

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 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 380-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.



Chapin Mansion Completes Renovation

On Tuesday, August 20, the Niles History Center (NHC) will host a Grand Reopening Celebration from 5:00 until 7:00 p.m. Extensive work has been completed by Mihm Enterprises, Inc. of Hamilton Michigan

to renovate the Mansion's upper balcony and porch, as well as adding an ADA-compliant accessibility ramp. Remarks will take place at 6 pm. Visitors will be able to tour the Mansion afterward. This free event is open to the public, all ages and for the first time, to those with mobility issues!

The Project was funded in part by a Capital Improvement grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA). In addition, the Michigan-based crowdfunding platform, Patronicity, allowed community donors to contribute another \$15,000 to the Project, which was matched by a grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) Public Spaces Community Places program. The Grand Reopening Celebration is presented with support from the Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce.

History Center Director, Christina Arseneau, identified this Project as an important one several years ago. Prior to this Project, the Mansion was not accessible to people unable to climb stairs. 1 in 5 people will face a physical handicap at some point, even if it is only temporary.

In 2017, Kil Architecture of South Bend was hired to conduct an architectural study of the porch to determine the scope of the project and create a plan, drawings and budget estimates. Kil worked with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which approved the Project in Fall 2017. Niles' Historic District Commission approved the work in Spring 2018.

Mihm Enterprises, Inc. of Hamilton, MI was the sole bidder for the work and was awarded the contract for the construction, which began in February 2019.

The NHC has already served more than 6,000 people in 2018 and feels that they can serve more with an accessible building; as, despite this increase in attendance, segments of the population are not able to visit the Chapin Mansion at all. A school class with a child in a wheelchair and a group of senior citizens turned down visits last year because the building is not accessible. Even those with medical conditions sometimes have trouble climbing the stairs to the Mansion's first floor. At the NHC, we often hear comments from visitors and see postings on the NHC's Facebook page asking when the Mansion will be accessible.

The City of Niles' population is 11,600. Of this number, 18.6% are senior citizens and 10.1% are disabled. This Project to make the Mansion accessible was developed to serve these constituents and their friends and families, as well as visitors from other areas who may have physical disabilities or ambulatory restrictions.

The project has goals beyond restoring the building's façade and making the building accessible. More visitors to the Mansion will have a positive impact on Niles as a cultural destination. In addition, the project will demonstrate our local commitment to special needs communities. Anyone can become disabled at any time, whether through injury or illness, and physical handicaps should not prevent someone from participating in cultural programs. This project allows Niles an opportunity to serve as a model on creating accessibility at historic properties and will inspire other organizations and municipalities to do the same.



The Chamber's Mission

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



Chamber Chat Features Jam Central Basketball Elite

Chamber Chat, brought to you by Brentwood at Niles, airs on the third Wednesday of every month from 11:30 until 12:00 noon on WNIL 107.5fm. Last month, Chamber Chat featured Jam Central Basketball Elite. Tune in to learn more about this amazing organization.

[Listen Now!](#)

Potential Alternative to Gas Tax

On Monday, July 8, State Representative Brad Paquette, State Representative Jack O'Malley, and the Director of the Berrien County Road Commission gathered at Niles District Library to propose and

discuss a new plan for the Michigan Infrastructure overhaul.

The new proposal forgoes the gas tax increase and rather, re-allocates the current revenue from Michigan's gas taxes to provide more road funding. The key to this plan is that every cent of the current gas tax is to be designated to the roads, instead of the money also being distributed to school aid and revenue sharing. Those funds would then come from the K-12 money that is currently being diverted to higher education, and through making the internet tax a true sales tax.

The proposed plan also gives local governments more control in how their funds are spent on the roads. One element of allowing local governments more control, will give areas the opportunity to designate their funds to the roads that are in the worst shape, or as they see fit, rather than through their current classifications of primary versus secondary roads.

As it stands, this proposed action is currently being negotiated with the Senate as well as with Governor Gretchen Whitmer, and several other proposed ideas and solutions are currently being worked through to best determine what is the best course of action for the state.

The Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce understands that Michigan's infrastructure plays a vital part in our business community. To share your thoughts with us, please click [here](#).



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.



Eye Opener Breakfast, Hosted by Michiana Business Support & The Networking Group

August 2 | 7:30-9:00 AM

Southwestern Michigan College Niles Campus
33890 US-12
Niles, MI 49120

Don't miss out! On Friday, August 2, the [Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce](#), [Michiana Business Support](#), and [The Networking Group](#) are teaming up to bring you the August Eye Opener Breakfast.

Visit Southwestern Michigan College Niles to join us for a morning of networking with fellow area business professionals and community leaders. Breakfast will be provided by Brentwood at Niles.

Don't forget your business cards to enter to win one of our amazing door prizes!

Register



Business After Hours, Hosted by PACE of Southwest Michigan & Berkshire Niles

August 22 | 5:30-7:00 PM

Berkshire Niles
10 N. 3rd St.
Niles, MI 49120

On Thursday, August 22, join the [Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce](#), [PACE of Southwest Michigan](#), and Berkshire Niles for the August Business After Hours! The event will take place at the new Berkshire Niles, located at 10 N. 3rd St., and will offer attendees the opportunity to gather with fellow business professionals and community leaders.

A cash bar will be available at this event, courtesy of [Iron Shoe Distillery](#).

Be sure to bring your business cards to enter to win one of our door prizes!

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Welcome our New Members!

Please give a warm welcome to Michiana Christian Embassy, Best-Syrups, Four Flags Apartments, FitStop24, and Smith Automotive, the Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce's newest members.

[Michiana Christian Embassy](#) views the entire City as their family and strives to serve and bless in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through cooperative efforts with the Niles Area Ministerial Association, Southwestern Michigan College, The YMCA, The Salvation Army, The Gateway Foundation, Optimist Club Soccer as well as missions outreaches at home and overseas, Michiana Christian Embassy sees itself as a church within the greater church of Niles, and wants to see the Kingdom of God touch and bless every friend and neighbor to the utmost!

More Info

[Best-Syrups](#) provides the community with services like no other! This syrup factory is the place to go for your next party or work event. They would provide the syrup, you would provide the ice! They make all the syrups in house and provide customers with over 40 unique flavors.

[More Info](#)

Four Flags Apartments is under new ownership and management and has recently undergone a full rehabilitation. Four Flags Apartments is an affordable elderly community, with elderly being defined as 62 years of age or older or mobility impaired. Four Flags is part of HUD's Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program. Residency is restricted to households earning 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) or less. Rental rates are based upon adjusted household income.

[Email Four Flags Apartments](#)

[FitStop 24](#) is a family-owned franchise, 24-hour gym that will be opening this fall! FitStop 24 will offer tanning, group classes, free weights, and circuit training. Registration opens soon, so stay tuned to capitalize on this great new amenity right in the heart of downtown Niles.

[More Info](#)

[Smith Auto](#) is your number one source for quality used vehicles. Offering cars, trucks, and SUV's, Smith Auto has a variety of vehicles that is sure to meet your needs and your budget. Smith Auto's automotive professionals provide a hassle-free environment that guarantees a satisfying car buying experience.

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