

GREATER NILES  
Chamber of Commerce

# CHAMBER CURRENTS

A monthly newsletter from the Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce

## What is the Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce?

**The Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce (“the Chamber”) was created to be an advocate for the business community, to promote and raise the profile of the community, and to drive economic growth in the service area. The Chamber was founded in 1919 by a group of Niles business owners and consists of more than 300-member businesses. The organization serves the communities of the City of Niles, Niles Charter Township, Bertrand Township, Buchanan, Galien, Three Oaks and Cass County. The Chamber three primary focus areas are economic development, business advocacy, and member services.**



ANNUAL LUNCHEON &  
AWARDS CEREMONY

05.14.19

## The Chamber Celebrates 100 Years

On Tuesday, May 14, the Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce celebrated 100 years in the greater Niles community with the Annual Luncheon and Awards Ceremony, in partnership with Teachers Credit Union. It is with great pleasure that the Chamber was able to share in this experience with our friends and neighbors from the community as we ushered in a new era.

This luncheon was a time to celebrate the greater Niles business community and recognize outstanding member businesses and top leaders in the greater Niles area. It was our honor to present five separate awards to amazing individuals and organizations that have dedicated themselves to the success of our region.

The 2019 Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Sandy Whitmyer. Sandy currently serves on the Niles Main Street DDA Board, Design Committee, and is serving as the Chair of the Promotion Committee. Additionally, Sandy has been the president of the Niles Art Association since 2012, and also volunteers at the esteemed Chapin Mansion.

The 2019 Chamber Ambassador of the Year Award was presented to Marci Taylor. Since joining the Ambassador program, Marci has taken on several leadership roles including representing the program as its chair, and now as the Ambassador Coordinator. Marci has dedicated herself to the greater Niles business community, ensuring that her neighbor businesses are thriving.

The 2019 Young Professional of the Year Award, sponsored by Lake Michigan College, was presented to Muta Mwenya. Muta is a husband, writer, speaker, entrepreneur, ideator with experience ranging

from corporate communication to vocational ministry. In 2016, Muta and his wife, Christine, launched Relevant Church. A Niles congregation that has grown from a handful of people to hundreds of individuals that gather each week. In 2019, Muta and the team at Relevant Church also launched Atomic Bean Coffee, a coffee shop on Main Street in downtown Niles.

The 2019 Community Leadership Award was presented to the YMCA of Southwest Michigan for their incomparable presence in our community. The YMCA of Southwest Michigan represents social wellness in its entirety as they consistently seek to strengthen our community physically, mentally, and socially.

Finally, the 2019 Business of the Year Award was presented to SLR Pilates, a fully equipped yoga and Pilates studio that has brought about an esteemed fitness culture that has captured the hearts of area residents. SLR Pilates has demonstrated an exceptional dedication to this community by showcasing exceptional business practices and working towards a heightened quality of life for our region.

The Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce was also honored to welcome Rich Studley, President and CEO of the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, to our event. A conversation with Mr. Studley featured an outlook for Niles and a look at the hot-button issue of infrastructure in Michigan.

Thank you to all those who were able to join us at the Chamber's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Luncheon and Awards Ceremony. This was a momentous occasion and we were thrilled that you were able to join us in celebrating.



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## Kinexus Manufacturing Industry Projections

Kinexus is a nonprofit organization that works to provide sustainable and systemic solutions for the most pressing workforce challenges. In recent reports, Kinexus forecasted an industrial boom within Southwest Michigan over the next ten years that will bolster the region's economy, but also incite a gap within the manufacturing workforce.

Southwest Michigan is one of the leading manufacturing industries within the state as it provides approximately 18,000 manufacturing jobs that account for 17.5 percent of the workforce. In 2018, Kinexus reported a full five percent increase within the manufacturing industry and in 2019 has projected further growth.

This bodes well for the overall economic state of the region, but still leaves a lingering worry regarding workforce. According to Economic Modeling, an estimated 16,000 additional career and technical education-related jobs will be available in Southwest Michigan by 2030. These numbers showcase a staggering change in Southwest Michigan's overall workforce as more and more positions will be available.

Kinexus prioritizes three primary variables that will attribute to this deficit: 1.) an aging population, 2.) a declining population, and 3.) a declining number of people achieving educational attainment. Between 2010 and 2017, Michigan's median age increased from 37.5 to 38.7 while the Tri-County (Berrien County, Cass County, and Van Buren County) region increased from 41 to 42.6. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over the last eight years, Michigan's overall population increased by one percent, while the Tri-County population decreased by two percent. Finally, according to the 2018 American Community Survey, in the Tri-County area, 11.6 percent of the current workforce do not hold a high school diploma or equivalent. This is comparative to the 10 percent that Michigan as a state averages.

These numbers and projections reflect an impending and prevalent change that will be influencing the economic state of the greater Niles area. The Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce will work to help maintain a sustainable business community in the coming years and will continue to work to arm our region with influential news and information.

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## The Chamber's Mission

**Serving businesses and our members by providing products, programs, and services that drive company and community growth**

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## Hampton Inn and Suites by Hilton is Well Underway



Many have seen the construction well underway for the new Hampton Inn and Suites by Hilton in the 1400 block of S. 11<sup>th</sup> St. This new facility has been under construction for several months and is projected to be completed in the fall or winter of this year.

Upon completion of this project, the Hampton Inn and Suites by Hilton will be three stories and will feature 72 rooms. The hotel will offer several amenities for guests including a fitness area, pool access, and a business center.

Please [click](#) here for more information regarding this new business.

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## The Chamber's Vision

**To be a trusted source of information, an effective resource, and an influential advocate for the business community in the greater Niles area.**

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## Updates on Island Park

On Monday, April 8, Niles city council began discussing the future of Island Park in Niles. The park has seen considerable damage since the 2018 flood left behind damaged playground equipment, uprooted trees, and a layer of sediment that covers the Island. Additionally, Island Park is known to be prone to flooding and has needed consistent repairs in the past. Since the 2018 flood, Island Park has remained closed to the public.

The city of Niles has begun discussing the fate of the park, arriving at three potential options:

Option one is full park restoration that would cost approximately \$200k - \$250k.

Option two is partial park restoration that would cost approximately \$200k and would include restoration of the bridge and removal of the damaged equipment but leave the park primarily in its natural state.

Option three is decommissioning the park. This would include disabling the bridge, keeping the gate to the park locked, providing additional security, and removing the play equipment. There is no approximated cost for this option.

As discussions continue on the fate of Island Park, the city council has approved the solicitation for bids to repair the bridge. Additional park restoration has yet to be decided.

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## Business After Hours

June 4 | 6:00-10:00 PM

On Tuesday, June 4, join the [Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce](#) in the June Business After Hours, hosted by the [South Bend Cubs](#)! Watch The South Bend Cubs take on the Bowling Green Hot Rods while connecting with fellow business leaders in our area!

This game is located at Four Winds Field, 501 W. South St., South Bend, IN 46601.

The gates will open at 6:00 p.m., and the game will begin at 7:05 p.m. Watch the game from the esteemed Pepsi Stadium Club while enjoying appetizers and access to a cash bar! Your ticket is included when you RSVP with the Chamber, but parking will cost \$7. (Guests may park in any lot except for Lot A) Seats are limited! One must RSVP to receive their ticket! Visit the following link to reserve your ticket today!

Upon reserving a seat through the Chamber, one may pick up their ticket from the 1st Base Box Office on the day of the game!  
Please contact Eileen Villanueva at [eileen@greaternileschamber.com](mailto:eileen@greaternileschamber.com) or 269.683.1833 with any questions.

Register



## Eye Opener Breakfast

June 28 | 7:30-9:00 AM

On Friday, June 28, join the [Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce](#), [The Morris Estate](#), and [2C Construction](#) for the June Eye Opener Breakfast. This event will be an opportunity to network before work with fellow business professionals and community leaders while enjoying breakfast with The Supper Club by The Morris Estate.

This event will take place from 7:30 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. at The Supper Club by The Morris Estate, 1245 S. 11th St., Niles, MI 49120.

[Register](#)

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## Welcome our New Members!

Please give a warm welcome to Angelic Cleaning, Oh MY, LLC, and Green Stem, LLC, the Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce's newest members.

[Angelic Cleaning](#) offers commercial cleaning and janitorial services to businesses throughout the greater Niles area and is passionate about providing the best service experience to their customers.

[More Info](#)

[Oh MY, LLC](#) is a formal attire retailer that offers bridal, prom, and pageant gowns, tuxedo rentals, full-service event planning, professional alterations, embroidery and customization services, and more with the mission of making elegance affordable.

[More Info](#)

[Green Stem, LLC](#) of Niles is a Michigan based, family owned and operated, Medical Marijuana Provisioning Center located on the 11th St. corridor. Green Stem is dedicated to bringing premium, quality cannabis medicine products and wellness care to the greater Niles area.

[More Info](#)

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[Email Eileen](#)

[Email Jeff](#)

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