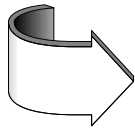


Chamber Times



Letter from the President

We are gearing up for the Spring and Summer Season and getting ready for lots of events to come!

Get out your calendar and mark these Chamber Events down:

• April 15th, House Representative Bruce Rendon will be coming to The Rolling Stone Steakhouse at 7:30 a.m. to address your concerns. Tickets are \$10 each and available at the Chamber Office.

• May 9th, Senator John Moolenaar will be coming to our area. Location to be announced for a lunch meeting.

• May 18th, The 18th Annual Chamber Golf Outing at the West Branch Country Club I hope to see everyone out and about! We have some great events coming up that hopefully can address some of the current business concerns.

This month we are working toward tackling some new projects and enhancing the events that we already have. We are working on the 4th of July festivities and parade forms are available, if you are interested. The theme is "Hometown Pride" this year!

Our New Membership packet is coming together. We are making headway with some changes but have more that have to be achieved yet.

A new member brought a really great idea up to me for the youth and the businesses in our community. So I will be talking to the school to see if we can work in collaboration on this project. I hope there will be more to come for you on this!

Also, nominations for our Board of Directors will be coming in the following months. So, anyone that is interested in being on the board of directors, either come see me, or stop and see one of our current board members! WE ARE SO FUN!!! AND EXCITED!!!!

– Christie Blackford

Inside this Issue:

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Funny Forward

This e-mail forward found its way to our inbox this month:

The Power of Music

As a bagpiper, I play many gigs. Recently I was asked by a funeral director to play at a graveside service for a homeless man. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper's cemetery in the Kentucky back country.

As I was not familiar with the backwoods, I got lost and, being a typical man, I didn't stop for directions. I finally arrived an hour late and saw the funeral guy had evidently gone and the hearse was nowhere in sight. There were only the digging crew left and they were eating lunch. I felt bad and apologized to the men for being late.

I went to the side of the grave and looked

down, and the vault lid was already in place. I didn't know what else to do, so I started to play. The workers put down their lunches and began to gather around. I played out my heart and soul for this man with no family and friends. I played like I've never played before for this homeless man.

And as I played "Amazing Grace," the workers began to weep. They wept, I wept, we all wept together. When I finished, I packed up my bagpipes and started for my car. Though my head hung low, my heart was full.

As I opened the door to my car, I heard one of the workers say, "I never seen nothin' like that before and I've been putting in septic tanks for twenty years."

Apparently, I'm still lost...

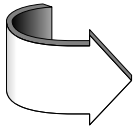
Chamber Hours

Mon., Tues.,
Thurs., Fri.
9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Wed.
10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Board Members

Mark Wait
Matt Arbour
John Thibault
Dave Clouse
Michelle Frechette
Julie Hock
Jeff Hodges



Give and Take Constructive Feedback with Ease

No one likes to hear criticism about themselves. Even when someone says, "Tell me what you honestly think about," we often hold back, knowing that our honest opinion may cause an uncomfortable silence or even a shouting match. And when someone does get completely honest with the feedback, the listener often shuts down.

The word honest means full disclosure with good intent. The words good intent are key to achieve positive results. Constructive feedback is a positive spin on giving helpful communication with good intent.

When it comes to feedback, you need to remember some key points to keep the sting from hurting you:

All feedback is valid from the critic's perspective. For example, if someone says that they don't think you're working hard enough to deserve your current job, before you blow up, perhaps consider that they don't know about all the extra hours you put in at night and on the weekends. Before you react, always ask yourself what that person sees (or doesn't see) from his or her vantage point.

Disregard the judgmental aspects of the feedback, and address issues that can be beneficial to you. Every feedback has some take-away point you can grasp onto. Put aside any negativity you hear, and listen for the root of the feedback.

Keep your mind open to all viewpoints. Remember that any form of feedback is an opportunity to learn. If you adopt an attitude that says, I want to know if I have blind spots that I may not see about myself, then you will view feedback as a glimpse into yourself.

Avoid taking a defensive position when feedback is leveled at you. don't say, "How could you say such

a thing?" or "I can't believe you would say that." These statements will discourage honesty in the future.

Turning the Tables

If you are the critic, you have some rules to follow too. Before you dispense any of your honest opinions, keep the following in mind:

Challenges stated in positive terms lead to solutions; challenges stated in negative terms lead to distress and feelings of helplessness. Therefore, always frame your feedback in positive terms. Example: I love the presentation you did last week. It would be great to see that side of your personality more often.

Before you use constructive feedback, always ask yourself, To what extent is this person capable of fulfilling what I want? A follow up question is, Is my expectation realistic? Sometimes the criticism isn't justified if your expectations of others are unrealistic.

When you don't solve challenges, there is no forward movement.

Therefore, think about the behavior that does not move you one step closer to what you really want. Is that the behavior your criticism will bring out? If so, how can you reframe your opinion into a more positive statement that moves the other person to the needed behavior?

Granted, constructive feedback or criticism is rarely fun; however, it is necessary in order to grow. So whether you're giving or receiving feedback, always keep an open mind and a positive attitude. Only then will the criticism be a valuable feedback tool.

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<http://www.JoyceWeiss.com/wp>

and feel free to respond in the comment box.

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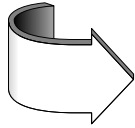
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West Branch Chamber Golf Outing

Dear Friend,

The West Branch Area Chamber of Commerce is hosting the 18th Annual Chamber golf outing at the West Branch Country Club. The event will take place on May 18, 2011.

I invite you to participate with the chamber through this tournament. All proceeds will go toward the gen-

eral operating fund. Only half of our operating budget comes from Chamber membership dues. Your help through fundraising like this is critical and much appreciated.

If you have any questions, please call (989) 345-2821. Happy Golfing!

– Christie Blackford

*Please indicate by checking any of the following choices of sponsorship:

A 4-person team, \$300 per team

A purchase of a hole for \$50. Your business name will be posted at the tee box.

A gift certificate or donated merchandise to be used as door prizes.

A limited number of Major sponsorships available at \$300.00.

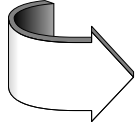
A limited number of Beverage Cart sponsorships available at \$100.00.

Business Name _____ Contact Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Gift Certificate Amount _____ Merchandise _____

Please mail to:
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422 West Houghton Ave
West Branch MI 48661



Calendar of Events!

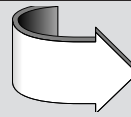
April

- 7 Ogemaw County Business and Community Expo at Ogemaw Heights High School, Kathy Adair 345-0692
- 9 Ogemaw County Humane Society's Pet Pictures 11-4 at the Ogemaw County Humane Society located on M-33 with Easter Bunny, Laura Dean 343-7387
- 9 Kirtland Center for the Performing Arts Presents Papa Doo Run Run 275-6777
- 16 Spring Art and Wine Walk Downtown West Branch. Enjoy an evening of art and wine while strolling the streets. Downtown Merchants Association, Tom Damoth 345-5100
- 16 Ogemaw County Humane Society's Pet Pictures 11-4 at the Ogemaw County Humane Society located on M-33 with Easter Bunny, Laura Dean 343-7387
- 17 Easter Egg Hunt 1pm Rose City Park. Rose City – Lupton Area Chamber 685-2936
- 19-30 Youth Art Show West Branch Creative Arts Association, Jeanne Oram 836-2932
- 19 Kirtland Center for the Performing Arts Presents Yellowstone – Travel Adventure 275-6777
- 21 Blast the Blues. Enjoy a Night of great food, talented local artists, and wonderful entertainment at Dean Arbour Ford of West Branch Tolfree Foundation, Beverly Bernard 343-3690

- 21-23 Pioneer Power Antique Tractor Club Swap Meet Open to the public to swap on a first come first serve basis, Sandra Bortle 473-4702
- 23 Easter Egg Hunt in Newman Park at Noon, Skidway Lake Chamber of Commerce 873-4150

May

- 5 River House, Inc. High Tea and Silent Auction. Kriss Goodrow 348-3169
- 7 Spring Fling and Dinner Dance at 6:00 pm, Skidway Lake Chamber of Commerce 873-4150
- 7 Kirtland Center for the Performing Arts Presents, Robin Spielberg 275-6777
- 7 Opening Day of Little League. Howie Hanft 312-0973
- 15 Open House At Camp Timbers 1-4pm Tour YMCA Camp Timbers, explore Piper Lake, see the climbing tower and state record-longest zipline.
- 20-23 Victoria Days Weekend Sidewalk Sales at Tanger Outlet Center Featuring 20 + stores for your convenience 345-2594
- 21 Kirtland Warbler Festival at Kirtland Community College 275-5000
- 27-30 20th Birthday Party and Memorial Weekend Sidewalk Sales at Tanger Outlet Center Featuring 20 + stores for your convenience 345-2594



New Members!

Ogemaw County Voice, Aaron Builders, St. Vincent DePaul, Ann's Hair Affair

Member News!

Hospice of Helping Hands

Hospice of Helping Hands is proud to announce the 2011 Hearts for Hospice Top Sellers:

Overall Top Selling Location

- McGregor's Country Store

Bars

- AuSable Inn
- Mio Saloon
- Rau's Tavern
- Rainbow Gardens
- Spikehorn Restaurant and Lounge
- Sportsman's Bar

Banks

- Central Michigan Federal Credit Union
- Firstbank
- First Federal of Northern Michigan
- Northland Area Federal Credit Union

To see pictures from the Hearts for Hospice campaign, check out our Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Hospice-of-Helping-Hands-Inc/137433262975041>

Thank you to all who sold hearts, bought hearts, and had a Heart for Hospice!

National Volunteer Week

April 10-16, 2011

Established in 1974, National Volunteer Week has provided recognition for those that do volunteer their time to help make their communities a better place. National Volunteer Week is also about inspiring and encouraging people to actively engage in their communities. It's about showing when people work together, in unison, we can achieve great things and make a difference.

National Volunteer Week is not only our moment in time to celebrate our volunteers, but to enable a nation to share ideas, practices, and stories, wherever they happen, thereby shaping a movement to re-imagine the notion of citizenship for the 21st century.

Hospice Advantage would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our hard-working and dedicated volunteers and to encourage everyone to join this effort and become a volunteer for the community.

Ogemaw County Literacy Council

Changing Lives Through Literacy

www.ogemawliteracy.org

February 16, 2011

Dear Teachers, Families, and Friends of Literacy:

The Ogemaw County Literacy Council has scheduled a tutor training class on March 26, 2011 at the West Branch Public Library from

9 a.m.-4 p.m. to promote family literacy within our community. We will be using the Barton Reading and Spelling System designed to improve reading, spelling, and writing skills of children, teenagers and adults who struggle due to dyslexia or other learning differences. The Barton System is Orton-Gillingham influenced and is supported by solid research.

Working in cooperation with Midland schools, the Literacy Council of Midland has been using the Barton System for several years. Their documented success rate continues to be far above early expectations and has resulted in a similar success for Ogemaw County!

Becky Manning, a Certified Instructor at the Literacy Council of Midland, will be training parents, volunteers, and participants who have a committed desire to help improve the spelling, reading, and writing skills of children, teenagers and/or adults.

If further information is needed or you have questions regarding the event, please contact the Ogemaw County Literacy Council at 989-345-3033 or info@ogemawliteracy.org.

Sincerely,

Noreen Connolly, Marsha Boyd, Greg DeMatio, Dan Stoneback, Jennifer Izvorski, Denis Fitzgerald, Robin Andress, Brandy Barber
Ogemaw County Literacy Council Board of Trustees

BARTON READING AND SPELLING SYSTEM TUTOR PROGRAM REGISTRATION

Saturday, March 26, 2011

9:00am to 4:00pm

Course fee is \$ 5.00 donation per person to help defray expenses.

Lunch will be provided.

Name: Phone: _____

Email: _____

Address: City: Zip: _____

Please send Registration form and course fee to:

Ogemaw County Literacy Council,

P.O. Box 753, West Branch, MI 48661

Make checks payable to: Ogemaw County Literacy Council

Kirtland announces new offerings in Grayling

GRAYLING – Kirtland Community College, in cooperation with the AuSable Artisan Village (AAV) Committee, has announced two new offerings which will begin in March.

The first will be a free "eCommerce Seminar" from 7-8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 15, at the Devereaux Memorial Library at 201 Plum St. in Grayling. There is no registration for this event, and the public is welcome to attend.

"This free 90-minute seminar features web developers, area business consultants, financial professionals and the computer science

con't on next page



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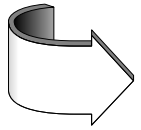


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Member News! cont'd

faculty of Kirtland Community College,” said Clay Horton, AAV liaison and computer instructor at Kirtland. “Real-life presentations will also feature opportunities for questions and answers about the past, present and future of eCommerce.

“Business people from the immediate area and artisans who are eager to lift their craft to the next level are encouraged to attend,” he added. “Even if you are just curious about eCommerce, this is the event for you.”

Just a day later, a new six-week course, “Beginning Knitting” will get under way at the AuSable River Nature Center (the former public library) at 100 S. James St. Cost for the non-credit offering is \$75, with needles and wool being included.

“Prior knitting experience isn’t required,” Horton said. “Some experience will help and this class can be a great transition back into knitting.”

Beginning Knitting is slated for 6-9 p.m. each Wednesday from March 16 to April 20. Pre-registration is required, as seating is limited to 16 persons.

Annually, about 3,200 students attend a variety of certificate and two-year degree programs at Kirtland’s four locations – the main campus near Roscommon and the Michigan Technical Education Center (M-TEC) in Gaylord, as well as sites in Grayling and West Branch – with the college’s service area including all or parts of Crawford, Oscoda, Ogemaw, Roscommon, Otsego, Kalkaska, Missaukee, Gladwin and Alcona counties, and the surrounding areas.

For more information or to register for Beginning Knitting, contact Karen Sessions via e-mail at karen.sessions@kirtland.edu or by calling 989-275-5000, extension 279.

Weinlander Fitzhugh

Weinlander Fitzhugh Welcomes New Team Member

Weinlander Fitzhugh, a certified public accounting and financial consulting firm, announces the addition of Corinna N. Scharf, CPA to their team of professionals.

Scharf joined the firm as a Junior Accountant in December 2010. She graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Professional Accountancy degree from Saginaw Valley State University in May 2009. While attending Saginaw Valley State University, Scharf was a member of Delta Sigma Pi, a professional business fraternity and the international honor society, Beta Gamma Sigma. Also, she has been a volunteer for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. Scharf is a member of American Institute of Certified

Public Accountants and the Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants.

As a member of Weinlander Fitzhugh’s team of professionals, Scharf provides accounting, auditing, and tax preparation services for a variety of clients. She has experience in all facets of accounting and specializes in internal auditing for a diverse array of clients including those in governmental, non-profit and manufacturing clients.

Weinlander Fitzhugh is a full-service accounting and financial consulting firm with locations in Bay City, Clare, Gladwin and West Branch. Currently, the firm has eight partners and 45 employees, offering in-depth and personal service to a wide range of businesses and organizations. With over sixty years of experience, WF has the expertise and insight to provide a complete range of services such as, accounting, auditing, tax planning and preparation, payroll preparation, management consulting, retirement plan administration, financial planning and information systems consulting.

Colon Cancer Awareness Month

Things to Do Now that I’m 50:

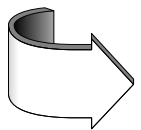
- Go skydiving
- Run a marathon
- Travel the globe
- Get tested for colon cancer

The American Cancer Society recommends that if you are 50 or older, to ask your doctor about getting tested for colon cancer. When colon cancer is found, in the earliest stages, the survival rate is 90 percent. However, symptoms (i.e. bleeding, cramping) may only appear in the later stages when treatment may be less effective.

You can log onto www.cancer.org/healthcheck to take the Great American Health Check, which will provide you with a list of recommended early detection tests based on age, gender, and family history. Use this test as way to discuss colon cancer with your doctor. For more information, contact the American Cancer Society at 1.800.ACS.2345.

Happy 40th Birthday to Ace Electric!

In the last 40 years, Ace Electric has serviced the area with plumbing, heating and electrical work! They were here before there was a building department, and just to name a few places that they have worked on: Tanger Outlet Center, Quality Inn, Super 8, Ponderosa, Surline and Rose City School! We are very glad to have you here!



First Annual Friendly Rival Community Food Drive Challenge

Houghton Lake vs. West Branch

Food collected March 7th through April 30th will stay in the community collected in.

The community with the most pieces wins the traveling trophy. The winner will be announced the first week of May. So drop off your non-perishable food items at any of these locations!

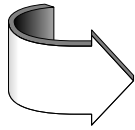
West Branch

- West Branch Chamber of Commerce
- Ogemaw Community & Business Expo
- Glen’s Market of West Branch
- Tanger Outlets
- Firstbank Main Branch
- City of West Branch – City Hall
- The Rollingstone Steakhouse & Grill

- R&J Screenprinting & Embroidery Inc.
- Morse Clark Furniture
- Primary Care at The Medical Arts Building (Old Hospital)

Houghton Lake

- Houghton Lake Chamber of Commerce
- Houghton Lake Expo
- Glen’s Market of Houghton Lake
- Chase Houghton Lake
- Chase Prudenville
- Dollar Daze
- Kronner’s Rx
- Chemical Bank
- Arnie’s Arts & Crafts
- Best Choice Market Place



Committee Reports

From the EDC:

Here is more information about economic gardening and what it is. Between the regional planning commission (EMCOG) and the consultant (Shepherd Advisors) and the EDC (us!) we have an opportunity to run this type of program in our county if the grant from USDA Rural Development is received.

Economic gardening? What's that?

By Lester Graham

When the governor gave his State of the State speech, I was standing on the crowded floor of the House of Representatives. Governor Rick Snyder outlined his plans to get Michigan back to work. We all listened as he said the Michigan Economic Development Corporation would lead the way.

"The MEDC will recalibrate its efforts and become a better partner with these regional groups to enhance economic gardening, talent enhancement, and support service to companies."

I was thrown by the phrase "economic gardening." Certainly, it conjures up some images: tending to needs of the economy, nurturing business, growing jobs. But, really, what does it mean?

To find out, I called up the guy who is most associated with 'economic gardening.' His name is Chris Gibbons and he's the Director of Business and Industry Affairs at the city of Littleton, Colorado, a suburb of Denver.

He took "economic gardening" from an academic exercise to creating jobs in his town. He says this is not "economic hunting," as in trying to lure companies... and it's not business retention... just trying to keep companies from leaving.

"Our focus is on entrepreneurs and growth. And that takes you down different roads in terms of the kinds of tools and the kinds of things that you do."

Gibbons says they target so-called "stage 2" companies, typically 10 to 100 employees and about \$1-million to \$50-million in sales that have the capacity and the intent to grow. Why those and not others? Because they create the jobs.

"Those 'Stage 2' companies, even though they're typically between 5 and 10-percent of the population, usually are generating around 30-35-percent of the total jobs that are out there."

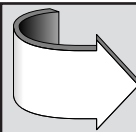
This economic gardening is not just tax breaks or government loans; Gibbons says they help with mapping out strategy, researching the competition, exploring potential markets, and helping find employees with the specialized skills a company

might need.

To do all that, an economic development agency gathers all kinds of databases and programs and resources that help companies find out where their challenges and opportunities are. And they do it fast. If they meet with a company in the morning, the expectation is they'll have something for them that afternoon, not the typical, "We'll get back to you in a week or two."

And it seems to work. Where "economic gardening" has been done correctly, the jobs have come. Although one economic

con't on next page



Current Members!

Thank You for Continuing to be a member of the West Branch Area Chamber of Commerce!

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Edward Jones

Serenity Home Health Care

Pioneer Pharmacy

Team Hodges

Oberdick Drafting and Design

Dr. Laura Prescott

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Timber Ghost Gardens

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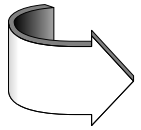


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Committee Reports cont'd

development expert familiar with economic gardening says it should not be pursued to the exclusion of other approaches.

But, because it's been such a success, the economic gardening model has been used by cities and regions around the country. Now states are picking it up. Michigan is one of nearly a dozen states looking at it or implementing economic gardening.

In Michigan, the guy who's going to be heading up the effort is Michael Finney. He's CEO of the state's Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

Finney says embracing economic gardening means a change in how his agency works with Michigan businesses.

"We were simply visiting companies and asking pretty simple questions or routine questions: 'Are things going well,' 'Is your business growing,' 'Thank you, very much. I'll see you in a year.' What we really need to do is we need to probe it deeper. We need to understand beyond if a business is growing or not. We need to understand where their opportunities are."

And they cannot do that from Lansing efficiently. So, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation will be working much more closely with the regional economic development groups around the state. Governor Snyder says he wants those state workers in the same offices as the local and regional people, getting to know local businesses better, finding out how they can help.

"So, economic gardening really takes it to another whole level where we really become very knowledgeable of a business' challenges and growth opportunities and we find creative ways to assist those businesses."

But before that happens, it appears Finney, his crew, and the Governor are going to have to get the rest of the state up to speed.

The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy at the University of Michigan regularly surveys local government leaders throughout the state. Tom Ivacko is one of the researchers who reports on the surveys.

"There is, I think, not a great understanding among Michigan local officials about what economic gardening is today. We did

ask whether or not local officials are providing support to existing businesses in terms of economic gardening and among all jurisdictions in the state, just over a quarter of these jurisdictions say they are doing something like this, providing support to existing local businesses."

But, that means 75-percent either never had heard of 'economic gardening' or they weren't using aspects of the approach.

Ivacko says it appears that at least some of the local government leaders see it as some kind of approach to business retention...

"The most common type of activities that these local officials report undertaking are more of the old-school type economic development activities, things like providing tax abatements. That's not a core activity in a pure sense of economic gardening."

Ivacko says a few local governments are using aspects of economic gardening, but it's not clear whether they actually realize they're engaged in that approach.

Mayors, city managers and county commissioners are going to be hearing a lot more about it in the very near future.

At the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Michael Finney says business leaders like the idea that the state of Michigan is planning to commit a lot of its resources to assist existing companies with growth.

"The message that we're getting back is that this concept of economic gardening is one that makes an awful lot of sense. Existing companies are enthusiastic about it. And it should help us grow companies that are already here."

Michael Finney says getting the state's economy back on its feet is going to be helped by quickly assisting certain existing businesses to get the information and the help they need to grow. Rather than every business or every regional economic development group having to invest in huge amounts of money for research material, the state will gather it, make sense of it, work with companies to see how it applies to them and if it all goes according to plan, economic gardening could produce jobs.

Visitors Bureau

Visitors Bureau is the promotion service for Ogemaw County. The Chamber office uses and provides others with a multitude of promotional tools and vehicles in the marketing of Ogemaw County to tourists, business representatives and dignitaries.

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Web site: www.wbacc.com

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President: Christie Blackford

Presorted Standard
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WEST BRANCH, MI
48661
PERMIT #30

Support Local Business

Buy Local

West Branch Area Chamber

***Actual Decal
is in full color.*

BUSINESS *After Hours*

April 14 - Office Central (changed due to
Blast the Blues)
May 19 - Ogemaw County Fairgrounds
June 16 - Towne Club

Free Loaners

Towing Available

West Branch Collision, Inc.

"Your No. 1 Unibody Specialist"

COMPLETE AUTO BODY CENTER



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2515 S. M-30
West Branch, MI 48661

989-345-7230