



# DOWNTOWN NEWS & INFORMATION



## Ideas for Retailers, Restaurants, & More

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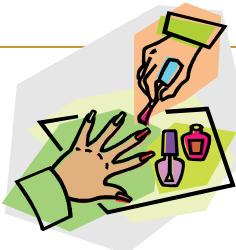
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### New Business Coming Soon!

#### *Michelle Nails - a full service nail salon!*

The shop is located right outside the DDA District in the same shopping plaza with Planet Video, Fantastic Sam's, Sunnyside Café, & Mancino's. (725 W. Grand River)

Stop in and welcome new business owner, Huong Le, to the area!



I just returned from a Downtown Development Association conference in Petoskey and heard so many unique ideas from other communities I just have to share them with you.

One interesting solution to a difficult topic a DDA Director shared with us was the ever present 'open late' debate. Who participates? How long should a store wait it out before shutting the doors?

For this particular community they wanted businesses who weren't staying open longer and later (once or twice a week) to know how many potential customers they missed. Therefore, shops who were open kept stacks of bright post-it

notes and passed them out to customers and encouraged them to place them on the front doors of businesses that were closed reading simple messages like, "Wish you were open," or, "I would have spent money here tonight," and, "See you next Thursday night!"

Merchants who then opened up the following day would see their front doors covered in notes or hardly at all. It was a clear sign that staying open late would benefit their business or not.

It is hard to gauge what traffic you missed after hours. Unless you stand outside and count the number of people who peer in your window or pull at the

locked door, you may not have any idea the number of sales that were lost!

The National Main Street Association research points out that 75% of all retail business is conducted after 5pm and on weekends. This is especially true in a town like ours that truly is a 'bedroom community.' With a small residential population most people work outside of the area and only return after an 8am-5pm shift. Unless you are counting on all of your foot traffic to be served by people who remain in town all day or the rare individual who is on vacation, you probably are missing a

*Continued on pg.2*

## Updated Shop!, Dine!, Services! Brochures Coming Soon

Last summer the DDA had three brochures printed highlighting businesses within the District under the categories of shopping, dining, or services.

Since businesses have come and gone the reference material needs a major update!

Not only will the brochures have a new look and a current list-

ing of businesses, they will also feature some other amenities that should have been included in the last edition. Look for them by the end of August!



## Ideas for Retailers, Restaurants, & More cont...

huge amount of sales.

One more point, and this one is the hardest to hear, is that you need to remain consistent with late hours for a year or more. It is impossible to gain customer loyalty and spread the word if you only try it for a couple weeks.

I hear this all the time from both successful businesses and those who are just getting started. "I tried it for a couple weeks but no one came in," or, "if more shops would stay open then I would, but until then I'm not going to bother," or my favorite, "we tried staying open late about five years ago (or more) and we didn't get the traffic we hoped for."

I don't know if anyone has noticed, but Williamston isn't the same city it was a few years ago. True, the economy has taken a turn, but I guarantee you won't make more money by not being open!

Special events are bringing more and more people in town and I hope the business community isn't missing the boat. The Farmers' Market, the Flea Market, Light Parade, ArtFest, Jubilee, Harry Potter Celebration, and all the other civic events are opportunities to set out sidewalk sales, hold special in-store events, or organize something to make your business a destination.

If you plan on doing something special let me know, let the Chamber know, and most of all, let your neighboring businesses know! They may want to jump on the band wagon. Say team work!

How many times have you stumbled upon a town that has so many little things going on all at once and it seems like the coolest place? The stores are open, the restaurants have café tables, the shops have small displays out front beckoning you to come in. We are seeing some of

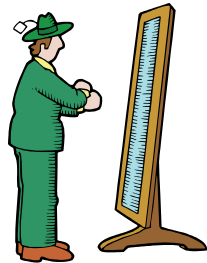
this here as well.

Some of you reading this are doing a great job and you set an excellent example for everyone. You know who you are. Others need specific examples and to know that their efforts aren't wasted.

While walking downtown Petoskey I saw that the DDA gave matching laminated front door signs to businesses that stayed open on Thursday and Friday nights. The signs read, "Open Late, Just for You!" The continuity and direct intention was so eye catching. Since the signs remain up all week they can't be missed and I can still picture those signs in my head. Some ideas are so simple and make such a lasting impression.

I would love to hear your comments. The holiday shopping and dining season is just around the corner. Perhaps we could get something in place soon so everyone is working toward one goal.

Email me at [econda@cablespeed.com](mailto:econda@cablespeed.com).



## Have you heard of Michigan Week? Only 51 Years in the Making!

*Michigan Week* is an annual tribute to the best of the Great Lake State. It began 1954 as a way to promote state pride among citizens and to celebrate the rich heritage and unique features that make Michigan special.

At a recent conference I learned that many towns throughout the state set this week aside each May

(typically the 3rd week) and host special events and celebrations featuring folksy fun.

A special [Michigan.gov](http://Michigan.gov) offering that students can partake in is the *Michigan Week Youth Photo Contest*. 2005 was the contest's third year and it invites young photographers to capture views of their favorite historic sites. The 12 winning photos each

year go on display in the rotunda of the Michigan Library and Historical Center during *Michigan Week*. Not a bad prize!

The week also hosts annual awards paying tribute to community volunteers, citizens, and municipal employees who have contributed to the preservation of Michigan history, a Mayor Exchange,

and a Michigan Notable Books list.

Visit the website to see what other cities have done to celebrate. Williamston should participate in 2006! Our heritage is great and May is a great kick off to summer! What do you think?

### Future Dates:

May 20-26, 2006

May 19-25, 2007

## Relay For Life ~ 24 Hours to Raise Funds & Awareness

Williamston's *Relay For Life* is just around the corner and as one of the most successful relays in the mid-Michigan area we ought to be very proud!

Starting on Friday, August 12th at 3pm, the overnight event is a, "celebration of hope, progress, and answers." Teams of family, friends, and co-workers come out in droves to lend a hand in the

fight against cancer. Pledges are raised from personal contributions but also from creative ideas like carwashes and bake sales. You still have time to get a team together. You can walk or run so don't be shy. Sign up today!

Entertainment, games and music are scheduled during the entire event! For more information please contact the local organizer,



Jenni Beamer, 332-3300 or email her at

Jennifer.beamer@cancer.org.

Registration deadline is 8/6/05 so don't delay! Cost is \$100 (and they take plastic).

The Relay starts at the Community Center at 201 School Street. The event will happen rain or shine, but let's plan on a beautiful day and night for this wonderful celebration!

*This information was obtained from the American Cancer Society website. Please visit the site for more details: www.cancer.org*

**You can be the one to put your store on the map. Don't wait for someone else to do it! Read about this great example...**

## Fiber & Fabrics: A Brochure of Greater Lansing

Messee Wilson of the *Fabric Gallery* spearheaded an informational brochure that features, "specialty shops offer [ing] service, quality, and unusual selections," in the fabric and fiber arena in the Greater Lansing area.

This is the brochure's second edition and even though many of the previous partici-

pants are no longer in business she was able to recruit most of the current stores in the area who fit the criteria to participate.

Messee sent them an invitation describing the concept, the cost to participate, total distribution, and the amount of copy each store could have to highlight its unique features.

Ten shops in all collaborated covering these cities; Charlotte, East Lansing, Portland, Holt, Lansing, Okemos, & Williamston.

I have heard many of the antique dealers in the area talking of a similar brochure. Give Messee a call, 655-4573, or stop by the store to see the innovative brochure yourself.

## Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Flea Market Saturday, August 6th, Dawn 'till 3ish at Rusty Crow, Too lot
- Williamston Theatre Project Reading Saturday, August 6th at 3pm at Wholistic Life Services 1099 W. Grand River Ste. 2
- City Council Meeting Monday, August 8th at 7pm in Council Chambers
- Relay for Life (ACS) Friday, August 12th, starts at 3pm at Community Center, see article for details
- Cathy Ellsworth Memorial Golf Scramble Saturday, August 13th at Oak Lane Golf Course, call Dan at 655-4430
- EDC Board Meeting Monday, August 15th at 7pm in Council Chambers
- DDA Board Meeting Tuesday, August 16th at 7pm in Council Chambers
- Chamber Board Meeting Wednesday, August 17th at 8am at Depot Museum
- Beautification Fund Meeting Thursday, August 18th at 6:30pm at Depot Museum
- City Council Meeting Monday, August 22nd at 7pm in Council Chambers
- Chamber Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies Tuesday, August 23rd, 9:15am - 12 noon, call for details 655-1549
- Planning Commission Meeting Thursday, September 8th at 7pm in Council Chambers

Ongoing

- Farmers' Market - Thursdays 2pm - dusk in Felpausch parking lot . New vendors each week!

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**We're on the web**  
**www.williamston-mi.us**

*Newsletter provided by:*  
**Alison Alfredson**  
*Community Development Director*



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## City Board Positions Available

Have you ever thought about sitting on a City Board? Many of your neighbors and fellow business owners do. Most Boards and Commissions meet one night a month and require an hour or two additional per month to read packet material or discuss related items.

The City currently has positions open on the Planning Commission and the Economic Development Corporation/TIFA Board. In addition, a new group is being formed called the Parks and Recreation Commission. You might get in on the ground level with this one.

If you've always wanted to get involved, this is your chance. Great things are happening in Williamston and it takes people like you to keep us in shape!

You can now go to the City's website to get an application, click on Permits & Forms, then click on Boards & Commissions Applications. You can always stop by City Hall to fill one out as well. If you have never sat through a meeting, please join us to see what it's all about. We welcome you.

**www.williamston-mi.us**

## 'Walk in Williamston' Campaign

Frank Buzzita, member of the Planning Commission, recently visited many City Boards speaking on his campaign to 'Walk in Williamston.' His proposal was spurred by his recent medical advice to do more walking. He took to the streets and literally discovered the charm of Williamston. His idea is to encourage residents to walk; walk the sidewalks in downtown, down the boardwalk, and when the construction is complete, continue the laps across the new bridge and back!



Gather your friends and neighbors for walking groups or do it on your own time. Walk on Thursdays past the farmers' market in the evening and visit the shops that stay open late! Make Saturday family day. Take advantage of what Williamston has to offer while benefiting your health!

More events are in the works to market the idea including a Mayoral Bridge Walk for Labor Day at 10am. We even hope to put routes on the City's website for various athletic levels. Stay tuned for that.

The campaign has even been given the Michigan Surgeon General's support and will be in their newsletter. Now, get out there and start walking Williamston.