

COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2023

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU  
AND THIS COMMUNITY



Tonya Hogan, 50, opens a treat bag for her dog Pepper inside their room at Harbor Light Salvation Army in Detroit on March 9. On most days, Pepper drags her feet to resist going inside the tiny room with no windows where they have lived for over year while Hogan seeks to find secure housing. SARAHBETH MANEY/DETROIT FREE PRESS

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

Stories are powerful. A single story told in the right voice — shared at the right time — can change a life, transform a community or even shape what comes next. • A story written by Free Press reporter Jennifer Brookland led to more resources for young people aging out of foster care. • Michigan now has a poet laureate because of a story by Clara Hendrickson. • And Nushrat Rahman’s beautifully told tale of a Detroit’s journey out of homelessness inspired many readers to open their wallets and give. • Oftentimes, these are not the stories that captivate the masses, yet these are the stories that are the backbone of a news operation that is nearly 200 years old. Then and now, the Free Press seeks to make a difference through journalism. And as we welcome you to the fifth edition of the Detroit Free Press Community Impact Report, we are reminded of the tremendous potential of our journalism, and the responsibility that comes with it.



Nicole Avery Nichols  
Editor,  
Detroit  
Free Press

You count on us to get it right. It is our duty and obligation to not let you down. In the context of an increasingly polarized political environment, where ideologies often shout over the voices of ordinary people, the Free Press staff is committed to documenting the nuance, and the complexity of these times. As you will see highlighted in this year’s impact report, our newsroom is committed to journalism that centers the challenges Michiganders face daily, and the solutions that make life better for our city, our region and our state.

Your readership and support is important, and very much appreciated. Please continue to read the Detroit Free Press in print, at freep.com, and, if you have not done so already, consider becoming a digital subscriber at subscribe.freep.com. As a reader, you enable us to tell the important stories, and to engage with diverse communities in meaningful ways.

When I was a small girl, my grandmother would give me money by folding it up into a small square, and then pressing it down into the palm of my hand. It was an intimate gesture that Southerners of a certain age know well. The impact of that gesture was bigger than a \$20 bill. To me, it was about being cared for and seen. That’s the level of deep connection and lasting impact I seek with Free Press readers. Our stories have the potential to make good things happen, and your support makes that possible.

Thanks again for reading. And please know that we will continue to strive to build community through journalism.



Toddlers excitedly run in for lunch as Yolanda Williams, owner of Dee’s Little Angels Child Care Center in Detroit, helps lead them into a room April 20. Child care providers have been frustrated by a delay in DHHS notifications. ERIC SEALS/DETROIT FREE PRESS



COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2023

Detroit Free Press

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

We’re the biggest newsroom in Michigan.

We’re journalists and also volunteers and mentors,  
parents and community members, voters

and citizens. Free Press journalists aim to tell the stories  
that matter to you and your community, to hold our elected  
officials accountable and to spotlight the people and places  
that make our city and state unique. Along the way, we  
have garnered some recognition, including 10 Pulitzer  
Prizes and four national Emmy awards.

But none of that matters to us as much as our mission:

To be on guard for you.

**FREEP.COM** REACHES  
**6,000,000**  
AVG. MONTHLY ONLINE VISITORS

READERS AGREE

THE FREE PRESS HAS A POSITIVE MISSION  
TO **HELP THE COMMUNITY BY KEEPING  
PEOPLE INFORMED**

“Thank God for our Free Press.”

“What great journalism and public service.”

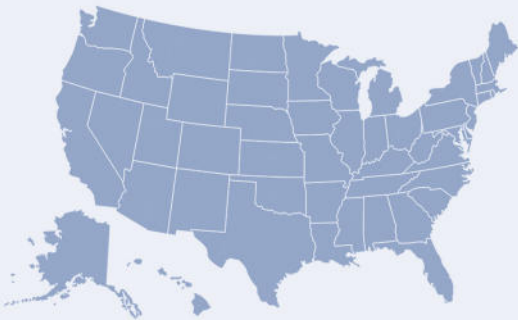
The Free Press has “the ability to do long-form, thoughtful, balanced  
pieces that nobody else is able or willing to do — and to raise above the  
surface ideas and analyses that most of us just aren't thinking about.”

“I miss quality journalism like this in the blogosphere/anyone with a  
keyboard writing of today. It's true journalism!”

“Thanks for your commitment, time, energy, and passion to reporting  
on all things Detroit and Michigan and being the ears and voice of the  
people.”

OUR REACH

THE FREE PRESS REACHES  
PEOPLE IN ALL **50 STATES**  
AND **MORE THAN  
200 COUNTRIES**



SOURCE Comscore Media Metrix U.S. Multi-Platform,  
Free Press feedback, 2023

On guard since 1831.  
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COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2023



Doula Erika Millender, left, talks with DeJuan Bland as he holds his daughter Wynter Bland, 4 months, while sitting with his wife, Jenise Bland, during a post-natal visit to their home in Dearborn on Jan. 12, 2023. Doulas serve birthing people prenatally, during labor and delivery and after a baby is born. RYAN GARZA/DETROIT FREE PRESS

How Detroit and Michigan have changed in these important areas

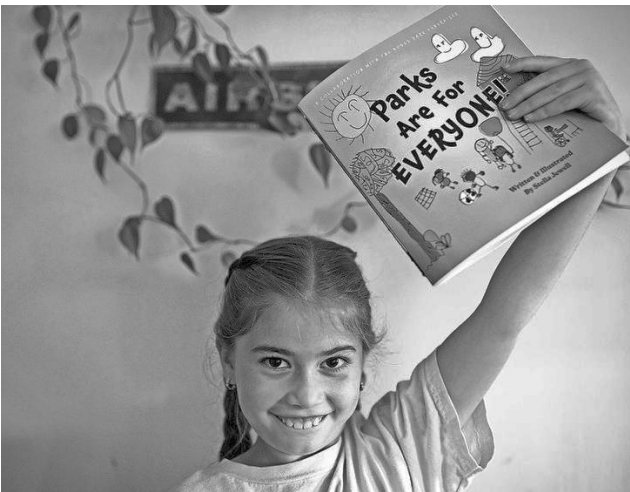
Anjanette Delgado Detroit Free Press | USA TODAY NETWORK

Is Michigan better off with the Detroit Free Press on guard? Have we helped you discover a new path to civic participation? Answering these questions is the most important measure of our work. • We see impact as the real-world change that happens as a result of our journalism. This collection of stories underlines our purpose and celebrates that change. • In 2023, we saw results especially in the areas of juvenile justice, renter protection and public safety, and in the lives of children and their caregivers. One of the joys of doing this work in metro Detroit, too, is how often our readers step up to give money and help to those in need. It’s something we saw especially during the pandemic that continues, thankfully, to this day. Each one of us, regardless of position or title, holds the power to make change.

While we take note when people promise change, too, we stay on top of the issues and those in power to report when they follow through and actually make change. Many of these stories aren’t over. Keeping watch is our mission at the Detroit Free Press, as it has been through two centuries. Your generous support helps us to do this work. It’s difficult and expensive, and it takes time. Thank you for reading and subscribing and taking action when you can, too. If you know of an area that needs change, please email us at [investigations@freepress.com](mailto:investigations@freepress.com) or send mail to 160 W. Fort St., Detroit MI 48226.

Continued coverage of dangerous conditions in Wayne County’s juvenile jail brings state intervention

After several Detroit Free Press stories in 2022, officials moved the entire population of Wayne County’s juvenile jail — roughly 120 youths — into a different facility while abandoning the old one. But problems continued after the move that the Free Press continued to cover, including that youths in the new facility were doubled and tripled in cells at times, a deputy used a Taser on a juvenile and a 12-year-old boy allegedly was raped by multiple juveniles. After the alleged rape, the county declared the facility under a health emergency, the state moved staff on-site 24 hours a day, seven days a week and a county administrator was fired. We stayed on the story through the summer as the state monitors left for two weeks but were brought in again after another alleged assault. In November, the state put the facility on a provisional six-month license.



Stella Jewell, 8, shows the book she authored and illustrated, “Parks Are for Everyone,” on June 28 at her home in Detroit. MANDI WRIGHT/DETROIT FREE PRESS

GM removes security officers accused of racism, abuse of Black people

The private security force Renaissance Center Management Company was created by General Motors to patrol Detroit’s iconic RenCen. But for more than a decade, its white officers have been accused of assaulting, targeting, harassing and falsely detaining Black people on the property. It’s a pattern that has gone unchecked for years, according to federal lawsuits filed against RCMC, GM, G4S Solutions and a handful of officers. The Detroit Free Press reviewed hundreds of docu-

ments including lawsuits and internal complaints. We interviewed current and former employees and an August 2023 victim of an alleged assault. We reviewed footage showing white officers physically harming Black people, corroborating allegations. Our investigation was published on Nov. 16. By Nov. 17, GM told the Free Press it was reviewing the security contract, ordered the officers accused of racism and abuse be removed from its Detroit properties including the RenCen, and mandated racial sensitivity and deescalation training for security officers. The Michigan State Police and the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards, which grants licenses to operate as a private security police agency, are investigating. On Jan. 4, General Motors confirmed it has suspended the arrest powers for the private security police force. Officers can no longer carry handcuffs and the number of them allowed to carry guns has also been reduced.

State agrees to audit Child Development and Care subsidy program

Two laws were introduced for a vote and the Michigan Office of the Auditor General announced it would audit the state’s Child Development and Care program after Free Press reporting revealed children were being wrongfully terminated from the subsidy program, parents were not receiving notification, and care providers were forced to remove children from day care spots for lack of payment even though care had already been provided for weeks or months. The audit is expected to begin in the fall of 2023.

Continued on next page

State fixes flaws in food assistance for aged-out foster youths

After reporting revealed youths who had aged out of Michigan’s foster care system were being denied food assistance, the Department of Health and Human Services made changes to ensure its caseworkers were informed about existing policies exempting the youths from work requirements. It conducted awareness-raising activities on the child welfare and public benefits sides, and

designated caseworkers to handle applications and questions from this uniquely vulnerable population. DHHS also initiated a proactive communications strategy to reach out to foster youths who aged out — even if they did not apply for food assistance — to check in about their needs via text. Additionally, all of the young people who should have been receiving food assistance and who were identified to DHHS by the Park West Foundation received their SNAP benefits after publication of the article.



# COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2023



Dr. David Brown, a plastic surgeon from the University of Michigan, left, helps to screen Volodymyr Bubela, 17, of Lviv, Ukraine, on May 14 on a hotel patio in Leczna, Poland. MANDI WRIGHT/DETROIT FREE PRESS



Merritt Sellers steers the J/111 sailboat “nosurprise” in the Beaver Island Race in Harbor Springs, Michigan, in August 2021. PROVIDED BY SCOTT SELLERS

Continued from previous page

### DOJ, others investigating Michigan school district over use of seclusion and restraint

Months after the Detroit Free Press released a sweeping investigation into the use of seclusion and restraint in Michigan schools, the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education confirmed they were investigating a mid-Michigan district’s use of both practices. This district was a key focus of the Free Press investigation.

### Day care owner receives \$20,000 gift on Kelly Clarkson show, thousands more from readers

Betty Henderson was profiled in a late 2022 Free Press story that focused on her 24-hour day care, which provides essential child care services to working parents in Detroit. Immediately following publication, readers sent Henderson \$2,000 in support, in addition to diapers and toys. Over the next few months and into 2023, the outpouring of support continued:

- As of Jan. 18, readers and viewers had sent Henderson a total of \$5,747.
- A family asked the parents of the 31 children enrolled at Angels of Essence to make a wish list of three gifts apiece, then fulfilled the entire list of 93 presents for Christmas. He also gave gift cards to the staff and brought in a bagel breakfast for them all to enjoy.
- A reader donated her company’s payroll and accounting expertise, allowing Henderson to reduce her operating expenses and, for the first time in her career, offer health insurance to her staff.
- A reader who learned of Henderson’s difficulty getting her new building insured after a fire made innumerable phone calls on her behalf until he found an underwriter who agreed to provide her with an insurance policy, enabling her to continue plans to expand her business.
- Henderson also received local, state and national media coverage. She was invited to appear as a guest on the Kelly Clarkson show, where Clarkson surprised her with a \$20,000 donation.

### Ford reverses course, keeps AM radio after coverage ignites DC

We heard that Ford Motor Co. may be starting to remove AM radio from some of its vehicles and wrote about not just the company’s plan of action but also a comprehensive piece on why the decision was made, how it did not include commercial vehicles (bound by contract) and potential impact during emergencies. The story made national news and within weeks, Ford had reversed its plan and agreed to keep AM radio. After speaking with policy leaders about the importance of AM broadcast radio as a part of the emergency alert system, we’ve decided to include it on all 2024 Ford & Lincoln vehicles, Ford CEO Jim Farley tweeted. Alex Siciliano of the National Association of Broadcasters wrote, “I’ve been in DC since 2011 and I can’t remember working on an issue gathering such broad bipartisan support so quickly. Your original story on Ford removing AM really helped ignite it!”

### Nonprofit collects \$12,000 in donations, medical supplies to help Ukraine relief efforts

For Dr. David Brown, a plastic surgeon at Michigan



Robotics team members Tyneisha Powell, 13, left, and Joshua Baker, 11, have fun with staking cones at Detroit’s Foreign Language Immersion And Cultural Studies School on Feb. 10. ERIC SEALS/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Medicine and a professor at the University of Michigan School of Medicine, the Russian invasion of Ukraine meant one thing: He could no longer get to his kids — the severely burned children he’d treated for years on annual medical mission trips to the Eastern European country. Brown and Dr. Gennadiy Fuzaylov, of Boston, who founded the nonprofit Doctors Collaborating to Help Children, began collecting medical supplies to send to their colleagues in Ukraine. “I can’t fly a jet over there and clear the airspace,” Brown said, “but I do know who needs bandages and syringes and how to ask people for them here in this country. ... And so that’s what we’re doing. If we can spread that word a little bit and let people know that something’s being done that they can feel good about, maybe be they’d be willing to pitch in and help out.” After the Free Press wrote about their efforts to deliver medical supplies to Ukraine, Fuzaylov said \$12,000 worth of donations were made to the organization to directly benefit the cause.

### Michigan appoints poet laureate

During the Detroit Free Press’ coverage of the Michigan budget, we keyed in on one smaller item of general interest: another \$100,000 for a state poet laureate. Only the state didn’t seem to have a poet laureate, despite already having funded that position for a year and a half. We investigated through the Freedom of Information Act and inquiries to multiple state departments and people in the poetry community. The state initially defended its lack of action before reversing course and appointing Michigan’s first poet laureate since 1952.

### Mackinac Island public safety officials use coverage in public education campaign

Mackinac Island has been discussing at City Council meetings how to address concerns about e-bike battery fires and fire safety. The Detroit Free Press told the public for the first time the island had four fires related to the issue, and the fire chief was desperately concerned. Then the state fire marshal sent out memos to public officials urging them to carefully track incidents. Then the police chief issued ordinance updates on changes to e-bike policy and the Free Press wrapped it all together

into a tidy package. The police chief said the mayor, members of the city council and the city attorney were so grateful for the depth of information, plus the Q&A format, that the coverage would be used in public education campaigns and island training.

### Baker College under federal investigation

We reported with ProPublica in January 2022 that at Baker College, one of the largest private colleges in Michigan, less than one-quarter of its students graduate. We also found that 70% of Baker students who took out federal student loans have problems making payments two years after leaving college. An exceptionally large number of former Baker students with loans filed claims with the federal government that they were defrauded or misled by the college. In June 2023, we learned from a national accrediting agency that Baker College is under federal investigation for its recruitment and marketing practices.

### Readers donate \$9K to help formerly homeless woman with rent, car repair

After the Detroit Free Press (in collaboration with BridgeDetroit) told the story of a woman climbing out of homelessness after her husband died of COVID-19 complications, we received an outpouring of emails and calls from people who wanted to help her. Readers donated \$9,075 to help Tonya Hogan get back on her feet, covering her rent for several years, paying her \$950 car repair bill, getting household items to her and sending food for her dog, Pepper. They sent handwritten cards to her through the mail, telling her how her story moved them. They emailed us and said her story and thorough reporting highlighted how arduous homelessness is and that finding a home is not enough. After she received the checks, she was able to pay to get her truck back from the auto shop where it had sat for weeks because she couldn’t afford the repair cost. When a reporter last visited her, it sat in front of her new home, with its engine running. Hogan was beaming.

### Michigan War Dog Memorial gets more than \$1,000 in donations

We wrote an in-depth piece on the Michigan War Dog Memorial, a nonprofit that is the only cemetery to honor and bury military and other service dogs in the nation. The story also highlighted dogs’ contributions to various wars and police duty. We published it on a Saturday, and, by Monday, the Michigan War Dog Memorial said it had received more than \$1,000 in donations.

### Free Press story cited in legal filings over voting machine theft case

The Detroit Free Press uncovered an unusual legal filing from Muskegon County seeking a legal determination on the law surrounding voting machine tabulator possession — a step that led up to the indictment of three people who allegedly obtained voting machines after the 2020 election. Many outlets followed our reporting and cited the Free Press. It has also been cited in numerous legal filings over whether the case can proceed.

Continued on next page

### Free Press article cited in Michigan Supreme Court opinion

A Detroit Free Press article on parents who turn themselves over to Child Protective Services to get mental health and behavioral help for their children was cited in the concurring opinion to a Michigan Supreme Court Order. Justice Megan Cavanagh wrote the opinion, which cited the reporting to indicate the scope of the problem and to illustrate that parents who relinquish their paren-

tal rights are not necessarily guilty of abuse or neglect. Justice Cavanagh urged the Legislature to enact a neutral no-fault category that would allow courts to take jurisdiction of these extreme-case kids without having to find the parents guilty of serious abuse or neglect, which also places them on the central registry and jeopardizes their custody of other children and ability to hold certain professional and community roles.



# COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2023



Betty Henderson, 51, plays with children at Angels of Essence Child Care Centre, a 24-hour child care facility she owns and operates, in Detroit on July 14, 2022. “We were working 14 to 17 hours around the clock,” said Henderson, who has a staff of seven people and serves 30 children. SARAHBETH MANEY/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Continued from previous page

### Michigan stops pre-employment testing for marijuana

The Michigan Civil Service Commission lifted its requirement for pre-employment marijuana testing after the Detroit Free Press showed that the state, which was having difficulty filling jobs, was losing out on more otherwise qualified employees because of testing since the state legalized adult recreational use of marijuana. When we flagged the issue in February, a Civil Service Commission spokesman said there had been no proposals to change the policy. Staff proposed changing the policy after our article published.

### 15-year-old sailor inspires others, changes understanding of what’s possible

We covered the incredible story of Merritt Sellers, a 15-year-old sailing phenom, in 2022. Then we learned from officials who put on the Bayview Mackinac Race from Port Huron to Mackinac Island that our coverage from 2022 has inspired other families to include more young women in the race. Race officials, seasoned sailors, individual families reached out to say our coverage changed what they considered possible.

### Ford exec put on leave, departs company

The Detroit Free Press was the only news outlet to cover, from start to finish, the case involving Ford Motor Co. executive Franck Louis-Victor. It led to revelations about the extent of domestic assault allegations against him — and (by coincidence) his being put on leave within minutes of our call to Ford asking about his until-then unreleased confession at the police station. We filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the police and courts. He has since left the company.

### Detroit school reaches fundraising goal

The James and Grace Lee Boggs School on Detroit’s east side reached a fundraising goal needed to build a park after an article in the Detroit Free Press. We wrote about 8-year-old Stella Jewell, a student at Boggs whose book was given to donors supporting the fundraiser. At the time the article was filed, the school was \$14,050 shy of reaching its overall fundraising goal of \$75,000 by July 17. By July 12, the school had met its goal. Principal Julia Putnam said the story got the final ball rolling.

### Detroit chess club gets single \$50,000 donation

Kevin Fite, founder of the nonprofit Detroit City Chess Club, received a flurry of donations following publication of our article, including one \$50,000 donation from a supporter who was moved to contribute again after seeing the story. In a thank-you letter to the Free Press, Fite wrote: “Our kids will benefit deeply with the generous donation we received.”

### HOW WE TRACK IMPACT AT THE FREE PRESS

We track 12 different types of change, including new laws and policies, legal action, government investigations, individual actions and benefit to source (the person or people we wrote about or photographed saw some sort of benefit afterward, most commonly a donation or other offer of help). We must believe, through additional reporting or social science methods, that our work was a catalyst for that change in some way. If not, we don’t include it here.

One impact of our work not yet mentioned is that, this year, more news organizations like ours have been inspired to track impact and report it to their communities as well. We support this and have helped to champion the work that others in this field have done. This collective reporting contributes to researchers’ ability to better understand the role journalism plays in modern society. Our democracy depends on a functioning, watchdog press.

### Nonprofit helps to send Detroit students on a college tour after readers donate

Renee’ Fluker, founder of the Midnight Golf Program, told the Detroit Free Press that her nonprofit received emails, calls and contributions after we published its story. The contributions helped to send six busloads of high school students from Detroit to the Success College Tour in Atlanta in March. The tour featured eight college visits, exposure to sites of cultural significance and golf.

### Bally Sports spreads story of Cass Tech’s longtime basketball scorekeeper

Using a Detroit Free Press article as reference, Bally Sports produced a piece on Willie Roy Ogletree that aired during halftime of the network’s broadcast of the state boys basketball championship game won by Cass Technical High School for the first time in the school’s history. The segment was not only a tribute to Ogletree’s longtime dedication as basketball scorekeeper at one of the most storied schools in Detroit, but it also was a tremendous source of pride for many in the community who have admired Ogletree through the years.

### Detroit middle school robotics team named to exclusive group of brand ambassadors

The middle school robotics team at the Foreign Language Immersion and Cultural Studies School in Detroit was named a member of Team REV, an exclusive group of 70 teams representing REV Robotics, after a feature in the Detroit Free Press. The article focused on the team’s trip to the International 2023 FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Championship. The Motor City Alliance, which supports robotics teams in Detroit, also gained sponsors

because of the article, said Leon Pryor Jr., the team’s coach in 2022-23 and a volunteer at the Motor City Alliance.

### Michigan story on doula coverage under Medicaid sparks advocacy win in California

The Detroit Free Press wrote about Medicaid beginning to cover doula services in Michigan and included an innovative step DHHS had taken: creating a standing recommendation by our state’s chief medical officer for women to receive doula services, removing the barrier of needing a referral from a doctor before Medicaid would cover them. Amy Chen, a senior attorney with the California-based National Health Law Program and leader of its Doula Medicaid Project who was interviewed for the article, read the story once it was published and realized a standing recommendation was a possibility. She and fellow advocates immediately approached California’s state Medicaid agency with the idea, and after several months, California announced it would be issuing a statewide recommendation for doula services. “The first I’d heard of the standing recommendation in Michigan was from the article you wrote in early 2023 about the state’s doula Medicaid benefit,” Chen wrote in an email. “This standing recommendation will make a huge difference in reducing a real barrier to access.”

### MSU promises to reevaluate security stance after shooting

The Free Press, like many other outlets, investigated security policies and procedures at Michigan State University after a Feb. 13 mass shooting in which three students were killed and five others injured on campus. That reporting included showing MSU classroom doors didn’t have locks and MSU did not have a security system that could simultaneously lock exterior doors, measures in place at many other schools. On March 1, MSU announced it would change locks, install such a security system and mandate active shooter training. However, our recent reporting showed that it has installed locks on 500 fewer doors than promised, isn’t done installing the security system and won’t mandate training. After repeated questions from the Free Press, an MSU spokesman said the school “will reevaluate our effectiveness in student and employee completions in a year to determine if we need to take additional actions to ensure our Spartan community is engaging in this process.” This commitment to reevaluate effectiveness was not included in previous communications from the university.

If you’d like to contribute to our journalism, please consider subscribing, donating to our reporting fund, tipping us to something we should investigate or simply sending us feedback. We cannot do this work alone.

Anjanette Delgado is an executive editor at the Detroit Free Press. She has written for the Media Impact Project at USC Annenberg’s Norman Lear Center, which studies the effect of media on society. Email: adelgado@freepress.com .

### Detroit Mayor Duggan’s administration vows to change ethics policy

A Free Press investigation found allies of Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan or others with financial and personal ties to city government stacked on a board that sets pay raises for the mayor and city council. That included at least one person with a city contract, another who previously ran a nonprofit that frequently partnered with the city on projects and Duggan’s campaign attorney. When

presented with this information before publication, Detroit Corporation Counsel Conrad Mallett said reforms were necessary. “I get it that the process could be improved, and we’re going to,” he said. The head of the Detroit Department of Civil Rights, Inclusion & Opportunity confirmed the city will require all seven members of the commission to file new ethics disclosure forms. Another 13 mayoral appointees on other boards and commissions, including four on the Board of Police Commissioners, will also now need to file the forms.



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Wilma Rush, 81, left, watches as Laundry Kirksey, 12, of Detroit, adds water to plants at the Stoepel Community Garden on Stoepel Street in Detroit on Aug. 3. The garden is part of Saturday's Neighborhoods Day in the city where volunteers show up to help beautify areas. ERIC SEALS/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Thank you to our funders, partners and subscribers

Jewel Gopwani Myers Detroit Free Press USA TODAY NETWORK

A unique combination of philanthropy and partnerships supercharged the Free Press' impact in 2023 — and with more support can make an even bigger difference in 2024. • Together, we have improved the lives of young people throughout Michigan. We exposed systemic failures that lead many people to homelessness, and, in the process, enabled readers to help a woman struggling to afford her first apartment after being homeless. • We have put a spotlight on youth athletes whose accomplishments are too often overlooked. And we are training the next generation of journalists, offering mentorship and newsroom experience, igniting a passion to pursue journalism.

Here's a look at the difference this work is having on the community.

We seek support to continue the journalism and the training you'll read about here in 2024 as well as the Free Press' high school journalism program.

If you are interested in backing Free Press journalists today and into the future, please contact Senior Editor Jewel Gopwani at jgopwani@freepress.com.

Report for America

The Free Press helped make a big difference in the lives of Michigan's children and the people who care for them.

We told readers about foster kids who have aged out of the system and denied food assistance even though they were eligible for it. After our article published, the state acted: It reversed those denials and assigned a caseworker to handle applications from former foster kids.

We wrote about Betty Henderson, who runs the only 24-hour day care in Detroit — a lifeline for parents who need care for their children while they work evening and overnight shifts. After that article published, dozens of people donated money, holiday gifts for the children and diapers — so many diapers that parents in need didn't need to supply them to the day care for two months. And Kelly Clarkson featured Betty on her TV show and gave her \$20,000 to support the day care.

These life-changing moments happened for young



Midnight Golf founder and President Reneé Fluker, left, talks with Cassidy Dickerson, 17, of Detroit, and Alexa Thomas, 17, of Franklin, during a program Feb. 7. SARAHBETH MANEY/DETROIT FREE PRESS

people in our community because of a partnership between the Free Press and Report for America to cover the well-being of children in Michigan.

Report For America, a journalism nonprofit, helps to put journalists in newsrooms across the country to cover essential issues that too often go underreported. RFA covers a portion of the reporter's salary, the Free Press

covers a portion and we seek to raise the rest through philanthropic funding.

In the summer of 2023 we welcomed another RFA corps member whose role is to spotlight the champions and the challenges of youth sports, outside of popular high school athletics.

We have profiled the cheerleading coach at Detroit PAL, Glenda Stancil, whose name is synonymous with cheer in Detroit. We highlighted the Cass Tech Varsity girls golf team, the first Detroit girls golf team to make it to the state championship tournament. And we shared the challenges of parents and coaches who struggle to make the most expensive youth sport — ice hockey — more affordable and accessible.

We're proud to partner with Report for America, which has placed hundreds of journalists in newsrooms across the country to help fill coverage gaps.

We're particularly proud that two corps members, one covering economic mobility in Detroit and one covering democracy in Michigan, have graduated from the program to pursue these beats full-time at the Free Press.

Apprentice program

They made it to the front page. They kept at it when sources told them they couldn't talk to the Free Press.

Continued on next page

NEWS TIPS

What should we investigate? Send story ideas and news tips to city@freepress.com or investigations@freepress.com, or call 313-222-6601. Encrypted email: james.schaefer@protonmail.com. The safest way to send secure information is by U.S. Mail. You can reach us at:

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# COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2023



Detroit PAL cheer commissioner Glenda “Coach Pott” Stancil, center, watches as different divisions of the Motor City Heat Elite cheer team practice at St. Paul Tabernacle Church of God in Christ in Detroit on Aug. 22. RYAN GARZA/DETROIT FREE PRESS

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They left with skills and confidence to work at their college newspapers. Those are some of the most noteworthy gains for Detroit Free Press Summer Apprentices in 2023.

In July, six local high school students joined our newsroom for four weeks. They received training in journalism fundamentals including interviewing and writing. They gained mentors and learned from seasoned photographers, reporters and editors.

This program is possible thanks to the generous support of the Lipinski Journalism Fund at The Michigan Daily, funded by John and Holly Madigan. The students took an inspiring tour of The Daily, meeting the summer editing team of the independent student-run newspaper that covers the University of Michigan and Ann Arbor.

Apprentices put their skills to work reporting and photographing community news, the Detroit Pistons and entertainment.

Apprentices helped cover every angle ahead of Beyoncé's stop in Detroit, writing about how fans prepared their look for the big night and an exclusive story highlighting a Detroit native returning home as a back-up dancer during the superstar's Renaissance Tour appearance at Ford Field.

They helped Pistons fans get ready for the new season, assisting the Free Press' beat writer by analyzing the performances of three players during the NBA's Summer League games.

They dug into community news, letting readers know about a series of events to celebrate the Detroit Zoo's 95th anniversary and a host of new Little Free Libraries popping up across the city. They also previewed and covered Detroit's Neighborhoods Day, where dozens of community groups host service projects and events.

The Free Press is home to several journalists whose first professional bylines appeared in the Free Press when they were summer apprentices. It's a program that has inspired generations of young people to pursue careers and journalism. We invite your support for this program in 2024.

### Thanks to the Free Press' many partners

The Free Press wants to recognize its partnerships with community organizations and other media organizations and groups. We appreciate each of these



Tonya Hogan, 50, kisses her dog Pepper during a bath at her apartment in Melvindale on Aug. 20. SARAHBETH MANEY/DETROIT FREE PRESS

partnerships. Large and small, they have strengthened our connections with the community, enhanced coverage for Free Press readers and helped the Free Press identify important issues for coverage throughout 2023 and beyond. These partners include: Bridge Michigan, Metropolitan Affairs Coalition, Michigan Radio, WDET, Bridge Detroit, Outlier Media, Detroit Documenters, Planet Detroit, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, Chalkbeat Detroit, PolitiFact, Detroit Public Television, Michigan Press Association, ProPublica, the Detroit Chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists, Grist, Columbia University School of Journalism and Brown Institute for Media Innovation.

**Freep Film Festival partners** included Wayne State University, American Citizens for Justice, WDET, Detroit Film Theatre, Detroit Historical Museum, Michigan Science Center.

### Thank you to our funders

- Albion College, for an opinion writing internship
- Bridge Detroit and Outlier, for reporting support
- Ford Foundation, for the Freep Film Festival
- Report For America
- The Lipinski Journalism Fund at The Michigan Daily, for the Free Press Summer Apprentice Program
- The National Press Foundation
- Michigan Justice Fund, for “Coldwater Kitchen” documentary film
- University of Michigan English Department, for a journalism internship

## JOIN US

To learn more about supporting journalism in 2024 and funding efforts like the Free Press Summer Apprentice program, internships for aspiring journalists and coverage of crucial issues like economic mobility, democracy and the well-being of children — or other coverage areas that contribute to a more equitable and informed community — please reach out to Jewel Gopwani at [jgopwani@freepress.com](mailto:jgopwani@freepress.com). Subscribing to the Free Press is another way to support public service journalism and inspire change. Subscribe at [subscribe.freep.com](https://subscribe.freep.com).



COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2023



Amanda Nouhan, 27, of Detroit, center, gets shouts of encouragement from Shadarian Corona, left, and other members of We Run 313 along the Dequindre Cut during the 46th annual Detroit Free Press Marathon presented by MSU Federal Credit Union in Detroit on Oct. 15. ERIC SEALS/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Marathon, other Free Press events give back to community

Aaron Velthoven  
Michigan.com

The Detroit Free Press, through collaborations with its business arm, Michigan.com, continues to produce flagship events such as the Detroit Free Press Marathon presented by MSU Federal Credit Union, the Breakfast Club Series, Detroit Free Press/Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers Top 10 Takeover dining series, and the Freep Film Festival. These initiatives have not only enriched the local entertainment landscape but also have become cherished traditions that bring the community together.

Here are some of our notable highlights for this year's events:

Detroit Free Press Marathon presented by MSU Federal Credit Union

The 46th annual marathon race weekend took place Oct. 13-15. Participation returned to pre-pandemic levels, with more than 24,000 registrants across eight races.

Detroit's marathon is the largest international road race in North America, and the only international event series in the world that traverses two international border crossings within both the marathon and half-marathon courses. Participants start along Fort Street in the financial district of downtown Detroit, head west to cross into Canada over the Ambassador Bridge, viewing what for many is a once-in-a-lifetime sunrise as they make their way over the Detroit River, continuing along the Windsor riverfront before heading back into the U.S. via the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel, the famous "underwater mile" of Detroit's race course. Once participants return to the U.S., the Detroit showcase begins. Participants race through the historic Woodbridge neighborhood, Midtown, Brush Park, Eastern Market and the Dequindre Cut and finish at the foot of Campus Martius.

This year's race weekend generated more than \$23.5 million in economic impact to the city of Detroit.

Join us Oct. 18-20, 2024, for the next race weekend. Don't miss out on the opportunity to participate in this exciting event! Registration opened Jan. 1, with discounted pricing available during the early-bird period.

Renowned Breakfast Club series returns

Following a pandemic pause, the Detroit Free Press Breakfast Club forum returned this year with two sold-out events featuring important discussions around energy, jobs and Detroit's revitalization efforts.

U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm talked with host and award-winning Free Press columnist Carol Cain about crucial issues impacting the Motor City, the state and country when she kicked off this



Sommelier Brian Macmillan pours a drink for Renee Turissini, of Ann Arbor, during the Detroit Free Press/Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers Top 10 Takeover of Tallulah Wine Bar & Bistro in Birmingham on May 9. JUNFU HAN/DETROIT FREE PRESS

year's series June 19 at the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham.

On Nov. 30, Cain talked with Detroit businessman Dan Gilbert, founder of mortgage giant Rocket Companies and the Bedrock real estate firm. The discussion was wide-ranging, from his thoughts on how to attract talented young people to Michigan to his recent loss of his 26-year-old son, Nick, and the \$400 million donation he and his wife, Jennifer, announced for the future Nick Gilbert Neurofibromatosis Institute inside a planned Henry Ford Health-Michigan State University research center in Detroit, as well as to bring a Detroit location of the renowned Shirley Ryan AbilityLab to Henry Ford Hospital.

Launched by the Free Press in 2018, the Breakfast Club has featured high-powered leaders in business, politics, sports and education talking about important issues impacting the region and has previously included former governor and former Michigan State University Interim President John Engler, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Mayor Mike Duggan, Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel, Wayne County Executive Warren Evans, Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter, Detroit Lions President Rod Wood, business executive Denise Ilitch and Bud Denker, president of Penske Corp.

Detroit Free Press/Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers Top 10 Takeover celebrates culinary excellence

For years, the Detroit Free Press has championed the exceptional dining scene of metro Detroit, recognizing

outstanding restaurants through its renowned coverage. In 2015, this commitment to honoring culinary excellence extended to the creation of the Top10 Takeover series. This unique initiative showcased special dining events at selected establishments featured in the Free Press.

The 2023 edition of the Top 10 Takeover series, presented in partnership with Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers, featured 11 exceptional restaurants. This celebration of culinary artistry went beyond providing unforgettable dining experiences; it also served a noble cause. With each ticket sold, a portion of the proceeds was generously donated to Forgotten Harvest, a Detroit-based organization dedicated to rescuing surplus food and distributing it to those in need.

In 10 years, the Top 10 Takeover Series and Top 10 Cares program has raised more than \$488,000 for charity.

The Top 10 Takeover series exemplifies the Detroit Free Press' unwavering dedication to initiatives that positively impact the community.

10th annual Freep Film Festival

The documentary-focused film festival celebrated its 10th year when it returned to theaters April 26-30.

Opening the year's festival was the Free Press-produced documentary "Coldwater Kitchen," which follows a chef teaching culinary arts to inmates at a Michigan prison. Viewers gain insight into how the culinary program's participants utilize their newfound skills upon release as they reintegrate into society. "Coldwater Kitchen" made its debut at DOC NYC, the nation's premier documentary film festival, in November 2022.

Festival week continued with a live recording of Elvis Mitchell's radio show "The Treatment." The show, which is known for Mitchell's interviews with some of the most influential people in arts, entertainment, sports, and fashion, featured legendary actor Laurence Fishburne as the guest. Fishburne appears in Mitchell's debut film "Is That Black Enough for You?!" which was also screened at this year's festival. The nationally syndicated show and popular podcast is produced by KCRW, NPR's flagship station in Los Angeles, and airs on WDET-FM in Detroit. WDET was again a partner in the Freep Film Festival.

More than 30 films and events made up the 2023 festival. Festival films screened at several venues, including the Detroit Film Theatre at the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Michigan Science Center, the Detroit Historical Museum and Frame in Hazel Park.

Other events the Free Press produces include:

- Top Workplaces
- Detroit High School Sports Awards
- Shining Light Regional Cooperation Awards