be achieved through equity and not equality as we focus on the individual needs of our students. Our district and staff are more than qualified to carry out this task.
- As a current board member, I am proud that our district effectively trail-blazed and reopened to allow more students to participate in in-person learning. While the school was never completely shut down, the reopening allowed parents who elected through a survey to send their students back to school. We look forward to the day when we will all be comfortable returning. This is still an uphill battle. Our district is a puzzle comprised of many different entities—teachers, administrators, para-professionals, support staff, and students. Not one component is valued more than the other.
- While the negotiation process of the SEA's contract seemed lengthy, it was successful in that it accommodated not only the teachers but all parties within the district. It was critical that no party nor detail was overlooked. It is important that our district remain fiscally responsible, operating within the parameters of our budget yet assuring that teachers and students are provided with the proper tools and devices needed to operate. Maintaining an unbiased board that will focus on the needs of the district in its entirety is the most important issue at stake in this race.
- As a mother of three students who have journeyed through Sunnybrook School District 171 since 2001 and have all gone on to have successful college careers, my goal as a mother and member of my community is to see that the children within my community are afforded the best education that we can provide for future leaders of our communities. In an effort to restore the continuity of education and bridge the gap left by COVID, it is important to plan summer school and support programs that will allow our students the opportunity to catch up as needed.
- Focusing on the individual specific needs of our students can be done by returning the Heritage grading system back to quarters instead of trimesters to match that of Nathan Hale; adding and designing sensory hallways at Nathan Hale that will provide high energy students movement breaks that will assist in preventing disruptive behaviors from occurring within the classroom environment. The sensory path is designed to allow students to focus and return to class ready to learn. As safety is equally as important as our children return to school, in order to prevent the possibility of contamination our bathrooms must be remodeled, making them touch-free and sensor activated.
- I will work with my fellow board members on these strategies so that all of our children have an equitable chance at education so that there are none left behind.

### NICOLE THOMPSON (2-YEAR TERM)

**Residence:** Lynwood

**Occupation:** Occupational Therapist

#### Resumé highlights:

- 25 years as an Occupational Therapist
- 10 years as an Early Intervention therapist for the state of Illinois
- 15 years as a youth leader at Family Christian Center

- 15 years as a parent volunteer at Sunnybrook School District 171

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- We need to increase Parent/Teacher and School Board collaboration
- There is a lack of funding for technology within the district
- Decreased or modified curriculum within the classroom is an issue
- I truly believe that every child deserves a quality education. We spend so much of our time acknowledging actors, athletes, and entertainers that our society does not invest in our youth. If elected, I will collaborate not only with teachers but with parents to create curriculum conducive to ensure growth for every child. I would also apply for grants in order to receive additional funding for our school district to enhance our technology lab and school library.
- In addition to this, I would like to implement programs within the community to bridge gaps for extra curriculum activities.

### TIMOTHY TERRELL (2-YEAR TERM)

**Residence:** Lynwood

**Occupation:** Clinical Research

#### Resumé highlights:

- 35 years of experience in the business and medical industries.
- Ability to provide strategic analytical expertise.
- Provide progressive ideas and implementation to ensure the district is moving financially and educationally.

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- To ensure the district is equitable and financially solvent. That the children of this community have a strong scholastic foundation to pursue their goals and aspirations in their academic and professional career.
- To provide a fair wage/salary for those working in the district.
- To be unbiased and impartial to the children, staff, faculty, and community of Sunnybrook School District 171. To work strategically as a team with all stakeholders within the community that will ensure the success of this district educationally and financially.
- To pursue new and progressive teaching methods so that the children of this community have the same learning opportunities of those in other areas, either via e-learning or in-person learning.
- Establish open communication with parents and teachers to address and bring resolution to their issues and concerns.

### ELISSA VELOZ (4-YEAR TERM)

**Residence:** Lynwood

**Occupation:** Stay-at-home Mom

#### Resumé highlights:

- PTA President of Sunnybrook 171 PTA
- Lansing Special Volunteer Award recipient
- Volunteer as team Mom for Lynwood Little League since 2014

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- There should be more focus on boosting morale in the district which is conducive to a quality learning environment. Also, there should be an emphasis on transparency and adhering to rules and regulations.
- The best way to increase morale is by making everyone in the district feel valued. When a person feels valued they are more inclined to go above and beyond the call of duty because they feel appreciated. Also, I believe there should be emphasis on transparency and adhering to rules and regulations though out the district. I believe if we make these simple adjustments to the core of Sunnybrook's mission we will strengthen the bond of trust with all stakeholders.

## District 158 School Board

Uncontested

### MELISSA ENRIGHT-TAYLOR

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Cosmetologist

#### Resumé highlights:

- Mother of two daughters in D158
- Very involved parent, I've sat on the PTA Board for 3 years at Coolidge and volunteer as often as I can in the school.
- Very interested in the schools and community and their future successes.

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- At this time one of the biggest issues is getting the kids back in school safely full time. I know the current decisions have not been made lightly. I look forward to investing my time to D158 for its continued success in serving the kids and families.
- I feel the best plan is to really listen and hear all the stakeholders of D158. I am a fair, open-minded, and honest person, these are qualities that will help me serve the people of D158 responsibly and respectfully. I am excited to work with fellow board members as a team for continued success of D158. I am dedicated to these schools and community.

### JIM LONG

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Retired educator 40 years: Teacher/coach/athletic director/Department chairman/administrator

#### Resumé highlights:

- Inducted into the Illinois Basketball Coach Hall of Fame 2006
- Named Athletic Director of the Year by the Illinois Directors Association 2005
- Received the Golden Apple Award and Distinguished Teacher award
- Officiated Illinois State Finals in Basketball 2002 and 2003
- Officiated Indiana State Final in football 2012

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- Education and well being of the students
- Use of tax monies wisely
- Technology
- Continue to look for grant money
- My goal is to maintain a balanced budget using district funds to continue providing an excellent education for district students and continue to support the staff in seeking district grants.
- My promise is to listen.

### SARA WALLACE

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Faculty Member, Unity Christian Academy

#### Resumé highlights:

- 15-year resident of Lansing (41-year resident of Lynwood/Lansing)
- 4 children currently in School Districts 158 and 215
- 2 children with IEPs; 1 in the co-taught program

#### Issues, goals, promises:

- Important issues are the continuing changing effects COVID has on the way we deliver quality education to our 158 families and maintaining a positive, solid financial position especially with the ever-changing demands the state of Illinois puts on its school districts.
- I have learned quite a bit from my four years of being a 158 Board Member. A goal is to keep all of the families in 158 in mind when making decisions on education delivery. I will be a voice for all students, especially those who have educational challenges and accommodations.

DISTRICT 158 ELECTIONS, continued

**ROBERT WOOD**

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Retired, Trustee at First United Methodist Church

**Resumé highlights:**

- Experienced board member serving since 1993-1994 school year
- Lansing resident, home owner, and tax payer since 1978
- Involved community volunteer

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- Get the staff and the students safely back into our schools
- Expand Lester Crawl Primary Center to increase impact of early childhood interventions
- Work with SD 215 and other community organizations to take full advantage of all our various resources, i.e. Fox Pointe, Patti Leach Youth Center, Lansing Park District, Lansing Library
- Expand extra-curricular opportunities for youth with before and after school activities
- Take ownership of transportation issues
- Communication is of primary importance. All stakeholders need to be able to voice their concerns and offer solutions and strategies. At the same time, stakeholders need to be informed of the plans in place. Our first goal has to be to offer a safe environment for everyone in the our facilities. Then we can focus on the business of education. The staff of SD158 is well trained, dedicated and devoted. We need to maintain their morale and enthusiasm for their tasks, inspiring our youth to reach their full potential, while exploring the wonders of the world around them.
- Our tax burden has to be equitably shared, however, and an effort applied to the Cook County Assessor to insure that we do not tax our busi-

nesses out of our community, county, and state.

- Lester Crawl expansion is critical to getting children off to a good start in schools, and has to be a top priority for 2021-2022.

**District 215 Board**

Uncontested

**ANDREA BALLARD**

**Residence:** Calumet City

**Occupation:** 4th/5th grade Special Education Learning Behavior Specialist at Hoover Elementary School (District 157)

**Resumé highlights:**

- I am able and eager to hear other points of view and help to build a consensus that is in the best interest of the students and the community.
- I am committed to learning the process of developing policies and working as a team with the hopes of reflecting the input of every dedicated member.
- I am grateful for the opportunity to advocate for our district. I am committed to actively representing the interests of our students, the families, and ultimately the community as a whole.

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- In alignment with our district's mission statement and my core values as a veteran educator of students with physical, cognitive, and emotional challenges, I believe as a board member we must commit to providing a quality learning environment, especially during this unprecedented global pandemic. We must stay abreast of current state and national wide changes to guidelines that have been previously set to make sure that our students and families are receiving materials and nutritional meals that are so needed. It is key to maintain clear and consistent communica-

tion with administrative, educational, and all support staff that will help keep our education process moving forward. We must stay abreast of all educational trends that will ultimately set the tone for providing a diverse, relevant, and responsive learning environment. It is imperative that our young scholars continue to develop the skills that will prepare them to be critical thinkers and problem solvers and will propel them to a successful future no matter the pursuit.

- I promise to be committed to the task, no matter how challenging. I plan to be a fair and objective board member who will value all other ideas and opinions. It will be necessary to utilize this learning experience as a way to build me as a board member and as a person. I promise to be a community listener who will work tirelessly to be an advocate for those I am serving.

**RICHARD DUST**

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Retired

**Resumé highlights:**

- Taught social studies at TF South for 37 years
- Coached cross country, track and softball at TF South for 37 years
- Member of the District 215 School Board for 12 years

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- The board has recently put great effort into increasing equity for everyone within the district. This started with an equity statement that includes all groups in our district and the formation of an Equity Committee. This is the first time the board has had a standing committee for this important area. This vital work must continue. Also, we have to continue to handle the COVID-19 pandemic by ensuring the safety of our students, teachers, staff, and families as our

first priority.

These efforts will build on the other areas of progress the board has made in recent years. We have instituted a full school day for all students and have had a balanced budget every year. There have been increases in graduation requirements, honors courses, A.P. courses, vocational courses and extra curricular activities. Also, we have improved relationships with our unions by going from an adversarial model to a collaborative and cooperative model.

- We will work with students, staff, families and the community to find the best way to get all of our students back into school in a safe manner. Equity work must continue within the district. Our Equity Statement includes all groups within our schools. There is much more work that needs to be done to bring this equity about. This includes continuing the rewriting of our curriculum to make it more relevant to all students. The board will continue with responsible spending—living within our means. There will not be a referendum for any tax increases. We will always be looking for new ways to increase opportunities for all of our students in both academic and extra curricular areas. The board will strive to maintain a good working relationship with our unions to benefit our students. Finally, maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for our students, teachers, staff, and families, no matter what the circumstances, will always be a main goal.

**DIANA JACKSON**

**Residence:** Calumet City

**Occupation:** Senior Accounting Manager



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Saturday, May 22  
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Participants in both competitions have a chance to advance to the Finals in conjunction with the MLB World Series!



**Resumé highlights:**

- I have worked in the accounting field for more than 20 years
- I have worked with various not-for-profits and educational institutions that serve our youth

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- The most important issue for me is equity. We need to ensure there is equity between our schools and within our schools. We need to make sure all students within our district are treated fairly and equitably. We need to ensure our student athletes are treated fairly across all sports regardless of gender or program.
- My goal as a current parent, as a District 215 student, and a District 215 Alumni my promise is to ensure that there is equity and inclusion for all our students in our district. My promise is to ensure that we allocate funds to the appropriate program and causes that benefit our students as a whole. My biggest promise is to ensure we provide our students and staff to with a safe, and healthy, and collaborative working environment to ensure success of all parties.

**MARCIE WILSON**

**Residence:** Lynwood

**Occupation:** Educator

**Resumé highlights:**

- Adjunct Faculty Member at Indiana Wesleyan University: I have been an adult educator for 15 years. I have trained and coached students who needed extra help bridging to college and career readiness courses. As an adjunct faculty member, I teach courses online and face to face in Human Resource Management, Conflict Resolution and Communication skills.
- Social Media and Branding Consultant: As a social media and brand consultant, I coach individuals, churches and businesses on how to promote

effectively online and build their brand to grow their audience. For churches, I show them how to effectively conduct online service.

- Teacher at Heritage Middle School: It is such a great feeling to help to educate the children in my community.

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- It is important for the students in 215 to know that someone cares about their future. Being able to participate in the development of a student is rewarding. I also believe students need to know they have options beyond high school. As a board member I will be able to help students to see their future.
- It's important to make sure every student has the best programming, teachers, and administrators with enough money to make it all happen.
- I promise to dedicate my time, talent, and resources to make District 215 effective for our students.
- I promise to help students thrive post-COVID academically, mentally, and emotionally. Since life has changed for our students, I am dedicated to making sure they can thrive in all areas. I promise to try my best to keep them safe.
- I promise to help the students see a future for themselves whether it's college, career, or military.
- I promise to be a team player and keep the best interest of the students in the forefront.

**VILLAGE BOARD ELECTIONS**

LANSING'S Village Board consists of the Mayor (sometimes called Village President), six Trustees, and the Village Clerk. The Mayor oversees the Village's overall operation and is responsible for making sure Village ordinances and laws are followed. Village Trustees initiate, consider,

and vote on issues that affect life in Lansing—economic development, public safety, roads and infrastructure, finances, and property. In general, the Mayor votes on issues only if the Trustee vote results in a tie. The Village Clerk takes minutes at Board meetings but does not cast a vote. In Lansing, the Mayor also serves as Liquor Control Commissioner, granting liquor licenses to businesses that apply.

**Village President (Mayor)**

Uncontested

**PATRICIA EIDAM (VILLAGE VOICE PARTY)**

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Mayor, Village of Lansing

**Resumé highlights:**

- Lansing's first female Police Officer/ Paramedic, 1979
- Lansing Village Trustee 10 years
- Lansing Village Clerk 4 years
- U.S. Army Veteran

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- Funding for the Pavement Management Program, which includes street resurfacing, seal coating and crack filling, and other major infrastructure.
- Funding, including grants, to improve the lighting of streets in residential areas.
- Attracting new business and development to Lansing Municipal Airport including the restoration, preservation, and promotion of the Ford Hangar as an event center and tourist attraction.
- Continue to promote and develop Fox Pointe as a premier destination venue with emphasis on interest in Fox Pointe to attract upscale retail businesses and restaurants to downtown Lansing.
- Establish an annual business license program centered on updated con-

tact information and safety inspections.

- Continue recognizing importance of diversity and working to help build an inclusive culture in the community.

- Prioritize and support the redevelopment of Torrence Avenue between 178th Street and Thornton-Lansing Road as well as in the Landings Shopping Center.

**Village Clerk**

Uncontested

**VIVIAN PAYNE (VILLAGE VOICE PARTY)**

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Lansing Village Clerk

**Resumé highlights:**

- Village Clerk – 2017 to Present
- Executive Assistant to the Mayor – 2009 to 2017
- Elected as a Trustee to the South Suburban College Board of Trustees

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- Maintaining the exceptional service of the Clerk's office by blending online technology with professional face-to-face interaction to best ensure effective communication with Lansing residents and businesses.
- Working with the administration and Village Board to review and update existing Village ordinances.
- I will maintain an ample amount of welcoming and friendly front counter staff during peak periods. This includes bi-lingual employees to help our Spanish-speaking residents. I will also post a Clerk's Corner section on the Village website that provides up-to-date information for residents re-

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"I can really tell that God is the center at LCS! I also appreciate the COVID 19 plan in place at LCS. I know that everyone is doing what they can to keep everyone safe."

LCS PARENT

"LCS has been such a blessing to our family. The entire staff is so amazing! Our son is not only growing academically but spiritually as well! So happy we picked LCS for our family!"

LCS PARENT

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garding new ordinances and timely options for paying water bills and purchasing vehicle stickers.

### Village Trustees

Four candidates running for three seats (See the story on page 1 for more detailed information about these candidates.)

#### MAUREEN GRADY-PEROVICH

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Professor of Nursing

**Resumé highlights:**

- Current Village of Lansing Trustee overseeing Youth Center and Insurance
- Lansing resident for 34 years
- 41 years in Nursing (over 30 years in Emergency Nursing)
- 14 years as Professor of Nursing
- Active Volunteer, Honor Flight Chicago, Common Ground, Volunteer Recognition Committee

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- Public Health / Safety
- Communication with stakeholders—I will answer emails and telephone calls and follow up as indicated; communication is the core value in improving Lansing. I will work closely with Lansing businesses, schools, churches, organizations, and the Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce to define areas where we can work together for a common goal.
- I pledge fiscal responsibility. I appreciate the enormous confidence voters have placed in me. I will continue to support cost effective plans to improve our Village's infrastructure and services needed by our residents, businesses, and visitors.

#### BRIAN HARDY (VILLAGE VOICE PARTY)

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Self-employed fabricator/welder

**Resumé highlights**

- 4 years experience as an elected Village Trustee in Lansing
- Owner/operator of a successful business in Lansing for over 33 years (Chicago's Finest Ironworks)
- Former President and Director of the Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce, 1996 to 1999

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- Continuing to fund our Pavement Management Program to help repair and maintain our streets
- Maintaining an aggressive pursuit of grants to financially assist all of our departments
- Working with other taxing bodies and local agencies to reduce property taxes for Lansing residents and businesses
- Collaborating with other local agencies and groups on programs that benefit Lansing residents
- As a Village Trustee for the last 3 1/2 years, giving back to my community has always been a priority.
- As a resident and business owner in Lansing for over 30 years, my goal is to promote and develop continued economic development throughout the village while also prioritizing public safety for our entire community.

#### MICAELA SMITH (VILLAGE VOICE PARTY)

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Community Relations & External Affairs Coordinator, Thornton Township

**Resumé highlights:**

Here are three bullet points that indicate my qualifications:

- Chief of Staff for a State Representative Marcus C. Evans, Jr., 2012-2019
- Assistant Director of Government Affairs & Community Relations for

Chicago State University, 2019-2020

- Lan-Oak Park District Commissioner, 2017-present

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- COVID Recovery- The COVID-19 pandemic has created a crisis for all and it's critical to revitalize our Village so that our businesses, families, seniors and students can thrive again.
- Public Safety- The recent spike in carjacking, other robberies and theft has made our communities apprehensive. It is extremely important to enhance public safety measures to protect the well-being of citizens.
- Interact with Businesses- Maintain a neutrally beneficial relationship between the Village of Lansing and its business community through programs such as the Lansing Facade Improvement program.
- Constituent Services – Provide assistance for programs and resources that are necessary to sustain improved quality of life.
- Accessibility – Encourage open communication, feedback and discussions about any issues, concerns and questions.
- Partnerships & Collaboration – Working together can help achieve goals for long-term cost-savings and service improvements to strengthen the community.

#### LIONEL VALENCIA (VILLAGE VOICE PARTY)

**Residence:** Lansing

**Occupation:** Director of Operations at Staffing, Inc. in Willowbrook, IL

**Resumé highlights:**

- Appointed as a Village Trustee in 2020
- Chairman, Lansing Human Relations Commission, 2018 to 2020
- Past President, Lansing Association for Community Events (L.A.C.E.), 2018 and 2019

**Issues, goals, promises:**

- Together with my fellow candidates, we will continue to work on making a difference in the quality of life for diverse groups of Lansing residents. As the former president of L.A.C.E., I see the Fox Pointe venue as an ideal location to bring groups together and help create a shared sense of community.
- I am proud to be a voice for our growing Hispanic community. I bring different perspectives to the table. As a Spanish speaker, I can help bridge communication gaps that may exist. I have spoken to many of our Hispanic business owners and want to continue to seek ways to incorporate their existing needs as well as potential new business owners into economic planning. I will work hard to facilitate communication not only for our Hispanic residents and business owners but also for the entire Village.



FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION about local candidates in Lansing's local elections, visit the "Local elections" news category at The Lansing Journal's website. For quick access scan the QR code. Or visit [www.thelansingjournal.com/news/category/elections/](http://www.thelansingjournal.com/news/category/elections/)



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# OBITUARIES / MEMORIALS

## Pamela Marie Kowal

FEBRUARY 17, 2021

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE FAMILY



Pamela Marie Kowal (née Natzke) age 65, of Boise, ID, formerly of Calumet City/Lansing, IL, passed away Wednesday, February 17, 2021. She is survived by her beloved husband Timothy Kowal.

Loving mother of Aaron J (Ana); devoted grandmother of Jameson and Zeke; dearest sister of Patricia, Thomas (Laurie), Robert (Pamela Huizenga), Barbara (Joseph)

Januchowski and Joseph (late Janette); fond aunt of Mark Olszewski, Heather Groff, Tom and Lani Januchowski. Dear mother-in-law Violet Kowal. Brothers-in-law Mike (Kathy) and Bill (Karla); Cousins Mary, Jay and Janet. Pam is preceded in death by her parents, Thomas and Roberta Natzke, grandparents Robert and Grace Schwieman, and father-in-law James Kowal.

A celebration of life may be planned at a later date.

## Robert Meredith

FEBRUARY 23, 2021

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE FAMILY



Robert S. Meredith passed away suddenly on February 23, 2021, at the age of 55, in Allentown, PA.

He is survived by his loving daughter Michelle Gomez (Meredith), son-in-law Fernando Gomez, stepdaughter Christina Stemple (Verdone), son-in-law Matthew Stemple, grandchildren Colin and Kansas Stemple, late son Michael Leach, brother John Meredith, sister-in-law Sharon Meredith, sister Debbie Peterson, nephew David Meredith, niece Theresa Uylaki, and many other family and friends.

After high school, Rob served in the Air Force and was honorably discharged.

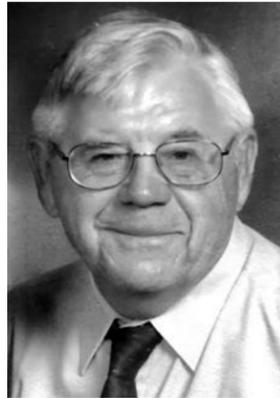
Rob was a man of much random knowledge; he was kindhearted and would do anything for anyone; he was a kid at heart, loved vacationing and family outings and the Chicago Cubs. He will be forever missed.

In lieu of flowers please light a candle to celebrate Rob's life.

## Milton Van Drunen

JANUARY 30, 1925 – JANUARY 30, 2021

INFORMATION FROM SCHROEDER-LAUER FUNERAL HOME



Milton Van Drunen of Lansing, IL, passed on to his heavenly home on January 30, 2021, his 96th birthday, surrounded by his family: loving wife AnnaMae (nee Huizenga) and children late Milton (Rita) Van Drunen, Kathy (Bill) Dykstra, Debra (Jim) Panozzo, Steve (Debra) Van Drunen, Joel (Carol) Van Drunen, 18 grandchildren, their spouses, and 44 great grandchildren. Milton was preceded in death by his

great-granddaughter, Lara Van Drunen.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a private family service was held at Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Lansing, Illinois. Mr. Van Drunen was laid to rest at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, Elwood, Illinois. Family and friends were invited to view the service via livestream.

Milton was born to Gerrit and Johanna (nee Van Heest) Van Drunen on January 30, 1925, and is survived by sister Pearl (late Quirinius) Reynhout and preceded in death by sisters Joann (late Isaac) Van Der Heyden, Bess (late Hilbert) Bult and Flora Hawkins.

Milton graduated from TF North High School in 1943 on a Friday, and he enlisted in the Navy on the following Monday, serving proudly as a torpedo man on the submarine tender U.S.S. Sperry in the South Pacific. His years of hard work included working at Boonstra's Poultry Store and over 40 years of roofing with Lange Roofing.

Milton was a loving friend to many, known for his jokes, quips, songs, and stories. He truly loved his family and loved spending time with them. In his spare time he found joy in gardening and fishing, when he got a chance. He was a faithful member of New Hope Christian Reformed Church and daily modeled his faith to everyone he met. Milton was loved by many, and he will be truly missed.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made in Milton's name to the Christian School of your choice.

## Marlene E. Wojciehowski

DECEMBER 23, 1935 – FEBRUARY 5, 2021

INFORMATION FROM SCHROEDER-LAUER FUNERAL HOME



Marlene E. Wojciehowski, born in Harvey, IL, to Budrow and Norma (Grueter) Bennot, died peacefully on Friday 2/5/2021. She was predeceased by her parents, her former husband George E Wojciehowski, her brother Budrow Richard (Dick) Bennot, sisters Nona Lulich, Patricia Bennot, and her grandson Torry Wojciehowski Cartwright. She is

survived by her aunt Phyllis (Bennot) Killpatrick, sister Janis Bennot; 6 children: Mark (Nancy) Wojciehowski, Marsha (Doug) Glassford, Lynn Cartwright, Laura (Ron) Eisaman, Cheryl (Ken) Reininga, and Carol (Bobby) Angarola; 9 grandchildren: Karyn Davis, Ryan Davis, Christopher Eisaman, Lauryn (David) Mann, Catie (Josh) Henry, Ronnie Eisaman, Travis Trevino, Lindsay Glassford, and Kendra Reininga; 9 great grandchildren: Aidan, Aubrey, Avery, Alexis, Tylor, Gwendolyn, Joel, Emma, and Olivia; and numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Marlene grew up in Harvey, IL. She attended Thornton High School, Class of 1953, where she was very athletic and performed as a baton twirler. She moved to Thornton, IL, where her father's family went back four generations to the mid 1860s. She then married, had 6 children, and opened a Snack Shop on Chicago Road in the little town. Marlene loved playing card games, bowling, vacationing in WI, socializing, and especially her family! Marlene's fondest memories were of the 20+ years she spent living in Vero Beach, FL. After retiring as a manager for the San Antonio Shoe company (SAS) she took a position as a private nanny for two small boys. Their mother Jennifer was an optician, and their father Deryl Loar was about to run for Sheriff of Indian River County, FL. Marlene was very actively involved with campaigning in the communities, and Deryl was elected and then reelected multiple times. Marlene touched the lives of everyone she met with her loving and generous spirit. She will be greatly missed!

A Celebration of Life service is being planned for Friday, July 2, 2021. Marlene will then be interred in the Garden of Serenity Wall II #76 at Oakland Memory Gardens, Dolton, IL.

The Lansing Journal can work with funeral homes or directly with families to publish obituaries with photos in our daily online edition. These posts are then included in the morning email that is sent to our subscribers. For more information, contact [info@thelansingjournal.com](mailto:info@thelansingjournal.com).

## Freedom Church presents case for Special Use and variance request

BY MELANIE JONGSMA

LANSING, Ill. (March 3, 2021) – "I am so appreciative of the Village of Lansing," said Pastor Thaddeus Searcy at the March 2 Village Board Committee of the Whole meeting. Searcy was there to provide information and answer questions about the Special Use and variance request for Freedom Church Ministries. "[Lansing] is just an incredible village. ...And we want to build something that will last in the village of Lansing."

Last year the church purchased the campus previously owned by Illiana Christian High School (2261 Indiana Ave.). They met with the Planning and Zoning Board to request a Special Use to allow a church in a residential district. A variance is also required because Freedom Church would be located within 750' of Oak Glen United Reformed Church. The Planning and Zoning Board agreed last March to recommend Village Board approval, but the pandemic altered Freedom Church's timeline for occupancy.

Searcy and Freedom Church are now hoping to have their first in-person worship service in the remodeled building on Sunday, March 21, pending Board approval.

### RESIDENTIAL CONCERNS

Residents from the surrounding neighborhood voiced some concerns during the public comment portion of the March 2 meeting. "My back yard is facing the main parking lot there," said Eric Spolmar, who lives on Violet Rd., "and I went through a lot with the kids at the high school, with loud music after basketball games and all kinds of stuff." On occasions when Illiana's parking lot was full, cars would circle around on Violet Rd., sometimes parking there and blocking driveways. Though Searcy had said Freedom Church would be limiting attendance at worship services to 222 cars—the number of parking spaces on the campus—Spolmar is worried that special events such as weddings and funerals could draw larger crowds, as could the basketball tournaments Searcy had shared as an example of how Freedom Church wants to use the building.

Tina Arteaga submitted a public comment virtually that questioned whether "another church in this area is the best allocation of resources." She also cited complaints about garbage removal, leaf pick-up, snow plowing, and the general upkeep of the building and property. Village Administrator Dan Podgorski pointed out that because that area is zoned as an R2 Single-Family Residential District, it cannot be used for commercial or industrial purposes. "You're only ever gonna get a church or a school there," he told the Trustees.

The vote for approval is scheduled for the March 16 Village Board meeting.



Pastor Searcy addressed Trustees and the public at the March 2 Committee of the Whole meeting. (Photo: Melanie Jongsma)

## Community Good Friday Prayer Walk planned for April 2

BY JOSH BOOTSMA

LANSING, Ill. (February 17, 2021) – The community prayer walk "Stations of the Cross" is scheduled to take place this year on April 2. The annual Good Friday tradition will step off at noon from St. Ann Catholic Church, walk west while stopping for each of 14 "stations," and end at Trinity Lutheran Church, about three quarters of a mile overall.

Last year's Good Friday walk was cancelled and replaced by a video. This year's event will require participants to wear masks and maintain social distancing. In previous years, the prayer walk concluded with an inside service, but this year's will end with a short outside prayer service.

### ALL ARE WELCOME TO HISTORICALLY-ROOTED OBSERVANCE

A flyer for the event says, "All are invited and encouraged to participate as a community commemorating the events that transpired as Jesus carried his cross to Golgotha to be crucified." In 2019, the prayer walk drew a crowd of nearly 200 people. For some, this year's event may mark the first large group gathering they have been part of in over a year.

The tradition of 14 stations has roots in Catholicism, with images depicting Jesus Christ on his way to be crucified. The Lansing prayer walk has relied solely on Bible readings and prayers to establish the stations.

Four local faith leaders have agreed to participate in the event so far: Pastor John Holyer of Trinity Lutheran Church, Fr. Mark Kalema of St. Ann Catholic Church, Pastor Dave Price of First United Methodist Church, and Pastor Jonathan Vitale of Lansing Assembly of God.

St. Ann Catholic Church is located at 3010 Ridge Road, and Trinity Lutheran Church is located at 2505 Indiana Avenue. More information is available by calling Trinity Lutheran Church at 708-474-7997.

# Lansing taxing bodies work together to demand property tax fairness for local businesses

## Support hoped to spread, Village creates online portal for businesses

BY JOSH BOOTSMA

LANSING, Ill. (March 13, 2021) – When business property reassessments were released last year in Lansing, some of the Village's property owners were shocked at the likely increase in taxes they would have to pay in 2021. In the last few months, public bodies in the Village of Lansing have taken steps to advocate on behalf of local businesses by creating a joint resolution to send to the Cook County Assessor's Office.

### SPIKING ASSESSMENTS: HOW WE GOT HERE

During the Cook County Assessor's 2020 reassessment of property in south suburban Cook County, many commercial and industrial properties in Lansing were assessed at a much higher value than in previous years. According to data available on the Cook County Assessor's website, some values doubled, tripled, or even quadrupled, forcing some Lansing businesses to consider closing or moving to Indiana to avoid unmanageable tax bills in the coming years.

As was first reported in the December print issue of The Lansing Journal, one example of a drastic increase in property assessment values is the property on the northeast corner of Roy Street and Ridge Road (3300 Ridge Road). This property houses Mancino's Pizza & Grinders, Oo Wee Chicken & Ribs, The Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce, and soon Pour on Roy. The assessed value of the property quadrupled from \$54,596 in 2020 to \$216,643 in 2021. Assuming the equalized tax rate remains similar to last year, the taxes owed on the property will quadruple as well, an increase that property owner Jim Todd says will force him to move or close his business in the next handful of years.

### LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

Since the reassessments were released, some Lansing business owners have spoken virtually to Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi and members of his staff. Village Trustee and Lansing business owner Brian Hardy has been part of some of those conversations and said a February 27 email from Kaegi's Communications Officer

Scott Smith indicated the Assessor's Office was aware of the issue and was hoping to get it resolved.

### JOINT RESOLUTION

At the February 2 Village Board meeting, Village Administrator Dan Podgorski presented a resolution which he explained was a combined resolution, meaning it is designed to be passed by more than one governing body.

The title of the first draft of the resolution is, "A JOINT RESOLUTION DEMANDING FAIRNESS AND EQUITY IN DETERMINING THE ASSESSED VALUE OF COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES FOR THE CALCULATION OF REAL PROPERTY TAXES."

Podgorski said the resolution was drafted by the Village's attorneys and represents an effort on behalf of the Village to "put as much pressure as we can on the Assessor's Office, and plead for some equity in the assessment process, and some relief and some consideration for commercial and industrial property owners."

The three-page draft includes a demand for "fairness and equity by the Cook County Assessor in determining the assessed value of commercial and industrial properties," as well as a demand for the Cook County Assessor to "re-evaluate the distribution of the tax burden on their commercial and industrial property owners."

The resolution also states, "The Governing Bodies urgently request that the Cook County Assessor immediately decrease assessed values for commercial and industrial real estate beginning in 2020: a) based on the COVID-19 epidemic, b) based on business vacancy rates, and c) based on the current economic hardships faced by businesses and the Governing Bodies."

After reading the draft resolution to the Village Board on February 2, Podgorski said, "It's on the front of every-

one's minds, and we'd like to do everything we can to convince the assessor that his office needs to evaluate what's being done to our commercial property and industrial property owners."

### SUPPORT FOR THE RESOLUTION

The strength of the Village's resolution lies just as much in its supporters as in its language. Podgorski mentioned many of Lansing's public bodies were interested in adopting the resolution, meaning they would be part of the "Governing Bodies" mentioned in the joint resolution.

Aware of the staggering tax increases facing some Lansing businesses this year, District 158 School Board President Bob Wood was quick to approach the Village and discuss ways to help. This discussion was then brought to a virtual intergovernmental meeting in late January.

"Pretty soon we realized that there was a lot of mutual support ... and we really started talking about how we could garner more widespread support," said District 158 Superintendent Nathan Schilling, who wrote a letter to Illinois State Representative William Davis explaining the situation.

Schilling said W.C. Reavis Elementary Principal Dave Kostopoulos wrote a similar letter to State Representative Marcus Evans Jr.

Another public body that intends to support the resolution is the Lansing Public Library. Library Director Debbie Albrecht said, "Normally taxing bodies don't get into the politics of other things, but to me, this isn't about politics. This is about what's right and wrong."

Albrecht said Podgorski made a presentation before the Library Board in February. The Library Board will vote on whether or not to support the joint resolution at their March board meeting.

"It just seems like such a shame because with Fox Pointe ... [Lansing] is right on the cusp of being a place that people are going to want to come to, where maybe you want some new restaurants, and bars, and busi-



Village Administrator Dan Podgorski

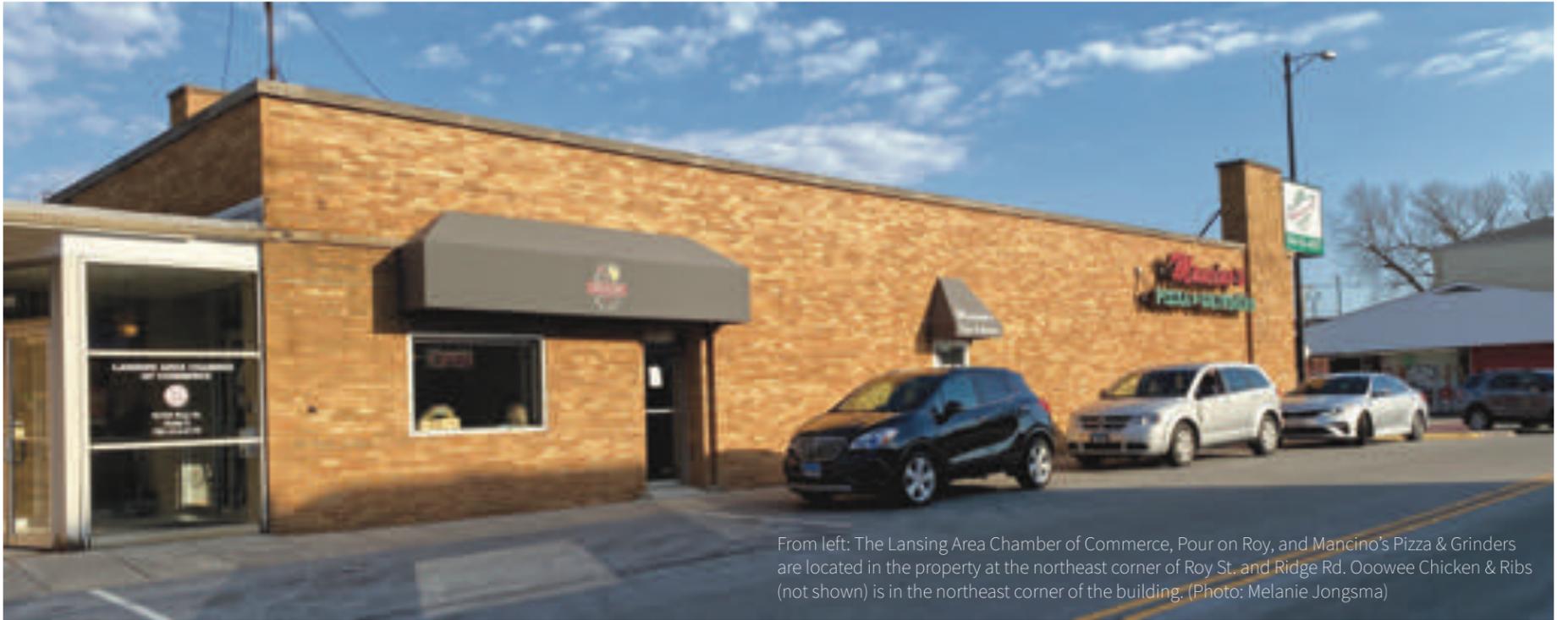
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# Easter

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From left: The Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce, Pour on Roy, and Mancino's Pizza & Grinders are located in the property at the northeast corner of Roy St. and Ridge Rd. Ooowee Chicken & Ribs (not shown) is in the northeast corner of the building. (Photo: Melanie Jongsma)

nesses because we'll have more traffic in town. Well, this is just going to kill that!" she said of the expected increase in property tax bills.

Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce Director Amy Todd said the Chamber Board already voted to support the resolution once it's finalized. Todd owns Mancino's Pizza & Grinders, mentioned above as a business that will be devastated by property taxes over the next few years if nothing changes.

The District 215 School Board is also planning to pass the resolution once it's finalized, with School Board President Michael Bolz describing the board's position as "very supportive."

Lan-Oak Park District Superintendent Sharon Desjardins said the Lan-Oak Park Board would be "discussing and possibly acting on the resolution at its March 15 meeting."

It is unclear if Sunnybrook School District 171 will vote to adopt the resolution.

#### PRESSURING THE ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

Podgorski said the goal for the resolution is not only to have Lansing's public bodies adopt it but also get more widespread support.

"Resolutions, we know, are non-binding, but if we can get enough taxing bodies within Lansing, and possibly start to convince some taxing bodies outside of Lansing to do the same, possibly we can put together enough pressure on the Assessor's Office to reconsider and to pay attention to the hardships that they're placing on our property owners," Podgorski said.

He also mentioned the Village would usually look to the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association for guidance in these types of issues, but the Association is waiting to see

some of the results from the property tax appeals process before taking any action.

"If enough taxing bodies would support resolutions like this, we may be able to force the assessor to adjust those assessed valuations just by raising the profile of the issue," Podgorski said. "So, no guarantee that is this going to result in what we want, but we don't have a chance of it if we don't go down this path."

#### AN ONLINE PORTAL FOR BUSINESSES IN THE MEANTIME

As public bodies seek to effect change in the Assessor's Office, the Village of Lansing has opened a portal on its website by which business property owners can send the Village basic information about their property reassessments. The Village hopes to collect examples of inequity in property reassessments in Lansing to be able to reference them in potential conversations with the Cook County Assessor's Office in the future.

The portal, which asks property owners to submit their Property Index Number (PIN), 2019 assessed value, and 2020 assessed value, is available at [www.villageoflansing.org/village\\_departments/planning\\_and\\_development/property\\_tax\\_assessment\\_portal.php](http://www.villageoflansing.org/village_departments/planning_and_development/property_tax_assessment_portal.php).

"While knowingly they should be taking their challenges, their appeals, to the Board of Review and the Assessor's Office, we are certainly willing to offer some assistance and to help," Podgorski said during the February 17 Village Board meeting. "If nothing else, it may help us advocate—when we get the resolution adopted—it may help us cherry-pick a couple of examples that maybe we would attach to the resolution when we send it."



The Todd family invested money, time, and labor to remodel the space where they will open Pour on Roy, beginning before they learned their property tax bill would quadruple. Brothers-in-law Jim Green (left) and John Todd pitched in with the rest of the family. The Todds are not sure now how long they'll be able to sustain their new business under that kind of tax load. (Photo: Amy Todd)

## QuikTrip gas station approved for former Kmart location

Southeast corner of 173rd and Torrence

BY JOSH BOOTSMA

LANSING, Ill. (February 6, 2021) — On February 2, the Village Board approved a special use permit for QuikTrip to operate a gas station at the southeast corner of 173rd Street and Torrence Avenue, a potential project that would see the old Kmart building demolished and replaced by fueling areas and a parking lot for the QuikTrip gas station and convenience store.

The special use approval comes after QuikTrip representative Andrew Smith made a presentation before both the Planning and Zoning Board on December 9, 2020, and the Village Board Committee of the Whole on January 19, 2021.

#### GAS STATION AND CONVENIENCE STORE TO FILL CURRENTLY EMPTY LOT

The proposed project would bring a QuikTrip convenience store to the high-profile corner. The store would face northward, and a covered gas fueling area would be on the north side of the store and a diesel fueling area to the east.

The southeast corner of 173rd and Torrence is currently a vacant lot, with LA Fitness located at the south end. On the east side of the lot along Oak Avenue is the former Kmart building.

Smith said QuikTrip was involved in talks with LA Fitness about how to share parking areas in the lot. He also said the company plans to do landscaping work around the lot, which currently has little more than concrete.

Though planned as a popular spot for highway truckers to stop for gas and grab a bite to eat, Smith said the location will not be place for truckers to stay overnight, and onsite staff are trained to enforce that rule.

At this point, Smith said, the facility is not planning to include

any fast food partnerships and will sell its own food and packaged alcohol. Slot machines are planned for the location as well.

Smith said the process to start construction would ideally start in the spring of 2021, and once started, the opening date would be roughly 9-10 months afterward.



# Eight months of Common Ground

Well into Lansing's year-long pilot program, partnerships describe their experience

BY ASHLEE DE WIT

LANSING, Ill. (March 5, 2021) – The year-long Common Ground pilot program is more than halfway over, and the experiences of each group have been as diverse as the participants.

Common Ground, which launched in August 2020 with 44 people, partners participants with someone of a different cultural background. The stated goal is for each partnership to meet at least once a month for a year. The program is designed to help people explore differences, correct misunderstandings, and discover similarities through informal meetings. The partners are provided with a list of questions for each month's meeting to help start and guide their conversations.

## ENLISTING LANSING LEADERS

The pilot program aimed to bring in Village officials, school board members, members of the Human Relations Commission, and other leaders in the Lansing community. Ideally, it will expand further in the future.

Melanie Jongsma is coordinating the program after bringing the idea to the Human Relations Commission (HRC) more than a year ago. Jongsma is Publisher of The Lansing Journal, but is acting as a private Lansing citizen in her role with Common Ground. She has coordinated the program before, in her church, and offered to help the HRC launch a Lansing version. COVID lockdowns slowed the process of starting the program in early 2020, but Jongsma was able to organize the launch meeting late last summer.

The HRC, which seems like a natural fit for the program, was originally acting as the program sponsor, but they ran into issues around how to interpret the Open Meetings Act. In the meantime, Jongsma continued providing leadership. The commissioners are now once again talking with her to figure out exactly how they can be involved.

Jongsma notes that while the program doesn't technically need a sponsor, sponsorship does help to get the word out. She has also considered the newspaper as a sponsoring organization, citing the Journal's mission of community building as another good fit for Common Ground.

## FREEDOM AND STRUGGLE

As program coordinator, Jongsma sends emails to participants at least once a month, organizes quarterly full-group meetings, and advises partners when issues arise. But because the program is largely self-directed, each partnership has a lot of freedom to decide where, when and how to meet.

Some groups clicked immediately; others took more time to warm up. Some partnerships have struggled with resistance, hectic schedules, and COVID fears, and never really got off the ground.

## WHAT SUCCESS CAN LOOK LIKE

Here's a look at a couple groups who have had success in the first half of this village-wide program, and what they think the future of Common Ground can be:

### Ken and Cam

Ken Reynolds is a former TF South English teacher and is currently the Director of Communications for the Village of Lansing. He's white.

Cam Sanchez traces his heritage back to a Black, American slave and a Cuban immigrant, among others. He's currently a student at TF South.

At first glance, they don't seem like a likely pair—but because of the Common Ground program, the two have shared deep conversations, lots of friendly banter, and meals at Mancino's.

"At the first general [Common Ground] meeting, we quickly realized that not only do we have a different race, but also the greatest age difference of any of the partners—which is a credit to him, and also means that I am

old," Reynolds laughed.

They do have some things in common, of course. One is that they both like to talk, which has been a great asset during their partnership.

"We start on one question, and we never finish it!" Sanchez said. "We go all over [during the meetings]—it's a business meeting, it's 'how's the family?' We never get through all the questions, but we have amazing conversations. One of our biggest things is current events. I truly enjoy that we're in a position that we're comfortable discussing this—comfortable discussing the plain truth of what's going on, and what's been going on."

"One of the things I've enjoyed the most is that we have these conversations in general, but also on a personal level," Sanchez added. "We have this open dialogue, but it's non-confrontational. I truly enjoy that."

That kind of connection doesn't happen overnight. "It takes some time to get to the questions, but we're developing a relationship. We've completely lost track of time during our conversations. He's a confident young man, and it's refreshing to see someone who knows they want to help," said Reynolds, citing Sanchez's work with We Are Lansing, the nonprofit he started earlier this year.

Reynolds and Sanchez both have great respect for the community they're a part of.

"Lansing is so small, but so big. Many people don't know their neighbor, don't know the local businesses," Sanchez said.

"Early on, we agreed that we'd be meeting at Lansing restaurants, when they're open," Reynolds added. "The name of the program is pretty clear—Common Ground—and both of us recognize that one thing we share in common is a love for the village and how much we care about our community. If that's shared, then the rest of this stuff we can work on."

### Missy and Tiffany (and Rosa)

Missy Krygsheld and Tiffany

Wells are not part of the city government or members of the HRC. However, they are enthusiastic participants in the Common Ground program and are doing their part to grow it already in this pilot year.

Krygsheld, who is white, and Wells, who is Black, did not know each other when they were partnered up, but they did have some connections. They discovered they know a lot of the same people—largely through Lansing Christian School. Krygsheld's daughters attended the school, and she still volunteers there. Wells' children are current students, and she is employed at the school as an Enrollment Associate.

"We've now been meeting for a while," Krygsheld said. "One of the questions we answered was, 'Are you

careful with how you speak to your partner?' And initially, I was very careful. We didn't know each other or our backgrounds, and I didn't want to offend."

But Wells added that both she and Krygsheld are generally very careful anyway. "I think there's a certain amount of sensitivity that we both try to apply in our lives. We want to be thoughtful about how we say things. We may not get it right all the time."

"That's probably why we wanted to do the program!" Krygsheld said.

Krygsheld and Wells have had most of their meetings at Krygsheld's house— "Partly because of COVID, and partly because it's so cozy here, it's hard to resist!" said Wells, speaking from the kitchen where they were baking together during their monthly meeting.

"Mark [Krygsheld's husband] and I choose to still live here [in Lansing], even though the neighborhood has changed a lot since I was a kid here," Krygsheld said. "It's important to me to make a better connection with my neighbors, and I look forward to learning more about Tiffany."

Krygsheld began getting to know her neighbors years before the Common Ground program began. Rosa



Dr. Sophia Jones-Redmond (left) is partnered with Amy Todd. The pair took a masked photo at the Common Ground launch meeting in August of 2020. (Photo provided)

## Living Word Church - Our Church in Our Town

Here's what some of our Lansing members have to say about our community and our church:

- "We love the diversity of the town. It's a community with a hometown feel that has forest preserves, bike paths and friendly neighbors. Living Word Church is special to us because we see the long history and devotion that it's had to Lansing as well as the global mission field. There is a stability here which allows us to maintain long term relationships as well as the ability to begin new ones." Glenn & Bekki, Lansing residents for 30 years
- "I love Lansing because of all the parks! There are four parks within walking distance of my home and I really appreciate how the community has invested in this aspect of the town. Living Word is special to us because it represents our family well. With being a more diverse family, the church does a good job of having a diverse culture here." Hussein & Rita, Lansing residents for 12 years
- "I love Lansing because it is my home! I've been here since I was ten years old and it's just a great community to live in. Living Word is special to me because they took me in and they loved me. They really embraced me and my daughter." Courtney, Lansing resident for 10 years



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Your Church in Your Town



Cam Sanchez (left) poses with his Common Ground partner Ken Reynolds. (Photo provided)



Leo Valencia (left) and Ernst Lamothe had their March Common Ground meeting at Lynnies restaurant (3249 Glenwood Lansing Rd). (Photo provided)

Romero is her next-door neighbor of nearly 15 years, and the pair have been learning from each other and growing in their relationship during that time. Romero also knew about Common Ground, but was hesitant to join.

"I find it hard to talk [in English] for long conversations," said Romero, whose first language is Spanish. But because she has a prior relationship with Krygsheld, she was willing to be a guest at some of her Common Ground meetings. Wells and Krygsheld are happy to have her.

"A lot of Missy's comments [in our early meetings] have been about how she has learned things already through her relationship with Rosa," Wells noticed.

Krygsheld provided an example: "I remember, years ago, hearing someone speak Spanish, and thinking, 'I really think they should speak English.' Then I met Rosa and realized the challenges that come with learning a new language. I went with Rosa to a market when she was new [here]. It was a small market with a Spanish soccer game on the TV. I didn't know what to do; no one was speaking English; I just followed Rosa around! Change is hard, but knowing that I have a connection with people of other cultures helps me realize that I don't want to 'go back to how it was.'"

The story is evidence that relationships change people—a truth that Common Ground is based on.

"I think it is critical that we are more comfortable with each other," Wells said. "Probably the reason we can't move beyond certain biases and stereotypes is that we don't have any other experiences [to show us otherwise]."

Having diverse relationships is helpful to having grace and seeing others' perspectives. To be limited in relationships provides limited understanding, which doesn't serve us in the long run."

**GRASS-ROOTS GROWTH**

"This is the first year of the program, a trial run," Krygsheld said. "We're hoping to reach more people [next time]."

Wells and Krygsheld are already doing their part to expand the program. Aside from bringing Rosa into their partnership, they also inspired Krygsheld's daughter, Dorelle Scheeringa, to join—and Wells found a partner to match her with.

They've talked about inviting friends to some of their meetings, and they intend to bring in their husbands as well. They've been making a list of the things the men have in common, to help convince them.

"My husband wouldn't ever sign up for something like this [program]—but he might come with me to a dinner or outing with Missy and her husband," Wells said.

Their efforts are a natural way to grow the program among residents of Lansing—friends, neighbors, and relatives reaching out to each other, introducing each other, getting each other involved. It's one way that Common Ground can continue.

"I have wondered about next year," Jongsma said. "Obviously, I want to see this grow. I don't know the best way to do that. I want to talk about that at one of our next large-group meetings."

**HARD WORK TOGETHER**

According to Jongsma, a lot of the partnerships have been a really good fit, and commitment is paying off. She uses Village Trustee Maureen Grady-Perovich and her partner, Michelle Smith, as an example.

"As busy as they both are, they meet every month," Jongsma said. "I don't think they've missed a meeting."

Other groups have struggled—with personality differences, busy-ness, and, on top of everything else, COVID. Some dropped out when their partners were unable to continue meeting. Others said good-bye to their partners, but stayed in the program hoping to find a replacement. "That's a real commitment," said Jongsma. "I work hard to honor that commitment by finding someone new to match them with, but I'm not always successful."

The quarterly large-group meetings can help keep participants on track. All the Common Ground members gather to give updates, ask questions, and participate in discussion. Seeing and hearing from the other people involved reminds each partnership that they are not alone in this effort.

"In my emails and at the large-group meetings, I want to highlight those who are doing well, but also I want to be sensitive to those who are struggling. I don't want them to feel left out," Jongsma said. "This is difficult work. Struggle is normal."

Even groups who are meeting faithfully and having meaningful conversations face difficulties.

"Tiffany has a busy schedule and she's a younger mom than me," said Krygsheld. "I've told her multiple times, 'Thanks for taking time for me. I know she's busy, and I can see how it's a hard thing.'"

Reynolds and Sanchez also have to work hard to ensure they get their meetings in.

"January was a rough month with a lot going on, nationwide and personal," Sanchez said. "But we're going back to it in February. We've made time."

**WORTH THE EFFORT**

Of course, no one said the program would be easy. But, in Wells' estimation, it has been worth the challenge.

"I think that [Common Ground] has been really positive," Wells said. "There are a lot of examples of people who are making it work or trying to make it work. I have found that when I get caught up ... in everything—COVID, and the election, and their implications on race—I find myself more discouraged. I'm always trying to intentionally remind myself that I have friendships with people like Missy, who can help me know what the truth is: that there are good people in this world who want to do what's right."

"It's not going to happen overnight," she added. "I can't change how everyone is thinking, everyone who is hateful. But I can do this. We're here to be the light, instead of getting distracted by the darkness."

The Common Ground program is unique to Lansing, and only The Lansing Journal is reporting on it. To follow this



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NEWS, AND ALL THE THINGS THAT MAKE AMERICA WORTH LIVING AND DYING FOR.



A rendering of the proposed memory care facility that will be added to the St. Anthony campus in Lansing. The memory care building will comprise three separate households of 20 units each. (Rendering provided by Worn Jerabek Wiltse Architects, P.C.)

# St. Anthony takes steps toward campus expansion

## Memory Care, Independent Living to be added to Assisted Living campus

BY JOSH BOOTSMA

LANSING, Ill. (January 12, 2021) – St. Anthony of Lansing hopes to expand its campus significantly in coming years by adding a memory care facility and multiple townhome buildings to meet the needs of more local seniors.

The proposed expansion was first described in detail by three representatives of the project at the December 9, 2020, meeting of the Planning and Zoning Board.

### ADDING MEMORY CARE

The project falls into two main categories: memory care and independent townhomes.

The planned memory care facility will contain 60 units and will be constructed near the existing St. Anthony of Lansing building, which serves as an assisted living facility and comprises 125 units. The memory care complex would be one building, but contain three separate households of 20 units each, a move that is in step with memory care best practices, said Michelle Sablack, architect at Worn Jerabek Wiltse Architects.

The units in the facility, said Sablack, will be private residences and include in-suite bathrooms. The building will include common spaces like kitchens, dining rooms, and enclosed outdoor spaces where residents can enjoy the outdoors unaccompanied. The exterior of the building, Sablack said, will be designed to “really help this feel like home.”

### ADDING INDEPENDENT LIVING

In addition to the memory care building, multiple independent townhome structures are planned, some of which will house six units, others four, and one will house three units and a community center. There are 33 total planned units. Each rentable unit will have two bedrooms, no steps, widened doorways, and other features tailored to seniors. The townhomes will line Spring Lake Drive, which curves around Spring Lake. The land

planned for the townhomes is currently empty with the exception of one existing townhome building that has been vacant since 2013.

The community center, Sablack said, will contain a business center, a fitness area, a community room, and the leasing office.

### COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Presenters at the December 9 meeting indicated a desire to clear out much of the natural plant growth that currently wraps around the perimeter of the small lake and make the shore a place for residents of the area to walk and enjoy the spring-fed lake.

The campus will be connected in terms of resident transition from one living situation to another within the community, as well as in resident interaction and events, said Gardant Management Solutions Vice President of Development and Positioning Rick Banas.

“Gardant has been involved with St. Anthony since the community opened in 2013. We were involved with the development of the community, have managed the community since it opened, and we’re really excited about this project,” Banas said. “We’re very excited to see this type of comprehensive development.”

### FROM P AND Z TO BOARD APPROVAL TO BREAKING GROUND

Planning and Zoning Board commissioners asked questions but had

largely positive reactions to the proposed project. They voted unanimously in favor of it. “Thank you for bringing memory care into Lansing,” Commissioner Cathy Hallow said.

“I think it’s a nice development and a good opportunity for Lansing residents,” said Commissioner Tom McSwiggan.

The petition and Planning and Zoning’s recommendation came before the Village Board of Trustees’ Committee of the Whole meeting on January 19. Trustees voted unanimously at their February 16 Board meeting to approve the project.

Zach Leonard, owner of Bravo Properties LLC, said construction on the townhomes could happen in 8-12 months, with the memory care facility to be built afterward.

St. Anthony of Lansing is located at 3025 Spring Lake Drive, just off of Chicago Drive.



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# TF South serves as ‘designated vaccination site’

## And South Suburban College becomes public vaccination site—by appointment

BY MELANIE JONGSMA AND JOSH BOOTSMA

LANSING and SOUTH HOLLAND, Ill. (Updated March 1, 2021) — After a day of set-up and a day of testing the appointment/registration systems, TF South officially opened as a designated COVID-19 vaccination site for District 215 staff Wednesday morning, February 10. Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle held a press conference at the TF South location later that day.

The District 215 Board of Education had approved the agreement with Cook County Department of Public Health at a special meeting in early February. The agreement designated TF South as a vaccination site for teachers and staff in District 215, as well as teachers and staff from feeder schools in the region. Registration was later expanded to members of the South Suburban Conference and then to private schools in the South Cook County region.

“This is our first site that is serving a designated population,” explained Caryn Stancik of Cook County Health. Appointments are given via personalized email links, and anyone checking in for an appointment is required to show identification or credentials.

### ESSENTIAL WORKERS, LIMITED SUPPLY

Education personnel are considered frontline essential workers and became eligible to receive the vaccine when Illinois entered Phase 1B on January 25. Each time District 215’s administrative office was notified about a vaccination site opening in the area, that information was distributed throughout the district. However, many staff reported they were unable to get an appointment—even though they called immediately—because supplies are limited and demand is high. Having a designated vaccination site reserves vaccines specifically for education personnel in South Cook County.

Education personnel are required to wait for 15 minutes in a waiting area after receiving the first vaccine dose at TF South. During that 15 minutes, a healthcare worker meets with them to schedule their second dose. The first of those second-dose vaccination appointments came due in early March, so the lobby is now filled with a combination of first-dosers and second-dosers.

### CHOOSING TF SOUTH

District 215 School Board President Michael Bolz credited Superintendent Sophia Jones-Redmond “for her re-

On the first day of public vaccinations at South Suburban College, the line stretched outside the gym. (Photo: Josh Bootsma)



ally tireless efforts in pursuing this on behalf of the district and the staff and community members that are making this possible. It is no small endeavor.”

Bolz added, “Making the vaccine available to our teachers and staff is one critical step toward safely reopening our district’s buildings to our students. It also supports efforts to slow community spread of the virus.”

Both the School Board and Cook County Health exercised great caution to avoid problems experienced at other vaccination sites. “We do not want to say anything that will lead folks to misunderstand that this is a ‘public site,’” wrote Stancik in an email. Bolz affirmed, “We want to make sure people know that they will not be able to just show up and get a vaccine.” In fact, he added, people who show up without appointments only serve to slow down the vaccination process, as staff have to be diverted to deal with interruptions.

### SOUTH SUBURBAN COLLEGE: PUBLIC VACCINATIONS

The day after TF South opened as a designated vaccination site, South Suburban College (SSC) opened as a vaccination site for the general public.

On February 11, as local residents were receiving shots of COVID-19 vaccine in the SSC gym, local leaders and officials gathered to officially announce the location and thank the many people who made it possible. Located near the northern entrance of the Athletic and Physical Fitness Center on the South Suburban campus, the site is the third large-scale vaccination location to open in Cook

County, following the Tinley Park Convention Center in Tinley Park and Triton College in River Grove.

According to Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha Jr., up to 800 people can be vaccinated per day at SSC—assuming vaccine is in full supply.

### VACCINE REGISTRATION AND AVAILABILITY

Vaccinations at South Suburban College are currently available only by appointment at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov or by calling the vaccine hotline at 833-308-1988 from 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

An estimated 600,000 Cook County residents are currently eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Health officials repeatedly remind residents that the current vaccine supply is not adequate to vaccinate everyone at this time.

“We are equally as frustrated as the community with the lack of vaccine that has been distributed. We are asking Cook County residents for their continued patience as we work to ramp up one of the largest county-operated vaccine programs in the country,” said Rocha.

### OFFICIALS SHARE APPRECIATION, RESOLVE

“The need is great, especially in the southland where many of our brown and black neighbors have suffered disproportionately,” said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. “I’m proud of the work being done to expand equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine for the residents of Cook County.”

“I think this is awesome. This is the perfect marriage between the college and the county,” said SSC President Dr. Lynette Stokes. “Based on what we’ve already done, it makes sense. We’ve been a testing site since last summer, so for us to be a mass vaccination center—it makes sense. ...We’re a community college, a college for the community.”

SSC Board Chairman Frank Zuccarelli added: “South Suburban College belongs to this community. ...The reason we do well is because we do well with each other. We couldn’t do it without everybody.”

“We’re committed to vaccinating as many Cook County residents as it takes to turn the page to the next chapter,” Preckwinkle said. “Every day we get closer and closer to putting our current chapter in the history books. Today, another page turns.”

South Suburban College is located at 15800 South State Street, South Holland, IL.

### THIS WEEK’S COVID CATCH-UP:

## Two categories of symptoms (Part 2)

COVID Catch-up is a weekly column featuring Lansing Journal journalist Carrie Steinweg’s personal experience with COVID-19 and things she learned from others who shared their experiences. Visit [www.thelansingjournal.com](http://www.thelansingjournal.com) to view previously published columns—and subscribe to make sure you don’t miss future COVID Catch-ups.



CARRIE STEINWEG  
(PHOTO PROVIDED)

BY CARRIE STEINWEG

LANSING, Ill. (March 4, 2021) — Last week I shared many of the symptoms of COVID-19 that occurred before I was hospitalized. Some of the most worrisome, annoying, and painful effects of COVID-19 happened after my hospital discharge. While I had experienced every one of the CDC’s approved list of symptoms on their website before I was hospitalized, most of them remained when I left the hospital and others followed.

### SAME OLD SYMPTOMS

There were some medications that were being used to treat COVID-19 patients in November, but I was told I had

been beyond the window of when they would likely be effective. Since it had been nearly two weeks since my first symptoms, I wasn’t eligible for those available medications. I was given antibiotics, but they didn’t seem to cause any improvement. I felt no better when I went home from the hospital than when I went in. I had been on oxygen since being admitted and once my oxygen hit an acceptable level, I was released.

When I got home, though, I didn’t feel like I was breathing any easier and in some ways felt worse. I still had no energy and felt fatigued. My appetite was getting a little better, but I still couldn’t taste or smell anything. I still had a bad cough and sore throat and was congested. Muscle aches continued and my whole body hurt. The headache was just about gone and that was a big relief. I was still bothered by bright lights and sensitive to noise, but it was getting better. I kept alternating between chills and sweating. I was still getting lightheaded when walking.

### NEW SYMPTOMS

As I continued with those symptoms, a whole new crop of things were going on. I had earaches and my neck and behind my ears felt swollen and sore and sensitive to touch. My toes were sore and red and itchy. I was spending most of my time in bed and it was a couple days before I even sat up in a chair. My legs had gotten so weak they’d buckle under me as I walked up stairs and I had to hold tightly to the railing to keep from falling. I’d sit down on the toilet and didn’t have the strength to pull myself up. I couldn’t stand to shower or cook.

In the hospital, I had been given blood thinners. As a side effect, I was getting bloody noses daily. One day, I had a nosebleed that lasted more than two hours. I was also given steroid shots in my stomach while in the hospital. I had a terrible bout of insomnia like nothing I’d ever experienced and I wondered if it was related to the steroids. For almost a month I was sleeping very little—some nights only about 90 minutes. Even though I was getting little sleep, I was very hyper when I was awake and everyone around me got tired of hearing me talk.

I had noticed when my symptoms first started that a lot of my hair was falling out. It just got worse and worse. Soon it was visibly obvious and my once-thick head of hair had gotten very thin.

### INTENSE LEG CRAMPS

There were other things going on that were embarrassing or female-related and better left not mentioned here. But probably the worst thing I experienced were intense leg cramps that lasted hours. Unlike a “Charlie Horse” that might last a few minutes and go away as you get up and walk on it, it was non-stop pain for hours and nothing seemed to help it go away. They’d happen a bit during the day, but were worst at night when I’d lay on the sofa trying not to wake anyone else for up to four or five hours just rolling around with pain of about 9 on a scale of 1-10. I took Tylenol, which is what I would normally take for a headache or other pains. It did nothing to decrease the pain. I talked to a nurse by phone who suggested it was just due to the lack of circulation and suggested stretching exercises. It eventually went away as I was getting around more, but the couple of weeks of this intense pain was one of the worst parts of having COVID.

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**3/28 Palm Sunday:**  
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**4/1 Holy Thursday:**  
Mass of the Lord’s Supper 7:00 p.m.

**4/2 Good Friday:**  
Community Prayer Walk at Noon  
Veneration of the Cross at 3:00 p.m.  
Stations of the Cross at 7:00 p.m.

**4/3 Holy Saturday:**  
Easter Food & Basket Blessing at 1:00 p.m.  
Easter Vigil Mass at 7:30 p.m.

**4/4 Easter Sunday:**  
Masses at 8:30 & 10:30 a.m.

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# Financial concerns force Lansing Country Club to sell

Golf and sportsman's club sold for development, potential forest preserve

BY JOSH BOOTSMA

LANSING, Ill. (January 22, 2021) – After decades of golfing, fishing, events, and bocce ball, the Lansing Country Club has shuttered for good. The closure and sale of the 79-year-old club came about as membership numbers decreased and property taxes increased.

### THREE WORDS: COOK COUNTY TAXES

Secretary of the Lansing Country Club Board Jeannie McCall said the cause of the closure is simple: "Three words: Cook County taxes."

McCall has been a member of the club for 45 years, and she has served on the club's Board for about half that time. She says in 2009 a change in the way Cook County taxed the club resulted in a doubling of the club's annual tax bill, an increase from roughly \$90k to about \$180k. McCall said the Cook County Assessor's most recent assessments, which have many Lansing businesses reeling, would likely increase the club's taxes to \$200k.

"We don't have the members to sustain that tax bill at all," McCall said.

McCall also mentioned that despite the name "Lansing Country Club," roughly two-thirds of the property owned by the club is located in Indiana. The third located in Illinois includes the clubhouse and facilities. The Indiana land, McCall said, is taxed roughly \$20k every year, about nine times less than the tax bill for the Illinois portion.

### LANSING COUNTRY CLUB SALE AND FUTURE PLANS

Club leadership has tried for several years to sell the property. In March of 2020, they received a bid from the Saxon Group Inc., a construction services company. The company plans to construct a medical facility on the Indiana portion of the property. McCall said the Saxon Group has offered the Illinois side of the property to the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

McCall said the Lansing Country Club insisted on selling both the Illinois and Indiana land as one parcel, believing they would not be able to attract a buyer for just the Illinois land. "Nobody wanted one inch of Illinois land. Nobody. Not one buyer. Not at any price. Because of Cook County taxes," she said.

On January 6 and 7, the club had an estate sale to sell



The Lansing Country Club, located at 18600 Wentworth Ave, was handed over to new ownership on January 15. (Photo: Josh Bootsma)

as many fixtures, furniture pieces, decorations, and other items as possible. McCall said the building was handed over to the Saxon Group on January 15.

### A HISTORY OF GOLFING AND SPORTSMANSHIP

The lake at Lansing Country Club is a prominent feature of the grounds and has drawn special club members who pay only for the privilege of fishing in it. The origins of the lake are found in the brick-making industry, an industry popular in the surrounding area around the turn of the 20th century. According to McCall, the lake was originally a "clay hole," used by brick-making companies to remove clay from the ground to later bake into bricks. The resulting holes in the ground were eventually filled in with water.

McCall said before the property was incorporated as a club in 1955, trap shooting became a popular attraction of the area and became a part of the club's offerings until the late 70s. Around this time the club became a full 18-hole course, having originally offered nine holes, then 11.

In an effort to increase revenue and maximize the lake's utility, Lansing Country Club began offering a fishing-only membership about a decade ago. "We have good

fishing," McCall said.

At one time the club had a 100-member bocce ball league that McCall organized. "Every Wednesday was bocce night for maybe the last fifteen or twenty years," she said. "With twelve teams, you'd have a twelve-week season. ... Yeah, bocce was really fun to play."

### A COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACE

In addition to all of its recreational offerings, McCall said the Lansing Country Club has served as a stalwart of community, hosting the Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce's golf outings, election night parties, and many weddings. "I got married here even. Yeah, lots of weddings," McCall said, who had her wedding at the site in 1979.

Interest in the club to serve as a wedding or reception venue dropped steeply starting in 2016, as the club started to shop itself to potential buyers. "What bride wants to put her money down on a building that might close?" McCall said. "Up until 2016, we had weddings almost everything weekend, I would bet."

Decades ago, the Lansing Country Club would host live music nights for members, "probably at least once a month," McCall said.

"This was, in the old days, the place to go," she said.

### ENJOYING THE MEMORIES

McCall, who grew up in Thornton and has lived in Lansing since 1971, said the closure of the Lansing Country Club has been difficult for longtime members of the club like her, but she appreciates the community response. She said during the days when the club was having its estate sale, old members and club staff came just to walk through one more time. "It's been pretty neat," she said.

A December Facebook post announcing the club's sale was commented on over 100 times and shared over 40 times. "Overall, I'm sad. But I appreciated everyone that commented with their memories. Totally appreciated that. It's good that this club brought so many people so many memories," said McCall.

The former Lansing Country Club is located at 18600 Wentworth Avenue, Lansing, IL.

## Thank You to the Lansing Village Board for approving the expansion of St. Anthony of Lansing!

Expansion plans call for the development of a Continuum of Housing and Care with the addition of Townhomes and Memory Care

Townhomes	Supportive Living	Supportive Living Memory Care
The two-bedroom townhomes for low-income adults 62 and older will include design features to help residents age in place. Maintenance, landscaping, and snow removal services will be included in the rental fee. Residents will enjoy access to a Community Center and be able to purchase guest meals and Beauty/Barber services and participate in the social, recreational, educational, and wellness programs at the Supportive Living community.	The existing Supportive Living community serves adults 65 and older who need some help to maintain their independence. The community features private apartments and the availability of personal assistance, help with medications and support services such as three daily meals, housekeeping and laundry.	The Supportive Living Memory Care community will be designed to serve adults 65 and older with Alzheimer's or related dementia. The focus will be on maintaining a sense of purpose and belonging in all seasons of dementia. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specially designed indoor and outdoor community areas.</li> <li>- Specially trained staff.</li> <li>- Activity-based programming.</li> </ul>



Call 877-882-1495 for further information about St. Anthony.





## 2021 Lansing Good Neighbor Day Parade announced, registration now open

“Superheroes of Lansing” will follow new parade route May 1

BY JOSH BOOTSMA

Left: The Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce created posters advertising the theme and the new route for this year’s Good Neighbor Day Parade, May 1.

LANSING, Ill. (February 10, 2021) – Amid great disappointment, last year’s Good Neighbor Day Parade was cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns. This year, however, the event is planned to take place at 2:00 p.m. on May 1 with the theme “Superheroes of Lansing.”

An annual event organized by the Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce, this year’s parade will mark the 53rd year of the celebratory community event—one that brings Lansing families, government, schools, businesses, and other organizations together.

Last year’s parade was first delayed due to COVID, and then cancelled outright. Barring an about-face in the current promising COVID trends, this year’s parade will occur on the first Saturday of May, as it has for decades.

### A NEW ROUTE FOR THIS YEAR’S SUPERHEROES

A new route was planned for last year’s cancelled parade and will be used for this year’s instead. The

route will have participants start near the intersection of Ridge Road and Wentworth Avenue, travel west on Ridge to Burnham Avenue, then turn south and end at Burnham and 186th Street.

Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce Director Amy Todd told Chamber members, “Our theme is Superheroes! We hope to see everyone dress and decorate according to this fun theme.”

### REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Line-up for the parade will start at 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 1, and the parade will officially step off at 2:00. The registration deadline for this year’s Good Neighbor Day Parade is April 26. More information is available from the Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce, 708-474-4170 or director@chamberoflansing.com. The Chamber office is headquartered at 18155 Roy Street, Suite 3, in Lansing, Illinois.

To read about the unique history of Lansing’s Good Neighbor Day Parade, visit [www.thelansingjournal.com](http://www.thelansingjournal.com) and search for Carrie Steinweg’s 2018 article: “Good Neighbor Day Parade is one-of-a-kind.”

## District 158 food drive keeps Roundball charitable spirit alive

BY JENNIFER YOS

LANSING, Ill. (March 3, 2021) – Up until this pandemic year, every February for the past eleven years School District 158 has hosted a successful charity-driven Roundball Classic basketball tournament for local fifth graders. The four-day event at Memorial Junior High School not only promoted friendly sports competition, but also raised funds and served as a food drive for local community organizations.

### FOOD DRIVE DESPITE NO TOURNAMENT

After last year’s tournament, event organizers Rick Seymour and Sally Reynolds announced they would be stepping down from organizing it, an announcement that left the future of the Roundball Classic in peril. That uncertainty combined with the pandemic kept the tournament from happening this year. However, District 158 Board of Education Secretary Mary Kelly suggested the district alternatively conduct a food drive throughout the month of February.

The district hoped to reach or surpass 1,000 donated food items to be delivered to the Lansing Community Food Pantry at 2990 Ridge Road on Tuesday, March 2.

Last year’s Roundball tournament totaled a whopping 5,737 donated food items, but that number included contributions from schools outside District 158—Heritage Middle School, Lansing Christian, and St. Ann School, which took First Place in the Roundball food drive competition. Food item donations had also been collected at the four-day tournament as well.

### LOCAL SCHOOLS MEET THE CHALLENGE CREATIVELY

Reavis Principal David Kostopoulos acknowledges that soliciting donations has been harder this year, but they have tried to compensate by hosting food drives that coordinate with student educational material and with PTA craft supply pick-ups.

“The Reavis PTA supported the food drive by creating Valentine’s Day card craft kits for students to pick up

when they dropped off food items,” he explained. He added that they also hope to support the food pantry with produce that is grown in their school garden over the summer. “We are aware of many families that are in need of food during this pandemic especially,” he explained. “Additionally, there are many families that are looking to donate as so many are looking for ways they can contribute to helping others in their community.”

Coolidge Principal Pam Hodgson echoes the sentiment: “With so many families struggling right now, I am happy to see Coolidge families coming together to help others in our community. Learning remotely makes having a food drive a little more difficult. However, our Coolidge families came through once again and dropped off 467 items for the Lansing Food Pantry. I’m glad that Coolidge School and the rest of Lansing School District 158 were able to support our community.”

On March 2, Oak Glen Principal Michael Earnshaw announced, “I cannot be more proud of all of our Oak Glen Grizzly staff, students, and families! Throughout the month of February we collected 1,182 items to donate to the Lansing Food Pantry! I am so proud and honored to serve in such a great community that even in the midst of a pandemic when we are not together at school, we’re still able to collect and donate so many items that will help our Lansing families in need. This is proof that a ‘school’ is so much more than a building, it’s a community that looks out for one another.”

### DELIVERY

On March 2, District 158 custodial staff helped deliver the food items to the Lansing Community Food Pantry,

## nartoon by Jim Siergey



HIPPEAS

where volunteers were waiting. Using an angled chute, boxes were slid down into the basement of the Lansing Assembly, which serves as the Lansing Community Food Pantry. The pantry is open for recipients on alternating Tuesdays, depending on a recipient’s last name. First-time visitors must follow a procedure in order to become food recipients.

District 158 offices are located at 18300 Greenbay Avenue in Lansing. The Lansing Community Food Pantry is located in the basement of the Lansing Assembly church at 2990 Ridge Road; its phone number is 708-446-9298.



District 158’s February food drive donations were delivered to the Lansing Food Pantry by custodial staff on March 2. (Photo: Jennifer Yos)



Lansing Community Food Pantry Co-Chairman Bob Barnes catches a box of food as it slides down the ramp into the Lansing Food Pantry. (Photo: Jennifer Yos)

# Sand Ridge Nature Center to upgrade campus, offer new exhibits in 2021

New signage, better fishing, and pollinator gardens included among campus improvements

BY KATIE ARVIA

SOUTH HOLLAND, Ill. (February 24, 2021) – On track to be completed and open to the public this summer, Sand Ridge Nature Center in South Holland is currently undergoing a complete makeover. Updates are being made in the nature center's exhibit room, lobby, and classroom (which will soon be renamed the flight room).

## IMPROVEMENTS ALLOW FOR A NEW APPRECIATION OF NATURE

Stephen DeFalco, Director of the Sand Ridge Nature Center, said that these renovations will allow for "fresh, engaging, and informative exhibits about the ecological and cultural past, present, and future of the Calumet area." Also included in these updates are brand new enclosures for the animals who call Sand Ridge Nature Center their home.

"I think the improvements will encourage residents and visitors to rediscover the nature center and learn about and find a new appreciation for the flora and fauna around them," said DeFalco, who explained that the center's last major update was in the 90s. "The overall 'flow' of the space will also be better, and some interactive additions will have both kids and adults excited."

These improvements were made possible by an Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant, awarded by the Illinois Department of Nature Resources. The OSLAD program is state funded and provides funding assistance to local government agencies for the acquisition and/or development of land for public parks and open space.

## THE SAND RIDGE CAMPUS

Not only is the nature center receiving a complete facelift, other sections of the Sand Ridge Campus are also receiving updates. In addition to Sand Ridge Nature Center, the Sand Ridge Campus includes Green Lake Aquatic Center, Green Lake and Clayhole picnic areas, Green Lake fishing lake, Camp Shabbona Woods, and the Burnham Greenway. Updates will include two fishing outcroppings, new outdoor interpretive signage to help better navigate the area, outdoor landscape art at Green



A rendering shows the updates that will be made to the exhibit room of the Sand Ridge Nature Center in 2021. (Graphic provided)

Lake Woods, the restoration of nearly 15 acres of land, and a new nature play area at the nature center. While some of the work has already been completed, the work at the nature center and other projects will be completed by July 2021.

## POLLINATOR GARDEN

In addition to the OSLAD grant, Sand Ridge Campus was also awarded the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF) grant. These funds will be used to build a pollinator garden at Green Lake near the aquatic center. The grant also allows the campus to work with an educational partner—in this case, the third-grade students at Wentworth Intermediate School in Calumet City. The children will have a field trip to the garden and have special lessons in their curriculum. The goal is to plant the garden this year, completing it in time for an Earth Day community event in 2022.

## EVENTS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

In a normal year, Sand Ridge Nature Center hosts a variety of events, including large-scale annual programs. 2020 was not a normal year, however, and many events had to be cancelled. DeFalco said that the only special

event that was able to take place in 2020 was the annual Juneteenth Celebration, which occurred virtually. Nearly 120 guests participated.

The center also hosts public programs, which are small-scale events that are either drop-in based (self-guided or with minimal staff involvement) or registration-based (staff-led activities and/or artmaking projects). Sand Ridge also hosts group visits and campground programming. Currently, the center offers virtual programs for school groups, libraries, scout groups, and others in lieu of in-person visits.

Due to the unknowns of COVID, Sand Ridge will be planning public programming only one month in advance. DeFalco recommends visiting [FPDCC.com](https://www.fpdcc.com) to view the online calendar. Additionally, the Sand Ridge Nature Center's Facebook page will share upcoming in-person and virtual events. From April 30 to May 3, Sand Ridge Campus will be participating in the City Nature Challenge, an international effort for people to find and document plants and wildlife in cities all over the world.

## ICE AND CLAY

The Calumet region has a remarkable connection to the last ice age. Around 14,000 years ago, the area was underwater, in what is known as Ancient Lake Chicago. According to DeFalco, the ice age involved a consistent ebb and flow of ice, where areas would slowly repeat a cycle of freezing and melting.

"That main North American ice sheet that covered the Great Lakes region was the Laurentide Ice Sheet. Within this ice sheet, you had smaller sections (glaciers) and on the edges of the glaciers you had lobes. So, when we talk about our area in terms of glaciers, we are talking about the Lake Michigan lobe of the Wisconsin glacier, part of the larger Laurentide Ice Sheet that covered most of North America," DeFalco explained.

At the end of the ice age, around 12,000 years ago, the amount of water from the glacial melt resulted in the formation of Niagara Falls. Due to this break and new avenue for water to flow, the Great Lakes slowly drained to their current levels over about 4,000 years.

"As the water recedes, it leaves behind little shorelines, which is the cause of Calumet's dunes and swale topography. Every 2,000 years, a more defined ridgeline is produced. ...In our wetland/dune and swale topography, these ridgelines were the major high points and soon became reliable routes of travel for Native Americans and other groups of people for generations to come," DeFalco said. Some of these ridges are now the sites of roadways—such as Lincoln Avenue/Michigan City Road—or railways—like the Canadian National Railway or Norfolk Southern Railway.

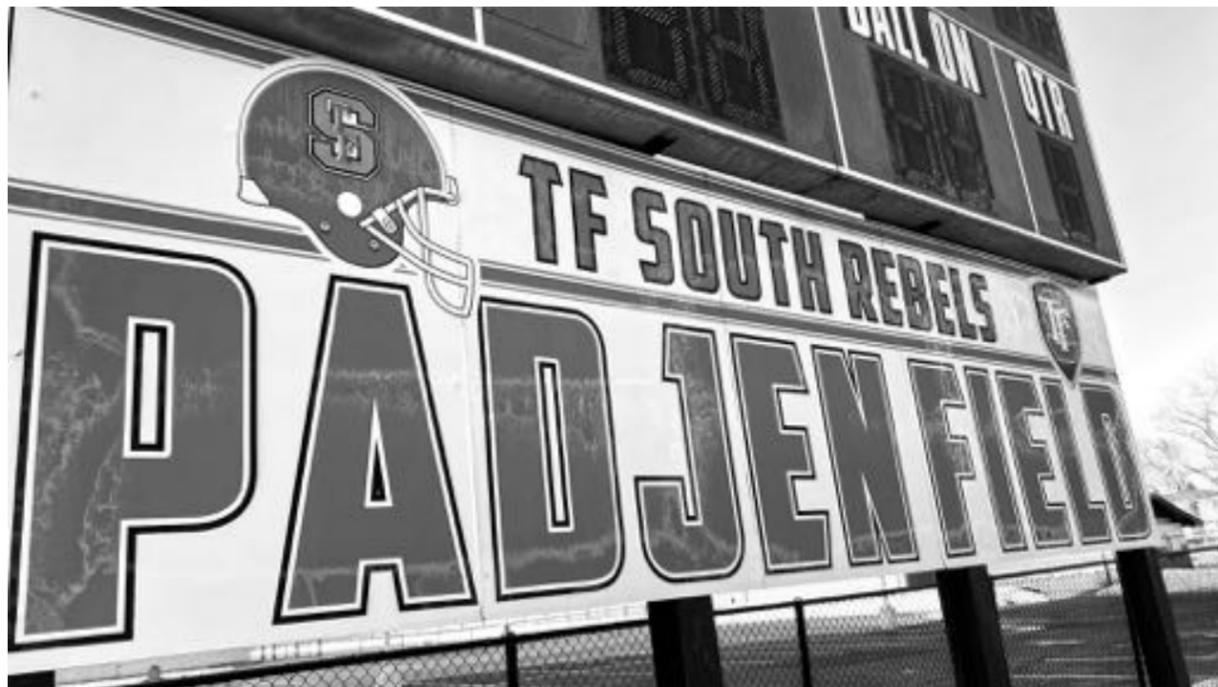
Additionally, Green Lake, the deepest fishing lake in any of Cook County's forest preserves, was once a clay quarry. Some of the largest brick factories in the nation could be found on the south side and in the south suburbs of Chicago in the late 1800s. About 60 brickyards produced nearly 540 million bricks per year from the clay found in quarries like the one formerly at Green Lake.

## A NEW YEAR AT SAND RIDGE

DeFalco has three main goals for the Sand Ridge Campus in 2021: connecting to local communities, understanding and addressing barriers community members face, and involving community partners and other agencies in activating Sand Ridge Campus.

"I love the work I do, and I could cheerlead for Sand Ridge Campus all day," DeFalco said.

The Sand Ridge Nature Center grounds are open every day from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm, and the lobby is open for restroom access. The Sand Ridge Nature Center is located at 15891 Paxton Avenue, South Holland, Illinois.



TF South to play first football game of the school year—Friday, March 19

BY JOSH BOOTSMA

LANSING, Ill. (March 5, 2021) – On Friday, March 19, the TF South football team will take to the field for the first time since 2019. The usual fall football season was delayed by COVID-19 concerns and has been replaced by what is currently scheduled to be a six-game spring season.

TF South will host Bremen High School for the matchup, which starts at 7:00 p.m. The game will be played according to IHSA guidelines, which mandate that all players and coaches must be masked at all times.

TF South Athletic Director Marc Brewe said the game will be open to some spectators, though the exact capacity restrictions are still being determined. Interested in-person spectators are invited to call the TF South Ath-

Above: Though remnants of the former TF South team name still exist, player uniforms have been updated following an August decision based on student survey results. (Photo: Melanie Jongsma, March 6, 2021)

letic Department at 708-585-2061 for more information.

Brewe said the game will also be live-streamed via the TF South Athletics YouTube channel.

Though playing football after only two-and-a-half weeks of practice with limited fan attendance and no pep band or marching band is not ideal, players and coaches are happy to be playing.

Friday's contest will also be the first game the TF South football team will play without its "Rebels" nickname. After a decision in August to drop the racially-charged "Rebels" nickname from the school, the team's jerseys will simply say, "TF South" according to Brewe.

The full team schedule for the 2021 season is available online.

TF South High School is located at 18500 Burnham Avenue in Lansing, Illinois.

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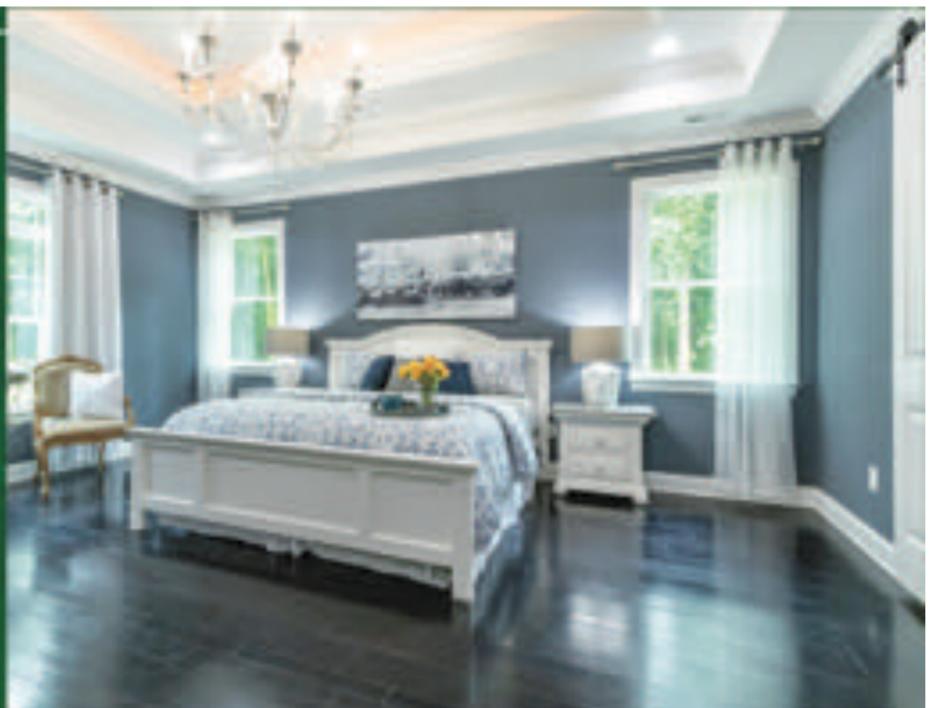
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# Little Black Library comes to Lansing

Library display highlights Black authors, seeks to start meaningful discussion

BY JOSH BOOTSMA

LANSING, Ill. (March 8, 2021) – Recent patrons of the Lansing Public Library may have noticed a new section called “Little Black Library.” The few dozen books arranged on a series of wooden blocks were not only a display for Black History Month, however. Backed by a nonprofit organization of the same name, the Little Black Library in Lansing is the latest site of a growing, nationwide campaign to promote “reading and discussions of literature on antiracism and the Black experience.”

## THE GOAL OF LITTLE BLACK LIBRARY (LBL)

“LBL brings a collection of important books on the Black experience and racial justice to your community. We want to promote deeper engagement on topics of race, identity, and systemic racism through knowledge sharing and discussions,” says the “About” page on LittleBlackLibrary.com, the organization’s website.

By featuring books by Black authors on the Black experience, Little Black Library hopes to provide a means for communities across the country to engage in challenging conversations about race and differences.

## LANSING ROOTS

Cathy Chukwulebe graduated from TF South in 2010. She’s currently studying to get her Master’s Degree in Business Administration from Harvard Business School. She is a biracial immigrant and started Little Black Library in response to the racially-charged events of last summer. “I started LBL last summer when the egregious cases of violence against Black people fueled many people to start a personal journey towards being actively anti-racist,” she said.

Chukwulebe said she noticed that most of her own education regarding racial issues came primarily through reading and conversation. “Though many books on antiracism were selling out from physical and online bookstores at the time [during the summer of 2020], it would likely not be sustainable,” she said. “Unless there are processes in place to remind people the importance of continuing their ally-ship, they tend to ‘move on.’”

The Little Black Library is a way for people to continue to learn about racial justice and the Black experience. Chukwulebe hopes the initiative will

allow people in places like Lansing to “grow together and catalyze action within our communities.”

## A LIBRARY WITHIN A LIBRARY?

Although there are 10 Little Black Libraries so far across the country, the one in Lansing is the first located in an actual library. The other locations follow a model similar to “Little Free Libraries,” where interested readers take a book and leave a book as they see fit. Though that method has seen success, says Chukwulebe, it involves significant maintenance work and oversight.

The easier solution, and one the nonprofit organization is hoping will spread, is to partner with local public libraries. “The benefit of having an LBL in a public library is that these books are on display front and center for anyone looking to learn about racial justice or the Black experience,” said 2019 TF South graduate Jadyne Newman. She says the initiative is a great way for public libraries to highlight the best Black authors and bring about meaningful conversation.

Newman is on the board of Little Black Library with seven other women from across the country, and says the organization is excited to use the Lansing Public Library as a prototype for what she hopes is the first of many library partnerships. “Eventually, LBL will use Lansing as a model to encourage libraries nationwide to create their

own Little Black Library displays,” Newman said. Newman works at the Lansing Public Library as a Youth Library Associate and was instrumental in bringing the Little Black Library to the location.

## BLACKNESS AND BOOKS

Unlike the Little Free Libraries common in areas like the north side of Chicago, Little Black Libraries have criteria about what books are included. A base foundation of books is available on the organization’s website, and is broken up into categories.

“We are continuing to curate a wide-ranging list of books for all ages and of all genres. The current list includes social commentary, antiracism literature, memoirs, young adult fiction, children’s books, and many other books featuring Black protagonists and by Black authors,” said Chukwulebe.

Some of the books include *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson, *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, and *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson. LBL books can be checked out from the library like any other library book.

## DIVERSE BOOKS FOR A DIVERSE LANSING

“Reading is something incredibly important to me, and as a Black person, it can be hard to locate books about Black people, by Black people,” Newman said. “Working to promote these titles that are sometimes difficult to find, and placing them on display for all to see, read, and experience is beyond exciting.”

“Public libraries have long been a place where everyone is welcome, a place where accessibility and diversity are valued. By creating a display of books about the Black experience, the library aims to serve our diverse community of Lansing, which is over 40% African American,” she said.

Chukwulebe said that although she’s ten years removed from Lansing, she sees improvement in the area when it comes to racial justice, and hopes the Little Black Libraries can help that process. “When I hear news about dissolving the TF South ‘Rebels’ mascot, which has been a long-time nod to the Confederacy, I’m hopeful that we are heading in a new direction,” she said.

The Lansing Public Library is located at 2750 Indiana Avenue, Lansing, IL.



A Little Black Library is located inside the Lansing Public Library. The display highlights Black authors and the Black experience. (Photo provided)

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# Immersive Van Gogh exhibit signals hopeful end to pandemic art drought in Chicago

Above: Visitors immerse themselves in Van Gogh's art—projectors bring the paintings to life, aided by music and mirrors. Floor markings help patrons observe social distancing guidelines throughout the experience. (Photo: Carrie Steinweg)

BY CARRIE STEINWEG

CHICAGO, Ill. (February 20, 2021) — “Immersive Van Gogh Chicago” just opened, and it is different from what might first come to mind as art. The exhibit offers intense visuals coordinated with a carefully curated soundtrack. Because it quickly sold out into early April before opening day, organizers extended the exhibit into September, moved opening hours earlier, and offered Saturday afternoon VIP and Premium tickets for February and March. Tickets for spring and summer are selling fast.

## VAN GOGH BROUGHT TO LIFE

Immersive Van Gogh Chicago has taken up occupancy at the Germania Club Building, in a new venue called Lighthouse ArtSpace Chicago. The exhibit fills three large rooms with 35-foot-tall walls and includes an up-

stairs balcony that gives visitors a birds-eye view.

Using projection technology, this presentation incorporates every bit of space into a canvas where Vincent Van Gogh's most famous works come to life in front of viewers' eyes. It's like a beautifully-colored slideshow with perfectly timed music, but with images that rotate and spill out of the borders and expand in front of you. The 33-minute presentation that plays on a loop feels somewhat like virtual reality, but without the goggles.

## MAKING THE MOST OF VAN GOGH

Viewers don't have to be familiar with Van Gogh's work to enjoy the immersive exhibit. Images from his “Starry Night” piece or one of his self-portraits will likely be familiar to most. The timeless pieces from the late 19th century are brought to the forefront in a new way that allows patrons to take in the iconic works of the Dutch impressionist artist in a non-traditional way.

Attendees would do well to read up on the famous artist before going to the exhibit, as little biographical information is available. Van Gogh suffered from mental illness and committed suicide at just 37 years of age, a poor and unknown artist who had sold only one painting in his life from the

collection he had amassed of over 2,000.

## WATCHING, WALKING, LISTENING

As patrons make their way through the venue, floor markings assist with social distancing. In the gallery rooms, circles indicate where to stand to remain six feet apart from others. Some mirrored props allow for camera phones to pick up selfies with a phenomenal backdrop. Viewers can walk through the exhibit but can also find a place to sit and enjoy the art.

The musical component, which is mostly instrumental, really takes the experience to the next level. The 15-song soundtrack is an eclectic mix of new and old. The popular “Non, Je ne regrette rien” by French singer, songwriter, and actress Edith Piaf is part of the playlist, as is Bach's “Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major.”

## TICKETS

Ticket sales are currently limited to 30% of normal capacity, and tickets are in high demand. Prices start at \$39.99 for adults and \$24.99 for children 16 or younger, with untimed and flexible ticket options. For more information visit vangoghchicago.com, call 844-307-4644, or follow @vangoghchicago on FB, Instagram, and Twitter.




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