

# GET YOUR FATHEAD!

TODAY:  
PORCELLO

TUESDAY:  
ORDOÑEZ

WEDNESDAY:  
INGE

COLLECT FATHEADS, 2A | COUPON, 10A



DREW SHARP: TIGERS ROLL  
AS PORCELLO IS DEMOTED 1B

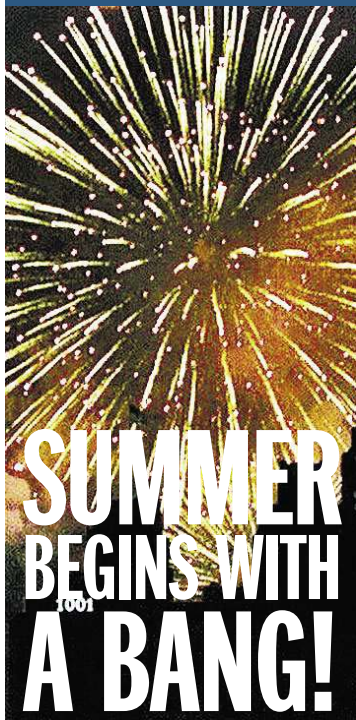


## Detroit Free Press

Monday 6.21.2010

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### SUMMER BEGINS WITH A BANG!

Tonight's the night for the annual fireworks display over the Detroit River. Rain is possible, but we've got tips for how to navigate downtown road closings and find a parking place. No. 1 tip: Leave plenty early.

**METRO, 3A**  
**FIND MORE FIREWORKS DISPLAYS AT FREEP.COM**

### COMBAT DEATH

Flint-area soldier, 24, is killed in Afghanistan

**METRO, 9A**

### BREAK ROOM

Jeff Seidel is ready for summer and Parrotheads

**PAGE 2A**

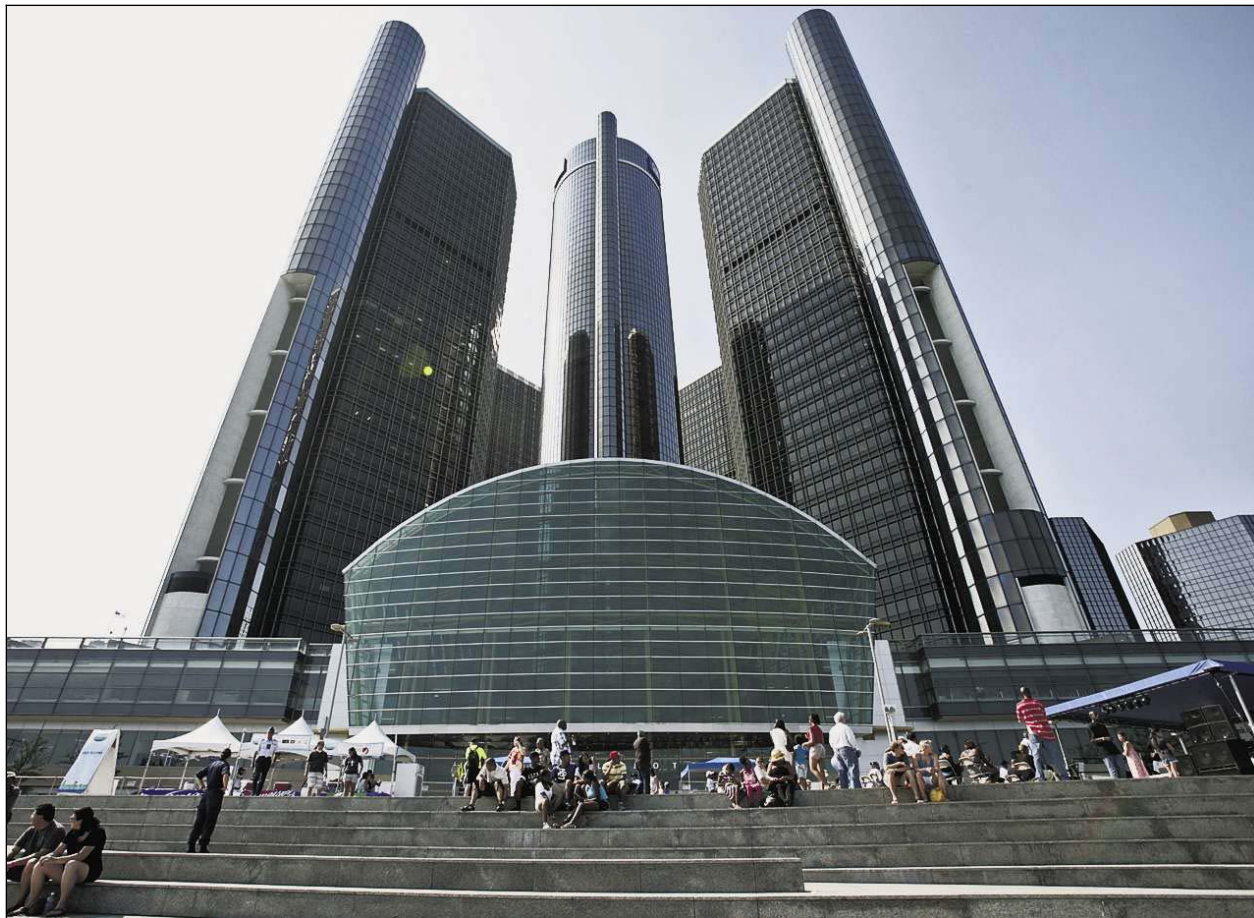


**Welcome summer**  
It'll be hot, but rain threatens riverfront fireworks  
**FORECAST, 2A**

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## 'GREAT NEWS FOR DOWNTOWN'



Photos by PATRICIA BECK/Detroit Free Press

People enjoy the GM Plaza and Promenade outside the GM Renaissance Center on Friday afternoon during the fourth annual Detroit River Days Festival. True to its name, the downtown landmark is enjoying a renaissance of optimism about its future.

## Business is looking up for Renaissance Center

Landmark gets a new lease on life as owner GM makes comeback

By JOHN GALLAGHER  
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Less than a year ago, the Renaissance Center looked like it might become Detroit's biggest vacant address. General Motors, which owns the RenCen, was going to move a huge chunk of its employees to Warren. The restaurant Seldom Blues was headed for a quick death.

Now, it's turning around. GM announced in February that it would keep its employees at the RenCen. At least two popular restaurant companies — Andiamo and Matt Prentice Restaurant Group — are vying to take over the Seldom Blues space.



A Ferris wheel is part of the fun at River Days. Inside the RenCen, some tenants are expanding into more space and new ones are moving in.

And real estate professionals are abuzz with reports that Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan may bring up to 3,000 employees from the suburbs to the RenCen's 500 Tower.

Jim Anderson, president and CEO of the research firm Urban Science, who has been a tenant since the late 1970s, said the im-

provement in outlook has been palpable.

"There's certainly a greater sense of optimism for the future, there's no doubt about that, since a year ago, and every month it seems to get a little better," Anderson said.

**■ RENCEN'S BRIGHT PROSPECTS. 2A**  
**■ FAST FACTS ON RENCEN. 2A**

## State air monitoring not good enough, critics charge

Health at risk, environmental groups say

By TINA LAM  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

*Day two of two*

Sharp cuts in the state budget for environmental regulation, down 75% since 2002, have hurt its ability to monitor air quality, putting the health of Michiganders at risk, environmental groups say.

The Sierra Club and others filed a complaint with the Environmental Protection Agency in March, asking it to investigate. "The state is failing to implement significant portions of the Clean Air Act," they said.

Too many large polluters are being issued new five-year permits to release air pollutants

without full evaluations by state regulators, their letter said.

Legislators haven't raised fees on polluters since 2001, which help pay staff. There are now 10 state staffers who do the work 50 once did in Wayne County's air quality division.

"The general public thinks someone must be looking at polluters' operations to make sure they're complying, but that's

just not the case anymore," said James Clift, policy director of the Michigan Environmental Council.

State officials say they're doing the best they can.

Asked whether he agrees that Michiganders' health is at risk, Vince Hellwig, the state's air quality chief, responded: "No comment."

**■ MONITORS STRUGGLING. 5A**



### Read Part One

The 48217 ZIP code is the state's most polluted.

**See a video and check a database of toxic ZIP code rankings in Michigan**

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## METRO

# Business network aims to aid metro entrepreneurs

\$3M grant promised for economic revival

By KATHERINE YUNG  
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Four major business development organizations in the region plan to announce today they are teaming up to form the new Business Accelerator Network of Southeast Michigan.

The network will consist of Ann Arbor SPARK, Automation Alley, the Macomb-Oakland University Incubator and TechTown. These organizations hope that by working closer together, they will be able to do a better job helping entrepreneurs in southeast Michigan.

“This will go a tremendous way to rebranding the region as a region of innovation,” said David Egner, executive director of the New Economy Initiative for Southeast Michigan, a philanthropic effort that is working to improve metro Detroit’s economy.

NEI has agreed to support the network with a \$3-million grant over three years.

Business development organizations have become cru-

cial players in reviving Michigan’s economy as more residents launch their own companies after being laid off or taking buyouts.

The network and NEI plan to build a database that will list all the business resources around the state that entrepreneurs can access. A test version of the database will be available in about nine months.

Other projects would involve venture capital funding, the development of best practices and intellectual property.

Michael Finney, CEO of Ann Arbor SPARK, sees one key way the network could benefit his organization.

Each month, eight to 10 start-up companies take advantage of SPARK’s services, double the number 18 months ago. But about a quarter of the companies that contact SPARK are from outside Washtenaw County. The network could help SPARK assist these companies, Finney said.

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## Macomb

SHELBY TOWNSHIP

### Teen pulled from lake dies

A 16-year-old boy who was pulled Thursday from a man-made lake at a subdivision was taken off life support Saturday and died, police Lt. Thomas Kohl said.

The teen died at Children’s Hospital of Michigan in Detroit.

The teen, whom police did not identify, was pulled from the lake in the area of 22 Mile and M-53 where youths were celebrating the last day of school, police said.

It was unclear whether the teen knew how to swim or how he went under water.

## Oakland

PONTIAC

### Stagehands injured at Silverdome

Ten people were hurt and a concert was canceled Saturday when a stage collapsed at the Pontiac Silverdome before the event.

Fire crews went to the Silverdome about 4:15 p.m. on a call of a roof collapse. They found the roof intact, but were met by people hurt when a stage for sound and lighting collapsed, Pontiac Battalion Fire Chief John Widdis said.

He said crews were told that 100-150 people were inside when the incident occurred. No one was trapped or had to be rescued. Widdis said that those who were hurt were production people or stagehands.

He said they were setting up the stage, which was almost the entire width of the floor, when for an unknown reason it collapsed while people were working on it.

A.R. Rahman, whose musical score was featured in the film “Slumdog Millionaire,” was to perform.

FERNDALE

### Marchers for social justice build tent city

Members of an organization called the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign erected a temporary tent city Sunday in Ferndale.

Attempting to highlight the plight of poor and homeless people who have been affected by the recession and the foreclosure crisis, the group has been on a 12-week, 24-city march from New Orleans to Detroit to attend the US Social Forum, which is scheduled to run from today through Saturday.

The group of about 50 marchers was due to be joined Sunday evening by delegations from Kentucky, Ohio, Alabama and Mississippi. The tent city is at Hilton and Marshall, east of Woodward and south of 9 Mile, according to Peter Cooper, a spokesman for the group.

“We’re trying to focus attention on the growth of poverty in the U.S. and the great disparity between the rich and poor,” said the Rev. Bruce Wright, a member of the group and the pastor of Refuge Baptist Ministries in St. Petersburg, Fla. “Every day we continue to hear rosy reports about economic progress, but the reality is just the opposite. Millions of Americans are falling into poverty.”

## Midland

MIDLAND

### Biden to attend groundbreaking

Vice President Joe Biden is scheduled to be in mid-Michigan today for the groundbreaking of a battery plant, which is a Dow Chemical joint venture.

The factory, set to open in 2012, will manufacture lithium-ion battery cells and packs.

Dow Kokam has been awarded \$161 million in federal grants and \$42 million in state tax credits.

— COMPILED FROM REPORTS BY CHRISTINA HALL, JOE ROSSITER AND ZLATI MEYER

## COVER STORY MEDICAL MARIJUANA



Photos by MANDI WRIGHT/Detroit Free Press

Kriss Pullen-Gideons conducts a test June 14 to determine the acidity of well water for Denny Regal, 58, of Hamburg Township at her hydroponic store, Gro Blue, in downtown Ann Arbor. She used part of her retirement savings to open Gro Blue, which she co-owns with her son and daughter.

# Even in a poor economy, the pot industry grows

## Entrepreneurs cashing in on services tied to growing

By KATHERINE YUNG  
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

In Michigan’s burgeoning medical marijuana industry, few rules exist, much of the business occurs in secrecy and the only way for growers to make big bucks is to break the law.

“If you operate within the law, you’re not going to make a lot of money,” said Leili Russo, who grows marijuana for medical purposes and serves as the secretary of the Genesee County Compassion Club in Flint.

Growers, also called caregivers, say that at best, they can make \$40,000 a year. And that’s after spending \$1,000 or more on equipment and other supplies, and putting in countless hours every day tending to plants.

Under Michigan’s medical marijuana law, caregivers can supply only five patients. Each patient can have 12 plants. But growers who choose to ignore these rules can easily make \$100,000, said Adam Brook, an industry consultant and the organizer of the Ann Arbor Hash Bash, an annual rally to support reforming marijuana laws.

### Sometimes, greed doesn’t pay

With these conditions, it’s no surprise that medical marijuana is becoming a big business in Michigan’s depressed economy. Nineteen months after residents voted to legalize medical marijuana, the industry has attracted more than 8,000 caregivers, people who grow and harvest marijuana plants so they can be turned into medicine for patients, according to the Michigan Department of Community Health.

For caregivers who abide by the law, this kind of work is usually a second job. That’s the case with Corey Hathaway, 33, of Eaton Rapids. Hathaway used to run his own commercial construction company, but that business dried up when the economy tanked. So he found a job working at HydroWorld, a hydroponic shop in Lansing. To supplement his income, he also is a caregiver with five patients.



Hydroponic stores like Gro Blue sell organic gardening supplies and indoor growing equipment, which help in cultivating medical marijuana.

“The people that are greedy don’t succeed because they can’t maintain the patient-caregiver relationship,” he said.

The law is vague about what caregivers can do if they produce more marijuana than their patients need. To make extra money, some sell their overages on the black market or to dispensaries, clinics or other caregivers.

### Making money without plants

Growing marijuana is just one part of the rapidly expanding industry. Experts say more lucrative opportunities can be found selling the hydroponic equipment that caregivers need and teaching them how to grow marijuana properly. Another moneymaker: operating clinics that help people get the paperwork they need to qualify as medical marijuana patients.

These kinds of service businesses are springing up all around the state and are the most visible part of the industry. Already, price wars have sprung up among the dozens of hydroponic shops that have opened in southeast Michigan.

The intense competition hasn’t stopped Kriss Pullen-Gideons from believing that her store, Gro Blue in downtown Ann Arbor, has a bright future. She used some of her retirement savings to open the small shop on West Liberty, and her son and daughter are co-owners.

“People are surprised at how many regular people just walk through the door,” she said. “It’s definitely going to be a growing industry. We should

counter. Liberty buys its marijuana from caregivers throughout the state.

“We hope to be a model,” said the owner, a former home inspector for Bank of America who would only give his name as James Chainsaw.

Michigan law does not specifically address these kinds of clinics and dispensaries. But industry experts expect that it will only be a matter of time before courts challenge their legality. Already, a number of cities and towns have passed ordinances prohibiting medical marijuana businesses.

### Groups could change things

To stay within the law, many patients and caregivers are buying and selling marijuana at facilities operated by a few so-called compassion clubs, which act as support groups for patients.

The Genesee County Compassion Club is the state’s largest, with more than 1,000 members. Every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, it holds private meetings for members at its office in a small strip mall in Flint; smoking marijuana is permitted. Membership costs \$20 a year and includes a T-shirt.

The Ypsilanti Compassion Club takes a different approach. Its members meet at the 3rd Coast Compassion Center in Ypsilanti, which is open every day except Sunday. Marijuana smoking is allowed in some of the rooms. “We provide them a safe office environment,” said Darrell Stavros, one of the owners of 3rd Coast, which rents space to the club.

Whether these kinds of facilities will become the main avenue for medical marijuana sales in Michigan remains to be seen. But one thing’s for certain. With more than 1,000 medical marijuana patient applications arriving in Lansing each week, the industry is only going to get bigger, with all kinds of business ventures likely to be launched.

“It’s definitely the wild, wild Midwest,” said Matthew Abel, one of the state’s leading medical marijuana attorneys.

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### Thousands registered for medical marijuana

In November 2008, Michigan became the 13th state to legalize medical marijuana.

The Michigan Department of Community Health began accepting patient applications in April 2009 and is currently three months behind in processing them. So far, it has approved registrations for more than 18,600 patients and more than 8,000 caregivers.

More information about the program can be found at [www.michigan.gov/mmp](http://www.michigan.gov/mmp).

embrace it.”

Hydroponic stores aren’t the only ones cashing in. Attorneys, grow consultants, grow-room designers and contractors and grow schools are all finding a market for services.

“There are so many people that are excited about being able to work,” said Michael Komorn, a Southfield medical marijuana attorney and the treasurer of the 17,000-member Michigan Medical Marijuana Association. “They want to get back into the marketplace.”

Entrepreneurs also are flocking to the sales side of the business, operating an estimated 20 dispensaries, cafés and clinics in the state, according to medical marijuana attorneys. At Liberty Clinic in Ann Arbor, above bd’s Mongolian Grill on Main Street, patients pay \$12 for an annual membership that allows them to purchase different strains of marijuana, which are displayed in small see-through packets on a

“THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE THAT ARE EXCITED ABOUT BEING ABLE TO WORK.”

MICHAEL KOMORN, a Southfield medical marijuana attorney

“IT’S DEFINITELY GOING TO BE A GROWING INDUSTRY. WE SHOULD EMBRACE IT.”

KRISS PULLEN-GIDEONS, who opened a hydroponic store in Ann Arbor