

WEST MICHIGAN

WOMAN

APRIL/MAY 2025

SPECIAL
SECTION:
AESTHETICS

Jenn Gavin

**PLEASANTLY
REVOLUTIONARY:**
Reshaping the Future
of Animal Behavior
and Training

YOUR CHILD HAS
COME OUT—NOW WHAT?
SHOWING SUPPORT AND
OFFERING UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

MICHIGAN OUTDOORS
—THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

HEALING FROM CHILDHOOD TRAUMA:
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BUILDING YOUR SPRING AND
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VOLUME 13, ISSUE 5

www.westmichiganwoman.com

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West Michigan Woman is published bimonthly by Serendipity Media, LLC; 535 Cascade West Parkway SE; Grand Rapids, MI 49546 and has periodical postage at Grand Rapids, MI, and additional mailing offices. Subscription information can be obtained through the above address, by calling 616-458-8371, or by logging on to www.serendipity-media.com

EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS and/or

query letters can be sent to

info@westmichiganwoman.com or

Attn: West Michigan Woman magazine;

535 Cascade West Parkway SE, Grand

Rapids, MI 49546. Submissions of

photographs, articles, and other material

is done at the risk of the sender, and

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes

to West Michigan Woman

c/o Serendipity Media, LLC; 535

Cascade West Parkway SE; Grand

Rapids, MI 49546.

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KASIE SMITH | *President & Publisher* | kasie@serendipity-media.com



At *West Michigan Woman*, our goal has always been (and will continue to be) to bring you topics that encourage learning, growth and thoughtfulness. In this issue, we feature small business owners, volunteers contributing to our community, and important issues that affect many—from family relationships to navigating early childhood trauma into adulthood.

Communities thrive when individuals support small business owners. For Jenn Gavin, CPDT-KA, FPPE, that meant combining her passion for training and helping dogs in need with her business prowess to create A Pleasant Dog (page 14). Like many business owners, Gavin looked for a service and couldn't find the help she needed. So, she did what many entrepreneurs do: Researched and filled the gap themselves. Now, over a decade later, Gavin is a renowned expert in her field and advocates for industry regulation, in addition to serving as a resource for other professionals all over the world.

While West Michigan is known for its generous spirit, the work of some can fall under the radar. For this reason, we're pleased to spotlight the 100th anniversary of the Junior League of Grand Rapids. One of the best kept secrets, the legacy of the JLGR extends far and wide! To read about the organizations they've helped get off the ground or the initiatives and services they've been able to fund, turn to page 28.

Passionate volunteers and experts are so valuable to our community because people face challenges and hardships every day. Whether it's learning how to best support your children when discussions on sexuality and gender identity arise (page 10) or healing from childhood trauma as an adult (page 8), the struggle is real for many. Having experts share their own journey and insight helps others learn how to confidently navigate perhaps uncharted topics. Thank you to all the experts who contributed to this issue!

Our next issue is dedicated to celebrating the individuals who are doing exactly this every day: our 2025 Brilliance Awards finalists and top honorees. If you haven't gotten your tickets yet for the 2025 Brilliance Awards on April 24 at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, be sure to visit westmichiganwoman.com and join us for this inspirational evening!

Kasie J. Smith

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HEALING FROM CHILDHOOD TRAUMA: YOU CAN REWRITE YOUR STORY

Your childhood may be long past, but its influence is reflected in your present—it shapes how you see the world and how you interact with others. Maybe you've noticed patterns you can't quite shake, like anxiety that won't settle. Or maybe you struggle with depth in relationships or find yourself overwhelmed because of your tendency to overachieve (or overextend).

All of these—and much more—can be related to childhood experiences. A groundbreaking study on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) revealed that early trauma can impact everything from mental health to chronic illness. Childhood adversity leaves a lasting imprint, not just emotionally but physically, too.

“Trauma changes who you are inside,” said Patty Wagenhofer, LMSW, a therapist at Unity Counseling in Grand Rapids. “But it’s not about ‘what’s wrong with you.’ It’s about *what happened to you.*”

The good news is that you have the power to change. As a trauma survivor herself, Wagenhofer offers hope to others. “You can heal, she said. “You can experience relief, happiness and joy.”

What Are ACEs?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) refer to 10 specific types of childhood adversity, categorized into abuse, neglect and household dysfunction. These include physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; neglect; and growing up with caregiver-related challenges like substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence or incarceration.

But trauma isn't limited to these categories.

“It’s important to examine past or current stressors that could be affecting your overall health and daily functioning,” said Wagenhofer. “Typically, there’s a connection.”

THE LASTING IMPACT OF ACEs

Childhood trauma increases the risk of:

- » *Alcohol and drug abuse, which raises the likelihood of smoking*
- » *Depression and anxiety*
- » *A sedentary lifestyle, contributing to obesity*
- » *Employment challenges*
- » *Chronic health issues, including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, GI problems, sleep disturbances, and strokes*
- » *Contracting an STD/STI*
- » *Suicide attempts*

Recognizing the Effects of ACEs

The landmark ACEs study found that individuals with a score of four or more were:

- » 12 times more likely to attempt suicide.
- » 7 times more likely to develop alcohol dependence.
- » 10 times more likely to use intravenous drugs.
- » At significantly higher risk for anxiety, depression and chronic illness.

Beyond these risks, ongoing research in neuroscience and epigenetics shows that childhood trauma can have generational effects. It's linked to chronic stress, difficulty maintaining healthy relationships, and physical health issues like heart disease, sleep disturbances and stroke.

Trauma manifests differently for everyone. Some struggle with trust or self-worth, while others develop perfectionism, people-pleasing tendencies or a persistent fear of failure. Even experiences like childhood bullying—often dismissed—can leave deep emotional scars.

“Bullying can have lasting effects well into adulthood,” Wagenhofer noted. “If you're struggling, you may still carry the child who was scared and scarred. That's why people often turn to numbing behaviors.”

Despite these challenges, healing is attainable.

“It's truly possible to overcome and resolve your trauma,” reassured Wagenhofer.

Steps Toward Healing

“People can heal through various pathways,” Wagenhofer said. “Therapy is one avenue, but there are other things that people can do.” Self-care practices like yoga or running can help, as can fostering meaningful connections and building a strong support system. Making healthy lifestyle choices can also play a role.

For those who choose therapy, working with a trauma-informed professional can help process painful experiences and develop healthier coping strategies.

“One of the most valuable aspects of therapy is getting thoughts out of your head and shifting your perspective,” Wagenhofer explained. “That's important because shifting perspective can quiet the noise in your mind, allowing you to move forward.”

Writing or confiding in a trusted friend can offer similar relief.

Many find that trauma-focused therapies—such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) or somatic therapy—help them reprocess painful memories and build healthier coping mechanisms.

“It's about reframing the experience so it no longer has power over you,” Wagenhofer said.

Moving Toward a Brighter Future

As you begin your journey, keep in mind that healing isn't linear. It will take time, but by prioritizing your well-being and using the tools available, you have the power to create a healthier emotional future.

“The most important takeaway,” Wagenhofer stressed, “is that healing is possible. You can move forward. You can find meaning and purpose.” **WMW**

“...it's not about
'what's wrong with you.'
It's about what
happened to you.”

FEATURED IN THIS ARTICLE:



PATTY WAGENHOFER, LMSW

Therapist, Unity Counseling

© Carbon Stories

LOOKING FOR A THERAPIST?

The *Psychology Today* website is a great place to start. Many therapists offer free 15-minute consultations to help you find the right fit.



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KIRSETIN K. MORELLO is a Michigan-based author, speaker, writer, travel-lover, wife and grateful mom of three boys. Read more about her at www.KirsetinMorello.com.



YOUR CHILD HAS COME OUT —NOW WHAT? **SHOWING SUPPORT AND OFFERING UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**

It's critical to offer understanding, support and unconditional love to your child if they choose to come out to you. That experience for Ollie Robison (xe/he/they), Healthcare Coordinator, Grand Rapids Pride Center, was a long and complex one, coming out multiple times in different ways to the same people.

"I came out as a lesbian in high school after I was outed and was facing anti-gay violence as a result," Robison shared. "I was 15 years old and was terrified, and actually passed out as soon as I said the words, 'Mom, I'm gay.'"

Robison then came out again in their mid-twenties after being married to a cisgender man for four years as a way to hide their sexuality, and once more in their mid-thirties as transgender and two-spirit. Each time, Robison experienced the fear of losing everything, just in different ways.

"I was terrified again of losing my children, my family ... everyone," Robison

recalled. "I came from a fairly conservative background and the two people who had been my champions of unconditional love had passed away by this time."

Unfortunately, Robison wasn't met with open arms from everyone in their life upon coming out.

"My mom has said a lot of very hurtful things over the course of my life as a result of me being queer," said Robison, who has since lost contact with their mother. "She told me that I'm unlovable, that I'm mentally ill, that I'm a bad parent, that I'm a test from God, and that she doesn't know what she did to deserve me—in the bad way. My dad was unsurprised each time I came out, and defended me to my mom when he was home and she was being particularly spiteful. He was a buffer of sorts, which was helpful and kind."

Robison refuses to be anything other than visibly and publicly out as an unapologetic queer person, and still

regularly speaks with their father today.

"It's critically important for all households to have open dialogue about sexuality and gender identity alongside medically accurate and scientifically accurate sex education," Robison said, noting this open dialogue is important to raising kids who are confident and can ask questions in a safe environment. "You don't know if your kid is queer until they tell you they are, so having that open dialogue ahead of time allows them the safety of knowing that they're going to be accepted if they are."

The first three things Robison suggests doing if your child comes out to you: **Take a breath. Hug your child. Love your child wholly and unapologetically. From there, seek external support.**

"Seek an online and in-person support space to ask all of the uncomfortable questions," Robison suggested. "Get yourself into therapy to fix *your* shock, uncertainty and fears. Do your best *not* to show the parts

that are hard for you to your child. That makes it harder on them and makes them feel less supported and less loved.”

Mistakenly, parents often seek a source of blame or a “why” when their child comes out.

“While seemingly benign, this delivers a message that there’s something wrong with your child,” Robison said. “Another common mistake is turning the dialogue into ways this impacts the parent or family. It sends the message that there’s something shameful that needs to be hidden.”

Ultimately, Robison emphasized the importance of being *that* person for your child—the one who will fight for their rights and defend them against hateful people ... even if those people are family.

“Loving someone is an action,” Robison said. “I remember when my mom told me she was in therapy to ‘learn how to love me’ and how badly that hurt.

“Being queer isn’t a bad thing. It’s not a shameful thing. It’s a beautiful thing, and to be a parent to such a wonderful, beautiful part of the diaspora that being queer encompasses should be a source of pride. Your child is strong, resilient and beautiful just as they are. Give them grace, and give yourself a little grace, too.” **WMW**

Robison recommends doing your due diligence to build your own support network, and advises against going through your child to find resources unless they approach you directly with them.

Some local options:

- » *The Grand Rapids Pride Center* | grpride.org
- » *Out On The Lakeshore* | outonthelakeshore.org
- » *OutFront Kalamazoo* | outfrontkzoo.org
- » *PFLAG* | pflag.org/meetings



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BUILDING YOUR SPRING AND SUMMER CAPSULE WARDROBE



Winter is behind us and we're ready to ditch the bulky sweaters, heavy boots and puffy coats for lighter, brighter and fresher styles. Rather than mindlessly buying up a hoard of trendy items, Kathryn Snow of Style Me Ada—an expert personal stylist and shopper—walks us through building a capsule wardrobe that will keep you feeling confident and stylish all spring and summer.

The key to a capsule wardrobe? Keeping versatility top of mind.

“I find that many of my clients assume that in order to have a capsule wardrobe, you have to spend a lot of money; however, in my opinion, the beauty of a capsule wardrobe is found in its simplicity,” Snow explained. “The most important thing when discerning key pieces for a capsule wardrobe is the versatility (not the price point) of each piece and the amount of heavy-lifting that a single item does for an entire look.”

PAS-TELL US MORE!

If you're gravitating toward pinks lately, you wouldn't be alone. According to Snow, it's the color of the season.

"Soft pastels such as pink, powder blue and butter yellow are everywhere," Snow shared. "The red-orange combo, lilac, and navy continue to trend, too. My favorite thing to do with colors like these is to present them in unexpected ways. For example, a bright pink pair of tailored pants or baby blue pumps to wear to work, or a pink hat to wear instead of the usual straw or neutral colorway."

Wearing one item with a bold pattern, Snow said, is a simple way to make your entire look more intentional.

"This year, I'm seeing year-round gingham and plaids, as well as lots of polka dots and stripes—all of which can be really fun roadmap pieces in a capsule wardrobe."

TOP TRENDS

From standout accessories to specific textures and fabrics, Snow shared her top must-have items to consider adding to your capsule wardrobe for the warmer months:

• **Yacht Chic:** "This is what I'm calling all the stripes, seashell earrings and necklaces, tailored shorts and boat shoes I've been seeing everywhere."

• **Charm Necklaces:** "They can skew young, but when done the right way, it's a fun way to express something personal via your jewelry. For more mature women, such as myself, I'm loving a few beautiful charms on a longer chain, layered with additional chains that are either very simple or have a little textural interest."

• **Feminine Tailoring:** "Choose pastel colors and floral unstructured blazers, along with materials like satin and silk, in addition to cinched blazers and corsets."

Snow also notes this season leans on romantic textures such as lace, ruffles and sheer elements, complemented by elegant footwear such as ballet flats and kitten heels (which is great news for those of us who've never recovered from wearing six-inch stilettos to the club in 2010).

SAVE OR SPLURGE?

When deciding what pieces are worth investing in, Snow suggests looking at accessories.

"I always prioritize timeless accessories, such as a great pair of shoes, a (quiet) luxury bag, jewelry or a belt," she said. "I personally also classify outerwear as an accessory, and this includes blazers. Depending on the color or fabric of an item, the price point may need to be elevated to ensure that fabrications, buttons, and seams look elegant."

So, savings? Basically everything else.

"You want to maximize the look, minimize the cost," Snow said. "I'm not in the business of spending clients' money just to spend it. Denim, basic tees, etc. can all now be found at a variety of price points. And fashion is cycling so fast these days, you don't need to spend a ton on pieces worn for just a season or two."

Ultimately, you should feel comfortable and confident in your chosen clothing.

"Remember, a capsule wardrobe isn't about having a super limited closet; it's about owning clothes that make getting dressed easy and still reflect your personal style." **WMW**



PLEASANTLY REVOLUTIONARY:



HOW JENN GAVIN IS RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF ANIMAL BEHAVIOR AND TRAINING

Jenn Gavin, CPDT-KA, FPPE, has always known that she wanted to work with dogs. After all, she's been training and rehoming them in various capacities for over 30 years. But after growing up in Midland and attending Hope College, Gavin worked first as a paralegal before ultimately pursuing her true passion—a decision sparked by wanting more flexibility to care for her children and the desire to help owners and their pets with challenging behaviors.

In 2014, Gavin's dream came to life upon founding A Pleasant Dog in Grand Rapids, where she's owner and head trainer. It's here that Gavin and her team of trained experts welcome the community through virtual and in-person offerings including your puppy's first kindergarten class, camps, advanced agility training, fun canine freestyle dance classes, fear-free grooming, and behavior consulting for dogs, cats and horses. It's an endeavor that has only continued to grow over the years, both in client base and with a move to a larger facility.

"The first dog I had as an adult was reactive to other dogs and humans, and when I went looking for help, I couldn't find anybody to help," Gavin recalled, noting the loneliness that accompanied that experience. "Many people who have reactive dogs feel unsupported, so a big part of our mission at A Pleasant Dog is to ensure that people who have dogs with these kinds of reactive or fearfully aggressive behaviors have the important ability to manage their dogs safely and to feel supported in their training."

Gavin herself has become an expert helping dogs with anxiety and aggression, so much so that she's developed an internationally renowned method for treating separation anxiety and associated disorders which has been the subject of several scholarly studies. She's also presented her research at international conferences including the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists' annual Veterinary Behavior Symposium, authored a book on the subject, and is an animal behavior resource for training and veterinary partners in West Michigan and beyond.

"This is kind of a dream facility, and we're actually visited by trainers, veterinarians and veterinary behaviorists from all over the world," Gavin shared. "We see some of the toughest behaviors in our state, and we are the number one facility West Michigan veterinarians refer to for training and behavior. I'm very proud of that and feel so honored."

Gavin is passionate about sharing how important it is that when working with animals even with aggressive or reactive behaviors, that long outdated approaches and methods (including dominance theory, physical and verbal correction, choke collars and electric fences) aren't accepted as effective, and that science-backed positive reinforcement should be the norm instead.

"Our industry is completely unregulated. You need a license to prepare food for people, to cut hair. You don't need a license to tell people how to manage dogs, who are animals with steak knives in their mouths,"

*Photo © Kelly Braman Photography
Makeup © Jerry Kragt, Aura Beauty Bar
Hair © Mary Thompson, Stylist, Design 1 Salon Spa Plainfield*

Gavin said, adding that it isn't a question of differing opinions when it comes to appropriate training methods. "The science has been decided and proven time and time again that positive reinforcement is the only humane way to train animals. It's why we use it with zoo and marine mammals, and even companion animals and humans. But there's so much confusion in our industry, and pet guardians are really at a loss to know who to turn to and who to believe."

The confusion often extends to veterinary partners, groomers and other industry trainers, as well—something Gavin is chipping away at helping to change.

"I am so fortunate to be surrounded by an incredible team of trainers, behavior consultants, and groomers, and the staff that supports us," Gavin shared. "Since having this [Knapp St] building in particular, we've really been very successful in building a community of dogs who started out as reactive—and may always have some big feelings about other dogs or people—but who have been able, through practice, to work toward being in carefully managed social environments, and that has been huge for the quality of life of so many people and their dogs."

One of the greatest lessons Gavin has garnered in her journey so far? There's still so much to learn.

"I feel like almost every day is a 'pinch me' moment; it's just incredible to be able to do a job that I love so much that also has such a **significant and positive impact on not only people and their pets, but the community around them.**"



“I have a good and thorough knowledge of the topics that I know, but there’s so much more to be discovered and understood,” Gavin said. “That’s why we keep our skills sharp, do continuing education, and require certifications of our trainers and staff.”

Gavin is especially proud that her facility is among the few in the country which practices in close conjunction with a board-certified veterinary behaviorist (Dr. Jill Sackman, DACVB, DACVS), helping assist owners whose dog’s behavior stems from a mental health issue and beyond simple disobedience.

“It’s funny to think about when I started this little solo business out of my home, and was thinking, ‘If I could just see three or four cases a week, that would be great,’ and all of a sudden, you have behaviorists and trainers coming from Australia, Italy and all over the U.S. to shadow and learn from you,” Gavin shared. “I feel like almost every day is a ‘pinch me’ moment; it’s just incredible to be able to do a job that I love so much that also has such a significant and positive impact on not only people and their pets, but the community around them. It’s really a dream come true.”

Looking to the future, Gavin is far from slowing down.

“My hope for A Pleasant Dog is that we can continue to provide this high standard of training, behavior consulting, and grooming in our community and beyond for as long as possible,” she said. “And, especially in this day and age, I’m hopeful we can continue to foster a spirit of community instead of competition in the animal care industry in West Michigan.”

Gavin, who describes herself as extremely shy and is a self-diagnosed autistic person, loves spending time on Lake Michigan’s sandy shorelines with her husband and two boys, is an avid historic preservationist, and enjoys reading, gardening, traveling to national parks and training her own two dogs, Primrose and Laddie. **WMW**



Photo © Amy Carroll Photography

“The number one thing I want people to know: There is help for dogs, cats, and horses who fight, bite or panic. **They do not have to suffer in silence.**”

– Jenn Gavin



A Pleasant Dog | apleasantdog.com

“**Pleasantly Independent: A Handbook for Separation Anxiety in Dogs**” by Jenn Gavin | etsy.com/shop/APleasantDog

Aesthetics



ADJUSTING YOUR SKINCARE FOR WARMER WEATHER

As the weather warms and we begin to enjoy all that the spring and summer seasons bring, our skincare routines also could use a change. From switching to lighter formulas to prioritizing sun protection and antioxidants, here's how to keep your skin healthy, glowing and balanced all season long.

According to Haley Outcalt, FNP-C, MSN, BSN, a board certified family nurse practitioner specializing in aesthetic and functional medicine and founder of Aesthetic Evolution, there are a number of ways we can modify our routines as we transition out of the colder months.

"I would transition to a lighter moisturizer such as Skinbetter Science's Trio Rebalancing Moisture Treatment or their Hydration Boosting Cream," Outcalt suggested. "I would also make sure I'm using a high-quality vitamin c for antioxidant protection such as Skinbetter's Alto Advanced Defense and Repair Serum or ELEVAI's Efinity serum."

INGREDIENTS MATTER

Outcalt emphasized the importance of specific ingredients as you look to refresh your skin from the harsh winter months.

"Antioxidants decrease sun damage, protect against environmental toxins, and increase collagen production," Outcalt said.

“And, as always, you need to wear a daily SPF above 40.”

For sun protection, she recommends Colorscience’s Total Protection Face Shield Flex or Glow SPF 50—a tinted moisturizer with an airbrushed coverage.

“Another favorite is Skinbetter’s easy to use SPF compacts, which come with either a tinted or matte finish,” Outcalt shared, noting she specifically loves the matte finish/clear coat as a primer or for when she’s exercising outdoors.

Outcalt also enjoys using a CO2LIFT Carboxy Gel Mask for deep hydration and increased blood flow.

“The glow you get is amazing and can really boost the dry skin struggles of winter and get your skin spring ready.”



**HALEY OUTCALT,
FNP-C, MSN, BSN**

*Founder, Aesthetic
Evolution*

Photo by Layla Trubec

TREAT YOURSELF WITH SOME TREATMENTS

Beyond adjusting your skincare routine, Outcalt also recommends some treatments which can set the foundation for healthy and glowing skin throughout the season.

“To reset the skin after winter, I always recommend using medical-grade products and getting a routine dermaplane session where we remove dry and dead skin cells,” she advised. “Before summer arrives, get your chemical peels and SkinPen microneedling sessions in because it’s harder to stay out of the sun for recovery. And let’s face it, we wait so long to finally be in the sun! Just make sure to always wear SPF to protect your investments.”



CONSIDERATIONS WITH INCREASED HEAT AND HUMIDITY

“To prevent clogged pores and breakouts during humidity, always double cleanse daily; I love Skinbetter Science Cleansing Gel and Colorescience Barrier Pro I-Step Cleanser,” said Outcalt, who also suggests using an Alpharet Peel Pad to add extra exfoliation for oilier skin types and acne-prone skin. “The one product you need year-round is Alpharet Overnight Cream, a retinoid, glycolic acid combination that increases skin cell turnover and collagen, and improves fine lines, texture, tone and pore size. It’s my OG anti-aging product.”

If you’re planning to spend time outside, opt for lightweight products that still pack a punch. Outcalt recommends incorporating at least an antioxidant, an Eventone cream to help decrease pigmentation, and of course, an SPF. Just remember to reapply your chosen sunscreen every two hours for extended exposure times.

Remember: Taking care of your skin also means taking care of your whole self; something Outcalt refers to as functional aesthetics.

“I believe skin health is multifactorial; my approach is addressing both internal and external factors,” she said. “We can use amazing high-quality products on the outside, but we need to take care of the internal aging factors. Gut health, hydration, a healthy diet, and exercise all improve the quality and function of our skin.”

Remember: **Taking care of your skin also means taking care of your whole self.**

WHAT'S NEW IN AESTHETICS AND PLASTIC SURGERY?

Advancements in aesthetics and plastic surgery are ever evolving, from small, nonsurgical tweaks to more aggressive surgical procedures and everything in between. We caught up with Dr. Bradley Bengtson, FACS, Founder and CEO of Bengtson Center for Aesthetics and Plastic Surgery, to learn what he's seeing in the industry at the moment.

Dr. Bengtson explained that trends in aesthetics and plastic surgery have been changing over time, along with the demographic of who is getting these procedures done.

“For the past 30 years, we’ve always approached plastic surgery as natural, proportional and restored; not over-operated, overdone, over-filled or over-tightened,” Dr. Bengtson said of his practice, which consistently integrates new surgical devices and technologies into their offerings. “The [greater] market is now coming to the realization that this is the direction they should go.”

While younger patients are indeed opting for more minimally invasive procedures (some even traveling over 250 miles to visit the Bengtson Center), there’s one overall desired outcome Dr. Bengtson has seen: Plastic surgery that’s so good, people can’t tell you’ve had anything done.

“There is also a trend toward non-surgical solutions such as non-surgical skin tightening and skin resurfacing, along with less-aggressive surgery and trends toward less surgery earlier, such as ‘mini’ face-lifts in younger patients, etc.,” Dr. Bengtson explained, noting the increase of new companies and products focusing on offerings specifically catering to this trend.

The most common patient requests Dr. Bengtson sees in his practice these days include nonsurgical treatments like muscle relaxers, fillers, laser treatments, and new skin tightening procedures; hair restoration treatments through individual follicle transfers, topicals, nutritional supplements, and light therapy; and weight optimization. He also commonly sees patients seeking surgical procedures like breast augmentation and lifting; body contouring such as tummy tucks and liposuction; and facial procedures like face- and neck-lifts and eyelid surgery.

“There is also a brand-new implant on the market (MOTIVA) that just got FDA approval,” Dr. Bengtson shared, noting that it’s the first implant to gain approval in many years and has some differences from other existing implants. “AI (artificial intelligence) will also continue to impact medicine and surgery—to what degree we do not know.”

Safety, of course, is something to be considered when looking at the possibility of pursuing any aesthetic treatment or plastic surgery procedure. It’s something Dr. Bengtson and his team shared as their top priority, with safety training for nurses and surgeons being a constant.

“We only purchase technology and products that are safe and have broad safety treatment bandwidths that improve outcomes and minimize complications,” he said. “We get bombarded every week with new technologies and products and we believe our role is to determine what is safe, real and effective.”

Ultimately, the decision to pursue an aesthetic or plastic surgery procedure is deeply personal. It’s important to remember that every individual has their own reasons for the specific route they choose to take. Plastic surgery can be absolutely life changing for those who may be seeking restoration or to build confidence that ultimately leads to an improved quality of life.

If you’re curious about a treatment or procedure, research accredited providers and surgeons and schedule a consultation so you can ask all the questions you have. It’s also wise to connect with others who’ve had the same or similar procedure to learn from their experience (online groups are a great place to start). [WMW](#)



**DR. BRADLEY
BENGTSON, FACS**

*Founder & CEO, Bengtson
Center for Aesthetics and
Plastic Surgery*

*Photo by Mitch Ranger
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Comerica Bank

Jennifer Baez-Taveras, Tiffany Bartrum, Kym Brown, Renee Kuizema & Amy McDonald

Fresh off celebrating its 175th anniversary in 2024, Comerica Bank's proud history includes a deep and passionate commitment to serving Michigan longer than any other bank with a continuous presence dating back to 1849.

Comerica also has a bold vision for the bank's future, built on lasting relationships that empower people and businesses to succeed.

Today, Comerica operates one of the largest banking networks in the state, and at the forefront of building those relationships throughout Michigan are banking center managers, including Grand Rapids area leaders: Jennifer Baez-Taveras, Tiffany Bartrum, Kym Brown, Renee Kuizema and Amy McDonald.

"All five outstanding women guide their teams to become trusted resources for our customers in West Michigan," said Debra Hanes, Comerica Bank Senior Vice President and Retail Regional Director. "They deliver on providing an exceptional customer experience and strive for excellence in meeting our customers' needs while driving growth."

They are raising expectations of what a bank can be and exemplify Comerica's commitment to helping customers and communities be successful.

Photo ©
Arrae Photography



Miller Johnson

Women's Initiative Network (WIN)

Miller Johnson's **Women's Initiative Network (WIN)** supports and empowers women in all aspects and stages of their careers.

Through **WIN**, we foster an inclusive environment, empowering women to excel, advance, and become leaders in the legal profession.

Our women are invested in our firm culture and one another.

- » **WIN Connects** pairs mentors to build authentic relationships and address vital topics.
- » **WIN Retreats** deepen connections and discusses career issues.
- » **WIN Workshops** feature coaching on client, career, and collaborative progress.

We prioritize recruiting, retaining, and advancing women, offering flexible success definitions to match individual lifestyles and goals.

Our "Women Supporting Women Initiative" partners with organizations such as Inforum Michigan, GROW, Junior League of Grand Rapids, and the Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan Council.

These commitments enhance our diverse, inclusive legal teams and drive innovative client service. **Our goal is to attract and develop client relationships that support successful women.**



“We
prioritize
recruiting,
retaining
and
advancing
women...”

Each MJ investment supports this goal. Learn more: millerjohnson.com/win



DEMYSTIFYING STOCKS: WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT AND HOW TO GET STARTED

Investing through stocks, as complex as it can seem, doesn't have to be intimidating. In fact, building your investments through stocks comes with incredible potential. Deb Moon, ABFPTM, ADPATM, Financial Advisor, Edward Jones, told us more.

Before you begin investing in stocks, pinpoint your goals and motivations.

"What matters most to you? It's important that your investments are based on your needs, wants and wishes," Moon said. "Emergency savings, meeting monthly budget needs, saving for vacations or education, health care, caring for aging parents and planning for retirement are just a few of the goals to consider. Working with a financial advisor can help you get your thoughts in order and create a path to partner with you in setting attainable goals for allocating your money."

Many women also cite intimidation as a barrier to entry in this type of investing, though it doesn't have to be that way.

"Everyone wants to be in the right place at the right time, but that's easier said

than done—especially when it comes to your investments," Moon said. "You may think you're being cautious or strategic, like switching lanes at the grocery store to move through the line faster. However, understanding your priorities and financial goals, weighing your comfort with investment risk and how long you want to invest for are great starting points."

According to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, stocks are defined as a type of security that gives stockholders a share of ownership in a company, and are also called equities. Moon explains that stock owners are usually entitled to receive dividends and vote on important company matters, with common stocks usually being purchased for their appreciation potential and possible dividend income.

"Stocks have a long track record of providing higher returns than bonds or cash alternatives," Moon explained, noting that many companies pay dividends on a regular basis, most often quarterly. "Dividends can be used to supplement your income or may be reinvested to buy additional shares.

Stocks that increase their dividends on a regular basis give you a pay raise to help balance the higher costs of living over time."

When you invest in stocks or stock mutual funds, Moon explains, you may experience more market volatility than more income-oriented investments, such as bonds or bond mutual funds, but that they can provide opportunities for higher returns.

"Stock prices can rise and fall for any number of reasons—lower than expected earnings, a change in management, changes in consumer tastes, and so on," she said. "Although the historical trend for stocks has been positive, there will always be periods when prices are down. One way to help defend against this volatility is to hold stocks for the long term, rather than constantly buying and selling, and to own a mix of stocks from different industries and even different countries."

According to Moon, identifying stocks to begin your investment journey starts with finding quality companies.

"Investing in quality companies at attractive prices is the best way for

individual investors to build and acquire stock ownership over the long haul,” she advised. “Quality companies share most, if not all, of the following characteristics: experienced management teams, a leadership position within its industry, a strong cash flow and a solid balance sheet.”

Moon recommends looking for consistent growth in sales and earnings, and notes that a company which regularly pays a dividend and increases it over time tends to have a strong business model. Just remember: Dividends can be reduced or eliminated at any time, without warning.

Three of the most common investment mistakes Moon sees investors make include: Keeping money on the sidelines, reacting to market predictions and switching investments based on past performance.

“When investing, we recommend keeping the following in mind: Stock market declines

are common, occur without warning and end unexpectedly. But they can also present opportunities for long-term investors to buy quality stocks,” Moon shared, adding that you should avoid jumping into or out of the stock market. “We believe investing is about *time* in the market rather than *timing* the market.”

With women being responsible for 85% of all household spending decisions, they’re rewriting the rules of financial independence and embracing their journey on their own terms. Working with a financial advisor could be helpful in the process.

“We recommend finding an advisor who listens and understands your personal story and intricate details of your personal life, who brainstorms with you, who checks in with you—not just about your finances but also about your life events—and bases recommendations and guidance on your short- and long-term goals.” **WMW**



**DEB MOON,
ABFPTM, ADPATM**

Financial Advisor,
Edward Jones

Photo © Deb Moon



2025 Forbes “Top Women Wealth Advisors Best-in-State” list – Michigan

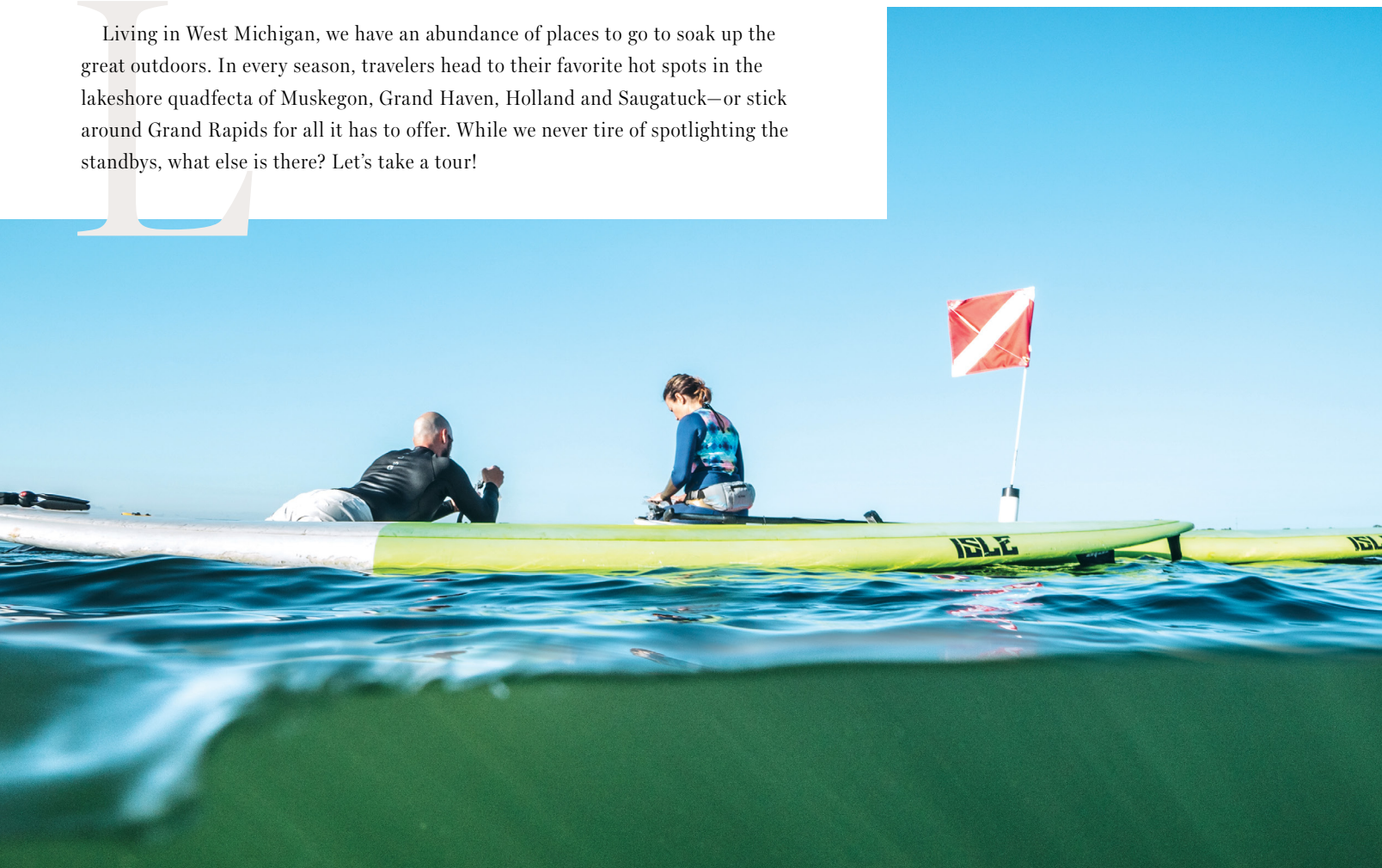
Kimberly L. Martin

Senior Vice President
Senior Resident Director
Muskegon, MI



MICHIGAN OUTDOORS —THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT!

Living in West Michigan, we have an abundance of places to go to soak up the great outdoors. In every season, travelers head to their favorite hot spots in the lakeshore quadfecta of Muskegon, Grand Haven, Holland and Saugatuck—or stick around Grand Rapids for all it has to offer. While we never tire of spotlighting the standbys, what else is there? Let's take a tour!



GO FOR THE DAY

If you've ever had a Disney princess fantasy, then **Kensington Metropark** in Milford is your setting. What's special about this park is that the bird population has become accustomed to humans and, if you hold out raw peanuts or sunflower seeds, they will land in your hand to feed. It's truly magical, and with an accompanying hike around picturesque Kent Lake, it's an unforgettable way to spend an afternoon.

In a different direction to the east side of the state is Midland's **Dow Gardens**. Spanning 110 acres, it showcases an astonishing array of annual and perennial flowers, starting roughly in mid-May with tulips and other colorful early blooms. There are bridges and water features throughout, and also on site is Whiting Forest, with its 1,400-foot-long canopy walk set amid tall pines. It's truly a different place month to month, making any time the right time to make the trip.



Thunder Bay Shipwrecks Tour, Alpena. Photo © Pure Michigan

Ann Arbor. Photo © Michigan Photography - Matthaeu Botanical Gardens

Eben Ice Caves. Photo © Bonnie Beckwith

Ocqueoc Falls. Photo © Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Also worth hopping on the highway headed eastbound are **Matthaeu Botanical Gardens** and **Nichols Arboretum** in Ann Arbor. Matthaeu blends numerous themed outdoor gardens with several different trails for walking, hiking, cycling and exploring nature. The nearby Arboretum or “The Arb” offers an homage to different landscapes, taking you through valleys, fields, glades and glens. You could also linger longer at **Gallup Park** which boasts activities such as fishing, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boating, row boating and more!

MAKE IT A WEEKEND

If the mention of watersports piques your interest, then you’ll want to check out **Chain of Lakes Water Trail** in northern Michigan. With 12 lakes and interconnected rivers making up a 100-plus-mile flatwater system, it has 84 launch points and the option to bring your own gear or rent from a participating outfitter. There’s also plenty to do in the surrounding communities, especially Elk Rapids for outdoor enthusiasts.



A sometimes overlooked spot that has distinct winter and warm weather offerings is **Cadillac**. Did you know? It has nine golf courses within 20 minutes of downtown! Caberfae is a popular option for teeing off, and it’s also a beloved skiing destination. And, new as of 2024 is the ORV/OHV scenic ride in Manistee National Forest, open from April through November. Cadillac is also the end point of the 92-mile White Pine Trail that starts in Comstock Park.

Always at the top of the “must” list for outdoor fun is **Ludington**, with its miles upon miles of Lake Michigan shoreline (and beaches)! Plus, this summer, visitors can fully enjoy Ludington State Park when it reopens after completed infrastructure projects. In addition to hiking trails and three campgrounds, the park also has a four-mile canoe trail. Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area and Lake Michigan Recreation Area are other draws to the area, as are fishing and paddling on the 66-mile Pere Marquette River.

STAY A LITTLE LONGER

While definitely hyper-seasonal, **Eben Ice Caves** in the U.P. just outside of Marquette is a sight to behold—and a temptress that calls travelers across the bridge in the brisk months. These spectacular formations are created by melting snow that freezes as it flows over cliff edges, usually occurring between December and March. More for the adventurer who doesn’t mind bundling up, clipping on some cleats, and taking a little trek around, the photo ops alone merit a trip.

Also kind of a timing thing, there’s **Alpena**, where fascinating shipwreck tours on Lake Huron begin in early May. They do run through early October, so it’s not too small a window of opportunity! Alpena Shipwreck Tours will take you on a glass-bottom boat cruise through Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, often called “shipwreck alley.” Or, depending on temps, shallow wrecks can be viewed by diving or paddling. And, don’t leave the region without peeping Ocqueoc Falls and having a splash in its rushing waters.

Close enough for a day trip, but interesting enough for an extended one, **South Haven** brings together beach bumming, sand dune climbing, fishing charters and horseback riding—plus golf and watersports. In winter, skiing, snowboarding, and snowmobiling take center stage, making it a “haven,” you might say ... no matter the month! **WMW**



CONTRIBUTOR

ALLISON KAY BANNISTER has been a West Michigan resident since 1987 and a professional writer since 2002. A GVSU alumna, she launched her own freelance writing business in 2017. Allison is a cookie connoisseur, word nerd, aspiring gardener, and metastatic breast cancer thriver who loves traveling in Michigan and beyond, and enjoys art, world cuisine, wine, music, and making homemade preserves.

ANNE MARIE HILLARY: TALKING 100 YEARS OF JUNIOR LEAGUE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Anne Marie Hillary first joined the Junior League in 2006 in Chicago and transferred her membership to Grand Rapids in 2012. Over the past 19 years, she's held various leadership roles within the organization, and today, as Junior League of Grand Rapids (JLGR) President, Hillary is passionate about sharing their impact.

TELL US ABOUT JLGR'S INFLUENCE ON WEST MICHIGAN AND YOUR SPECIFIC COMMUNITY IMPACT FOCUS AREA!

Our legacy in West Michigan is—as one of our past presidents recently stated—the best kept secret in Grand Rapids. But when you're celebrating 100 years of impact, we've got to let this secret out! The JLGR shows up in places and ways you may not recognize. We recognize the need and respond. For 100 years, our members have done this, and for so many organizations in Grand Rapids, their start came with one or more Junior League members behind them. In our first century of service, we've proudly been the force for many familiar organizations around West Michigan, helping to get them started, providing funding, training volunteers and advocating to effect change.

This year, we've reflected on what the city would look like without JLGR. Can you picture Grand Rapids without an art museum? Without Gilda's Club? Could you imagine if there was no CASA, or a Ronald McDonald House in West Michigan? Our current focus area is 'Advancing Women's Health and Development,' which ties into our mission of developing women and training volunteers, and was chosen in consideration of the Kent County Needs Assessment and surveys of our members and community partners. Today, we've renewed a legacy partnership with the

Women's Resource Center to advance women's health and development, providing education for women who are seeking new or better employment opportunities. We're also looking at financial literacy programs, thinking about how financial literacy plays a role in overall wellness. When women have these fundamental needs met, they can develop themselves and ultimately advance the lives of themselves, their families and those in their communities.

AS JLGR CELEBRATES 100 YEARS IN 2025, WHY SHOULD WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY LOOK TO GET INVOLVED?

Being a part of the best kept secret in town is great fun, fulfilling and friendly. Women join our organization typically for two reasons: to meet other like-minded women, and to improve and give back to their community. Women should look to get involved as part of the self-care movement, to not only do something for themselves but also to forge friendships and community impact in a space that provides life-long training.

WHAT SHOULD WE KNOW ABOUT YOUR UPCOMING 100-YEAR GALA ON APRIL 25?

We invite all community members to join us for this momentous milestone as we celebrate 100 years of service in a throwback to the 1920s: Gatsby style!

The location (Grand Rapids Art Museum) is a testament to our long-standing commitment to community impact, as the JLGR was instrumental in initiating educational art programs for the Art Gallery for over 34 years. Guests can find more information and purchase tickets at juniorleaguegr.com.

Please also visit our website for membership and support opportunities. JLGR women are a force for positive change in our community, and I'm proud to continue developing the next generation of civic leaders in Grand Rapids. **WMW**





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RODNEY ATKINS

Friday, May 9, 2025

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- Holland American Legion Band

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Enjoy the very best of Tulip Time on this guided tour that makes stops at all the top spots. And you don't have to fight traffic. Last year sold out, so get your tickets early!

SEE OUR WORKSHOPS:

- Floral Arranging Class (*sells out fast!*)
- Fused Glass (*NEW!*)
- Photo Walk (*sells out fast!*)
- Wooden Shoe Painting (*NEW!*)
- Cutting Board Workshop (*NEW!*)
- Wine & Cheese Tasting (*NEW!*)

