Oakland County’s 2015 Business Investment ‘On Fire’; Six Month Tally Tops 2014 Totals by Nearly $100 Million

Oakland County business investment through the first six months of 2015 is more than three quarters of a billion dollars – surpassing the total business investment for all of 2014 by nearly $100 million.

Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson said recently that the June Emerging Sectors® report revealed private business investment of more than $756.8 million through the first six months of 2015. Business expansion, attraction and retention investment for all of 2014 was $658.7 million, a difference of $98.1 million. The county tracks business activity connected to the Emerging Sectors business attraction and retention strategy as well as more traditional investments such as automotive.

“I encourage the citizens of Oakland County to take a look at those numbers,” Patterson said. “Our economy is on fire. We are roaring back from the ravages of the Great Recession. Our future looks blindingly bright.”

...See INVESTMENT Page 5

8 Solutions to Fix the Great American Crisis

By Byron Allen

The great American hero Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. told us 50 years ago in one of his last speeches, “The Other America,” there are two Americas. One has privilege, education, housing, jobs, access to capital, and economic inclusion. And the other America does not. These two separate Americas will not survive. We need one America -- one that includes housing, education, jobs, access to capital, and economic inclusion for every American. This will create a stronger America.

...See SOLUTIONS Page 12

Crime is down and optimism is up these days in Pontiac.

By Mike Martindale

Bucking years of escalating numbers, Pontiac has experienced a 37 percent decrease in violent crime since 2011 when the Sheriff’s Office took over law enforcement in Pontiac, according to Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard.

...See CRIME Page 4

Muslims and Arab Americans Band Together To Rebuild Black Churches

See article on Page 11

Congresswoman Brenda L. Lawrence’s statement on Iran nuclear agreement.

See article on Page 7

Pontiac’s NZ Bryant is the national champ for the 65-69 yr Senior Olympians. Won in the 50, the 100, and the 200.

O.U. Student-Athletes Lead Horizon League With 125 Spring Honor Roll Selections..pg 13

Kenneth R. Burch
Attorney At Law

Personal Injury
Auto & Truck • Wrongful Death • Medical Malpractice
Premises Liability • All Accidents & Serious Injury

Phone: (248) 338-1242

O.U. Student-Athletes Lead Horizon League With 125 Spring Honor Roll Selections..pg 13
Survey Will Help Coalition Improve Community Health in Pontiac

The Healthy Pontiac, We Can (HPWC) Coalition is calling on Pontiac residents to complete a survey about their health and wellness. The results will help the HPWC Coalition respond to health trends in Pontiac and prioritize future initiatives. Participate by visiting www.oakgov.com/health. Or Contact Kathy Forzley, Health Officer/Manager of the Oakland County Health Division, at 248-858-1410.

“It is vital that we hear from Pontiac residents,” said Kathy Forzley, manager/health officer of Oakland County Health Division. “Their feedback will help Healthy Pontiac, We Can serve them better in the future.”

The survey gauges participants’ opinions on topics ranging from access to physical activity and grocery stores to thoughts about various health issues within their community. It also touches on general community characteristics such as use of public parks, feelings of community unity, and availability of medical and dental care facilities. Any Pontiac resident over the age of 18 is eligible to take the survey. To receive paper copies of the survey, please email healthypontiac@gmail.com. Surveys are available in English and Spanish.

The Pontiac Community Survey was first distributed to residents in 2011. Using results from that survey, Oakland County Health Division secured grant funds on behalf of HPWC for projects within Pontiac which included installing adult fitness stations and a walking trail in Oakland Park and developing and supporting two “pop-up” produce markets. Current projects include working with local grocery stores to implement a Healthy Bites, an in-store program that provides colorful signs with easy-to-use nutrition information to help customers identify healthier options when shopping, and installing bike racks and bike fix-it stations throughout Pontiac and along the Clinton River Trail.

About Healthy Pontiac, We Can! (HPWC)

Oakland County Health Division organized the HPWC Coalition in the spring of 2011 after receiving a Building Healthy Communities planning grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH). The mission of the coalition is to increase healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco-free living to create a vibrant community that supports healthy lifestyles for all.

To find out more information about HPWC, visit www.healthypontiac.org, facebook.com/healthypontiac.mi, @healthypontiac or email healthypontiac@gmail.com.
Vote Yes - Tuesday August 4, 2015 Sinking Fund Millage for Pontiac School District

The Pontiac Schools District is seeking 2.87 mills ($2.87 on each $1,000 of taxable value) for five years from property owners. For information and educational materials for the August 4, 2015 Sinking Fund millage, please contact (248) 451-6800

Pontiac Schools Sinking Fund Millage:

- Needed building repairs long overdue
- Funds will only go to repair schools
- Schools might close, without repairs
- District performance is rebounding
- Student enrollment, scores improving
- Finances are better, deficit shrinking
- This millage is only 40 cents a day

Vote Yes!
Aug 4th

Pontiac School District
Sinking Fund Millage

Property owners will improve their neighborhood schools for just 40 cents a day. This is a win-win for Pontiac property values and for Pontiac Schools!

* Based on a home worth $100,000 with an assessed value of $50,000.

If the new millage is approved, we will be able to make critical building repairs that will provide Pontiac children with a safe, secure and healthy environment - without compromising educational programs.

View actual photos of real school building needs (along with more voting information) on the Pontiac School District website at

http://tinyurl.com/PSDAug4

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CRIME...continued from Page 1

From 6,025 violent crimes reported in 2011, the total has dropped to 3,750 in 2014, a decrease of 2,285 offenses, ranging from homicides to burglaries.

Some violent crime categories have been cut in half or better: homicides, from 16 deaths in 2012 to four last year; assaults, from 2,415 in 2011 to 1,275 in 2014; burglaries, from 1,261 in 2011 to 589 in 2014; and robberies, from 248 in 2011 to 153 last year.

Bouchard credits the hard work and efforts of his deputies, who took over patrols on July 31, 2011; active community leaders and organizations; churches whose influence extends far beyond Sunday services; and most of all, the community, eager to shed itself of those who would destroy it.

“No knock on the previous Pontiac Police Department, but they had serious money and manpower problems,” Bouchard said. “They had maybe 40 officers on the street when we immediately brought in 74 officers. We were able to nearly double the manpower and focus our energy to cut arrest time in half. They had a backlog in emergency calls and an average of 80 minutes response time to a 911 call. Now we are there at six minutes or under.”

The takeover is reaping benefits. Not only are streets and neighborhoods safer than they were four years ago, but the downturn in crime also has been credited with spurring investment in the city, Bouchard said.

He and Mayor Deidre Waterman remarked about lowered crime rates at a recent groundbreaking for the M1 Concourse near Woodward Avenue and South Boulevard. That’s where a vacant 27-acre lot where General Motors cars were built for decades will soon be transformed into a performance track and private auto “condos,” where car collectors will store and work on their prized vehicles.

In a state of the city address last week, Waterman noted $754 million in development plans is finding its way to Pontiac, including a $124 million investment by GM and a federally funded economic recovery plan. There has been a 9 percent rise in property values, and one-third of the city’s 900 blighted homes were bulldozed over the past year.

“Stay tuned for what’s next,” Waterman said.

Pontiac went through three emergency managers, beginning with Fred Leeb, appointed by then-Gov. Jennifer Granholm in March 2009. Leeb lasted a year and was replaced by Michael Stamppler, who served until August 2011.

During his time, Stamppler signed a letter of understanding with the Oakland County Sheriff’s Office to contract services in 2011 and disbanded the police force. Stamppler also quit that year and was replaced by Louis Schimmel, who remained until August 2013.

Pontiac on the move

Residential property assessments increased 9.18 percent in Pontiac from 2014 to 2015, according to the Oakland County Equalization Division.

“Rising property values in Pontiac show the impact of new leadership, blight elimination efforts, a substantial reduction in crime and hundreds of millions of dollars in economic development,” Oakland County Treasurer Andy Meisner said.

“A rebounding property tax base helps the city provide essential services to residents and is a critical component of Pontiac’s comeback.”

Bill Lee, CEO of the long-shuttered Strand Theatre on Saginaw Street, which is slated to reopen in February, said, “Patrols and officers are very visible, both day and night, seven days a week.

“You can sense the comfort when parking, eating at the restaurants and when visitors are checking out downtown with all that is happening. With Slows (Bar-B-Q restaurant) and Strand opening, we both will be attracting people from not just the Metro area, but from all over the entire region.”

Alex Resnik, his wife and 2-year-old son moved into the Seminole neighborhood west of downtown more than a year ago, and “it’s been great” he said.

“We wouldn’t have moved into Pontiac if we felt it was unsafe,” he said.

Ruth Johnson and Stephanie White, both longtime Pontiac residents, were lunching at the Lafayette Market Cafe. They said they feel safe in the city but were glad to hear that crime is dropping even more.

“Now I wish the public school system and the city could get together to do something about our schools,” Johnson said.

...See PONTIAC Page 5
WHAT’S HAPPENING IN OAKLAND COUNTY

Oakland County’s 2015 Business Investment ‘On Fire’; Six Month Tally Tops 2014 Totals by Nearly $100 Million

Investment...continued from page 1

In June, Patterson reported Emerging Sectors total investment had topped $3 billion since the program began in 2004. It was created to diversify Oakland County’s economy which had been heavily dependent on the automotive industry. The strategy focused on targeting international companies that expressed an interest in expanding operations into North America and North American companies that identified Oakland County as the right business location. The targeted sectors include advanced electronics, advanced materials, alternative energy, information technology/communications, aerospace and defense/homeland security.

The June report lists businesses such as Canada-based Magna International Inc., Troy-based Energy Power Systems and Bmax USA, subsidiary of a French tech company called I-Pulse, among nine companies who announced total investment in the county of $145.4 million, resulting in more than 1,000 new jobs and 759 retained jobs. Magna projects in Lyon Township and Novi total $104 million in investment.

Since inception, Emerging Sectors has 346 business successes resulting in total investment of $3.1 billion; 35,689 new jobs and 20,062 retained jobs. A success is a company that is either new to Oakland County or expanded here when it considered moving to another state or country.

The county’s Business Development Team works closely with Emerging Sector companies, providing assistance in such areas as site selection, workforce development, financing strategies, and coordinating state and local incentives. The team literally travels the world selling businesses on the advantages of locating in Oakland County. The county has more than 1,000 global firms from 39 countries.

Patterson said economists may debate reasons for the investment surge this year but he has his own theories.

“First, pent-up demand that is now being served,” he said. “Second, our gamble on diversifying our economic base beyond automotive is paying off in spades. And finally, there is a term, ‘Cumulative Causation,’ which means success breeds success. We are all beneficiaries.”

The most successful sectors in total investment are health care/life science (Medical Main Street) at $978 million, IT/communications (Tech 248), at $620 million and alternative energy at $548.9 million.

Patterson said the strategy is responsible for new investment in the county, on average, of $772,000 every day for 11 years.

“If I’ve said it once, I’ve said it a thousand times: Oakland County is the economic engine that drives the Michigan economy,” Patterson said.

PONTIAC... continued from Page 4

Octavia Carson recently graduated from Central Michigan University with a degree in public relations and has enlisted in the Navy. She said while lower crime numbers and investment in Pontiac sound good, she hopes they don’t harm low-income residents.

“I’ve seen some buildings developed and it’s cool — I just hope it doesn’t push people out,” Carson said. “You have to wonder, are people going off and committing those crimes somewhere else?”

City Councilwoman Mary Pietila is upbeat about the future, but also realistic.

“Yes, streets and neighborhoods are safer, (but) never will we have the streets of Mayberry RFD,” Pietila said. “Family morals have changed tremendously since the ’50s and ’60s. But we know the deputies are out and about, close by with a much faster response time. Although we have many of the same officers as we had in 2010, they have many more resources available to them, making their jobs easier to catch the wrongdoers.”

“Thank you for your service”

Bouchard retained 50 Pontiac police officers and made them deputies, and brought back 13 other Pontiac officers who had been laid off in a series of budget cuts. The Pontiac department went from nearly 180 officers to about 50 officers between 2008 and 2011. Most retained Pontiac officers remained at the sheriff’s Pontiac substation.

Pietila has often gone on ride-alongs with deputies, sharing their view of the city. Rather than viewing law enforcement as indifferent or the enemy, Pietila said she has seen people smiling at deputies and saying, “Thank you for your service.”

“They assist deputies by filling out incident reports, and are participate when it comes to eliminating or at least getting a handle on crime in our neighborhood,” she said.

Over the past decade, the cash-strapped city’s Police Department was rocked by budget cuts and layoffs, and at times had only a couple of patrol cars on the streets. It was finally disbanded in favor of contracting with the county sheriff.

At the time, the change was controversial and an emotional move for many within and outside the department. Some residents predicted the move would be too costly and the “brown uniforms” of deputies would never be accepted in Pontiac.

Millions in savings touted

Schimmel, the former emergency manager, said contracting with the sheriff and fire service from Waterford Township has saved the city millions of dollars.

“I’m out of the picture now, but I have not talked to anyone who has anything other than praise for the moves we made with the Sheriff’s Office and Waterford fire,” said Schimmel.

Pastor Douglas Jones of Welcome Missionary Baptist Church said crime is down because of the increased “visibility and presence of police” and “community interaction.”

“People are reporting things they didn’t before because police are responding,” Jones said. “People believe action is being taken, leading to results. And that is good for Pontiac.”

Jones said Pontiac residents are breaking out of a “don’t tell” attitude concerning crime in their neighborhoods. “People want their community safe for their children, their families and businesses,” he said.

mmartindale@detroitnews.com

Public Comments Requested for Grant

The City of Pontiac has applied for a federal grant to provide funds to support law enforcement efforts to help fight violent crime. The city is seeking public comments. The public comment period will end at 5:00 p.m., August 17, 2015. Comments should be sent in writing by mail to Jaki Holzer, 47450 Woodward Avenue, Pontiac, Michigan 48342 or by e-mail

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There must be no ambiguity regarding the United States’ readiness to enforce all options should Iran pursue development of a nuclear weapon and this agreement must deny Iran any and all pathways to a nuclear weapon while providing clear guidelines and enforcement mechanisms for removing any threat of such a weapon against the U.S., Israel, and our European and Gulf allies.

Though some of my colleagues in Congress have rushed to judgment on this agreement, either in criticism or praise, I will reserve further comment until I have had time to review this agreement in its entirety and I have been able to discuss the profound implications of such an agreement with key stakeholders and concerned constituents in my District. I am also scheduled to travel to the region within a few weeks.

I would like to thank President Obama, Secretary Kerry and the countless U.S. officials who have been dedicated to this crucial task over the past two years. While Congress has a great deal of work ahead regarding the review of this agreement, we must not fail to recognize the historic achievement made today. I congratulate all those involved for their valiant efforts to stabilize the Gulf region and pave the path for peace and prosperity for the United States, for Israel, and for the world.”

For more information, contact Tracy Manzer, Communications Director for Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence, at Tracy.Manzer@mail.house.gov or (202) 225-5802.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – “I am looking forward to reviewing the full scope and text of the agreement that was reached with Iran today. I have been very clear in my previous comments and statements that I am extremely sensitive to the concerns that many of my constituents have shared with me regarding any nuclear agreement with Iran.

“I am also scheduled to travel to the region within a few weeks. I would like to thank President Obama, Secretary Kerry and the countless U.S. officials who have been dedicated to this crucial task over the past two years. While Congress has a great deal of work ahead regarding the review of this agreement, we must not fail to recognize the historic achievement made today. I congratulate all those involved for their valiant efforts to stabilize the Gulf region and pave the path for peace and prosperity for the United States, for Israel, and for the world.”

For more information, contact Tracy Manzer, Communications Director for Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence, at Tracy.Manzer@mail.house.gov or (202) 225-5802.

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Gary Peters (MI) recently addressed the NAACP Annual Convention in Philadelphia, PA as part of a panel on NAACP’s legislative priorities. Peters discussed criminal justice reform and the National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2015, legislation he introduced to create a National Criminal Justice Commission to review and overhaul the criminal justice system. Peters introduced the legislation along with Republican Senators Lindsey Graham (SC) and John Cornyn (TX) in April. Peters was joined on the legislative panel by U.S. Senator Cory Booker (NJ) and Representatives Bobby Scott (VA-03), G.K. Butterfield (NC-01), Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18), Chaka Fattah (PA-02) and Al Green (TX-09).

“America has reached a point where we can no longer deny that justice is neither fair nor equal in our country,” said Senator Peters. “We must act now to understand the root causes of this inequity and reform our criminal justice system so it works for every American—no matter who you are, where you live or how much money you have in your pocket.”

Over the last year, incidents and civil unrest in areas like Ferguson, MO, Staten Island, NY, Baltimore, MD, North Charleston, SC and Inkster, MI, have highlighted the need for a top-to-bottom evaluation of the criminal justice system.

The National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2015 would create a 14-member, bipartisan National Criminal Justice Commission made up of Presidential and Congressional appointees, including experts on law enforcement, criminal justice, victims’ rights, civil liberties and social services.

The Commission would be charged with completing a 18-month comprehensive review of the national criminal justice system, including federal, state, local and tribal criminal justice systems, and issuing recommendations for changes in oversight, policies, practices and laws to reduce crime, increase public safety and promote confidence in the criminal justice system.

“The National Criminal Justice Commission is a vital step to finding solutions to the lingering problem of injustice that has shaken the public’s faith in the American ideal that justice is blind,” Peters said. “The Commission will make sure policymakers have a full understanding of the reforms and best practices we need to reduce crime, protect our communities, help law enforcement do their jobs safely and effectively, and most importantly, ensure that the scales of justice are balanced.”

The National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2015 is supported by a broad, bipartisan coalition of civil rights, criminal justice and law enforcement organizations, including the NAACP, the National Action Network, the National Sheriffs Association, Fraternal Order of Police, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, International Chiefs of Police, CURE and more.

The NAACP’s Annual Convention brings together thousands of advocates from across the country to set the organization’s legislative and policy priorities for the year. Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the United States.

“These problems are not easy and there are no quick answers,” Peters added. “But together we can achieve the promise of this great country equal justice and fair treatment for every American under the law.”
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FACILITIES MAINTENANCE
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WATER RESOURCES COMMISSIONERS OFFICE
• Engineering Aide Full Time $32,399.90 - $42,195.14
• Sewage Trmt Plant Operator Trainee* Full Time $29,119.74 - $32,648.46
closing 07/17/15
• Pump Maintenance Supervisor I Full Time $47,345.74 - $61,622.60

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COUNTY-WIDE
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PUBLIC HEALTH
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• Public Health Technician Part Time $14.79 - $19.26 Hourly
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Are you interested in a job on this list? Apply promptly! Examinations for these positions are continuous and applications will only be accepted until there are sufficient applicants to meet the County’s current recruitment needs. Oakland County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.
A robust economic recovery and strong fiscal practices are enabling Oakland County to focus on attracting and retaining employees and improving government facilities, County Executive L. Brooks Patterson said during his annual budget address to the Board of Commissioners today. Patterson's recommended budget is balanced through the year 2020.

“Oakland County’s future is bright: Employment is up, housing starts and prices are up, and the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well,” Patterson said. “Much of Oakland County’s financial success results from its focus on long-term financial planning – emphasizing thoughtful strategic management versus crisis management.”

The general fund budgets for fiscals 2016-2018 are approximately $429 million, $437 million, and $442 million respectively. The total budgets are $825 million, $832 million and $835 million.

The proposed budget takes into account the second part of Patterson’s .15 mills property tax reduction which he announced in his 2015 State of the County speech. The commissioners passed a .10 mills decrease this past spring for the summer tax bills. Patterson’s proposed budget calls for the implementation of the additional .05 mills tax cut. That will result in a 4.04 millage rate.

Now that the labor market is heating up and one-third of the county’s workforce is expected to retire or leave voluntarily in the next three to five years, Patterson wants Oakland County to remain competitive for attracting and retaining employees. To achieve that, he recommended:

- A general salary increase for each of the next three years effective Oct. 1, 2015 (three percent for fiscal 2016, two percent for fiscal 2017, and one percent for fiscal 2018);
- To reinstate the county’s match of up to $300 annually for the voluntary deferred compensation plan 457(b) effective January 1, 2016 (this is separate from the county’s defined contribution retirement plan for employees);
- A $25 bi-weekly increase in the county’s Retiree Health Savings plan for employees from $50 to $75. The county eliminated traditional retiree health coverage for new employees in 2006.

“We have experienced tremendous support from employees, most labor unions, and elected officials in holding the line on wages,” Patterson said. “Now it’s time to ensure we can retain our employees and attract new ones when we have open positions.”

Patterson also recommended a $4 million increase in the county’s Building Improvement Fund from $1.5 million to $5.5 million. An ongoing appropriation of this amount annually would provide sufficient funding for projected standard capital improvement needs of existing facilities over the next 10 years. The county made only necessary repairs and improvements during the Great Recession as another way of reducing costs. The additional building improvement funds will go toward improving security in county buildings and general repairs that were deferred during the Great Recession.

Other highlights of Patterson’s budget message to the Board of Commissioners included:

- Patterson’s economic diversification initiatives such as Emerging Sectors, Medical Main Street, and Tech 248 are fueling Oakland County’s recovery. After the initial recovery burst in 2011-2012 when almost 50,000 new jobs were added, job growth continues at a moderate pace with nearly 30,000 jobs added during the two years of 2013-2014.
- University of Michigan economists Dr. George A. Fulton and Donald R. Grimes forecasted that about 49,000 new jobs will be added in Oakland County over the next three-year period from 2015 through 2017.
- Oakland County’s most recent unemployment rate of 4.1 percent in April 2015 is below both Michigan’s rate of 5.4 percent and the national average of 5.4 percent.
- Oakland County’s per capita personal income of $57,035 for 2013 is the highest of any county in Michigan and higher than the national average.
- Sheriff deed foreclosures continue to decline and are currently estimated to be 1,500 in 2015, the lowest level in the 10-year period dating back to 2005.
- After five years of continued declines, property assessments finally stabilized in 2013 when assessed value increased county-wide by a modest 1.16 percent with no change in taxable value. Since then, assessed value has increased significantly by 7.11 percent in 2014 and 10.39 percent in 2015. The increase in 2015 assessed value is the largest increase since 1999, signaling a robust recovery.
- Taxable value is increasing at a more modest pace as a result of constitutional tax increase limitations. Taxable value increased in 2014 and 2015 by 1.65 percent and 3.69 percent respectively.
- The recommended budget includes an additional $2 million annually in the gross amount from the Convention Facility Liquor Tax. The additional budgeted revenue is partially offset by an additional $1 million expenditure requirement to fund the Substance Abuse Coordinating Agency operated by the Community Mental Health Authority, resulting in a net $1 million increase for the county’s general operations.
- The recommended budget will see a $1.8 million reduction in the transfer of funds from the Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund (DTRF) to the General Fund for both fiscals 2017 and 2018. As a result, the amount that will be transferred from the DTRF to the General Fund will be $10.8 million in fiscal 2016 and $9.0 million in each of fiscals 2017 and 2018.

Budget hearings will begin Thursday, July 23 at 10:00 a.m. at the Board of Commissioners Finance Committee meeting. The full board will vote on the budget on Thursday, Sept. 17 at 9:30 a.m. To view Patterson’s complete recommended budget, go to www.OakGov.com/mgtbud/fiscal and click on “FY2016 – FY2018 County Executive Recommended Budget.”
Officials announce $5 million available for small business microloans in Pontiac

By Dave Phillips

Pontiac and Oakland County officials hope a Monday announcement of $5 million being made available for small business microloans is a step toward diversifying and expanding mid-level businesses in the city.

The public-private partnership involving Huntington Bank was announced Monday. The microloans, ranging from $1,000 to $250,000, will come from a $5 million pool underwritten by Huntington Bank and will be available to small businesses in Pontiac.

The program is perfect for cities like Pontiac, which "have poverty (and a) lack of resources but have also got that fiery entrepreneurial spirit flowing through the city," Oakland County Treasurer Andy Meisner said.

"Victory for us is not just rolling this out. It's getting a steady stream of entrepreneurs in Pontiac and around the county."

Six potential Pontiac businesses are going through the program right now, including a cheesecake company, a store offering affordable fine suits and an Italian ice shop, said Scott Wolffis, senior vice president at Huntington.

"It's a great fill-in for companies that have ideas, that know what they want to do but don't quite know how to take that next step," Wolffis said.

The program includes education in different areas of business. The city of Detroit has a similar program and Huntington has already closed on about $1 million in loans there. A pool of $25 million will eventually be available across the state.

"We're focusing on Pontiac right now," Wolffis said.

The 10-year-old bank said that its partnership with Pontiac Mayor Deirdre Waterman is "underscoring the importance of localized economic development," and that it is "a testament to the City of Pontiac's strong commitment to local businesses.""The biggest growth in terms of economic development in Pontiac is in those smaller businesses that hire two to 10 employees. That is one of the greatest potentials for growth in Pontiac," Waterman said.

"Having access to capital in this market is in that amount and that sector for that group of entrepreneurs will really help to boost that sector in Pontiac," Waterman said.

Waterman and Meisner agreed that Pontiac, as the seat of Oakland County, plays a large role in the success of the county.

"In order to have a strong county seat and we have had an increased partnership of those in Oakland County who are helping us along that path," Waterman said.

Wolffis said this program "doesn't really fit within traditional bank programming but is geared toward entrepreneurs who have an idea but maybe have not reached the point where they've created a business plan."

Meisner said a key is to remove financing issues that potential entrepreneurs may have, including poor credit scores and even illiteracy.

"In a community like Pontiac that has real credit issues, that right there can be a deal breaker for loans," he said.

"You don't have to know how to read to bake a fantastic cheesecake. We have literacy issues in Oakland County. We have literacy issues in Pontiac. Maybe it's going to be a little easier to break down that barrier (through a program like this)."

The city is well-versed in regionalism, having chipped its payroll to 28 employees in part by contracting police and fire services, and that will be a benefit, Waterman said.

"Now I call ourselves the poster child of regionalism," she said.

"We are prepared to think regionally and be a part of that regional aspect. There are displaced ideas out there."

Article courtesy of the Oakland Press

HOW TO OBTAIN A LOAN

To learn more about the Pontiac microloan program and whether your business qualifies, contact the Oakland County One Stop Shop Business Center at 248-858-0783. The center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday and is located at 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Building 41W in Waterford. More information can also be found at www.oakgov.com/advantageoakland.

Muslims and Arab Americans Band Together To Rebuild Black Churches

A coalition of Muslim and Arab American organizations have launched a crowdfunding campaign to help rebuild eight burned-down black churches in the southern United States, according to Quartz.

The Respond With Love campaign, organized by MuslimARC, the Arab American Association of New York, and digital media start-up Ummah Wide, has already amassed $28,753 since launching July 2. The coalition noted that the attacks in Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, and Georgia “are […] on Black culture, Black religion and Black lives.”

These attacks came after a shooting on Emanual AME Church, a historically black church in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17 that killed 9 parishioners.

“We want for others what we want for ourselves: the right to worship without intimidation, the right to safety, and the right to property,” the campaigners wrote.

The funds raised will go to churches with the most need with the help of pastors and church leaders the coalition had consulted.

“The American Muslim community cannot claim to have experienced anything close to the systematic and institutionalized racism and racist violence that has been visited upon African Americans,” California-based imam and Muslim scholar Zaid Shakir wrote on the campaign website.

“We do, however, understand the climate of racially inspired hate and bigotry that is being reignited in this country. We want to let our African American brothers and sisters know that we stand in solidarity with them during this dark hour.”

The initiative will run through July 18, the second day of Eid al-Fitr.

8 Solutions to Fix the Great American Crisis

By Byron Allen

SOLUTIONS continued from Page 1

Unfortunately, the speech that Dr. King gave a little over 50 years ago sounds like he gave it yesterday. Every day we are seeing the ugly symptoms of two Americas. Whether it is Ferguson, Oakland, or Baltimore, the escalation continues.

I was very disappointed in President Obama when he called those young men in Baltimore “thugs” and “criminals.” He is the President of the United States and he should be above name calling. But beyond the name calling, here’s what I found really disappointing: this is not the hope and change I believe the majority of Americans financially supported and voted for. President Obama and others know that we have positioned the African-American community to fail - the statistical data proves it. This failure has now become the great American crisis.

These young men and others around the country that President Obama called “thugs” and “criminals” do not have access to a quality education. They do not have access to jobs. They do not have access to capital that is not predatory. What they do have plenty of access to are drugs, alcohol, guns, and gangs. This is Economic Genocide.

What America must remember is that we are approximately 327 million people out of 7 billion globally. For America to compete with our international neighbors, we need all American citizens to bring their best intellectual capital and be fully engaged - today and in the future.

Unfortunately, under the Obama Administration the statistical data has gotten worse and not better. Under the Bush Administration, unemployment for African-Americans was 10 percent. Under President Obama it has increased to 14 percent.

Poverty for African-Americans under the Bush Administration was 25 percent. Under President Obama, it has grown to 27 percent. The median income for African-Americans under the Bush Administration was $38,409. Under the Obama Administration, the median income has dropped to $33,321.

For African-Americans, home ownership has also dropped to a 25-year low. The wealth gap between white America and black America under President Obama has grown by 30 percent. These numbers are completely unacceptable. Every day we turn on our televisions broadcasting more tension and I can’t help but remember the words of music icon, Gil Scott-Heron: “The revolution will not be televised.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said it best: “This will do nothing but invite social disaster.” As he warned us more than 50 years ago, these numbers prove that America is on the verge of social collapse.

Coretta Scott-King was a personal friend and she told me, as African-Americans we have faced four major challenges: 1. End slavery 2. End Jim Crow 3. Achieve civil rights 4. Achieve economic inclusion. Without a quality education and economic inclusion, we are nothing more than modern-day slaves. Let’s truly take off the chains.

President Obama, with very little time left within your administration, clearly we have a lot of work to do. So here is what we need to accomplish to make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream and all of our dreams a reality:

1. Education reform: With a 47 percent inner-city high school dropout rate (Baltimore alone is 59 percent), we need education reform. We must invest more capital and resources to educate our children so that they are prepared to achieve a college-level education.

a. Hire college students to tutor pre-K through 12. This will help provide much needed jobs and educate our children at the same time.

b. Issue American education bonds that pay a tax-free yield. The bonds will help educate our children and the tax-free yield will incentivize the $15 trillion in cash liquidity that Americans have to invest.

2. Ensure access to non-predatory home loans: U.S. taxpayers invested approximately $475 billion to bail out the banks and other large corporations. Audit the banks and mandate that they make home loans to all Americans - especially African-Americans, the furthest left behind - so that the African-American community can close the large home-ownership gap.

3. Audit the banks and mandate that they make business loans to African-American owned businesses: This is very important because 60 percent of the employment in America is provided by small businesses, and African-Americans are not able to employ people in our communities without the necessary capital.

4. Make the Internet free: At the very least, you must make the Internet free in areas that are poverty-stricken. Without the Internet and access to information, poverty-stricken households will never catch up to households above the poverty line - throwing the African-American community deeper into the stone ages.

This is also in the best interest of homeland security. Every American should have access to real time information at affordable prices.

5. Equality in justice: Your former Attorney General Eric Holder told the world that with all things being equal, African-American males receive 20 percent longer sentences than white males committing the same crime. Please launch civil rights investigations to correct this and numerous other injustices.

6. Government economic inclusion: Make sure that 100 percent African-American owned media participates in your annual $2 billion advertising budget such as “Join the Army,” “Join the Navy,” “Join the Marines,” et cetera. This ad support will provide much needed capital to create jobs and help to ensure that all of our voices are heard and widely distributed - which is the very definition of a true democracy.

7. Access to capital: President Obama, you control approximately $1 trillion in government worker pension fund money. None of that capital is managed by people in the African-American community or invested with entrepreneurs from the African-American community. This access to capital and investments will provide much needed jobs and opportunities in our communities.

8. Stand up to corporate institutionalized racism: A top AT&T executive was recently caught in the horrific act of sharing a meme that used the “N” word. A subsequent lawsuit revealed AT&T had been covering it up for close to two years, perpetuating institutionalized racism. The executive in question was a “key player” overseeing the merger of AT&T and DirecTV, TMZ reported. Do not let AT&T buy DirecTV for $67.5 billion and become the largest telecommunications and television company without launching a civil rights investigation and making sure AT&T settles the lawsuits against them for these heinous racist acts. If we don’t send a message to corporate America that institutionalized racism is completely unacceptable, black America will never truly participate in the economic landscape.

President Obama, for most African-Americans, the American dream is a nightmare. This nightmare has become the great American crisis. Half the women in this country are living at, or below the poverty line. If our mothers fail, most likely so will our children.

President Obama, please remember we bought the hope and change you promised us. If we do not achieve economic inclusion, as laid out to us by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 50 years ago, there will be no change and we will lose all hope.

Most of the solutions on this list you can achieve without the support of Congress.

President Obama, please stop the economic genocide.

Follow Byron Allen on Twitter: www.twitter.com/RealByronAllen
OAKLAND COUNTY BUSINESS CALENDAR

• Walk-In-Start-Up Thursdays is 9:30 a.m.-noon and 1:30-4:30 p.m. every Thursday at the Oakland County Executive Office Building Conference Center, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford Township. It is a small business counseling initiative for individuals who want to launch a business. They will receive confidential, one-on-one advice from an experienced business consultant with no appointment necessary, first come, first served basis and each session is limited to 15 minutes. There is no fee. www.AdvantageOakland.com, 248-858-0783.

• Marketing Your Business workshop is being offered by The Michigan Small Business Development Center at 1-4 p.m. July 21 at Kettering University Campus Center in Flint. Registration can be made online at clients.sbdcmichigan.org/workshop.aspx?eckey=00559027

• CEED Lending Small Business Loan Orientation is 8:30-11 a.m. July 22 at Lafayette Market Community Room, 154 N Saginaw Street, Pontiac, free event. The Pontiac Regional Chamber is looking for thirty small businesses that are serious about taking their company to the next level partnering with CEED Lending. Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses, and the Oakland County One Stop Shop Business Center to share resources on funding, training, and marketing opportunities. Register online at ow.ly/Po8qD

• TiE Detroit, the Detroit chapter of the global non-profit organization for entrepreneurs, will host the “Interactive Growth Strategy Workshop with Raj Vattikutti” 5:30-8:30 p.m. July 23 at Engineering Society of Detroit, 20700 Civic Center Drive, Suite 450, Southfield. The event will begin with networking, appetizers and introductions. A fireside chat with Vattikutti, a philanthropist, entrepreneur and founding charter member of TiE Detroit, will begin at 6:30 p.m. Hosted by Ford Credit’s Global Project Manager Anu Gopalakrishnan, Vattikutti will discuss how to move a company’s top line forward and redefine and expand the addressable market. Attendees are encouraged to submit their past, current and future business challenges and questions for Raj ahead of time online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/37Jl5SM.

• SCORE Detroit presents “Social Media for Small Business Owners,” 8:45 a.m.-noon, July 25 at 28200 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, detroit.score.org, 313-226-7947.

• SCORE and Entrepreneurs Network Of Michigan present interactive seminar for 50 and up, to consider starting a business, 6-8 p.m. July 29 at Next Center 2121 Midvale, Birmingham. To sign up for free, contact Ike Engelbaum, founder of Entrepreneurs Network Of Michigan at 313-929-6105, www.sba.gov/content/50-entrepreneurs.

• Business Research: Feasibility to Expansion is 6-8:30 p.m. Aug. 12 at Oakland County Executive Office Building Conference Center, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford Township, free workshop, register at www.AdvantageOakland.com/businessworkshops, 248-858-0783.

• Business Start-up-The Essentials is 8:45 a.m.-noon, Aug. 12 at Michigan First Credit Union, 27000 Evergreen, Lathrup Village. Detroit SCORE’s introductory workshop, $25 per person. Veterans may attend for free, 313-226-7947, detroit.score.org.

• Starting a Business is 9-11:30 a.m. Aug. 13 at Oakland County Executive Office Building Conference Center, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford Township, free workshop, register at register at www.AdvantageOakland.com/businessworkshops, 248-858-0783.

• Team SBA Financing Roundtable is 9 a.m.-noon, Aug. 13 at Oakland County Executive Office Building Conference Center, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford Township, free workshop, register at www.AdvantageOakland.com/businessworkshops, 248-858-0783.

• Create Your Marketing Plan is 9 a.m.-noon, Aug. 18 at Oakland County Executive Office Building Conference Center, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford Township, register at www.AdvantageOakland.com/businessworkshops, 248-858-0783, $40 per person.

• 5 Steps to LinkedIn Mastery is 9-11:30 a.m. Aug. 19 at Oakland County Executive Office Building Conference Center, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford Township, register at www.AdvantageOakland.com/businessworkshops, 248-858-0783, $40 per person.


• Business Start-up Marketing is 8:45 a.m.-noon, Aug. 19 at Michigan First Credit Union, 27000 Evergreen, Lathrup Village, Hosted by Detroit SCORE, $25 per person, 313-226-7947, detroit.score.org.

Sports Breif

OU Student-Athletes Lead Horizon League With 125 Spring Honor Roll Selections

For the fourth straight semester, Oakland University student-athletes lead the Horizon League in Honor Roll selections. The Golden Grizzlies saw 125 student-athletes meet the honor roll benchmark, placing them above all other schools in the conference.

Since joining the Horizon League in 2014, Oakland has been the leaders of the conference in every semester in honor roll selections from their student-athletes.

Holly Kerstner, Associate Athletics Director for Student Services and Senior Woman Administrator at Oakland University, is extremely pleased with the way OU student-athletes have performed in the classroom.

“I am incredibly proud, and while we have high expectations for our student-athletes and express the importance of academics, they carry out the hard work which leads to them continuing to lead the league,” Kerstner said.

“I believe we have a strong staff that stresses the importance of academics and an incredible experience as a whole here at Oakland. We tie those three areas into everything we do, and we have dedicated student-athletes who are not only competitive on the field, court, track, and in the pool, but also in the classroom.”

In order to qualify for the honor roll, student-athletes must participate in one of the 19 league sports in the current season, earn a minimum grade point average of 3.2 and complete three semesters at the university as a full-time student.

In this past spring honor roll selection, the Golden Grizzlies led the pack by only six selections, topping Valparaiso who finished second on the list. Milwaukee, Wright State and Detroit all followed closely after.

Oakland had 14 of their sports contain student-athletes that made the honor roll.

Women’s track and field and cross country led the way in selections with 17. Women’s swimming, soccer, and volleyball all finished closely behind, while the other ten sports finished just below to round out the list.

Jessica Dood, a current volleyball player at OU and honor roll selection, understands how significant the accomplishment is and what it means to the university and the students.

“I think it’s awesome that Oakland has led the Horizon League in academics for as long as we’ve been apart of this conference,” Dood said.

“It’s a great feeling to not only be a part of a community that is succeeding in athletics, but also knowing that we are leading the conference academically, which makes being a part of Oakland athletics that much better and even more rewarding.”

OU looks to continue the success of honor roll selections and keep their streak of being on top going as they enter into the next school year.

“Success is contagious and every person loves to feel that they are in the number one spot,” said Kerstner.
The Pontiac Regional Chamber is hosting the Kelly Miller Circus for the exhibition of an all new 2015 show. The circus will roll into town on Friday, August 14th. Everyone is invited to come out and watch the animals being unloaded and fed, witness the raising of the giant big top, followed by a special Tiger Meet & Greet. Activities will begin at 7:30a.m., and the tent will be raised at 9:00a.m. Guides will be furnished for school groups and anyone attending.

The traditional “old style” circus will present performances at 4:30pm & 7:30pm. Support the Pontiac Regional Chamber – buy your tickets in advance and save.

The 2015 season promises to be more exciting than ever with many new acts and entertainers to amaze and amuse you. Come out and enjoy a day of fun filled excitement at the circus.

**SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES**

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<thead>
<tr>
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**TOTAL INVESTMENT**

$2,000  $500  $100
Community Events

Fun for Seniors
Regular Scheduled Activities
Robert W. Bowens Senior Center
52 Bagley, Pontiac, MI 248-758-3240

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise Class</td>
<td>M.W.F.</td>
<td>10:00AM - 11:00AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Class</td>
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<td>Will resume in September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beginner Hustle Dance</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>6PM - 7PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden Opportunity</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>10AM - 12PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bingo</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1PM - 2PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>M.O.W. (Lunch)</td>
<td>Daily ($2.50)</td>
<td>12PM - 1PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewelry Making</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1PM - 3PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hustle Dance Class</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>5PM - 7PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billiard (Pool)</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9AM - 5PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cards</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9AM - 5PM</td>
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Golden Opportunity Weekly Meeting Tuesday 10AM - 12PM

Ruth Peterson Senior Center
990 Joslyn, Pontiac, MI 248-758-3282

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<td>Exercise Video</td>
<td>Daily every hour</td>
<td>9AM - 5PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zumba</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>10AM - 11AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bingo</td>
<td>Monday &amp; Thursday</td>
<td>1PM - 3PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinochle</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>11:30AM - 3PM</td>
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<td>M.O.W. (Lunch)</td>
<td>Daily ($2.50)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billiards (Pool)</td>
<td>Daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Lab</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9AM - 5PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutrition Class</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>11AM - 12PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hustle Dance Class - Beginners</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>11AM - 12PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hustle Dance Class</td>
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Upcoming Events
Senior’s Fun Night
6:00P.M. - 8:30P.M. (Free) must be 50 & up
Come enjoy a night with other seniors
Bring a Friend, Neighbor or Family member
Something for everyone

Billiards (Pool)
Chess
Checkers
Movies & Popcorn
Pinochle-Biz Whiz-500

Line Dancing
Friday, July 17 - Ruth Peterson Center - Friday, July 31 - Bowens Center - Friday, August 14 - Ruth Peterson Center - Friday, August 28 - Bowens Center

Please bring a dish to share
VOTE!

Tuesday, August 4

Pontiac School District
Sinking Fund Millage

Property owners will improve their neighborhood schools for just 40 cents a day*. This is a win-win for Pontiac property values and for Pontiac Schools!

* Based on a home worth $100,000 with an assessed value of $50,000.

If the new millage is approved, we will be able to make critical building repairs that will provide Pontiac children with a safe, secure and healthy environment - without compromising educational programs.

“Schools with sound roofs, updated heating systems and upgraded security are not only less expensive to maintain, but have been proven to positively impact student learning.”

-Superintendent, Kelley Williams

View actual photos of real school building needs (along with more voting information) on the Pontiac School District website at

http://tinyurl.com/PSDAug4