

# NEXUS

## CHILDCARE

Daycare space for kids 0-5 is lacking in every north west county.

## SKILLS GAP

Workers lack soft skills like communication and reliability and job-specific hard skills.

## TRANSPORTATION

Long commutes, poor roads, high gas prices.

# SOLVING THE WORKFORCE PUZZLE

## HOUSING

Median Grand Traverse County home prices are up 32 percent since 2020, to \$392,000.

## PLUS:

Setting a course for college, NMC students mentor Blair fifth graders

Fellows, Outstanding Alumni named

## BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS

Antrim, Benzie, Leelanau and Kalkaska counties lag behind Michigan's average.



Northwestern  
Michigan  
College

# NEXUS

THE NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE MAGAZINE

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## BALANCING TRADE-OFFS

About once a week, when my husband and I are both on video calls while working from home, the audio gets squawky and screechy. A message will pop up on my screen: *Low system resources may affect quality.*

Typically I turn off the video, and the audio clarifies. Until I started working on this issue's cover story, I considered it a relatively minor, infrequent inconvenience: Trade off the video, temporarily, to fix the audio. Forge forward with my workday.

But what if the tradeoff you must make for your workday isn't so minor or temporary? Say you can't find daycare for your kids. Or that your commute is an hour, because you can't afford to live closer to your job. Maybe both.

As our story "Solving the Workforce Puzzle" explains (page 8), northern Michigan residents confront these tradeoffs every day. Some are familiar, some newer, but now, judged in the harsh light cast by the pandemic, more individuals and families are concluding the tradeoffs aren't worth the drain on their "system resources" of time, money and energy. They leave the workforce. Many others find their lives like the tower on our cover—precariously balanced, quality subject to collapse. That pop-up warning from Zoom started to seem prescient.

Warnings lead to awareness, which is the first step to problem-solving. Hopefully, our story sheds light and helps bring that awareness. Now, more system resources must be directed toward solutions that will stabilize people's lives. The quality of life we prize in northern Michigan hangs in the balance. **N**

TAKEAWAYS



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THE CLASS OF 2022 CELEBRATED COMMENCEMENT AT THE DENNOS MUSEUM CENTER MAY 7. MORE THAN 600 NMC STUDENTS EARNED DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES.





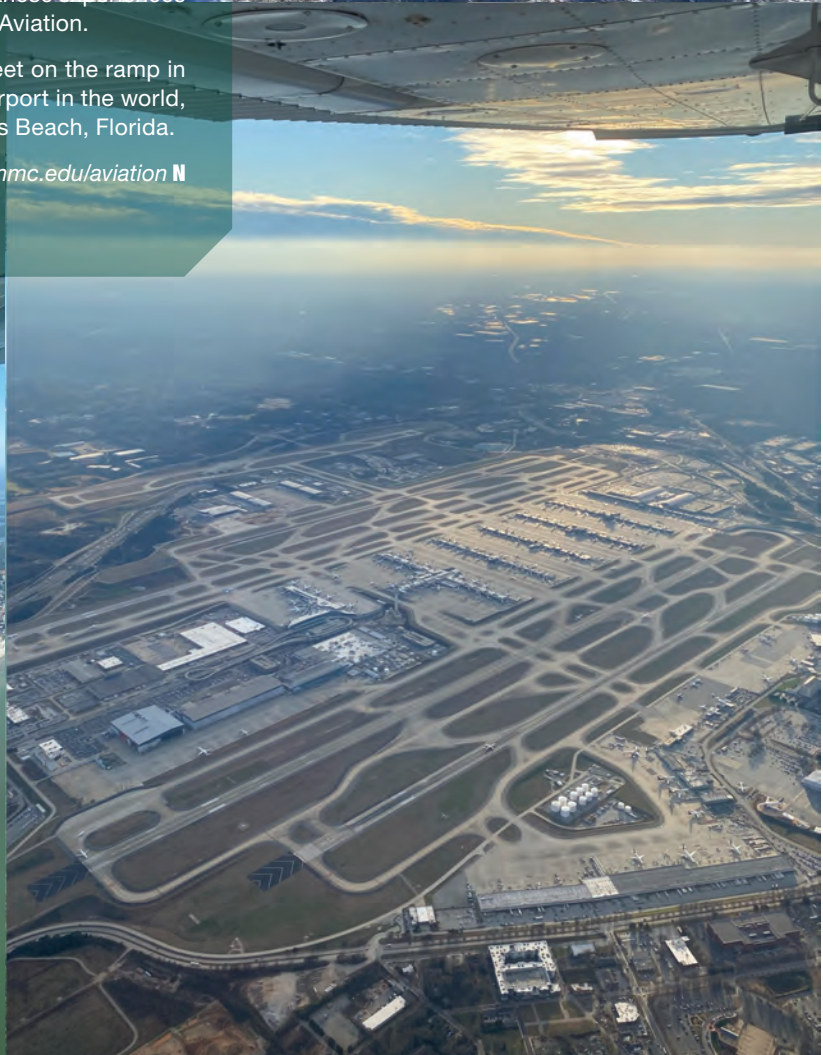
# AVIATION INTENSIVE

In January, 24 NMC aviation students and instructors flew eight aircraft from Traverse City to Venice, Florida for a two week flight training. For nearly 40 years, the annual "venture learning" trip has given aviation students opportunities to experience a wide range of scenarios in the aircraft, including carrying passengers, flying the seaplane and flying cross country in the middle of winter. "All of these experiences build a more confident pilot," said Alex Bloye, director of NMC Aviation.

Photos, clockwise from top left, show the NMC Cessna 172 fleet on the ramp in Macon, Georgia; mountains near Asheville, N.C.; the busiest airport in the world, Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport; and Fort Myers Beach, Florida.

*NMC's students fly their first semester in NMC's aviation program. [nmc.edu/aviation](http://nmc.edu/aviation)*

▶ Photos by Adam Dykstra





NICK NISSLEY, PRESIDENT



## CALLING THE HERO IN EACH OF US

**I ALWAYS** wondered what it would be like to be a superhero. This spring I had a little taste when I dressed up as “Captain Hawk Owl” for our college’s Big Little Hero Race. It’s a fabulous experiential learning event hosted by our business communications students to benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters.

In some ways, being the president of Northwestern Michigan College is like being a superhero. I get to help students achieve their goals and see their dreams come true! But more often than not, the real work happens a lot slower than my 5k pace and involves meetings, planning, collaboration and compromise. We’d like to think solving complex and systemic problems can be done at superhuman speed by some masked marvel, but the reality would make for a pretty dull summer blockbuster on the big screen.

The bright side is that we all have an opportunity to be part of the solution and to be a hero in the story. In fact, it will take all of us working together to solve our community’s challenges. My job isn’t to carry the weight of the world, but to make sure NMC is at the table and part of the conversation. Especially in a community like ours, we simply cannot wait for a hero to save us. We all have to show up, do the hard work, have patience and persistence and know we are making progress, even if it isn’t done at the speed of sound.

In this issue of *Nexus* you will read incredible stories of how NMC faculty and staff—our real superheroes—are working to make our college and community a better place, for our students and citizens. I am so proud of our Hawk Owl heroes and am proud to be part of a community that works together to do hard things.



**PRESIDENT NICK NISSLEY WAS INAUGURATED AND RECEIVED HIS PRESIDENTIAL MEDALLION AT THE 2022 COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY.**



**NMC STUDENT A TOP SCHOLAR NATIONWIDE**

NMC student Amber Marsh is one of 15 Phi Theta Kappa members selected as a 2022 Guistwhite Scholar, and will receive a \$5,000 scholarship for her baccalaureate studies.

Winners were chosen from among 2,700 applicants nationwide based on academic excellence, leadership accomplishments, and engagement in PTK, the international community college honor society. Marsh, of Kalkaska, has been president of NMC's PTK chapter for two years and led it to its best performance ever in the organization's Most Distinguished Chapter competition. She was NMC's Student Government Association president in 2021-22 and active in other student groups as well.

➤ *More info: [nmc.edu/ptk](http://nmc.edu/ptk)*

**K. ROSS CHILDS, ANN ROGERS NAMED 2022 FELLOWS**

The two Traverse City recipients of NMC's highest honor have supported the college for decades. Childs was a member of the NMC Foundation Board from 1990-1999 and an elected member of the Board of Trustees from 2001-2020, including two years as chair. He bookended those two decades by serving on the search committees that led to the selections of both Tim Nelson and Nick Nissley as NMC presidents. Childs and his late wife, Helen, have also supported NMC philanthropically for 35 years.

Rogers' late husband, science instructor and 1985 Fellow Joe Rogers, spearheaded the construction of NMC's Rogers Observatory, and she created a science scholarship as a birthday gift to him. She went on to create four scholarships, the most recent supporting students who are active in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work at the college. A longtime member of the Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council, Rogers can frequently be found walking across campus, taking stock of the native plants and trees she helped to plant.

➤ *See a list of all NMC Fellows since 1964 at [nmc.edu/fellows](http://nmc.edu/fellows)*



**K. ROSS CHILDS**



**ANN ROGERS**



### STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD IN EUROPE, SOUTH AMERICA

NMC resumed its place as a leader in short-term study abroad experiences this spring, with 50 students traveling to the United Kingdom (nursing, above), France (humanities), Spain (culinary) and Colombia (water studies).

They are the first trips since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and many colleges are still hesitant to travel, said Jim Bensley, director of International Services and Service Learning and co-leader of the France trip.

“We are on the leading edge,” Bensley said.

Studying abroad is one form of experiential learning and required for the global endorsement credential NMC began offering eight years ago. Bensley said that global experiences add another dimension to classroom education.

NMC also offers up to \$1,000 Global Opportunities scholarships to defray the cost of the study abroad experiences.

► *More info: [nmc.edu/study-abroad](https://nmc.edu/study-abroad)*



### NMC CREATES FIRST POSITION DEDICATED TO DEI

Longtime college staff member Marcus Bennett, Ed.D., begins serving as Special Assistant to the President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) beginning July 1.

Bennett, who holds a doctorate in community college leadership and a certificate on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the workplace, has worked at NMC for more than a decade. He is currently associate dean of campus and residence life.

“I am proud to have the opportunity to help our college grow in this area. I’ve seen firsthand some of the challenges our students face and am inspired by the commitment of our NMC community to create positive change,” said Bennett. He has also been a member of NMC’s DEI advisory committee, chartered by President Nick Nissley in summer 2020.

DEI duties will comprise half of Bennett’s job. He will continue as associate dean of campus life. Establishment of the new position fulfills a key objective within the DEI area of NMC’s strategic plan, NMC Next.

► *Read more about the plan and see progress trackers at [nmc.edu/strategic-plan](https://nmc.edu/strategic-plan)*



**IN MAY, THE TIMOTHY J. NELSON INNOVATION CENTER WAS DEDICATED IN HONOR OF NMC’S IMMEDIATE PAST AND LONGEST-SERVING PRESIDENT (PICTURED WITH HIS WIFE NANCY JOHNSON). DURING HIS 2001-19 TENURE, NELSON BUILT A CULTURE OF INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP.**



**ABOUT MARINE TECHNOLOGY**

- Nation's only bachelor's degree program, begun in 2015
- 100 percent employment track record
- **Career paths:** Marine mapping and hydrography, marine construction, marine exploration, science and research and environmental monitoring

▶ *More info: [nmc.edu/marine](http://nmc.edu/marine)*

**NMC'S MARINE TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS, LIKE SARAH SERGENT, USE THE R/V NORTHWESTERN TO TRAIN IN THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAM.**



# DEEP WATER EXPLORER

## Adult student finds success after second plunge into college

**MARINE TECHNOLOGY** student Sarah Sergent's enthusiasm for learning new things is as deep as the uncharted waters of the Atlantic that she's now exploring.

Sergent, 38, is spending the summer as an intern aboard a research vessel, helping operate the remotely operated vehicle *Jason* on its four-mile deep dives into the Atlantic Ocean.

"It's an absolute dream," said Sergent, who as a sophomore didn't expect to land a paid internship through the prestigious Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Boston, home of the National Deep Submergence Facility. She applied anyway, hoping the experience of the process might help her in a year or two. "I want to be able to go to these uncharted depths and see and learn things people have never known before."

One of three ROV units operated by the NDSF, a consortium of the National Science Foundation, the Office of Naval Research, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, *Jason* enables scientists to access the seafloor without leaving the ship's deck. Just how deep is four miles? Twenty times deeper than Lake Michigan.

"Sarah continues the legacy of NMC Marine Technology students receiving prestigious internships and scholarships," said Hans VanSumeren, director of NMC's Great Lakes Water Studies Institute. "Working alongside some of the world's greatest scientists, Sarah will be part of a team that can explore the deepest depths of the ocean using some of the most state-of-the-art equipment available."

Sergent's achievement is all the more remarkable considering that she had to overcome self-doubt to even return to college as an adult student. She left Saginaw Valley

State University nearly two decades ago when a back injury ended her pole vaulting career and cost her an athletic scholarship. She worked in behavioral health and substance abuse recovery coaching for a decade, and marked 10 years in recovery herself in March. She enrolled in the Marine Technology program in January 2021.

Once at NMC, her confidence flourished with the help of a success coach, a kind of re-entry navigator. Her foundation was further fortified with personal assistance from

VanSumeren and Marine Technology program coordinator John Lutchko on everything from course selection to preparation for the internship interview.

"It's a testament to what this program does and the places you can go and the opportunities that are presented," Sergent said. "It's possible. Not just people my age, but people in recovery."

"THIS IS A HIGHLY COMPETITIVE INTERNSHIP AND STUDENTS APPLY FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD."

— HANS VANSUMEREN, NMC

VanSumeren said that Sergent's internship will only improve already outstanding job prospects when she enters the marine industry workforce. NMC's BSMT graduates are highly sought after, with most students receiving multiple job offers. Starting salaries range from \$75,000-\$85,000.

"This is a highly competitive internship and students apply from all over the world," VanSumeren said. "Sarah's internship experience will only open new doors for her to consider."

Sergent will be at sea with *Jason* through early July. She expects to graduate with her bachelor's degree in 2024.

"It's amazing the things we're capable of. We short-change ourselves sometimes," Sergent said. "You can change your life and have more than you could ever even fathom." **N**





# **SOLVING THE WORKFORCE PUZZLE**

## Alongside the familiar “help wanteds,”

new signs have cropped up in many northern Michigan businesses over the past year.

It’s some version of “patience, please,” asking customers to be kind to the limited staff on duty. It’s also stark, black-and-white evidence of how dire the workforce shortage is as the region enters its busiest season.

In all sectors, from hospitality and retail to healthcare and skilled trades, employers are desperate for employees. Even more sought after are employees with both the hard and soft skills to go right to work, instead of needing on-the-job training.

“I’ve never seen this level of urgency for immediate hiring, ever,” said Janie McNabb, a 1994 NMC alumna and workforce development consultant for more than 20 years.

NMC is working with other regional leaders to solve the workforce puzzle, but it’s proving tricky. Complex, interlocking factors including a skills gap, a lack of child care and attainable housing, transportation issues, broadband internet gaps and an aging population, all exacerbated by COVID-19, have created structural instability that threatens economic growth and quality of life in northern Michigan. Steadying it will require collaboration, leadership and time.

### SKILLS GAP

The region’s economic development agency, Traverse Connect, spotlighted the skills gap in a 2021 study. Its recommended quickest fix was microcredentials, or short-term programs that deliver both job-specific technical or “hard” skills and “soft” skills like communication, dependability and time management.

NMC responded immediately, creating the Workplace Readiness series. In February, the first three microcredentials in communication, computer literacy, and customer service were rolled out for virtual delivery.

Brenda McLellan, director of investor engagement at Traverse Connect, is pleased at the rapid response. Another microcredential in programmable logic controllers and electronics, used in advanced manufacturing, will be introduced this fall.

“Those particular areas that team members (in the workforce) were lacking are being brought to the forefront at NMC,” she said.



BRENDA MCLELLAN



### SKILLS GAP

**43%**

JOBS IN REGION REQUIRING MORE THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA BUT LESS THAN A BACHELOR’S DEGREE

– TRAVERSE CONNECT 2021 SKILLS GAP STUDY

# SOLVING THE WORKFORCE PUZZLE



## SKILLS GAP

**300**

NMC STUDENTS ENROLLED  
IN MICHIGAN RECONNECT,  
SUMMER 2021-SPRING  
2022 SEMESTERS  
— NMC



## SKILLS GAP

**19,000**

ESTIMATED RECONNECT-ELIGIBLE  
RESIDENTS (25+ WITHOUT A  
COLLEGE DEGREE) IN REGION  
— NMC



JANIE MCNABB

Increasing the number of shortened-course pathways in degree programs is also a goal targeted for completion in 2024 in NMC Next, the college's strategic plan. Microcredentials already exist in geographic information systems and marine technology. A heavy construction certification is in development with Team Elmer's, a Traverse City employer of 500. McNabb listed health care and IT as other NMC areas ripe for microcredentials that meet area employers' needs.

"When a person sees a direct line, and it's quick, and it's accelerated, the more likely they are to enroll," she said.

By itself though, training isn't enough. A state program, Michigan Reconnect, pays for in-district NMC tuition for adults over age 25 who don't already have a college



ROB DICKINSON

degree. Some 19,000 adults in NMC's service area are eligible, but in Reconnect's first year, only 300 enrolled.

"There is no shortage of training right now. You could be in training for almost anything. Our area is really good about that and being reactive," said Rob Dickinson, regional director of business services for Networks Northwest. The organization works with employers in the 10-county area on recruiting, training and retention.



“There’s generally a focus on the skills gap when you see all these jobs going unfilled. But it’s really an indicator of other issues,” said McNabb, who also served as an NMC trustee from 2017 to 2020. “The other issues are what I call systems and infrastructures.”

“Daycare, housing, transportation, those are the big three we always hear about from our employers,” Dickinson said.



## DAYCARE DILEMMA

“Lack of and affordability of child care affects the whole picture,” said Cheryl Bloomquist, coordinator of NMC’s child development program. “It is such an important cog in this wheel of the workforce.”

Bloomquist has worked in child development in northern Michigan since 1976. Access and cost have been longstanding issues, but the shortages used to be confined to infant and toddler care. Now it’s crept upward to preschool age programs, she said. Both family daycares and larger, center-based programs are finding it harder to stay afloat due to a lack of staff. Providers get so desperate they turn to people with no experience. That in turn affects quality of care, which is critical for the brain development that occurs during ages 0 to 5.

“It’s not just providing a place for a child to be, it’s about providing good care,” Bloomquist said.

Her program provides training and feeds the childcare industry. Seventy percent of her students are already working, yet still, there are more children ages 0 to 5 than available daycare slots in every northwest Michigan county.

Some employers have taken steps to improve childcare for their own employees. NMC contracted with Munson Healthcare to offer on-campus daycare in 2014. TentCraft, a large manufacturer, allows employees to bring infants to work until they are mobile. On the cost side, Dickinson said a new program, Michigan TriShare, divides the cost of childcare among employee, employer and the state. On the regulatory side, Traverse Connect is advocating for statewide legislative solutions to make childcare programs less expensive to operate.

Despite case-by-case solutions, the pervasiveness of the childcare problem still means many people fall through the cracks.

“There are pockets of success in our region,” Dickinson said. “[But] one person’s solution doesn’t always fit another person’s problem.”

**LEFT: NMC CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM COORDINATOR CHERYL BLOOMQUIST SAYS 70 PERCENT OF HER STUDENTS ARE ALREADY WORKING IN CHILD CARE. IN 2014 NMC ADDED ON-CAMPUS CHILDCARE FOR EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS.**



## CHILDCARE

DAYCARE SPACE IS LACKING IN EVERY COUNTY. NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 PER AVAILABLE DAYCARE SPOT:

- 1.4 GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY**
- 1.4 ANTRIM COUNTY**
- 1.8 KALKASKA COUNTY**
- 2.0 LEELANAU COUNTY**
- 2.3 WEXFORD COUNTY**
- 2.6 BENZIE COUNTY**

– MICHIGAN LEAGUE FOR PUBLIC POLICY, MARCH 2021



# SOLVING THE WORKFORCE PUZZLE

## HOUSING

**17.1%**

RISE IN MEDIAN GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY HOME LIST PRICE, MARCH 2021 TO MARCH 2022, ON TOP OF A **15%** RISE FROM MARCH 2020 TO MARCH 2021. MEDIAN HOME SOLD PRICE WAS **\$392,600** IN MARCH 2022.

— REALTOR.COM



## BROADBAND

MUCH OF THE REGION IS BELOW AVERAGE IN BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS.

**91%**

**MICHIGAN HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO BROADBAND.**

**95.8% GRAND TRAVERSE**

**89.6% ANTRIM**

**87.7% LEELANAU**

**78.8% BENZIE**

**65.8% WEXFORD**

**59.6% KALKASKA**

— BROADBANDNOW.COM

**ABOVE: NMC'S INVENTORY OF WIFI HOTSPOTS, WHICH TRANSMIT AN INTERNET CONNECTION, INCREASED SIXFOLD FROM 2019-2022 THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF LIBRARIANS JOELLE HANNERT, LEFT, AND MARY BEEKER, RIGHT. STUDENTS CAN BORROW THEM FREE FOR THE ENTIRE SEMESTER.**

## HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION AND BROADBAND

By now, the red-hot housing market is a familiar story. Its roots also stretch far back, to the 2008 burst of the real estate bubble, which dried up demand for home construction. When demand revived, skilled trades workers were in short supply. Home inventory never caught up. Now it's been further depleted by remote workers able to live anywhere. Accustomed

Grawn and found a perfect job, except it was across the county in Acme.

"He could not make the numbers work to drive there every day," she said.

With the expansion of remote work due to COVID-19, some workers no longer have to travel to their jobs. They can still face hurdles, however. According to broadbandnow.com, an average of 91



to higher prices in bigger cities, those buyers also drive up prices with all-cash, over list price offers, squeezing out local buyers. Some call the phenomenon rural gentrification.

"My Grand Rapids income was two and a half times what it became in Traverse City, but my housing is more expensive," said Shirl Martin, 55. She's a native who boomeranged back to Traverse City in 2018 after becoming an empty-nester. Martin works in Oryana's Human Development division and is also enrolled in NMC's Business Development certificate program—another way the college seeks to fill the skills gap—as she considers buying or starting her own business.

Transportation is intertwined with housing. McNabb recalls a client who lived in

percent of Michigan households have access to broadband, or high speed Internet. But every northwest county except Grand Traverse is below that threshold, some well below. Less than 60 percent of Kalkaska County households have broadband coverage. In Wexford it's 65 percent and 78 percent in Benzie.

"With working from home, broadband availability is another barrier in rural areas," McNabb said.

Inadequate broadband access also presents a challenge to increasing online learning, another goal within NMC's strategic plan. NMC has tackled broadband gaps by loaning wi-fi hot spots through the library. An initial supply of 10 devices in fall 2019 has risen to 68, and check-out times have risen from weeks to the entire semester.

## SOLUTIONS REQUIRE PATIENCE, COLLABORATION

One factor in the Grand Traverse region's favor is the number of organizations joining forces to seek solutions. In July 2021, for instance, NMC, Traverse Connect, Networks Northwest and several other regional partners received a \$275,000 Michigan Economic Development Corporation grant to increase awareness and training on the most advanced manufacturing technology. Out of the \$275,000 grant, \$150,000 went to NMC to create an Industry 4.0 learning lab on the Aero Park campus. (See photo at right.)

Businesses, nonprofits and elected leaders are also players. Most recently, NMC Vice President for Strategic Initiatives Jason Slade joined a committee advising Grand Traverse County on how to spend \$18.2 million in federal COVID-19 funds. Housing, childcare, and infrastructure improvements like broadband and transportation are all among the areas under consideration.

"Having leadership at the college be at the table around those three major areas (skills, systems and infrastructure and awareness) is huge," McNabb said.

"The silos are disappearing, and organizations are working together to solve the problem," Traverse Connect's McLellan said, citing NMC's skills gap response. "It seems so overwhelming [but] when we take it in chunks, like the skills gap study, which highlighted exactly where we needed help, that makes it, 'OK, we can tackle this.'"

She added that career exploration needs to occur at younger ages. "We've got momentum in the space of child care and housing," McLellan said. "Gearing students toward the future is where we need to start putting some of our resources."

An appreciation for the magnitude of the puzzle is also needed, McNabb said. For instance, building out a microcredential is an intensive, time-consuming process. A tracking system is needed, too, so the region can measure its progress as people like Martin earn microcredentials.

"There's nothing built into our data collection systems as a country that



captures those credentials," McNabb said. Along with Michigan Reconnect, a tracking system is part of the statewide "Sixty by 30" initiative that seeks for 60 percent of Michiganders to earn a postsecondary credential by 2030. (It's now 49 percent.)

Bottom line: Expect those "patience please" signs to linger a while.

"It's not something we're going to solve, it's something we're going to continue to work at," Dickinson said.

McNabb agreed, and added that she's confident of the region's commitment to do so. Leaders being aware of problems and seeking solutions is a healthier position than ignoring or denying them.

"I absolutely believe NMC is headed in the right direction and the community is responding as well," she said. **N**

*To learn more about Michigan Reconnect, visit [nmc.edu/reconnect](http://nmc.edu/reconnect)*

*To learn more about NMC's professional and workforce development classes, visit [nmc.edu/training](http://nmc.edu/training)*

**VICE PRESIDENT OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES JASON SLADE WROTE A GRANT IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER REGIONAL PARTNERS THAT RESULTED IN \$150,000 FOR ADVANCED MANUFACTURING EQUIPMENT. IT INCLUDES A COBOT, OR COLLABORATIVE ROBOT (BLUE AND GRAY ARM) THAT WORKS WITH AN OPERATOR AND CNC MILLING MACHINE (BEHIND SLADE).**



## SILVER TSUNAMI

NEARLY A QUARTER OF NORTHWEST MICHIGAN'S POPULATION IS OLDER THAN **65**. STATEWIDE, IT'S **17%**. BENZIE, ANTRIM AND LEELANAU COUNTY HAVE MEDIAN AGES OF **50+**, MORE THAN A DECADE OLDER THAN THE MICHIGAN MEDIAN OF **39.8**.  
- U.S. CENSUS, NETWORKS NORTHWEST



# INSIDE MY BAG

NMC, MI Reconnect transform adult learner's college experience

Dropping out of school as a 20-year-old single mom has nagged at Jennifer Yaple for more than two decades.

So when Michigan Reconnect came along, she seized the state scholarship that pays the in-district tuition for adults over 25 who don't have a college degree. A conversation with Computer Information Technology instructor-turned-adviser Lisa Balbach steered the 43-year-old, now a married mother of three young adults, to IT. In her first year Yaple has learned how to manage her ADHD diagnosis, earned multiple scholarships, and overcome insecurity about returning to college and being a woman in a male-dominated field.

"I felt like I was drowning at first," Yaple said. But reaching out for help from instructors, a tutor and fellow students made a huge difference. "I'm surprised by my confidence. I actually understand this [material] and like it," she said. "I haven't felt like an outsider. I've felt welcomed." **N**

*Learn more about NMC's Computer Information Technology degree and certificate programs at [nmc.edu/cit](http://nmc.edu/cit)*

*Learn more about Michigan Reconnect at [nmc.edu/reconnect](http://nmc.edu/reconnect)*



◀ Counterclockwise from right, the backpack Yaple won as a prize at an IT social event includes:

1. Personal items: tissue, hand lotion, hand sanitizer
2. Both a Mac and a PC, necessary for her IT classes
3. Storage pouch for charging cords, screen wipes and mouse
4. Glasses to block blue light from extended screen exposure
5. Essential oils for calming and relaxation
6. Textbook
7. Charging cords for all her devices



JENNIFER YAPLE

**“I’M REALLY PROUD OF MYSELF.”**

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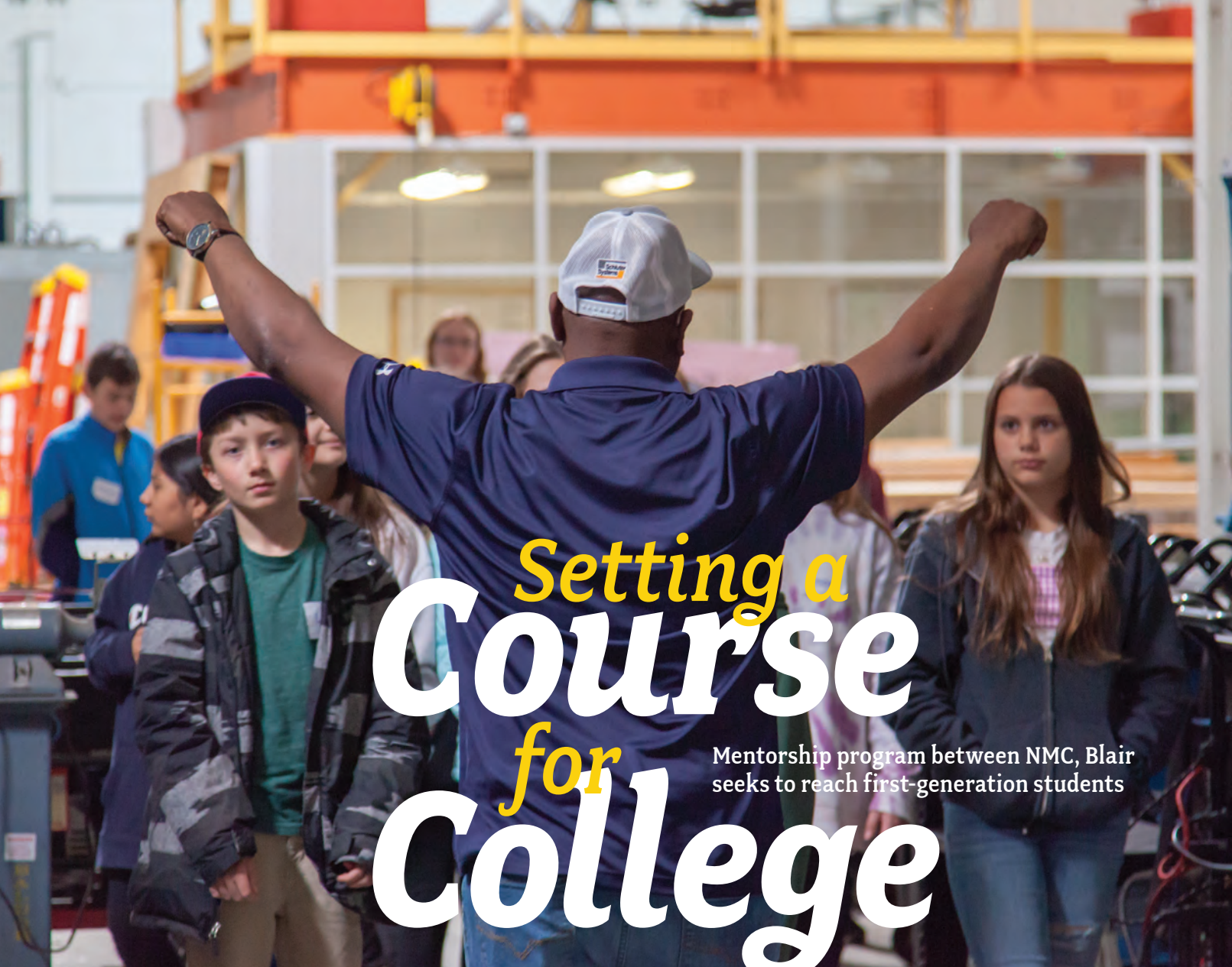
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[nmc.edu/reconnect](https://nmc.edu/reconnect)





# Setting a Course for College

Mentorship program between NMC, Blair seeks to reach first-generation students

**During** a four-hour field trip to NMC’s campuses, Blair Elementary School fifth grader Caiden Johnson learned he could become a chef, a sailor, a carpenter, a welder, an electrician, a mechanic, or a nurse—and maybe even pay for it by playing video games, too.

Aside from scholarships for the varsity e-sports teams, seeing the variety of programs was what Johnson, 11, above left, liked most about the April field trip, exactly what organizers of the first-year mentorship program between NMC and Blair had hoped. By pairing each Blair fifth grader with a current NMC student, college enters the sights of the kids attending the school with some of the greatest socioeconomic challenges in Grand Traverse County.

“We have a lot of kids who are starting to dream big. Now they have to understand they need to work hard,” said Emily Witte, a Blair reading specialist who coordinates the program. “For our kids who come from generational poverty, going to college could change their lives.”

Thus the message instilled through the mentorship program, which began last October and culminated in the field trip, is that students can use education to set their own course.

“All you need to know is you’re interested in learning,” construction technology instructor Phil McCuien, above, center, told the Blair students as he led them around NMC’s Aero Park Labs, home of construction technology, welding technology and renewable energy technology

*“We have a lot of kids who are starting to **dream big**. Now they have to understand they need to **work hard**.”*

— EMILY WITTE,  
BLAIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



**TOP:**  
NMC STUDENT MENTOR CAYLA DRZEWIECKI AND BLAIR ELEMENTARY FIFTH GRADER CAIDEN JOHNSON PLAY CHESS IN ONE OF THEIR WEEKLY MEETINGS AT BLAIR. **BOTTOM,** PHIL MCCUIEN, NMC CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY INSTRUCTOR, LAST IN HAT, SHOWS BLAIR STUDENTS THE SOLAR PANELS AT THE AERO PARK LABS BUILDING ON A FIELD TRIP TO CAMPUS.

**OPPOSITE:**  
CAIDEN JOHNSON, LEFT IN HAT, AND HIS BLAIR CLASSMATES GET A TOUR INSIDE THE BUILDING FROM MCCUIEN, WHO TOLD THEM, “YOU BELONG HERE.”

programs. “The message is to plant a seed. This is your home. You belong here.”

The mentors come from NMC’s chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international community college honor society. PTK advisor Kari Kahler initially connected with Witte, whose daughter Hannah attended NMC, over a social media post requesting school supply donations. Kahler knew of other community college-elementary school mentorship programs created as paths for first generation college students. PTK students were game, and the idea aligns with the community partnerships area of NMC’s strategic plan.

Following training modeled on the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, mentors met weekly with the students at Blair. They found the rewards of the program were mutual.

“It was a cool opportunity to make a friend,” said Cayla Drzewiecki, 33, Caiden’s mentor.

“It’s really a growing experience for me,” said mentor Jesse Anders, 43.

Witte and Kahler are already planning for next year’s class of fifth graders. Some of the pioneer mentors also plan to stay in touch with their mentees. Anders hopes he can do so even though he plans to transfer to the University of Michigan and commute from Interlochen to Ann Arbor.

“It’s the longevity that matters,” he said.

Witte agreed, and said this first year has ignited a crucial spark. “If we build that fire now, it’s more sustainable.” **N**



# BEYOND THE EXHIBITIONS

THE  
**Dennos**  
MUSEUM CENTER  
AT NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE

## Dennos shifts focus to collections preservation

### POP QUIZ:

What percent of the Dennos Museum Center's collection is on display at any time?

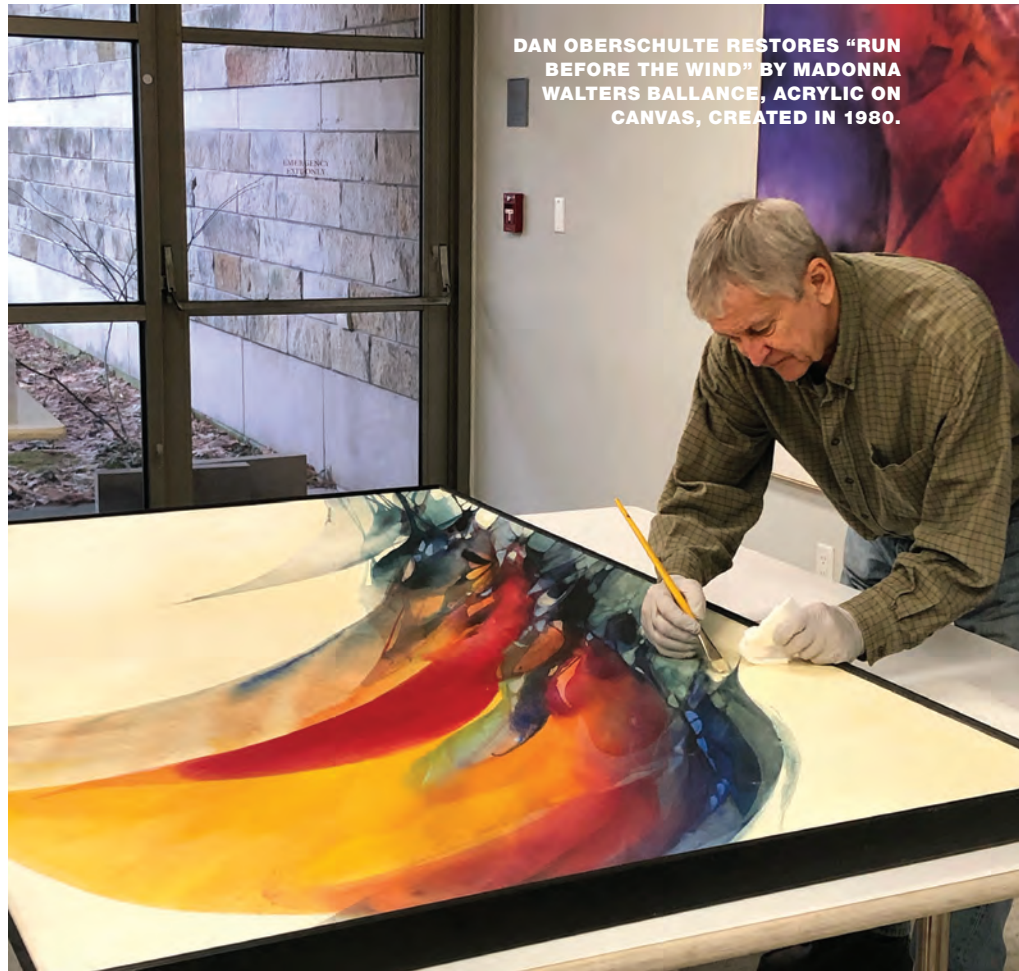
- A: 10%
- B: 25%
- C: 40%
- D: 55%

Answer: A

**FOR DENNOS** Executive Director and Chief Curator Craig Hadley, the fact that 90 percent of nearly 3,000 works of art are out of public sight doesn't mean they're out of mind. Since 2019 he's significantly stepped up the museum's resources to care for and preserve paintings, prints, photos, sculptures and other works of art entrusted to its care.

"Part of our professional and ethical duty is to care for works of art according to the professional standards of the field," Hadley said. "That's what fundamentally sets a museum apart from a gallery." Recent plans and improvements, paid for with more than \$66,000 in grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences and the National Endowment for the Humanities, include:

- Four new oversized painting storage racks.
- New equipment to monitor and maintain humidity, temperature and light exposure in the museum for optimal art preservation.



- Participation in the Museum Assessment Program administered by the American Alliance of Museums. Care of collections is one area of evaluation in the assessment, a first step toward museum accreditation.

- Participation in the national Conservation Assessment Program this year. Assessment includes recommendations for repairs and improvements.

Hadley, who serves as an accreditation site reviewer at other museums, said that at least half the on-site time is spent reviewing collection storage.

"Care of collections is a top priority for us," he said. "If we want to curate an exhibition, loan works of art, or establish donor confidence, the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) has rigorous standards that you have to meet."

Hadley has a five-year plan to reconfigure collection storage, which aligns with the timeline to seek AAM accreditation by 2025-26. Collections care tasks can overlap with exhibition and programming, too. Last year the Dennos' signature Inuit print collection, for instance, was completely inventoried for the first time since Northwestern Michigan College began collecting them in the 1960s. The inventory identified pieces for restoration, like "In the Night Sky" (below.) That 1961 work on paper is now hanging in the Power Family Gallery at the Dennos, as well as digitized for online access.

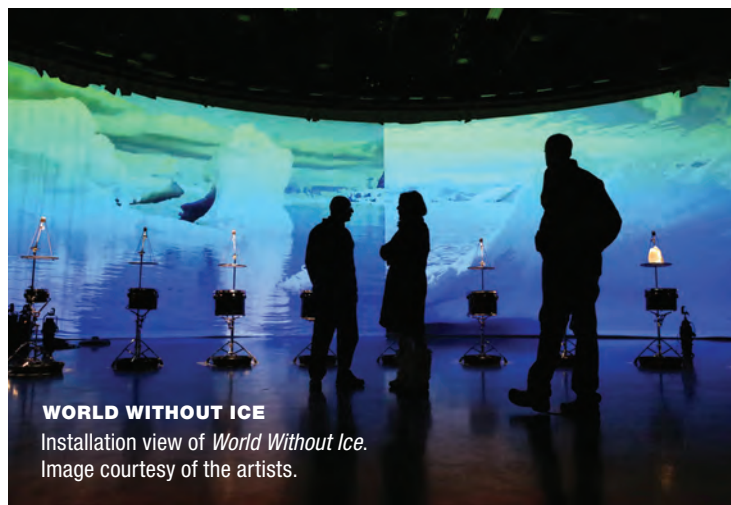
About 30 percent of the collection is now available online. All 3,000 Dennos works are slated for digitization by 2026. That means no work will ever be out of sight to the public, even if it is stored.

"We've never had that before," Hadley said. **N**



**TOP: "IN THE NIGHT SKY", MARY PITSEOLAK, 1961, BEFORE CONSERVATION. GLUED TO ITS BACKING, THE ACID IN BOTH GLUE AND BACKING BOARD WERE ACCELERATING THE DETERIORATION OF THE PRINT.**

**BOTTOM: "IN THE NIGHT SKY" AFTER CONSERVATION BY THE JOEL OPPENHEIMER GALLERY IN CHICAGO.**



#### **WORLD WITHOUT ICE**

Installation view of *World Without Ice*.  
Image courtesy of the artists.

## CLIMATE CHANGE ON VIEW THIS SUMMER

### **World Without Ice**

THROUGH JULY 24

Part science, part music, part art, this collaboration is a groundbreaking, thought-provoking and compelling multisensory experience focusing on Earth's changing climate. It takes its inspiration from University of Michigan geophysicist and 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winner Henry Pollack's book of the same name, which analyzed climate change science.

### **Environmental Impact II**

JUNE 25-SEPT. 4

Traditional art genres generally depict the natural world in beautiful, often pristine conditions. The works in this exhibition seek to heighten public attention and concern about environmental degradation as well as the unintended consequences of human interaction with nature and neglect.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT II**

Jeff Frost, 20160623 LakeFire Milky Way Overlook 35mm  
d800e. 8147. 2016. Photograph, archival inkjet. ©





# ALUMNI NOTES

## 2022 OUTSTANDING ALUMNI NAMED

NMC has recognized graduates and past students for significant professional achievements and/or exemplary leadership in the local or global community since 1988. Recipients' accomplishments reflect NMC values. Recognition is not contingent on having received a degree, but on recipient's achievements and positive reflection of the role that NMC played in their lives.

**1 RICHARD GRAY**, GLMA 2013 (awarded posthumously): Following his graduation, Gray was often present at the Great Lakes Maritime Academy as a mentor and adjunct faculty member. His life was cut tragically short in a shipboard accident in early 2022. Gray was devoted to his growing family of three young children with a fourth expected this fall. The many nominations Gray received represent the positive influence he had at the Academy. One nominator wrote, "As a recent graduate in the industry,

he continued to give back his time to GLMA. He always had a positive attitude and was willing to teach anyone anything if they asked....Richard was the best of the best."

**2 DR. ANDREA (ANNIE) KRITCHER**, 2001-2003: A Traverse City native, Kritcher studied engineering at NMC, and then went on to complete her B.S. in nuclear engineering at the University of Michigan and an M.S. and Ph.D. at the University of California-Berkeley. She first joined the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory as an intern and became a staff member in 2012. In 2018 she received Early and Mid-Career Recognition. Now, she is a physicist at the lab and the design lead within the Inertial Confinement Fusion program. She has served as lead researcher on several projects and has published over 35 reviewed scientific papers in journals such as *Nature and Science*.

**3 BOB SUTHERLAND**, 1982-1983: Sutherland is the visionary owner of Cherry Republic, which he started in 1989 by selling T-shirts sporting the motto "Life, Liberty, Beaches and Pie" out of the trunk of his car. Now, Cherry Republic has dozens of products, flagship destinations in Glen Arbor and Traverse City, satellite stores, and a nationwide website and catalog business. Sutherland is committed to clean energy, farmland preservation, outdoor recreation, and youth development and designates a portion of sales to charity every year. One nominator wrote of Cherry Republic, "one of the best examples I know of a company with multiple bottom lines that gives back to the community on many levels. It's a model for many to follow, but few can match."

► *Outstanding Alumni nominations are welcomed at any time. To learn more, visit [nmc.edu/alumni](http://nmc.edu/alumni)*



4



5

**GARY DAUW**, GLMA 2013, has retired from Interlake Maritime Services. He resides in Coopersville, Michigan, and has returned to his small machine shop.

**4 SIMA PATEL**, Adjunct Faculty 2007-2008, has been appointed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to a judgeship on the Michigan Court of Appeals in District 2. Previously, she worked as a senior appellate attorney at Fieger Law, and was a clerk for the Michigan Supreme Court.

**5 DR. MIKE TAYLOR**, AA 1986, is an associate professor in education at University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. He regularly leads groups of students on service trips to St. Bernard Mission School in Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

**6 MARK WILSON**, ASA 2007, was elected as a Traverse City commissioner in November 2021 and named one of *Northern Express*' 20 Fascinating People in March 2022. **N**



6

► Want to share your news? Submit it at [nmc.edu/about/foundation/alumni/keep-in-touch.html](https://nmc.edu/about/foundation/alumni/keep-in-touch.html)

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of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians





- Class business plan
- Food truck
- Restaurant space
- Own brick and mortar (2025-26)

## ARCHIE'S COMBINES STUDENT BROTHERS' TALENTS

**SINCE OWNING A RESTAURANT** was Jon Petrie's lifelong ambition, it made sense for him to attend NMC's Great Lakes Culinary Institute. It made even more sense to earn a second NMC degree, in business administration.

"It was a really good combination to have. It gave me a head start over a lot of people in the industry," said Petrie, 26, who in four years transformed a class business plan into a food truck and now a year-round operation inside The Workshop brewery.

That location perfectly aligns with Archie's menu of eclectic comfort pub food and its business values of treating employees well and buying local produce, Petrie said. Another bonus: The Workshop's kitchen offers far more elbow room than the food truck, which Petrie first ran in Grayling and then two Traverse City locations before moving into The Workshop last fall.

His partner in Archie's is brother Nick Petrie, 24, who's now a business student at NMC, too, aiming toward an accounting degree. The family connections don't stop there. Archie's is named for their grandfather, father David is an investor, and grandmother Edith's recipes show up in the "fresh, local, just delicious" menu.

The Petries aim to own their own brick and mortar restaurant in Traverse City in three to four years. **N**



**Jon Petrie** (hat) graduated from the Great Lakes Culinary Institute ([nmc.edu/culinary](http://nmc.edu/culinary)) in 2017, and earned his associate degree in business ([nmc.edu/business](http://nmc.edu/business)) in 2018. Brother Nick is a current student.





## PICKLING LIQUID

- 2 cups water
- 1 cup rice wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsps salt
- 1 tbsp sugar or sugar of your choice
- 1/2 tbsp pickling spice
- 2 crushed garlic cloves
- 1 tbsp sriracha or red chili flake

Combine all ingredients and bring to a boil. Turn off heat.

Place hot pickling liquid over vegetables of choice. Cover tightly with plastic wrap.

Lasts two to three weeks in the refrigerator.



## ASIAN-INSPIRED CHICKEN MARINADE

*prepares 3 chicken breasts*

- 2 minced garlic cloves
- 1 tbsp minced ginger
- 1/2 tbsp ground coriander
- 1 1/2 tbsps rice wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar
- 1 1/2 tbsps soy sauce
- 1 1/2 tbsps brown sugar or sugar of your choice
- 1/2 tbsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp fermented chili paste
- 2 tbsps vegetable oil
- 3 chicken breasts, sliced thinly

Combine all ingredients in a bowl or a bag, and refrigerate for 24 hours for best results.

### CHICKEN LETTUCE WRAP FILLING IDEAS

*(check your local farmers market or co op)*

- Pickled vegetables
- Green onions
- Red cabbage
- Cilantro
- Cucumber
- Organic carrots
- Daikon radish
- Crushed peanuts
- Bibb lettuce or baby romaine
- Kimchi
- Hoisin sauce (Korean BBQ)
- Sriracha mayo
- Toasted sesame seed



# CALENDAR

## JUNE

**18 Kids Free Fishing Day**  
 11 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Great Lakes campus harbor  
 Rods and bait provided, plus  
 food and family activities.

**1 Native American Student Organization Pow Wow**  
 2:30 p.m.  
 Grand entry, East Hall lawn  
 Main campus

6.20-8.19



**2 College for Kids classes**  
 Most classes run one week each.  
 Choose from STEM subjects, art,  
 outdoor education, culinary and more.  
 Register at [nmc.edu/kids](http://nmc.edu/kids)  
 or call (231) 995-1700.

**21 3 Cafe Lobdell's opens**  
 7:30-11:30 a.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays  
 and Thursdays until July 28.  
 Coffee and pastries served in  
 NMC's teaching restaurant at  
 the Great Lakes campus

**22 Life of Earth: Age of Humans**  
 Free film screenings at the  
 Dennon Museum Center.  
 1 and 2:30 p.m.

**28 NMC Summer Concert Band**  
 7 p.m.  
 Milliken Auditorium

## JULY

**3 "A Swinging July 3rd" concert**  
 7:30 p.m.  
 The Botanic Garden "Pavilion  
 Lawn" at Historic Barns Park

**12 NMC Summer Concert Band**  
 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.  
 Traverse City Senior Center  
 Rain Date: July 13, 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**14 International Affairs forum presents  
 Josh Rogin, Washington Post foreign  
 policy and national security columnist**  
 6:30 p.m. Location TBD  
[tciaf.com](http://tciaf.com)



**15 International Affairs forum presents  
 Ali Rogin, PBS NewsHour Weekend  
 foreign affairs correspondent**  
 11:30 a.m. Location TBD  
[tciaf.com](http://tciaf.com)

**20 The Lost Tapes: Tornado  
 Super Outbreak**  
 Free film screenings at the  
 Dennon Museum Center.  
 1 and 2:30 p.m.

## AUGUST

**27 Fall semester classes begin**  
[nmc.edu/fall](http://nmc.edu/fall)

**30 Pine Palooza student fair**  
 11 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Under the tent on the green  
 by the Innovation Center  
[nmc.edu/studentlife](http://nmc.edu/studentlife)



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**AFTER AN OUTSTANDING FIRST YEAR IN WHICH ONE TEAM WENT TO NATIONAL PLAYOFF COMPETITION, NMC'S VARSITY ESports PROGRAM IS GROWING, ADDING THREE NEW TEAMS FOR 2022-23: VALORANT, HALO INFINITE, AND SUPER SMASH BROS ULTIMATE. VARSITY PLAYERS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR UP TO \$1,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS.**

► *More info: [nmc.edu/esports](https://nmc.edu/esports)*

