

# the Westsider

WINTER 2017/2018

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Westside  
Neighborhood  
Association



# WELCOME

## Hello Neighbors!

This time of year many of us find ourselves reflecting on what we are grateful for and how we can share our gratitude with others. I am very grateful to live in such a warm, welcoming neighborhood filled with so many wonderful neighbors.

I am also grateful to be a part of the Westside Neighborhood Association, made up of our neighbors, who come together to give back to our community through the food pantry at Letts, donations to various activities at Sexton, and by holding fun and free events for the whole neighborhood.



**COREY & EMILY DERUSHIA**



If you want to participate in this act of giving back, please consider joining the Board in 2018. We're always looking for neighbors with new ideas, a passion for their community, and a willingness to participate. **Join us at our Annual Meeting on January 10th to learn more.** There are also subcommittees like Crime & Safety who are always looking for volunteers and a new pilot program designed to help neighbors in need of snow removal. Find out more at [wnalansing.com](http://wnalansing.com).

Happy Holidays,

Emily DeRushia  
President, Westside Neighborhood  
Association Board of Directors  
[board@wnalansing.com](mailto:board@wnalansing.com)

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The Board meets on the first Wednesday of every month at 6 p.m. at the Letts Community Center on Kalamazoo. Join us!



# *Around Town:* OLD OAKLAND NEIGHBORHOOD

Nestled between Oakland, Stanley, Cawood, and Willow are the friendly people of the Old Oakland Neighborhood Association (OONA). The Old Oakland Neighborhood is an award winning, nonprofit, volunteer-run organization enriching their community. They hold fundraisers and events, are friends of the nearby parks Dunnebacke and West Side Park, and operate a community garden.

One of their current projects is a Garden Project, which will involve learning about what other community gardens are working with and re-designing the garden to suit the neighborhood's needs. They will be gathering community input about potential options, including turning part into an orchard, or a fenced area for dogs.

Residents in the Old Oakland Neighborhood work cooperatively to improve the appearance, safety, health, and general welfare for all neighborhood residents by improving communication, sharing information, and interacting with fellow OONA members, other neighborhood groups like the WNA, local businesses, and elected officials and city government. They are passionate about working together to make the OONA a great place to call home, and we are proud to call them our neighbors!

You can learn more about the Old Oakland Neighborhood Association at [www.oldoaklandlansing.com](http://www.oldoaklandlansing.com). They also have a private Facebook group like ours if you would like to stay in the know that way.

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## NEIGHBORS WELCOME!



**WNA ANNUAL MEETING**  
6pm-8pm at SEXTON HIGH SCHOOL

Bring a dish to pass, meet your neighbors, and learn about the WNA!

# PROSPERITY

Earlier this month, a 16-foot-high stainless steel sculpture entitled “Prosperity” was installed at the north west entrance to Lansing, located at the fork in the road at West Saginaw and West Oakland. This project, part of a greater plan to create a welcoming and useable gateway to the Westside called Point West Art & Trail Project, was made possible by LEAP’s Public Art for Communities grant program in partnership with PNC Foundation, a MEDC/SOCA Patronicity crowdfunding campaign, Christman Construction, the Arts Council of Greater Lansing, the city of Lansing, Landscape Architects & Planners, Inc., Power of WE, the Saginaw Oakland Commercial Association, and artist & sculptor Fritz Olsen.



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# FUN ON THE WESTSIDE!

As the seasons change, so does the programming at Letts Center! Lansing Parks and Recreation invites you to visit Letts or jump online to [www.lansingmi.gov/parks](http://www.lansingmi.gov/parks) and see what it has to offer! From drop-in programs for preschool youth, to our daily FREE senior program, we have something for everyone!

Did you know? We offer lunch Monday-Friday from the Tri-County Office on Aging. Lunch is served at 12 noon. There is a \$3 suggested donation, but it is not required. We offer several senior programs before and after lunch including: BINGO, Bridge, walking club and more. Stop by between 10-2 and check us out.

Letts offers an after school program for K-6th grades! Cost is \$25/residents for the Winter/Spring session (Jan-Jun.) This after school program runs from 3:30-6pm, Monday-Friday and offers clubs, snacks and fun; stop in to Letts to reserve your child's spot today! Bussing is available from Lewton & Willow; staff will pick up children from Riddle.

We have free Teen Nights for 13-17 year olds every Tuesday night from 6:30-8:30; you just need your school ID to attend.

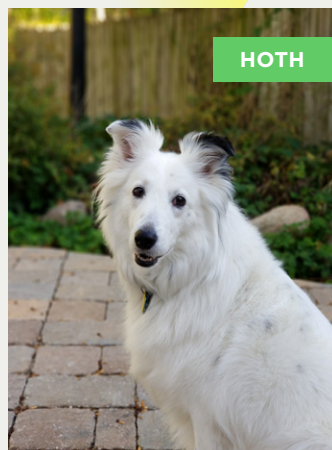
Lansing Parks and Recreation would like to thank the Westside Neighborhood Association for their generous support of the food bank. They pay for the food delivery costs each month, which helps us continue this needed service. If you are hungry and live in the 48915 zip code, call (517) 483-4311 to set up an appointment to receive food.

For more information, check out our website at [www.lansingmi.gov/parks](http://www.lansingmi.gov/parks), call (517) 483-4311 or stop by. We'd love to see you! Be sure to follow us on Facebook @LansingParksandRecreation and Twitter @LansingParksandRec!



## Westside Pet Spotlight: HOTH

Hoth is an 8-year-old border collie mix. We adopted him from a rescue group when he was a year old. He is a very sweet dog but also very nervous, so you might see us attempting to walk him around the neighborhood despite his protests that home is so much nicer than outside. He's really smart (too smart for his own good!) and has learned tons of tricks. He knows all the basics like sit, stay, etc., but also fun ones like wave, twirl, bow, and crawl. He even brings his toys inside when he's done playing in the yard. He has done competitive agility in the past but now we just do agility for fun and exercise. He is great with our infant son and all he wants out of life is a chewy, a belly rub, and a soft place to nap.



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- **Notary Public Services**

## *Take Note:* SEXTON STUDENTS AND PARENTS

The Ingham County Health Community and the Ingham Community Health Center offer a health clinic that students can access during all school hours. Services range from sports physicals to immunization clinics to mental services to just feeling rotten in the middle of the school day.

Additional available services include: laboratory services and tests; health maintenance exams; treatment for acute and chronic illnesses; dental, vision and hearing screenings and follow-ups; specialty referrals; individual, group, family, and community education; pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease testing; substance abuse education, counseling and referrals; and physical/sexual abuse counseling and referrals. The office is staffed with both a nurse practitioner and a social worker.

All insurances are accepted; students' families can make other financial arrangements as necessary on a sliding scale basis. The Clinic is working in tandem with Communities in Schools (CIS), overseen by site manager Julia Cawvey. The Clinic social worker and Julia will work together to identify at risk students to help ensure they are receiving adequate housing, clothing, nutrition, and hygiene.

They will also identify bullying activities and work to establish a safe learning environment for all Sexton students. An article containing additional information about the CIS program may also be found in this newsletter.

# Stella:

## A NEIGHBORHOOD RESCUE STORY

The Westside Neighborhood is full of critters of all shapes and sizes. From pigs to parrots and everything in between, we have a menagerie all around us. But what breed stands out from the rest? Our people.

This is the story about a dog named Stella, an owner who desperately wanted to be reunited, and a community full of heroes.

The morning of All Hallows' Eve, Westsider Amy Milner put out a call to the neighborhood: "Good morning neighbors. My dog slipped out the front door on my roommate this morning around 8:45 a.m. She has never run before and I am sure she is scared. Her name is Stella. She is a small 50lb brindle pitbull with no collar. This is my child and I am devastated... If found please call me..."

Our faithful neighborhood dog rescuer Joan Austin and her deputies were soon on the case! Over the next few hours, Facebook comments were flying back and forth as folks spotted Stella in pockets across the neighborhood and wished for her return. She took off from Kalamazoo Street heading west. She was next spotted by the train tracks near Sexton High School then again on Verlinden and perhaps across to Cleo. The rain was coming down, but that did not extinguish our hope that Stella would come home safely.

Finally, on a particularly rainy Thursday afternoon, after two nights of Stella traversing the neighborhood, a group of neighborhood heroes followed a tip to the RACER Trust site near Scribbles and Giggles.

She was finally spotted by a group of about seven and after some finagling and coaxing, they managed to catch the skittish pup and bring her home to safety.

Thank you to all of the neighbors who posted tips, drove around the neighborhood, and sent warm wishes for a safe recovery. Stories like these truly show what being a part of the Westside Family is all about!





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# COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS

*by Merry Rosenberg with information from Bill Milliken, Founder of CIS*

"Relationships, not programs, change people." That is the slogan of Communities in Schools of Michigan (CIS), a wonderful program new to Sexton that began this fall. Its Sexton Senior Site Coordinator is Julia Cawvey, who has her Masters in Educational Leadership and Policy. Julia spent the past two years at Willow School assisting younger students increase their literacy levels and supporting them with basic needs so they would one day have what it takes to graduate. The other Lansing schools with current CIS site coordinators are Averill, Atwood, and Willow all of which feed into Sexton. Two student interns from MSU and an Americorps volunteer are working with Julia. Communication is also essential to ensure that all of our students are surrounded by a community of support. In high schools like Sexton, community partners and initiatives are typically distributed across departments and administration. The goal of CIS Michigan is to bring everyone to the same page with a common vision for student success.

CIS, a private 501(c)(3) organization independent of the school system, is dedicated to giving students the tools they need to ensure successful graduation from high school and a positive entrance into the labor market. It begins in kindergarten, targeting students who demonstrate risk factors consistent with high school dropout. It utilizes a number of tools aimed at helping students find access to basic resources, including but not limited to, transportation, clothing, hygiene, and housing. After identifying students with these needs, CIS will help with a clothing closet and provide snacks, weekend survival kits, and bottled water. While Sexton avails itself of donations from the Newsboys program, each student is entitled to only one voucher per year. And bottled water is essential because the water fountains on Sexton's third floor are non-operational!

One focus at Sexton is its significant truancy rate. The most recent data showed that 74% of Sexton students had chronic absenteeism, defined as unexcused absences for 10 or more days of school. By mid-October, Sexton students had already missed 25 partial or full days or more of school. A student with chronic absenteeism is 7.4 times more likely to drop out of high school. Another focus is to show students they can have faith that Sexton will support them and help them achieve educational success so long as they do their part to attend class and engage in their education.

Julia is interested in partnering with the WNA to provide one-off activities, e.g., a ride to the dentist, as well as ongoing relationships where a mentor would become involved in various facets of a student's life. Julia has observed that students are unaware of the job opportunities available; in severe cases, students think their choices are limited to either end of the continuum: supporting a family with plasma donations or becoming a multi-million dollar sports star. Students are less aware of programs that can provide a skill leading directly to employment. Thus the key is to show students the resources and programs close to home. For example, the west campus of Lansing Community College offers one-year programs to become a dental hygienist or medical assistant.

Also, previous Sexton graduates would be an invaluable resource in showing students that they, too, can make it! Another idea is Career Events, staffed with local neighbors designed to show the students that their neighbors work in a variety of jobs, some of which may be tailor-made to their interests and talents! Julia is also considering a career club where students could meet during the day or after school

to learn what is possible, either on a one on one basis or targeted to the club as a whole. Julia also plans to assess students' social-emotional learning to determine whether they feel safe in their environment, are they being bullied, what coping skills they utilize when angry or frustrated, etc. She has also proposed a mental health initiative where students will learn about the stigmas associated with mental health problems and provide them with the resources to engage in healthy behaviors, e.g., engaging in sports or meditation and maintaining a healthy diet.

Is there an area where you can help a neighborhood child? A few years ago we unified in our response to the threat of Sexton's close. Now that it looks like Sexton is here to stay, we must play our part to help!

## RACER TRUST UPDATE

### Remediation Work Continues at RACER's Lansing Properties Under Contract

In November 2016 RACER Trust entered into agreements with Kansas City-based NorthPoint Development for the sale and development of nearly 260 acres of RACER's industrial properties in the City of Lansing, Lansing, and Delta Charter Townships. NorthPoint plans to develop a mix of manufacturing, warehouse and distribution operations for the automotive sector.

Under the sale agreements, NorthPoint is now in the process of its due diligence and planning. Ultimately it will have to seek approvals from the city and townships for its project(s). Those approvals must occur before the sales close and construction begins. All development activity will be coordinated with ongoing environmental cleanup, which remains the responsibility of RACER Trust under the oversight of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

In late summer RACER entered into easement agreements with Consumers Energy and the Lansing Board of Water and Light (LBWL) for the installation of a new gas main and added electrical transmission capacity, respectively. Both easements generally run west of the existing rail line from Michigan Avenue to Willow Street in Lansing Township. The LBWL was granted a temporary license to use an 18-acre parcel on the site near Michigan Avenue to stage equipment during construction, which is expected to last until August 2018.

RACER continues to work with the MDEQ on cleanup activities. Under current conditions, contamination at the sites does not pose a risk to the community. RACER is completing focused investigations to better characterize Per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFASs) at Plant 3. PFASs are compounds recently being tested at contaminated sites. PFAS are believed to have been used at the site as a mist suppressant for plating lines. Development and evaluation of remediation options also continues. Remedial plans for the lower 1,4-dioxane groundwater contamination and several other areas at the site are being prepared and should be presented to the MDEQ over the next several months. Once the MDEQ's questions have been addressed for the lower 1,4-dioxane plan it will be made available for public comment, which should be sometime later in 2018.

Finally, and importantly, RACER continues to monitor groundwater quality. In the event changes occur RACER will address them. Questions about RACER's Lansing sites can be directed to Sam Solomon at: [ssolomon@racertrust.org](mailto:ssolomon@racertrust.org) or (248) 990-1042.



# OLDS

by Chad Stevens

Please allow me to preface this article by saying that I am not a historian, nor have I ever worked for General Motors. I'm just some dude who likes the history of the city he grew up in and the neighborhood he currently resides.

My wife, Emily Stevens, and I purchased our home at 1316 N. Genesee from her father, Bill Shipley, in the fall of 2013. Emily actually grew up in that house as a child until moving on to MSU in 1997. There is rich history in this 94 year old tudor and the Stevens/Shipley family has been a part of that history for the better part of three decades.

When we bought the home from Bill, he presented me with a black and white photo that he had received as a gift. In the photo sat an old convertible automobile parked in front of our home with the words 1927 Convertible scribed onto it. I've always admired the photo as it harkens back to the art deco period of flappers and speakeasies. I was drawn to its simple, yet elegant, design of the car. I placed the photo on a shelf in our office where it sat for over a year.

While I liked the photo, it had its drawbacks. The quality of its resolution was rather poor, and I couldn't identify the make of the vehicle. I asked my grandfather, John Wiegner, who had worked for Studebaker in South Bend, IN. In 1955 he moved his family north to Lansing and worked as an engineer in body design at Oldsmobile. His best guess as to the make of the vehicle was a Chevrolet Coupe. He pointed out some details, that I have since forgotten, that led him to that conclusion, but he couldn't be certain.

Well, that bothered me. Not knowing for sure why that photo was taken in front of our house and what kind of vehicle it was didn't sit well with me. I messaged Bill to see if he had any info on the car, and he explained to me that he was told it was a photo taken from a still frame from a video on the history of Oldsmobile. So I took to the Googles, and dialed up a video search for the history of Oldsmobile. The first result was a seven minute video, and at the 4:35 mark I found what I was looking for. It was settled: a 1927 Oldsmobile. But I still wanted to know more.

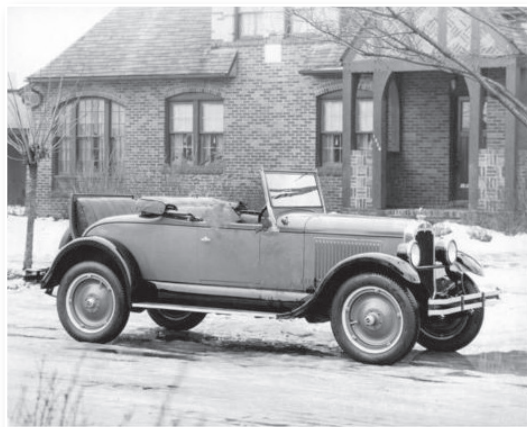


Once again, the intricate series of tubes and vacuums that we all know the internet to be, aided me in an image search for "1927 Oldsmobile Convertible". The front page of the search was littered with what appeared to be old stock photos, pamphlets, and present day car show photos. I ventured to the seldom seen second page of a Google search. To my surprise, I found another image of the same car, positioned slightly different, with our home in the background. And it was being sold on both Amazon and EBay!

I was intrigued as to whether there were more of these photos for sale. What I found was more than I expected. There were similar photos for sale as mine (car in front of house), and then I realized I recognized some of the other homes in the back ground; the first of which I noticed was at 505 Carey St. I then searched more years (1920s-1930s) and recognized more homes from throughout our neighborhood as well the Moores River Dr. neighborhood. In all, I found three separate photos of cars at my home, along with the 505 Carey St., and the following homes: 600 Dinsmore Ave., 1220 S. Genesee Dr., and 1311 N. Genesee Dr. There were other photos with homes that had all the hallmarks of a classic Westside home, but I have been unable to identify and locate them.

As you check these photos out, it might be hard for you to imagine that the homes you see, and maybe even live in, were brand new at the time. State of the art, even. Though many of the homes, in which the models are standing in front of, were still being heated by coal, maybe had a one car garage, and wouldn't see a television for another 30 years. Heck, owning a bottle of wine was illegal! These homes, and each of their owners, have been a part of so much history. And the fact that they are still standing, especially when Lansing has had a history of not necessarily protecting its heritage, is a testament to this neighborhood. We are a neighborhood that values its rich past. Rest assured, if you get the itch to start doing some research on your

own, I know this community will anxiously await your findings.



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COVER PHOTO: A snowy day in the Westside.

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