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JACKSON AREA COLLABORATIVE KNOWLEDGE SOURCE

Master Gardeners Welcome Spring

- page 2



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2026 MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- APRIL 5-18** CALENDAR CONTEST Online
- MAY 30** PAWS IN THE PARK 5K Cascades Park
- JULY 11** BLOOMS & BREWS CHS Grounds

For More Information: www.chspets.org

Welcome to J.A.C.K.S. —

Jackson Area Collaborative Knowledge Source. Our mission is to inspire community unification and promote the voices of organizations and individuals in Jackson County through a collaborative monthly publication.

**Learn more at
www.jacksfamilyguide.org**

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Spring Conference Highlights Growing Opportunities for Michigan Gardeners

Gardeners from across the region will gather Saturday, April 11, 2026, for the Jackson County Master Gardener Association's Annual Spring Conference at Bert Walker Hall on the Jackson College campus from 9:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The conference features a full day of education and community connection. This year's speakers include John Metzler presenting A Photographer's Take on Spring Ephemerals, Jan Shaw discussing natural herbal use with teas, and Dr. David Karowe exploring the effects of climate change on native plants. Attendees can also browse vendors, participate in a silent auction, win door prizes and enjoy lunch. Registration closes March 28, with tickets priced at \$45 for members and \$50 for non-members.

Beyond a single event, the conference offers a glimpse into Michigan's broader Master Gardener network.

What Is a Master Gardener?

The MSU Extension Master Gardener Program® is a horticulture education and volunteer training program designed to strengthen communities through research-based gardening practices. Volunteers are trained to share science-backed information on topics such as sustainable landscaping, pollinator protection, food security and environmental stewardship.

Master Gardeners can be found supporting school garden programs, assisting with community beautification projects,

leading educational workshops and helping residents make environmentally responsible gardening decisions.

How to Become One

The process begins with MSU Extension's online Foundations of Gardening course, offered in the fall and winter at a cost of \$350, with partial scholarships available. After completing the course, participants apply to become MSU Extension volunteers and attend a local onboarding session.

To earn certification, trainees must complete 40 hours of volunteer service in Michigan. To remain active, volunteers commit to at least 20 hours of service and 10 hours of continuing education annually.

Certified volunteers and trainees may also join the Michigan Master Gardener Association, Inc., a separate organization that offers liability insurance coverage for volunteer work, member discounts and expanded educational opportunities.

Staying Connected

The Michigan Master Gardener Association hosts events throughout the year, which can be viewed on its online event calendar. MMGA also has a newsletter that delivers helpful resources to recipients.

For those inspired by the April conference, becoming a Master Gardener offers a way to deepen gardening knowledge while making a lasting impact in communities across Michigan.

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2026 Spring Conference

SPEAKERS

- John Metzler** – A Photographer's Take on Spring Ephemerals
- Jan Shaw** – Natural Herbal Use with Teas
- Dr. David Karowe** – Effect of Climate Change on Native Plants

Sponsored by Jackson County Master Gardeners Association

**Join us at Jackson College
Bert Walker Hall, 2111 Emmons Rd., Jackson, MI**

The deadline for registration is **March 28** | Pre-registration required

Call 517.795.7708 for more information

**SATURDAY, APRIL 11
9:45 AM TO 3:30 PM**



Hometown Eats

March 2026: Klavon's

By Val Herr



While it's easy and understandable to get excited about new restaurants opening, don't forget the local ones that have been here all along. Recently, I met up with a friend for dinner at Klavon's Pizzeria and Pub, 1361 E. McDevitt Ave., Jackson, MI 49203. While I admit it had been about a year since I was there, I was very much looking forward to going back. It did not disappoint.

I started off with their spinach and artichoke dip (five stars). It was more than enough to share between two people, but not so much that I didn't want to eat my dinner. While enjoying my appetizer, I indulged in a cocktail. My choice was the Cherry City Sour. This new-to-me drink included Traverse City cherry whiskey, Hotel Tango cherry liqueur, vanilla cinnamon syrup, and lemon juice (five stars).

For dinner, I chose not to go with the traditional pizza and decided to try something new. My choice was the Turkey Avocado sandwich with chips. The sandwich included shaved turkey, avocado, and applewood-smoked bacon on toasted Zingerman's farm bread, finished with lettuce, tomato, and mayo (five stars). It was flavorful and filling.

I could only eat half of my sandwich, giving me lunch for the next day. The service was wonderful. Overall, a delightful experience with a great friend.

My only small critique was the noise level. At times, it was difficult to carry on a conversation.

When eating out at our local restaurants, don't be afraid to try something new. You may find yourself with a new favorite dish.

Overall score: 4.8 stars.

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Jackson County Animal Shelter's Adoptable Pets: Buddy & Marla

Contributed by the Jackson County Animal Shelter

Buddy

Meet Buddy! He is a three-year-old, sixty-two pound mixed breed pup who came to the shelter due to inadequate care. Despite his past, he is a happy-go-lucky kind of guy who loves sniffing and cruising around outside. Buddy is potty trained, gets along with most other dogs, and ignored the cats in the cat room. He has beautiful brown and white markings and one blue eye and one brown eye that make him extra special. He knows a couple of basic commands and walks nicely on a leash. Buddy could be your best buddy. Come meet him today at the Jackson County Animal Shelter!

Dog adoptions require an approved application: <https://www.co.jackson.mi.us/Dog-Adoption-Application>. A meet and greet

with your dog is mandatory, and a cat room walk-through is available. Dogs are adopted to approved applicants. Adoption fees are \$150 for medium and large dogs and \$250 for puppies and small dogs, which includes vaccinations, a microchip, and sterilization. Availability dates reflect when the dog



becomes JCAS property, and required medical procedures may delay adoption.

Marla

Marla is a two-year-old tortoiseshell cat. Tortoiseshell cats are known for their unique brindled black and orange haircoat. She came to the shelter when her owners surrendered her due to a change in lifestyle. Marla is a mellow girl who is friendly to everyone she meets. She

was recently spayed, which is why her belly is shaved. Torties can be independent, affectionate, and energetic. They are often fiercely loyal and may even pick a favorite person.

Come meet Marla at the Jackson County Animal Shelter, located at 3370 Spring Arbor Road in Jackson, Michigan. Cat adoption fees are \$60 for one cat and \$80 for two, which includes applicable testing, vaccinations, and spay or neuter. Necessary medical procedures may slightly delay adoption. Visiting in person is encouraged, but applications are also available online: <https://www.co.jackson.mi.us/DocumentCenter/View/1894/Cat-Adoption-Application-PDF>. Applications may be faxed to 517-780-4750 or emailed to animalshelter@mijackson.org. Visit mijackson.org/579/Animal-Shelter, find us on Facebook, or view available pets on Petango.



Cascades Humane Society's Pet of the Month

Contributed by Cascades Humane Society

Xena is an eight-year-old female mixed breed dog with a gentle soul and a quiet presence. She can be very timid at first and prefers to take her time getting to know new people, but with patience and kindness, her sweet personality begins to shine through. Xena is the type of dog who blossoms in a calm, understanding environment where she can feel safe and secure.

Once she starts to warm up, Xena shows her softer side and forms deep, meaningful bonds with her people. She would do best in a home that will allow her

to move at her own pace and offer her reassurance as she builds confidence. A peaceful household with a predictable routine would be ideal for this sensitive girl.

a presence that feels like home. For the right person, Xena won't just be a dog—you'll be her safe place.

About the Cascades Humane Society

Organized and incorporated in 1952, Cascades Humane Society is dedicated to improving the lives of animals, promoting responsible pet ownership, and creating lasting connections between pets and families. If you are interested in donating, volunteering, or learning about other ways to support CHS, please call 517-787-7387 or email hgolightly@chspets.org to learn more.



2025

IMPACT

CHS

Cascades Humane Society

943

TOTAL ADOPTIONS

26,657

POUNDS OF PET FOOD GIVEN TO PETS IN NEED

1,761

CATS & DOGS SPAYED OR NEUTERED

6,301

VOLUNTEER HOURS

Rocks, Minerals, & Fossils

By Jean McKim,
Imagine Planet

March is a great month in Jackson for rock, mineral, and fossil enthusiasts. Imagine Planet will be hosting Fossil Theme Day on Saturday, March 14. Bring your fossils to be identified (limit ten specimens each), make an imprint of a real fossil to take home, learn how fossils form, and more. The following weekend is the Michigan Gem and Mineral Society Show, March 20 through March 22 at the fairgrounds. This yearly event costs five dollars for adults, three dollars for seniors, two dollars for students, and is free for children under five. Veterans receive free admission on Friday. Hours are Friday 10 to 7, Saturday 10 to 6, and Sunday 11 to 5. I especially love the vendors and the silent auction, and the kids' space is awesome and free. Come learn from our local club, MGMS.

Spring Break begins for most local schools on March 27. We will be open with special demonstrations and activities on Friday the 27th, Saturday, Monday the 30th, Tuesday the 31st, closed Wednes-

day, and open again Thursday, April 2 through Saturday, April 4. We will also be open Tuesday and Thursday from 12 to 5 p.m. in addition to our regular hours. At that time, we will be closed April 6 through April 17 as we work on getting our animals back. Wish us luck and justice.



On April 18, we will be at Storer Camp Healthy Kids Day, and on April 26, we will be at Earth Day in the Park. More details will follow in the next issue or on our Facebook page.

So what is the difference between a mineral and a rock? I like to use a cookie analogy. Minerals are the ingredients of rocks. It does not matter which end of a stick of butter you cut from, the butter is the same all the way

through. The same goes for a bag of flour, sugar, or chocolate chips. Minerals are consistent throughout, with the same chemical composition and usually the same color. Rocks are combinations of minerals. Add chocolate chips and you get chocolate chip cookies. Combine quartz, mica, and pink feldspar deep underground and you get granite.

There are several important characteristics that set minerals apart. They have a definite crystal structure, which excludes opal. They are solid, which excludes liquid mercury. They are natural, so manmade diamonds and "Fordite," or solid car paint, do not count. They are inorganic, which excludes pearls and amber. They also have a defined chemical composition.

Fossils are evidence of life from the distant past. They can be molds, such as tracks and footprints; casts formed from molds; remains replaced by minerals, like petrified wood and bones; or even preserved in ice or amber. Learn more at Fossil Theme Day on March 14 at Imagine Planet.

Michigan Gem & Mineral Show

Friday, March 20th - Sunday, March 22nd, 2026

American One Event Center
128 W. Ganson
Jackson, Michigan

Friday, 10 AM - 7 PM
Saturday, 10 AM - 6 PM
Sunday, 11 AM - 5 PM

Adults - \$5
Seniors - \$3
Students \$2



Veterans free on Friday & Children under 5 free

www.mgmsrockclub.com

Michigan Gem & Mineral Society

517-522-3396



March 30 - April 3, 2026

Time: 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Ages: 5-12

Weekly rate: Members \$179, Community \$229

Financial Assistance is available

Register: Sign up in person or online at
JacksonYMCA.org

Join us for a week of fun field trips, swimming and more!



Jackson YMCA
127 W. Wesley St.
Jackson, MI 49201
517.782.0537

Steer Clear: How to Avoid Costly Auto Buying Traps

Contributed by
**TRUE Community
Credit Union**

Tax refund season is here, and for many people, that extra cash feels like the perfect chance to finally upgrade their vehicle. It's not just a feeling—tax season is historically one of the busiest times for auto sales and financing, driven largely by shoppers using their refunds for down payments.

That surge in activity creates an opportunity for predatory sellers. When you're excited about getting into a new (or new to you) vehicle, it's easy to overlook the fine print or miss red flags. And with today's high prices and tight inventory, more buyers are running into shady practices—from unsafe cars to junk warranties to surprise fees.

Why Auto Buying Traps Are On the Rise

Inflation, high demand, and a tight used car market have created the perfect environment for questionable sellers to take advantage of hopeful buyers. These traps aren't always obvious. They often show up as "too good to be true" deals, complicated financing, or cars with hidden mechanical issues.

Understanding the red flags can help you confidently choose a vehicle that's actually worth your tax refund.

Watch Out for These Common Traps

1. Overpriced Loans for Subprime Buyers

If your credit is bruised, some lenders may offer you a loan—but at sky high interest rates. And while higher rates for low credit borrowers are common, some dealerships mark up rates even further.

What to do instead:

Check with your financial institution before stepping onto a lot. You may qualify for a lower cost loan than you think, and pre approval gives you more negotiating power.

2. "As-Is" Cars That Aren't Road Ready

Some sellers offload vehicles with major, undisclosed issues—knowing

they won't last long on the road. When the car breaks down, they may offer to "take it back" ...for steep fees or with no refund at all.

Protect yourself by:

- Asking for a full vehicle history report
- Asking a trusted mechanic to inspect the car
- Walking away if the seller discourages questions

3. Add-On Warranties That Don't Actually Protect You

Extended warranties, service contracts, and protection packages can sound reassuring. Unfortunately, many aftermarket warranties have long exclusions, difficult claim processes, or coverage so narrow they're practically useless.

Ask these questions:

- What exactly does this warranty cover—and not cover?
- Are repairs required at specific locations?
- Is the seller pressuring me to buy this add-on?
- If the answers feel vague, it's okay to decline.

4. Yo Yo Financing

This happens when a dealer lets you take the car home before financing is finalized. Days later, they call back claiming your loan "didn't go through," pressuring you into a worse deal.

How to stay safe:

Never drive off the lot until all financing paperwork is complete and signed.

5. Hidden Fees That Inflate the Price

Documentation fees, "prep" fees, vehicle etching, nitrogen filled tires—many of these add-ons create profit for the seller, not value for you.

Tip: Ask for a detailed price breakdown and challenge anything that seems unclear.

You Don't Have to Navigate This Alone

Buying a vehicle is a big decision, especially during tax refund season when timing adds extra pressure. Connect with your financial institution to see if they can help you make the most of your refund by offering:

- Auto loan pre approval with transparent terms

• Guidance on affordable financing options

• Budgeting tools to help you determine what you can truly afford

o With TRUE Digital Banking, you can use the free SavvyMoney tool to find your debt-to-income ratio to determine what the best vehicle payment is for you

As an additional re-

source, our partners at GreenPath Financial Wellness offer free, confidential financial counseling to help you explore your options, understand loan terms, and choose the path that best supports your long term financial health. Visit TRUECCU.com for more financial wellness tools and services.

TRUE Community

Credit Union is a member-owned financial cooperative dedicated to helping people achieve their most important life milestones by offering competitive savings, checking, loan, and digital banking services with a people-first mission focused on creating legacy-defining moments for the communities it serves across Michigan.

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COVERAGE



Lomar Supports Jacktown Vectors with Custom Rolling Work Bench Project

By Becky Dorian,
Lomar Machine and Tool
Company

A recent collaboration between Lomar Machine & Tool Company and the Jacktown Vectors robotics team highlights the power of local partnerships in supporting student innovation and hands-on learning.

Lomar fabricated a set of custom rolling work benches for the Jackson-area robotics team, designed to provide flexible, mobile workspace during the group's busy robot build season. Built for durability and functionality, the benches allow students to organize tools, reposition work areas, and collaborate more effectively as they design and construct their competition robot.

To showcase team pride, the benches were

powder-coated in the Jacktown Vectors' signature purple, creating equipment that reflects the identity and enthusiasm of the students who will use it throughout the season.

Once fabrication and finishing were complete, members of the Jacktown Vectors visited Lomar's facility to complete the final assembly of the benches themselves. The students took the lead in putting the pieces together, turning the delivery into an engaging, hands-on experience that reinforced teamwork and problem-solving.

The visit also offered students an opportunity to

step inside a local manufacturing environment and see where the project originated — providing valuable exposure to careers and processes that align closely

where they tackle challenges involving design, fabrication, programming, and strategy. Throughout the season, students gain practical experience that mirrors real-world engineering and manufacturing workflows.

By supporting the team through projects like the rolling work benches, Lomar continues its commitment to community engagement and workforce development. Providing resources and opportunities for students helps strengthen the pipeline of future innovators while reinforcing connections between education

and local industry. As the Jacktown Vectors move through their competition season, the custom benches will serve as an everyday tool supporting creativity, collaboration, and learning — as well as a reminder of the community partnerships that help make those experiences possible.

About Lomar Machine and Tool Company

Founded in 1976, Lomar Machine and Tool Company is celebrating fifty years of quality craftsmanship, integrity, and customer-focused innovation in Jackson. Guided by strong family leadership and a dedicated team, Lomar continues to build reliable machines, lasting partnerships, and a proud legacy rooted in its community.



with the skills they develop through robotics.

The Jacktown Vectors program brings together students from across the Jackson area to participate in competitive robotics,



Photos contributed by Lomar Machine and Tool Company

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College & Career Access Center, March Scholarships

AFA National Scholarship

Description: One application for more than 100 scholarship opportunities for graduating high school seniors and current undergrads enrolled in an agriculture or food-related degree program in the U.S.

Eligibility:

- Current high school senior or undergraduate student
- Age 17-25 during the AFA Leaders Conference* Attending a four-year institution in the US or plans to obtain a four-year degree
- 2.5 GPA or higher (recommended)
- Passion for food, agriculture and/or natural resources
- Intention to pursue a career in the food, agriculture and/or natural resources industries

*AFA programming is designed for students ages 17-25. Based on previous participant feedback, our programming does not meet the developmental needs and expectations of students outside this age range.

Award Amount: \$1,600 - \$3,200

Deadline: March 5, 2026

TRUE Community Credit Union Scholarships \$10,000

Description: The TRUE Community Scholarship program offers financial support to students, particularly those graduating high school or non-traditional students seeking further education. This scholarship aims to empower students with financial knowledge to navigate their educational journeys. "At TRUE Community Credit Union, our mission is to cultivate legacy-defining moments for the people and places we serve for generations to come. We focus on creating meaningful connections and strengthening the communities we proudly call home."

Eligibility:

- Students and Non-Traditional Students who currently live, work, or attend school in Michigan
- Must plan to enter college in the next academic year (2026-2027)

Required Items:

- Evidence of enrollment in an accredited college, technical school or university must be submitted before award payment will be made to the award recipient
- Must submit an essay on financial education and its impact on their future

Award Amount: \$5,000 -

Deadline: Applications accepted electronically until 11:59 PM AM EST on March 25, 2026

Army Nurse Corps Association (ANCA) Education Fund

Description: One of the Army Nurse Corps Association's major initiatives is the Scholarship Program. Its purpose is the support of nursing education through scholarship funding to worthy students who are US citizens in an accredited baccalaureate or graduate nursing or anesthesia program.

Eligibility: Students currently enrolled in an accredited baccalaureate or advanced degree nursing or nurse anesthesia program who:

- Are serving or have previously served in any branch, at any rank, of a component of the US Army (Active Army, Army National Guard, or Army Reserve);
- Are not currently receiving funding by a component of the US Army (e.g., ROTC scholarship students and students receiving full GI Bill benefits are not eligible); and
- As applicable, have received an Honorable Dis-

charge.
 • Nursing or anesthesia students whose parent(s), spouse, or child(ren) have current or previous service in a component of the US Army.

Eligible programs include:

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)
- RN to BSN
- Accelerated Nursing Degree programs
- Graduate Certificate in Nursing (minimum of one year (2 semesters) in length)

- Master's Degree in Nursing (MSN)
- Anesthesia and Nursing Doctoral programs
- Graduate degree in related healthcare fields (such as Public Health) in furtherance of a nursing career

Award Amount: \$3,000

Deadline: March 31, 2026

For the full list of monthly scholarships, please visit the College and Career Access Center's website at jacksoncac.org.

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2026 KINDERGARTEN & YOUNG FIVES ROUND-UP

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• John R. Lewis Elementary	April 13	5:00 - 6:30 pm
• Dibble Elementary	April 14	5:30 - 7:00 pm
• Cascades Elementary	April 15	5:30 - 7:00 pm
• Hunt Elementary	April 16	5:30 - 7:00 pm
• Sharp Park Academy	April 20	5:30 - 7:00 pm
• JPS Montessori Elementary	April 22	5:00 - 6:30 pm
• Northeast Elementary	April 23	5:30 - 7:00 pm

Please arrive early as program will begin promptly!

Prizes & Food!

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Free T-Shirt upon enrollment!

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