

NEXUS

Michigan's Big Bet: **YOU**

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NEXUS

THE NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE MAGAZINE

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**WELDING STUDENT
LOGAN PUTMAN**

WE WELCOME ALL

As I write this, I'm fresh off a seven-state road trip to the Gulf Coast. My family often tracks license plates on long trips like this spring break ritual, but this year, I tracked community college signs.

We ate breakfast near Lake Michigan College in South Haven. Before lunch, we passed Ivy Tech in Indianapolis. Crossing into Louisville, Jefferson Community and Technical College greeted us, one of multiple campuses in Kentucky and in Tennessee. Coastal Alabama in, of course, coastal Alabama. On the return north we passed Sinclair (where NMC President Nick Nissley formerly worked) in Dayton, Ohio.

The only four-year school sign I spotted was for the University of Michigan. Our route could explain that. Maybe I just missed those signs while reading or napping. But after working at NMC as long as I have, I also see it as reflecting the welcome factor in community colleges.

Unlike many four-year schools, we're gate openers, not gatekeepers. We want you as a student. From submitting your application to finding your way to campus, we want you to get here. Once you do, we're ready to help you chart your own path.

Just read the student stories in this issue. Anastasiia Hrukach (p. 20) is a Ukrainian high school exchange student who found herself stranded in the U.S. due to the war in her home country. She's spent her unexpected year here dual enrolled at NMC. And then there's Logan Putman (p. 10), who thought high school was hard enough and never planned on college. Now he's pursuing his welding certificate and a long-held dream of becoming a welder.

NMC welcomed both and now both are looking at brighter futures. We'll do the same for you.

Cari Noga



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CERAMICS STUDENTS USE THE POTTERY WHEEL IN NMC'S SHIRLEY S. OKERSTROM FINE ARTS BUILDING. NMC ALSO OFFERS CLASSES IN DRAWING AND PAINTING, PHOTOGRAPHY, PRINTMAKING AND SCULPTURE. NMC.EDU/FINE-ARTS





FLYING ACRES

A business idea takes flight, meaning more jobs for NMC grads.

Bryan Hammis first started “playing with drones” at NMC in 2011 while a student in the traditional aviation program. Once he earned his private pilot’s license and instrument rating, a love of agriculture led him to a job as a crop production manager on a farm in Montcalm County, and he thought he might start a crop spraying business. He opted to continue his education at Michigan State University’s Institute of Agriculture Technology. In 2019, an MSU partnership with NMC led Hammis back to Traverse City for a two-week elective course and his UAS license. He then conceived Flying Acres, a business providing aerial application services to farmers. Business took off as soon as he and his wife Kaitlynn created their website last fall. This summer he expects to hire up to three NMC UAS students to meet the demand for Flying Acres’ services.

“We are going to be working closely with NMC through the years,” Hammis said. “It’s great for us and we want it to be great for the college as well. ■

▶ *Photos by Kaitlynn Marie Photography*

NMC debuts a stand-alone degree in uncrewed aerial systems this fall. nmc.edu/uas





NICK NISSELY, PRESIDENT

THE VIRTUOUS CYCLE OF TRUST, EVOLUTION AND VALUE

AS PRESIDENT OF NMC I wear many hats and “Chief Storyteller” is one of my favorites! I love having copies of Nexus magazine with me as soon as the new issue arrives so I can share the good stories with everyone I meet. Our January 2023 issue highlighted three of our degree programs with 100% employment: Aviation, Police Academy and Marine Technology. This is a GREAT story to tell. Community members, alumni, donors and lawmakers were all excited to hear how NMC is delivering on its promise and providing a great return on investment. In fact, just a few months later, the state invested an additional \$3.75 million to expand our aviation facilities, thanks to advocacy from Sen. John Damoose and support from Rep. Betsy Coffia and Rep. Curt VanderWall.

This is all great news, and there’s more. NMC has a new WET Tech degree, a new standalone Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS) degree and a new nursing partnership with Davenport University. Last month, graduates of our associate degree in nursing program were able to start working on their BSN with Davenport right here on our NMC campus. They’ll complete the fast-track program next August, saving themselves time and money before entering another field where demand outstrips supply.

But wait, there’s more! There will always be more. NMC is the trusted partner for employers, the state and our students. We’re continuously evolving and adding new programming to meet our stakeholder needs. Those partners are also investing in our college and our students to make our outstanding value even greater, as evidenced by programs like Michigan Reconnect, Michigan Achievement and College Edge, detailed in this issue’s cover story.

We’ve just celebrated our 2023 Commencement. As those graduates begin the next phase of their lives, incoming NMC students begin theirs this summer and fall. That cycle keeps repeating because of that trust, constant evolution and value. We’re proud to offer it. As taxpayers, alumni, donors and friends, thank you for being part of our shared success. **N**

AGREEMENT AIMS TO INCREASE RANKS OF DENTAL ASSISTANTS IN NORTHERN MICHIGAN

NMC and Bay Mills, a tribally controlled Upper Peninsula community college in Brimley, Mich., signed an articulation agreement in February which will allow Bay Mills' students to transfer to NMC's dental assistant program after their first year.



One of the key advantages of NMC's program is students' ability to earn registered dental assistant (RDA) licensure. In addition to being the northernmost accredited program in the state, NMC has an outstanding pass rate history, exceeding the state of Michigan's average in both the clinical and written portion of the

exams. Since 2019, at least 96 percent of NMC graduates have passed the clinical portion.

Dr. Jessica Rickert, a now-retired Traverse City area dentist who hired NMC graduates in her practice, connected NMC and Bay Mills. Rickert is also the first female Native American dentist in the United States, and remains the only one in Michigan. She now consults with insurer Delta Dental of Michigan and leads Anishinaabe Dental Outreach, the goal of which is to improve dental health in Native communities. In the Upper Peninsula the shortage of dental professionals is especially acute.

"The scarcity of timely dental care is causing serious hardship," Rickert says. "They have a wonderful program at NMC. Dental assisting is such a great career, and it's really fulfilling and it's necessary. Let's make this happen."

NMC recently invested \$52,000 in new equipment for the dental assistant program. It has six fully functioning patient rooms and some of the latest technology, including an intraoral scanner.

► Find out more: nmc.edu/dental



NMC RECEIVES \$3.75 MILLION IN STATE FUNDS FOR HANGAR, PLANES

A critical \$3.75 million investment will allow NMC to expand its aviation facilities and help address the nation's pilot shortage.

The funding will be used to renovate and expand NMC's 47-year-old hangar and purchase additional aircraft, allowing the college to increase its capacity to train more pilots, a need identified in the college's strategic plan.

"This effort has been more than a year in the making," says NMC President Dr. Nick Nissley. "We are grateful for the support and advocacy from our state lawmakers, like Senator John Damoose, who was a key champion of this project, as well as support from members of the house including representatives Betsy Coffia and Curt VanderWall. They see the value in investing in NMC to meet the region's workforce needs."

NMC must provide a 50 percent match to the state investment, with a total project cost of \$5 million for the hangar renovation, shown above, and \$2 million for the acquisition of four new, technically advanced aircraft for flight training.

► Find out more: nmc.edu/aviation

FEDS EARMARK \$2.7 MILLION FOR CAMPUS BOILER REPLACEMENT

A green energy infrastructure project would replace NMC's existing centralized steam power plant and decentralized air handling units with a new distributed geothermal system. The proposed \$12 million system would serve six buildings on main campus, have an expected life cycle payback period of 13.3 years, and will reduce site carbon emissions by 96 percent and natural gas consumption by 94 percent.



PHOTO: FROM LEFT, U.S. SEN. GARY PETERS, STATE SEN. JOHN DAMOOSE, PRESIDENT NICK NISSLEY, BOARD OF TRUSTEES VICE CHAIR RACHEL JOHNSON, U.S. SEN. DEBBIE STABENOW, STATE REP. JOHN ROTH.

NEW IT, ESPORTS CERTIFICATES TO BE OFFERED IN JANUARY

Certificates in computer support and cybersecurity specialization and Esports management will debut at NMC in January, offering students several additional paths to employment.

The certificates take one semester and one year to complete, respectively, which aligns with NMC’s strategic goal of offering future-focused education — more classes in shorter formats so students can get jobs faster.

“We’re giving students the opportunity to have quicker completion,” said Vice

President for Educational Services Stephen Siciliano.

Multiple IT careers are among Michigan’s hot 50 jobs with the best prospects through 2030.

The Esports certificate builds upon NMC’s success with varsity Esports teams, and puts NMC at the forefront of Esports’ development into an academic discipline.

The certificate is designed to feed into the current business administration associate degree, or a bachelor’s

degree in Esports production which Ferris State University launched last fall.

“So many potential students or current students are gamers. This will be a different path for them, to take something they love doing and make it into a career,” said Terri Gustafson, NMC’s Esports director.

NMC entered varsity Esports competition last year with two teams, and expanded to five this year.

► Find out more: nmc.edu/cit, nmc.edu/esports



RYAN DEERING

SURVEYING INDUSTRY TURNS TO NMC TO BOLSTER WORKFORCE

An aging workforce, lack of awareness of the career opportunities, and demand for surveying skills have created a shortage of surveyors. Launching a Surveying Technology associate degree in 2019 was NMC’s first response. Now, a new dedicated surveying technology program recruiter funded by an industry donor will tackle that lack of awareness. Recruiter Ryan Deering is confident that he can attract students, especially because NMC’s

program is unique in that it offers instruction for land, marine, and air applications.

Land surveying classes, underwater ROV classes and drone classes are all taught at the Parsons-Stulen Building on NMC’s Aero Park campus. NMC also has a campus harbor and vessel on West Grand Traverse Bay, and access to an airfield in Yuba where students can gain real-world experience in the marine and air applications.

“Everything is combined. It’s woven together nicely,” says Deering, who also teaches welding at NMC. “It’s limitless, what you can do with a surveying degree.”

Industry leader Leica also supplies NMC with close to \$1 million in surveying equipment each year for use in the program.

► Find out more: nmc.edu/surveying



EUGENE A. JENNEMAN

JENNEMAN, OLESONS RECEIVE COLLEGE'S HIGHEST HONOR

The NMC Fellow award for 2023 has been bestowed on Eugene A. Jenneman and Brad, D.J. and Marty Oleson, all of Traverse City.

Jenneman was the first director of NMC's Denno's Museum Center. The Olesons — siblings Brad and D.J. and cousin Marty—are the third generation of the family whose financial and volunteer support for NMC spans all eight decades of its existence.

Appointed as Denno's director before the museum even opened in 1991, Jenneman led the museum until his retirement in 2019. His culminating achievement was a 15,000-square-foot

expansion completed in 2017, which nearly doubled the museum's exhibition space. The new galleries, one of which bears his name, showcase pieces from the permanent collection that he acquired over 30 years, as well as the Denno's' signature Inuit art collection.

The Oleson trio carried on the NMC Barbecue tradition started in 1956 by their grandparents, Jerry and Frances Oleson, until it concluded in 2020 after raising nearly \$2 million for college projects. Marty Oleson is a member of the NMC Foundation Board, appointed in 2010. Brad Oleson was the Oleson family representative on the Barbecue



MARTY, BRAD AND D.J. OLESON

Board for decades, helping to engineer many improvements through the years.

D.J. sits at the helm of Oleson's Corporation and was recently chair of the Michigan Grocers Association. His internal leadership with the business helps make it possible for the Oleson legacy to live on as he cheers his sibling Brad and cousin Marty in their community-facing roles.

The Fellow award has been bestowed since 1964.

► See a list of all recipients at nmc.edu/fellows **N**



MICHIGAN'S BIG BET: YOU

COLLEGE HAS NEVER BEEN A BETTER DEAL THAN RIGHT NOW.

Beginning with the 2020 program Futures for Frontliners, Michigan has been investing in community colleges like NMC to create a workforce that will propel the state's economy forward and improve residents' overall quality of life. In the 2023-24 academic year, NMC expects more students to benefit from state grants than federal grants. You might even call the slate of programs an "MI Bill." Just like the GI Bill did for the World War II generation nationally, Michigan's college incentive programs are providing life-changing pathways to prosperity now.

Michigan Reconnect is the largest effort in state history to ensure Michiganders who are 25 or older and don't have a college degree—more than 4.1 million residents—have an opportunity to earn a tuition-free or deeply discounted associate degree or skills certificate.

"The goal here in northern Michigan, the Upper Peninsula and across the state is to meet the growing demand for highly skilled workers," former state Senator Wayne

Schmidt said of the bipartisan legislation in 2021. "Getting a college degree or training certificate will go a long way toward building a stronger regional workforce—which benefits families and communities alike."

A proposal to give access to even younger students by dropping Reconnect's age eligibility to 21 was pending in the Michigan Legislature this spring.

"We're hoping it's a permanent part of our state financial aid infrastructure," says Sarah Szurpicki, director of Michigan's office of Sixty by 30. The goal of her office, established in 2019 within the state department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, is that 60 percent of Michigan residents earn a degree or credential by 2030. (It's now 50.5 percent, up from 43.7 in 2016.)

"Our role at Sixty by 30 is to get them to your door," Szurpicki says of the partnership between her office and community colleges.

Reconnect is already changing lives—here's how. ▶





AMBER CLOUSE



LOGAN PUTMAN

The graduate: Amber Clouse / 32 *accounting*

Search **LinkedIn** for “accounting jobs, Traverse City” and you’ll get 344 results within 25 miles. Last December, there would have been at least 345—the job that NMC student Amber Clouse filled at Kelly Oil & Gas, five months before she graduated with her associate degree in accounting.

When her sister Janelle, also an NMC accounting graduate, told her about Reconnect, Clouse thought it was too good to be true. After the cosmetologist learned it was legitimate, however, she wasted no time signing up.

“When we were shut down for COVID, I was super unstable,” she says. “I wanted to make a switch and I was always good with numbers.”

Clouse originally planned to get a bookkeeping certificate, but with Reconnect covering costs, decided to go for her degree. She started in summer 2021 and graduated in May. She works at Kelly three days a week and says her income has risen by about 20 percent. One of her first purchases with her additional income: a new-to-her car. For years, she’d wanted to replace her 2000 Subaru, which had more than 200,000 miles on it. She now drives a 2019 Escape.

“I finally had the stability to do it,” she says.

She’ll celebrate her graduation with a vacation to Florida in January. On the itinerary: a “bucket list” item of swimming with manatees. It’s a dream her new income helps make possible. Clouse advises eligible adults to grab the Reconnect brass ring.

“It’s an opportunity that’s once in a lifetime, and you might not get again,” she says.

The current student: Logan Putman / 25 *welding*

50 Traverse City-area jobs advertised on **LinkedIn**; 34 on indeed.com

At Traverse City West High School, Putman struggled with motivation. After taking five years to finish, he graduated in 2017 with no desire to go on to college. Then came a string of 11 different jobs, most of them retail. Last summer, Putman decided he wanted to find a job he actually enjoyed.

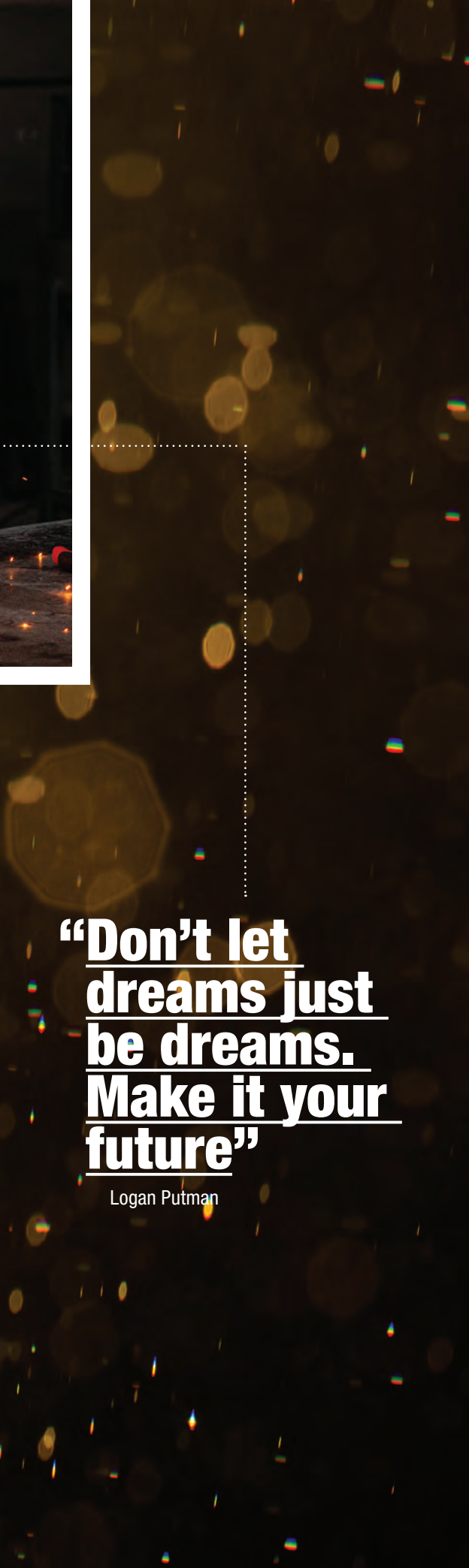
“My grandma has been coaxing me for a couple years to get more education. I finally took her advice,” says Putman, who long ago dreamed about owning his own welding truck. When he applied to NMC’s welding program in August of 2022, just months shy of his 25th birthday, admissions staff suggested he wait until spring semester, when he’d be eligible for Reconnect. He started January 17, his 25th birthday.

Reconnect brought what would have been a four-figure tuition bill down to about \$300, for fees and books. This financial windfall means Putman doesn’t have to work while he pursues his welding certificate, which helps him manage the stress and anxiety he’s prone to.

“Definitely having Michigan Reconnect is nice,” he says. “I think schooling is way more important [than work] now.”

Welding instructor Ryan Deering has also been an important part of his success, boosting Putman’s faith in himself when he struggles.

“Know who your support people are and don’t give up. Put your mind to it. Work through the negative,” Putman says. “Don’t let dreams just be dreams. Make it your future.”



**“Don’t let
dreams just
be dreams.
Make it your
future”**

Logan Putman



The new student: Teagan Knowles / 28

“It was something I wasn’t expecting, and to be handed this kind of opportunity at this time, it’s kind of life-altering,” Traverse City native Teagan Knowles says of the chance to earn her degree.

Although she just started her studies at NMC this spring, Knowles says she’s had “quite an educational journey.” Middle and high school were hard for her, a challenge she now attributes to then-undiagnosed ADHD. She dropped out of Traverse City Central High School to earn her GED in 2012, then later attended college in New York, studying fashion design.

“It wasn’t the right time for me to go to school,” she says. She returned to Michigan and lived downstate. Last fall, she applied to Oakland Community College, thinking about taking a class or two. She found out about the Reconnect scholarship and chose to move back to Traverse City in order to use it at NMC. She’s also saving money by living with her parents.

Now with Reconnect and a Pell grant covering all expenses, plus “a full tool belt” of coping and management techniques for her ADHD, Knowles is eager to return to a classroom for the first time since 2014. She’s keeping her options open in terms of a future career, starting with the basics this summer, like math and English.

“To be able to go back to school and be more confident in my learning skills is really exciting,” she says. “I find myself hungry to learn, almost.”

MICHIGAN ACHIEVEMENT

Michigan’s high school class of 2023 is the latest group of state investment recipients. With the Michigan Achievement scholarship, in-district high school graduates can save nearly half of full-time regular tuition and fees, up to \$2,750 per year at NMC. NMC expects up to 300 students to receive Achievement funding this fall, saving them more than \$800,000.

Wesley Richardson / 18 *Suttons Bay High School class of 2023*

As a dual-enrolled NMC student, Richardson already knew that NMC offered great value. Since he started taking NMC classes in his junior year, he expects to start college this fall with 19 credits under his belt, putting him a giant step closer to his plant science associate degree. He will also pursue a fruit and vegetable crop management certificate through NMC’s partnership with Michigan State University.

“Without FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and the Michigan Achievement scholarship I wouldn’t be able to pay for NMC,” said Richardson, who earlier in high school considered enlisting in the military in order to get the education benefits. ▶





“I’m excited to be a part of NMC and see where life can take me.”

— Katie Koester

His bosses at Cherry Bay Orchards, where he’s worked summers since eighth grade, urged him to get his degree, however. He’s enjoyed his NMC classes, especially macroeconomics with instructor Amjad Khan.

“They definitely are more challenging,” he said of college classes compared to high school. But challenges, like those found in agriculture, attract him.

Besides Michigan Achievement, Richardson was awarded another \$1,000 scholarship, and he said the aid will enable him to live on campus, which he’s looking forward to.

“[It’s] a next step kind of thing, a step to becoming an adult, being more independent.”

Katie Koester / 18
Traverse City Central High School class of 2023

NMC is the right place at the right price for Katie Koester.

“Being able to stay close to where I’ve grown up makes me feel more comfortable,” Koester says, who will receive the Michigan Achievement scholarship, among others, when she starts this fall.

Koester began living on her own a few months before graduation, so the scholarship has been a crucial part of her educational plan. “I have basically no money,” she says, “so that’s very helpful.” She’s considering biology at NMC and also a study abroad program, but is mostly looking forward to college as a place to figure things out.

“A smaller community is what I was looking for,” said Koester, who works at the Grand Traverse Butterfly and Bug Zoo in the summer.

“I love bugs,” she says. Transferring to an entomology program may be in the future, but for now, she’s happy to have chosen NMC as her next step.

“It’s going to be fun to push myself and see where I can land in the future. I’m excited to be a part of NMC and see where life can take me.” **N**

The MI Bill, in students and dollars:



PROGRAM	YEAR	NMC STUDENTS	ANNUAL AWARD \$
MI Achievement	Starts 2023	300	\$800,000
* MI Reconnect 21-24	Proposed	400	\$800,000 (conservative est.)
MI Reconnect 25+	2021-present	229	\$450,000
Futures for Frontliners	2020-21	157	\$380,000
Total		1,086	\$2.43 million

* PROPOSED BUT NOT YET APPROVED

Career-specific tuition programs and school-to-work pipelines are available from the state for future police officers and corrections officers.

► nmc.edu/police

College Edge // nmc.edu/edge

Any student planning to enter any Michigan college can take advantage of College Edge at NMC this summer. The first free five-week session of math and English courses plus student success activities just got underway. A second session runs July 10-Aug. 11. Students who complete Edge will also earn a \$1,000 NMC scholarship.

HOW TO SUCCEED AS AN ADULT STUDENT

Tips from NMC's Reconnect navigator



MARSHA TOMPKINS

Many more students could be poised to transform their lives through Michigan Reconnect. Statewide, about only 20 percent of the 114,000 people who've applied to Reconnect have actually enrolled. (NMC has served about 400.)

The state has hired a corps of 10 navigators to help prospective students become registered students. Marsha Tompkins is NMC's navigator. Here's Tompkins' wisdom, from counseling students mostly in their 30s and 40s, but as old as 72:

- Ask for help, whether it's a support service like child care, or a question about class content. Instructors are the go-to for classroom questions. Navigators can help with everything else. "The higher ed system is fraught with lingo and jargon. The navigator role just kind of clears that all out," Tompkins said. "It's a person at their side."
- If you've earned credits already, even a long time ago, they're probably still valid, with the exception of some technical areas, like nursing. "A majority of the time they don't expire," Tompkins said.
- Once enrolled, make an appointment with an academic adviser and create a plan that will lead to your goal. "Making a plan with an adviser maps it all out so they know what's ahead." At NMC, students can make advising appointments online: nmc.edu/advising



SOME OF NMC'S 2023 RECONNECT GRADUATES.





JIM SCHIFFER

INSIDE MY BAG

Surveying Technology
Jim Schiffer, 59
Traverse City



Jim Schiffer didn't hesitate to go back to school at NMC, even though decades have passed since he earned a bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of Michigan. Now a professional engineer with the Grand Traverse County Road Commission, he only needed to attend for about two semesters to be eligible to take the surveyor's licensing exam. That put him so close to an associate degree that he decided to go for that, too. He'll complete his coursework this summer.

The license will also complement Schiffer's consulting business in general civil and structural engineering.

Why surveying? "If you love anything technical, and you love solving problems, and you love being outside," he says, "it's all there." **N**

NMC offers an associate degree and professional development in Surveying Technology. Visit nmc.edu/surveying

▲ *Clockwise from top left, Schiffer's backpack contains:*

1. Folders: Yellow contains materials for the surveying licensing exam. Blue contains text materials.
2. Thermos filled with black coffee.
3. Tan folders: Class handouts and assignments; pens and highlighter. Yellow ruler is architect's scale, blue is engineer's scale.
4. Textbooks for surveying and UAS classes.
5. Field book: Legal records of his notes on projects. Water-resistant, pocket-sized. Scientific calculator to use on exam. The Swingline stapler dates back to Schiffer's undergraduate days at U of M, in the 1980s.
6. Green drawing templates kept inside the field book; flash drive.
7. Tablet and stylus. Stickers are associated with dirt biking, one of Schiffer's favorite hobbies.





WHEN NEVADA YETTER enrolled in NMC's Great Lakes Culinary Institute as a step toward her goal of opening a restaurant in her native Traverse City, her future business prospects seemed rosy.

Then came COVID-19.

Indoor dining rooms closed. Restaurants pivoted to curbside pickup and delivery. Menus turned into QR codes.

"I knew I had to change my business plan," says Yetter, 34. But she already knew how to pivot—in 2016, she had bought a farm and since adopted a health-conscious, sustainable lifestyle, prioritizing her own diet and fitness.

Her ethos and education, not to mention a Business Development Certificate (also from NMC), led her to create Fresh Life Meal Prep, a meal kit subscription service. Fresh Life's calling card is locally grown ingredients—Yetter's aiming for 60 percent from her own half-acre garden—and macro-based menus, where customers choose their meals based on protein, carbs and fats per serving.

"They're really conjoined, the farm and the meal-prep business," Yetter says. "The whole point is fresh sustainable food, not big-box. That's what we're trying to showcase."

Yetter is as much an entrepreneur as she is a chef. Last year, Fresh Life won a pitch night at TC New Tech. (She bought a new fridge with the prize money.) She brims with ideas, including plans for a podcast, pop-up dinners on the farm, a petting zoo, on-farm classes such as foraging and canning, and even franchising the Fresh Life concept, which NMC is also advising.

"I feel like I'm ready for more," she says. **N**

► Find out more or order online:
freshmealprep.com

FARM TO TABLE, DELIVERED

With a chef's passion and a gardener's discipline, a GLCI grad launches Fresh Life Meal Prep from her Kingsley farm.





FRESH LIFE'S MOROCCAN CHICKEN LUNCH

Makes 2 servings

MACROS: 25.3 g carbs, 9 g fats, 58.2 g protein

CHICKEN

- 2 6 oz chicken breasts
- 1/8 tsp garlic powder
- 1/8 tsp cumin
- 1/8 tsp chili powder
- 1/8 tsp sea salt

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Sprinkle seasonings over chicken and rub. Place chicken on oiled sheet pan and bake until internal temperature reaches 165 degrees



ORZO PASTA

Cook orzo pasta according to package directions, then add:

- 1 cup cooked and chilled orzo
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tbsp crumbled feta
- Pinch sea salt
- Any vegetables desired

Put all ingredients in a mixing bowl and mix well. Chill for 30 minutes.

CUCUMBER SALAD

- 1/2 cucumber, washed and quartered, sliced thin
- 4 cherry tomatoes, quartered long ways
- 1/2 tsp white vinegar
- Pinch sea salt
- Pinch cracked black pepper

Serve chicken over orzo, accompanied by cucumber salad.

SOUND WALL 2.0

Interactive Dennos favorite restored for new generation

“Please touch” has always been the rule in The Dennos Museum Center’s Discovery Gallery. Thanks to the donor-funded restoration of a signature piece, the sound wall, decades of future visitors will get to observe that rule.

In March, 75 Eastern Elementary kindergarten students were among the first large groups to compose their own music on the wall when they visited on a field trip. The theme for their trip was art and how it affects emotions. With the sound wall, one emotion was abundantly clear, said teacher Kathleen Ferguson, right.

“You could see the joy in their faces when they were exploring and discovering the different sounds,” she said. “The children were drawn to it.”

Ferguson was, too.

“I highly recommend it for any age. I found myself mesmerized by it,” she said.

That’s by design. The Dennos wants to be known as a family-friendly, intergenerational destination, and the sound wall is a great example, director Craig Hadley said.

A fundraising campaign last year raised more than \$30,000 to restore the wall, installed in the early 1990s. Over the winter, museum staff disassembled, sanded and painted each piece, testing it with every new coat of paint to make sure all the components worked. NMC IT staff replaced the computer, and Milliken Audio Technician Maria Ulrich wired new speakers and repaired the sound board.

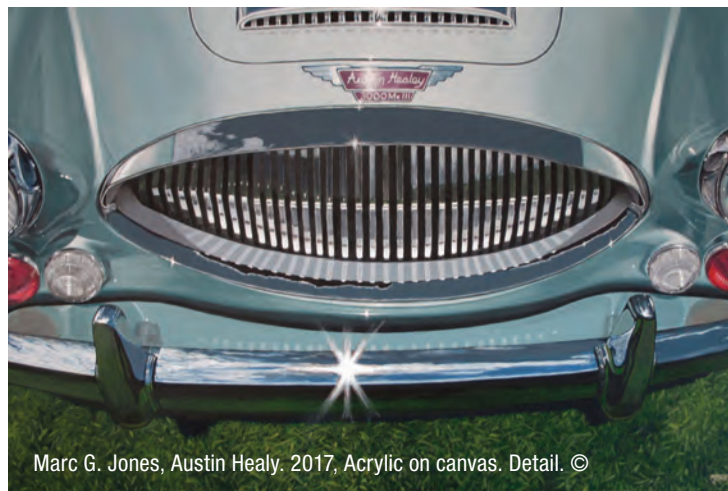
Even better, Ferguson received a scholarship for the trip, so admission for all 75 students was completely covered.

“We were able to experience the whole museum,” she said. “It was beautiful. The children, at such a young age, were so engaged.” **N**





**EASTERN ELEMENTARY KINDERGARTEN
TEACHER KATHLEEN FERGUSON
COMPOSES MUSIC ON THE RESTORED SOUND
WALL WITH HER STUDENTS DURING A FIELD
TRIP TO THE DENNOS MUSEUM CENTER.**



Marc G. Jones, Austin Healy. 2017, Acrylic on canvas. Detail. ©

LANDSCAPES, LUSTER AND JERRY'S MAP

See three new summer exhibitions
THROUGH SEPT. 3

- **A New Perspective: Landscapes from the Dennos Museum Center.** Explore this collection and see if they evoke memory, transport you through time, or reveal new outlooks and possibilities.
- **Luster: Realism And Hyperrealism In Contemporary Automobile And Motorcycle Painting:** This traveling exhibition showcases artists who specialize in the vehicles.
- **Jerry's Map:** Composed of over 4,000 individual eight-by-ten inch panels, its installation, unique to every venue, is dictated by the interplay between an elaborate set of rules and randomly generated instructions.



Jerry Gretzinger, *AAIII*.
n.d. Mixed media.
Image courtesy
of the artist.



Ukrainian Hawk Owl

War prevented an exchange student from returning home. She's now on the dean's list and plans to transfer to WMU.

Anastasiia Hrukach has so completely adopted Traverse City as her home that she tries to use her palm, as Michiganders do, to show the location of her native Ukrainian city, Chernihiv.

"But it doesn't work," she says with a laugh, dropping her hand in her lap as she sits in the Hawk Owl Cafe on NMC's main campus, separated by 5,000 miles and nearly two years from Chernihiv and her family.

Hrukach arrived in Traverse City in fall 2021 for a year as an exchange student at Traverse City Central High School. She was supposed to reunite with her parents and younger brother Nikita in Ukraine in May 2022.

But Hrukach's plans changed on February 24, 2022, when Russian troops invaded Ukraine. Chernihiv, located near the border on the main highway a few hours north of the capital, Kyiv, was one of the first cities attacked. Hrukach, 17, had to figure out how to cope with an unimaginable reality.

"People didn't believe, to the last day, that the war would start," says Hrukach, who had known fighting between Russia and Ukraine for half her life, dating back to 2014. Despite the eight intervening years of conflict, mostly in eastern Ukraine, no one had foreseen an all-out war. So the news her host mother broke that February morning was shocking as well as frightening.

In those first days, both of her parents' workplaces were bombed as was a neighbor's house. Her family fled to a shelter. To prevent a Russian advance on the capital, Ukraine bombed a key bridge between Chernihiv and Kyiv, isolating the city. Hrukach worried if her family would have enough food. Power was limited and unreliable, so she could only communicate by text.

Quickly, however, her parents and brother moved to her grandparents' home in a safer village outside Chernihiv. Power improved enough that she could make phone and video calls. And with the help

of those in her new hometown, including host parents Erin and Dean Bowles, the Traverse City Track Club and NMC, she created a coping strategy.

"Keeping myself busy helped me the most," says Hrukach. "I do read news. I also know the best for me, and the best I can do is just get an education."

She's well on her way. Hrukach took most of her senior year classes as a dual-enrolled student at NMC. She made the dean's list for her high grade point average and earned 24 credits in subjects including English, psychology, contemporary social dilemmas and chemistry. She loved the in-person classes and NMC's faculty.

"Everyone wants to help you. You can text your professor and they will help you," she says.

Chemistry instructor Mary Jo Elliott is one of her favorites. "She explained it in a way that I loved. She is keeping us on track," Hrukach says, adding that the course requires 20 hours of homework a week. ▶

**“The best
I can do
is just get an
education”**

—ANASTASIIA HRUKACH



The Timothy J. Nelson Innovation Center is Anastasiia Hrukach's favorite place on NMC's campus. "I love how modern it is, how light and open it is," she says. "I'm in the Innovation Center ninety-nine percent of the time if I don't have my classes."





**HOME AWAY FROM HOME:
TRAVERSE CITY**

- Dual-enrolled at NMC and Traverse City Central High School
- Runs with Traverse City Track Club
- Member of TC Central cross-country, cheerleading and tennis teams
- Named to NMC Dean's List and plans to attend Western Michigan University in fall 2023

**HOMETOWN:
CHERNIHIV, UKRAINE**

- Located on main highway to capital, Kyiv
- Russia invaded Feb. 24, 2022.
- United Nations estimates 8,231 civilians killed
- Parents and brother, 9, moved to grandparents' more rural home

4,951 mi

“Getting out of your comfort zone is sometimes the *best thing* to do.”

—ANASTASIIA HRUKACH

Thanks to Elliott’s influence as well as the Bowleses (both engineers), Hrukach is leaning towards a degree in chemical engineering.

Dual-enrollment also was financially advantageous for Hrukach. In Ukraine, school goes only to 11th grade, so back home she would have been in college, which is mostly free to citizens. In the U.S. on a student visa, she’ll have to pay for tuition herself. She waged an all-out effort to get a scholarship, applying to 57 U.S. colleges and universities. She plans to attend Western Michigan University, which has offered her a full scholarship to its honors college. Combining her dual-enrolled credits with an Advanced Placement calculus course at Central, she could start at WMU with a full year already completed.

Sports and outdoor activities round out Hrukach’s life in Traverse City, another change for her. She was born with a

heart condition and doctors prevented her from much activity until she was 12 and outgrew her condition. Here, host dad Dean Bowles introduced her to running. Wednesday evening runs with the Traverse City Track Club became a weekly ritual, and she’s competed in events like the Frozen Foot 5K and St. Patrick’s Day fun run. She enjoys her fellow runners as much as the running.

“I felt like a part of the community,” she says.

The track club led to joining the Trojan cross-country squad. Her host mother introduced her to tennis, and she went on to earn the number one singles slot on the Trojan junior varsity tennis team. In between those seasons she even tried cheerleading for the boy’s basketball team.

“After cheerleading, I really changed. That got me out there,” Hrukach says. “It taught me how to smile.” In Ukraine, people don’t

show their teeth when they smile, so it was a change her family noticed right away, and one that she marvels at now herself, a visible evidence of how much has happened since she arrived in Traverse City. Prior to her exchange experience, she had never left Ukraine and never been on a plane.

“Getting out of your comfort zone is sometimes the best thing to do,” she says. “Being connected to people, and being part of some community, some outside support and people you trust, that’s what helps you most in life.”

Her visa requires that she return to Ukraine for at least two years. But for the time being, with no end in sight to the war and the scholarship awaiting at WMU, her home will be in Traverse City, at the tip of the pinky finger, with the Bowleses.

“I will stay here until the war finishes,” she says. “Maybe one day I will do something for my country.” **N**

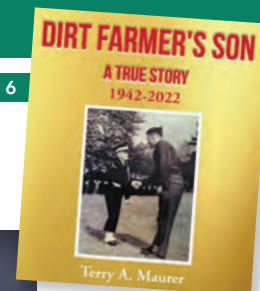


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ALUMNI NOTES

Five NMC alumni were honored with 2022 staff awards from the Grand Traverse Sheriff's Office. Included was recognition from MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) to **DEPUTY MITCHELL HOFFMAN** (Law Enforcement, 2019) and **DEPUTY HAYDEN TALBOT** (NMC 2021-2022). Life Saving Awards were presented to **DEPUTY HILARY SMITH** (Law Enforcement, 2016) and **DEPUTY SHANE ROELOFS** (Law Enforcement, 2020). **DEPUTY ROGER GROTEFENDT** (Law Enforcement, 2018) was honored as one of two Employees of the Year.

1 DR. ANDREA (ANNIE) KRITCHER (2001-2003, Outstanding Alumnus 2022) was named one of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2023. She was lauded for her scientific research that helped bring about the first-ever controlled fusion ignition in December 2022 at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California.

2 PEG JONKHOFF (Business/Marketing, 1976) recently printed the third edition of "Perry Hannah's Gifts, Then and Now," a local history book which she also co-authored about Traverse City's founding father. Proceeds from the book helped fund Hannah's statue, located at the corner of Union and Sixth Street in Hannah Park.

3 RICONDA SOLIS LAMB (Business, 1987) lives in Rogers City with her husband Richard. Together, they own the Presque Isle Advance and are active in the Rogers City Community Theatre.

4 STEVE SIVEK (Law Enforcement, 1996) was recently promoted to lieutenant of the Patrol Services Division for the Traverse City Police Department, where he has served for twenty years.

5 Sisters JANÉE MARIE MEADOWS (1999-2002) and **KALI MEADOWS** (2003-2004)

launched Hot Metal Playground. Their sketch comedy act performs throughout Michigan and the Midwest. Performance dates and digital shorts are available at hotmetalplayground.com and on social media.

JOHN NOYE (Commerce, 1971) is retired in Traverse City, after 30 years implementing technology solutions for Kellogg Corp.

REBA PARSONS (Culinary, 2021) is now a Culinary Specialist in the U.S. Coast Guard and is stationed in St. Petersburg, Fla. on a medium endurance cutter.

6 TERRY MAURER (Chemistry, 1964) is retired and now resides in St. Helena, Calif. His autobiography, *Dirt Farmer's Son*, has been updated through 2022 and is available through online retailers. ▶

2023 OUTSTANDING ALUMNI NAMED

Since 1988, NMC's Outstanding Alumni award has recognized graduates and past students for professional achievement and/or exemplary leadership in the local or global community. Recipients' accomplishments reflect the NMC values of dedication to lifelong learning, innovation and integrity, and respect for and collaboration with others.

7 JERRY DOBEK (Mathematics & General Arts & Sciences, 1998) As a student and as a faculty member since 1989, Dobek has played a pivotal role in the operations of the Rogers Observatory. His teaching at NMC extends into numerous school-based, community and national programs,

including the design of the State Theater's starry ceiling, the NASA Ambassadors and the International Dark Sky Association. Dobek has written dozens of dark sky ordinances for Michigan communities, and served as chair of the Grand Traverse Planning Commission for 15 years. He has received NMC's teaching excellence awards as both an adjunct and full-time faculty member.

8 TIFFANY SMITH MCQUEER (General Studies, 2012 & Practical Nursing, 2013) At the onset of COVID-19, Tiffany and her husband Jason McQueer, the owners of J&S Hamburg South in Traverse City, saw a need to provide food support to local

families. The McQueers also provided numerous meals for essential workers at Munson Hospital and other facilities. What began as one cooler outside their restaurant stocked with a handful of meals has turned into a full-fledged nonprofit organization, with three locations providing food as well as drives for holiday gifts, winter wear, and back-to-school support. Project Feed the Kids just passed the 200,000 meal mark, after nearly three years in operation. **N**

► *Outstanding Alumni nominations are welcomed at any time. To learn more, visit nmc.edu/alumni*

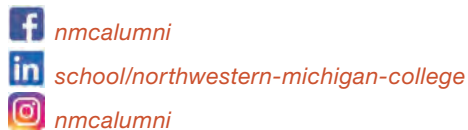


► *Want to share your news? Submit it at nmc.edu/about/foundation/alumni/keep-in-touch.html*

Or scan:



Join us on social media at:





CALENDAR

JUNE

13 **3 Cafe Lobdell's opens**
7-11 a.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays until July 20. Closed July 4. Coffee and pastries served in NMC's teaching restaurant at the Great Lakes campus.

17 **Kids Free Fishing Day**
11 a.m.-2 p.m. Great Lakes Campus
All equipment supplied.

18 **1 Free admission Denmos Museum Center**
for Juneteenth Day
11 a.m.-4 p.m.

6.19-8.18 **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 or call (231) 995-1700.

21 **New student orientation**
Must be admitted first.
Visit nmc.edu/apply
Also July 19, August 23

27 **NMC Summer Concert Band**
7:30 p.m. Traverse City Senior Center
A freewill offering will be taken.

JULY

1 **NMC Summer Concert Band,**
3 p.m. Traverse City West Senior High
A freewill offering will be taken.

10 College Edge, session 2 begins
Free math, English, student success activities for any student starting college at any school this fall.
nmc.edu/edge

11 **NMC Summer Concert Band**
7:30 p.m. Civic Center Amphitheater
A freewill offering will be taken.

AUGUST

26 **Fall semester classes begin**
nmc.edu/fall

29 **Pine Palooza student fair**
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Under the tent on the green by the Timothy J. Nelson Innovation Center
nmc.edu/studentlife

SEPT

30th anniversary season of International Affairs Forum begins
Check tciaf.com for lecture series speakers and dates, as well as other events.





Take the Nexus reader survey

by June 30 and be entered to win a Lobdell's gift card!



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NMC is your path to a brighter future, whether you re a traditional student just out of high school or a returning adult learner. Get the answers to all your questions about going back to school at drop in events on June 17, July 26 and Aug. 5.

➤ **Visit nmc.edu/quickstart for more details and to sign up.**