

MLICA Scoop

LAND IMPROVEMENT CONTRACTORS ~ MICHIGAN CHAPTER

2024 ISSUE 3

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From the Lead Plow, Russ Talaski, President MLICA

Winter is nearly here—even if the calendar says it's still a few days away, the weather certainly feels like a blend of fall and winter in the same week! In past years, I haven't gone snowmobiling until after parking the tile plow for the season. This year may be an exception, as snow is arriving earlier up north. I hope this message finds you and your family well, enjoying the beauty and joys of the season.

I'm thrilled to share that Michigan LICA is incredibly proud of our Scholarship Committee. They've worked diligently to select four outstanding candidates who will be awarded scholarships at our Winter Convention. In the past, I've attended conventions in other states and admired their scholarship programs. Thanks to the generous support of the Cook Family and others, I'm proud to say

we now offer scholarships for the relatives of our members—a remarkable milestone for Michigan LICA! I encourage you to reach out and express your gratitude to the committee for their hard work and dedication.

Looking ahead, I'm excited about the Winter Convention this January. It's a wonderful time to reconnect with LICA friends, gain valuable insights from sessions and guest speakers, and strengthen our businesses together. I hope to see you there!

Wishing you a warm and joyful season.

Yours in MLICA,
Russell Talaski



FEATURES

DIARY OF AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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OBITUARY FOR NICK STAAT | CLASSIFIEDS

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Diary of an Executive Director

As we wrap up 2024, I can't help but reflect on how quickly the fall season flew by. The unseasonably warm temperatures made it seem like autumn barely stopped in before it hurried on. Between dues renewals, sports and 4-H events, preparing for and hosting holiday gatherings, and diving into convention planning, time has been moving at lightning speed.

This is our final newsletter of the year, and I want to take a moment to thank all of you who have already submitted your 2025 dues. Your continued support helps keep Michigan LICA thriving. If you haven't yet sent in your renewal, it's not too late – we appreciate your prompt attention to this important step as we head into the new year.

Speaking of the new year, don't forget to send in your convention registrations! We are so excited about the Michigan LICA Winter Convention & Annual Meeting coming up on January 13-14, 2025, at the Okemos Convention Center. It's shaping

up to be a wonderful event, and we're really looking forward to connecting with all of you there. The annual meeting is also your chance to have your voice heard. Please provide your feedback on the kinds of events you would like to see Michigan LICA host. Your input helps shape the future of our organization.

On another exciting note, we are thrilled to announce that we are awarding scholarships to four exemplary students. This marks a fantastic beginning to our scholarship program here in Michigan, and we couldn't be prouder of the bright futures these young individuals have ahead.

As we close this chapter of 2024, I want to wish each and every one of you a blessed holiday season filled with warmth, joy, and time spent with loved ones. Let's usher in the new year together at the convention, energized and ready for everything 2025 holds. See you in January!

UPCOMING EVENTS

MLICA WINTER CONVENTION & ANNUAL MEETING

2187 UNIVERSITY PARK DR
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Highlighting Excellence: Michigan LICA's 2024 Scholarship Winners

Courtney Rodifer



care or pediatrics stems from her childhood experiences. Her deep passion for caring for babies began when she helped care for her baby sister. That early love for nurturing others blossomed into a commitment to serve through her faith and her future profession. In her scholarship essay, Courtney expressed a strong desire to make an impact on the world by providing medical care to people in need, inspired by her love for Christ. She also dreams of participating in missionary work, both domestically and abroad, where her skills and compassion can make a meaningful difference.

Courtney comes highly recommended by her teachers, who consistently praise her character and capabilities. As the granddaughter of longtime Michigan LICA member Dave Dunne and the daughter of Amy (Dunne) Rodifer, who works as an HR director, and a pastor father, Courtney is deeply rooted in a family of service and dedication.

Michigan LICA is honored to support Courtney as she takes the next step in her education and begins her college journey to earn her nursing degree. With her drive, determination, and heart for helping others, we are confident she will make a profound impact in the lives of her patients and beyond. Congratulations, Courtney, on this well-deserved recognition!

Michigan LICA is proud to recognize Courtney Rodifer as one of this year's scholarship recipients. A senior at Hudson High School, Courtney has demonstrated remarkable dedication both inside and outside the classroom, making her an outstanding example of leadership and academic excellence.

With a stellar 4.085 GPA, Courtney excels in her studies and has taken on leadership roles, including serving as vice president of the National Honor Society. Beyond her academic success, she is a young woman of action, already working toward her career goals. She is on track to complete Certified Nurse's Aide (CNA) training this December—an important milestone on her journey to becoming a nurse.

Courtney's aspiration to specialize in neonatal intensive

Erica Cook



Girl Scout leader and an assistant coach for a softball team. Her leadership and commitment have inspired others, as reflected in the glowing recommendations she received from her community. The Croswell-Lexington cheer-leading coach, who works with Erica's daughter Naomi, praised Erica's character and community involvement.

Additionally, a coworker described Erica as "someone who will stand up for injustice and always advocate for friends and family."

Erica comes from a family rooted in public service and care for others. Her mother works as a special education teacher, and her father is retired, enjoying time with their family. The Michigan LICA community has also become an extended family for Erica through her husband Ben. Larry Cook, a longtime Michigan LICA member, expressed pride in welcoming Erica into the fold.

Michigan LICA celebrates Erica Cook's achievements and is honored to support her journey as she continues to pursue her dreams in nursing. Her dedication to her family, education, and community embodies the values that Michigan LICA holds dear. We look forward to seeing all that Erica will accomplish in the future.

Michigan LICA is proud to announce Erica Cook as one of the recipients of the 2024 scholarship awards. Erica exemplifies determination, leadership, and a commitment to her community, all while maintaining her focus on higher education and family responsibilities.

Erica is currently a senior at Schoolcraft Community College, where she is pursuing her Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) with an impressive 3.2 GPA. In her scholarship essay, Erica detailed how she has successfully balanced her studies with an active family life, raising her two children and participating in numerous extracurricular activities. This year marked a particularly special milestone for Erica as she married Ben Cook, a dedicated member of Michigan LICA.

Beyond her academic and family achievements, Erica demonstrates her dedication to youth and community development. She serves as a

Highlighting Excellence: Michigan LICA's 2024 Scholarship Winners

Grace Kemp



Grace Kemp, one of this year's Michigan LICA scholarship recipients, exemplifies commitment, diligence, and a passion for excellence. Currently in her second year at Delta College, Grace is pursuing a degree in Law Enforcement and maintaining an impressive 3.8 GPA. Her dedication to her studies and her future career demonstrates the qualities of a leader with a steadfast focus on making a meaningful impact.

Grace's achievements are numerous and noteworthy. Under the guidance of her law enforcement teacher, she became an active member of Skills USA, where she participated in regional and state competitions focused on Crime Scene Investigation. This hands-on experience highlights her drive to excel and immerse herself in her chosen field. Beyond the classroom, Grace's involvement with FFA, the National Honor Society, and the National Technical Honor Society underscores her

commitment to community, excellence, and service.

In her scholarship essay, Grace reflected on the profound influence of her father, Dave Kemp, an esteemed Michigan LICA member. From him, she learned the values of diligence, responsibility, and the importance of striving for excellence, even when faced with challenges. These values have guided her path, shaping her approach to academics, personal growth, and service to others.

Grace is not only excelling academically but also giving back to her community as a Reserve Officer with Bay Public Safety while completing her studies. This role allows her to gain practical experience in her field and reinforce her commitment to making a difference in the lives of others.

Quoting Eleanor Roosevelt, Grace stated, "I am who I am today because of the choices I made yesterday." This sentiment is evident in her achievements and the path she has forged for herself. Grace Kemp's story is a testament to the power of determination, integrity, and the unwavering pursuit of one's goals.

Congratulations, Grace, on this well-deserved recognition. Your Michigan LICA family applauds your accomplishments and looks forward to watching your future unfold.

Logan Word



Michigan LICA is proud to recognize Logan Word as one of this year's scholarship recipients. Logan exemplifies the dedication, academic excellence, and commitment to land improvement that our organization values.

Currently a senior at Michigan Technological University, Logan maintains an impressive 3.78 GPA and has consistently earned a spot on the Dean's List throughout his college career. Logan is on track to obtain a Bachelor's degree in Forestry, complemented by minors in Business and Ecology. These areas of study not only reflect his academic ambition but also align with his aspirations to make meaningful contributions to forest management and the land improvement industry.

Logan's dedication extends beyond the classroom. His college advisor praised him for his involvement in extracurricular activities, including playing in the Husky Pep Band and participating in swing dancing. These activities highlight his well-rounded character, underscoring a balanced approach to

academic and personal growth.

Logan's practical experience is equally impressive. As part of his role with the Department of Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Division, he has actively worked in state parks, treating trees for various health issues. This hands-on experience has provided him with valuable insights into forest and land management practices.

In his scholarship essay, Logan expressed a clear vision for his future, emphasizing his passion for working in the land improvement and forest management sectors. He recognizes the critical intersection of ecological preservation and practical land-use improvement, which resonates deeply with Michigan LICA's mission.

Logan's commitment to his goals and his well-rounded achievements are also a testament to his upbringing. He is the son of Will Word, a dedicated Michigan LICA member, and his family's support and example have clearly been pivotal in shaping his journey.

Michigan LICA congratulates Logan on his many accomplishments and looks forward to seeing his future contributions to the land improvement industry. Logan's drive and dedication embody the spirit of this scholarship program, and we are proud to support him as he takes the next steps in his promising career.



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2025 National LICA Winter Convention Jacksonville, Florida - February 11 - 15th Tour Information & Educational Seminars

Optional Tours

Tuesday, February 11
Jacksonville Land & Sea Tour
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Join a local historian and storyteller for an entertaining tour through Jacksonville from both Land and Sea. We start with a two hour boat ride along the majestic St. Johns under bridges past major city landmarks with narration. The tour is customized by covering military history in Jacksonville with sites such as the USS Orleck and Lone Sailor statue. Next you can optionally take a one hour guided walking tour through Downtown Jacksonville going into sites such as the secret underground tunnels and 1909 bank vault. Your personal costumed tour guide creates an interactive tour atmosphere which is fun for everyone.

Wednesday, February 12
St. Augustine Experience
9:00 am - 4:30 pm

Enjoy your day in the Nation's Oldest City! The various architectural styles, narrow brick streets, and European flavors combine for a unique escape. Your professional tour guide meets the group dressed in period costume and weaves a tapestry of stories from the early colonial years to the Victorian Flagler era. We tour all the major sites including the Fountain of Youth, Spanish Mission Grounds, City Gates, Spanish Plaza, Cathedral-Basilica, Spanish Government House, Flagler Memorial Church, and the old Ponce de Leon Hotel. We disembark for photos at the Castillo de San Marcos, the stone fort that was never captured in battle. The tour includes one more stop at the old 1888 Alcazar Hotel or Flagler Memorial Church. Lunch today is on your own combined with shopping and free time exploring the historic district. During your free time, you can optionally tour the St. Augustine Distillery for bourbon and other tastings, visit attractions such as the free Government House Museum or walk the pedestrian shopping mall. Your personal tour guide in colonial attire creates an interactive tour atmosphere which is fun for everyone.

Educational Seminars

Friday, February 14 - 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

New 401(k) Mandates: Is Your Business Prepared?
Presented by: Mike Coughlin, World Insurance

Planning for retirement is more important than ever. Currently, 57 million employees lack access to retirement savings plans, with access and affordability being major barriers for small and medium-sized businesses. With many states now mandating employer-sponsored retirement plans or imposing stiff fines and penalties, we are offering members access to a low-cost 401(k) program. Our MEAP (Multiple Employer Aggregation Plan) provides key benefits to both employers and their valuable staff while helping you meet state requirements. Learn about the benefits and tax advantages of this program at our seminar, where our expert will answer your questions.

Tired of Paying for CDL Training? How to Conduct Training Internally for Your Employees.
Presented by: Caroline Krug, National LICA

As a LICA member, chances are you already have the expertise to provide the federally mandated Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) to your staff. Avoid the cost of outsourcing to driving schools and learn the simple process of becoming an approved training provider at this exclusive member seminar. You'll discover how to leverage your in-house talent to meet FMCSA requirements and register in the Training Provider Registry (TPR) at no cost. Take control of your ELDT compliance and unlock this valuable LICA member benefit.



St. Augustine

NATIONAL HAPPENINGS

2025 NATIONAL LICA WINTER CONVENTION

LICA Members, we're off to Florida just as the chilly temperatures set in. The Marriott Jacksonville Downtown is centrally located and offers breathtaking views of the Riverfront.

With the vibrant city of Jacksonville as our backdrop, this year's convention promises to be both enriching and enjoyable. From engaging tours to insightful seminars, there's something for everyone. Be sure to explore the local area, where you can enjoy a variety of dining options, cultural attractions, and scenic strolls along the river. This is not just a chance to connect with fellow members and industry leaders, but also an opportunity to recharge and gain fresh perspectives.

For more details visit LICANational.org

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NATIONAL HAPPENINGS

Exciting Updates to National LICA Member Benefits

National LICA is thrilled to announce some incredible new benefits for members, enhancing the value of your membership and offering tools to improve your business. Whether you're managing a team, outfitting employees, or planning for the future, our updated benefits package includes resources to support your success.

New Benefits to Help Your Business Thrive

- ◆ **401(k) Employee Program** National LICA now offers access to a 401(k) employee retirement plan, helping you attract and retain top talent while supporting your team's financial futures. This benefit provides a competitive advantage in today's job market and shows your commitment to employees' well-being.
- ◆ **Payroll & HR Services** Simplify your operations with professional payroll and HR services. This benefit offers a streamlined way to manage payroll, ensure compliance, and provide HR support, freeing you to focus on running your business.
- ◆ **M&V Custom Apparel Discount** Need high-quality apparel for your team or promotional needs? Take advantage of discounted rates through M&V Custom Apparel. Keep your crew looking professional and showcase your brand with custom gear at a great price.

Stay Informed About Member Benefits

With benefits evolving throughout the year, the best way to ensure you don't miss out on opportunities is by visiting our website regularly. Don't let valuable resources pass you by—stay connected and informed.

Discover how National LICA membership supports your business with programs designed for your success!



CHOOSE ONLY THE SOLUTIONS YOU NEED
Our core payroll package gives you the standard technology from UKG to get going. Then you can pick and choose additional payroll options and add HR services and workforce management solutions as you need them. As your business grows, we grow with you.

PAYROLL & TAX ADMINISTRATION
Reduce processing time and ensure accuracy and compliance with our unified platform.

- Payroll setup and tracking
- Gross-to-net calculations
- Tax administration, filings, payments
- Check printing and distribution
- Direct deposits
- Year-end processing
- General ledger processing
- Compliance support and reporting

HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES
Reduce administrative tasks so HR managers can pursue more value-added activities.

- Benefits administration
- HR consulting and support
- Recruitment and talent acquisition
- Onboarding and offboarding
- Performance management
- Compensation management
- HR recordkeeping
- Handbook builder and job descriptions

WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT
Control labor costs and reduce compliance risk across your diverse workforce.

- Time and attendance
- Scheduling
- Accruals tracking
- Leave/absence management
- ACA management and reporting
- Attestation management
- Multiple punch options
- Data collection

SECURITY FEATURES
Safeguard the physical security of your data and have consistent uptime for applications.

- Intrusion prevention/detection system
- Secure transmission sessions
- Virtual code authentication
- Best-practice coding
- Penetration and vulnerability scanning
- Antivirus software
- Risk assessment and patch management
- Security incident management

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Joe Amato | 848-208-2405

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401K EMPLOYEE PROGRAM



Our mission at the Association is to do everything we can to help members succeed by providing valuable services, promotional efforts, and member benefit programming. To that end, we're excited to announce a powerful new retirement planning solution that is now available exclusively for members of the Land Improvement Contractors of America Association.

We've partnered with Lincoln Financial, a nationally recognized leader in retirement planning services, along with trusted local expert and Association member World Insurance, to develop this unique program that leverages the strengths of group participation to provide a cost-effective and easy way for you to implement a turnkey 401K employee program. Our Multiple Employer Aggregation Program is a retirement plan solution that lets you offer your employees a competitive 401K benefit that can help reduce your fiduciary and administrative responsibilities in the process.

→ **IF YOU CURRENTLY HAVE A RETIREMENT PLAN FOR YOUR COMPANY,** it's worth asking for a free proposal to see if switching to this Group 401K Plan can save you time and money, give you greater peace of mind, and provide added flexibility for your employees potentially.

→ **IF YOU DON'T CURRENTLY HAVE A RETIREMENT PLAN OPTION** for your employees but are interested in adding this important benefit, please reach out to learn more and receive a proposal / quote. An employee Retirement Plan option can be a significant driver of employee retention as well as a recruiting benefit.

FOR NEXT STEPS, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION OR REACH OUT DIRECTLY TO OUR PROGRAM'S FINANCIAL ADVISORY PARTNER:

Mike Coughlin, CIC, CPIA, World Insurance Associates LLC
mikecoughlin@worldinsurance.com
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Easy Chocolate Fudge

This Fudge Recipe is the easiest way to make chocolate fudge. You only need three ingredients; it turns out so smooth and delicious.

Prep Time 10 minutes

Cook Time 5 minutes

Time to Set 4 hours

Total Time 15 minutes

Servings: 36 pieces

Taken from: <https://www.simplejoy.com/fudge-recipe/#recipe>

Ingredients

- 3 cups chocolate chips either semi-sweet or milk chocolate (18.6 ounces)
- 14 ounces sweetened condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions

1. Line an 8 inch by 8 inch baking dish with aluminum foil or two pieces of parchment paper overlapping to make an X.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine the chocolate chips and sweetened condensed milk.
3. Place the pan over medium low heat. Stir consistently until the chocolate is partially melted. Stir in the vanilla extract.
4. Continue stirring until the chocolate is fully melted and the mixture is smooth and starts to turn shiny.
5. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan. It will be very thick - if it doesn't pour well because of the thickness, don't stress, you're still on the right track. Once it is all in the pan, you can gently shake the pan back and forth to help it settle. You can also use a rubber spatula to spread it.
6. Allow the fudge to completely set. This can be done on the countertop and will take about four hours.
7. Remove the fudge from the pan and take off the aluminum foil. Trim off the rounded edges from the pan. Cut the fudge in half one way and then the other to make four equal squares. Cut each small square into 9 equal pieces by cutting into thirds one way and then the other. This will result in 36 equal pieces of fudge.
8. Enjoy right away or store in an airtight container for up to two weeks. (See the post for instructions on freezing.)



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MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

DECEMBER 2024



Is It the Holiday Blues or Seasonal Affective Disorder?

Holiday demands, gatherings, decorations, and other emotional and financial stressors can leave people anxious and exhausted. As such, some people experience short-term holiday blues or holiday depression. Conversely, during this time of year, others may be battling seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a form of major depression.

Individuals with a prior mental health condition may be especially prone to holiday depression. A National Alliance on Mental Illness poll revealed that more than 6 in 10 people (64%) with an existing condition say the holidays make their condition worse.

Holiday depression and SAD can be difficult to distinguish from one another, but the duration and severity of symptoms are usually the best clues:

- **Holiday depression** can start around November or December and lift shortly into the new year. The symptoms are typically mild and include:

- Changes in appetite, weight and sleep patterns
- Irritability
- Worry or anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling more tired than usual

- **SAD** typically occurs for 40% of the year, starting late fall or early winter and lasting until the spring or summer. Symptoms are often more severe and debilitating.

Taking Care of Yourself

If your depression symptoms seem to be short-lived and tied to the holidays, take extra care of yourself this season. Exercise regularly and drink in moderation since alcohol is a depressant. It's also important to set realistic expectations for the holidays. Lastly, try to find time for yourself in the hustle and bustle of the season and understand it's OK to say no to avoid overcommitting.

If your symptoms interfere with your ability to function or the holiday blues persist into the new year, it may be time to seek professional help from a health care provider. They can diagnose symptoms, discuss treatment and provide guidance.

Embracing a Digital Detox

Beyond work, people depend on technological devices for information, communication and entertainment. However, constant attachment to devices can have harmful effects on your mental health. To combat these issues, you may consider a digital detox or a disconnection from devices or social media for a defined duration.

Begin your digital detox by determining which behaviors you'd like to address and creating a plan that works for you. Try these strategies for an effective digital detox:

- **Turn off notifications.** Notifications are distracting and can hinder productivity.
- **Use digital detox tools.** Many devices have built-in tools that can silence notifications or disable apps for a certain period.
- **Start your day tech-free.** Instead, use the first hour of the day for activities such as exercising, spending time outside or preparing a healthy breakfast. The goal is to create a morning routine that sets a positive tone for the day and supports brain health.

- **Take periodic breaks from technology.** Eliminating the use of all digital devices may not be realistic, especially if you use them for work. Instead, set limits for how much time you spend on social media each day or designate certain times for phone use.
- **Create gadget-free zones.** To be more present in your day, designate specific areas in your home, such as the dining room and bedrooms, where gadgets are not allowed.
- **Reach out for support.** Family and friends can offer emotional support during your digital detox. They can hold you accountable and keep you motivated when you're struggling to stick to your goals.

With a digital detox, you can break unhealthy habits and embrace more balanced, healthier alternatives. For further guidance, contact a mental health professional.

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Combating Workplace Safety Complacency

It's vital for employees to feel comfortable in their job role and capable of performing workplace tasks effectively. However, comfort shouldn't come at the cost of complacency.

Being complacent on the job and ignoring safety hazards can carry significant consequences in the workplace—such as near-miss incidents, injuries and even fatalities. After all, just because your workplace is safe, doesn't mean you don't have to follow proper precautions. In fact, many safety incidents aren't caused by unsafe conditions, but rather by careless acts or behaviors.

That's why it's crucial for you to play your part in combating complacency, keeping both yourself and others safe at work. Review this guidance to understand what workplace safety complacency is and how to prevent it.

What Is Workplace Safety Complacency?

Put simply, workplace safety complacency occurs when an employee becomes so experienced or familiar with their job responsibilities that they start to develop an overly relaxed attitude toward tasks. This attitude shift can cause the employee to ignore or become complacent with their job hazards and stop taking proper safety precautions.

Employees can display workplace safety complacency in a variety of ways—including rushing through tasks, skipping important safety steps during a task, multitasking or engaging in distracting activities while performing a task.

Regardless of how confident or comfortable you are with workplace tasks, it's imperative to avoid complacency. Even the most experienced employees can hurt themselves or others if they fail to uphold adequate safety precautions.

How to Prevent Workplace Safety Complacency

Here's what you can do to combat safety complacency within the workplace:

- **Take hazards seriously.** Remember that no matter your skill level, you're never immune to workplace hazards. Always pay attention during workplace safety meetings and training sessions to fully understand the risks that accompany your role and comprehend the consequences of engaging in unsafe actions.
- **Follow workplace policies and procedures.** Ensure you follow all safety policies and procedures when performing workplace tasks, even if it seems tedious. Don't rush through tasks, try to multitask or skip certain steps.
- **Conduct safety audits.** Consider having a co-worker routinely audit you to see if they identify any safety concerns while you work—this is also known as a behavior-based safety observation (BBSO). Make sure you assist your co-workers by auditing their work through BBSOs as well. By observing others, you may even become more aware of your own habits and identify additional areas for improvement.

To ensure a successful safety culture within our organization, it's crucial for you to be comfortable addressing complacency issues on the job. If you have any concerns regarding workplace safety complacency, talk to your supervisor.



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Obituary for Nick Staat



Nick Staat, a beloved husband, father, grand-father, and great-grandfather, passed away peacefully in his sleep at home on December 5, 2024, at the age of 83, just as he had always hoped.

Nick is survived by his devoted wife of 62 years, Karen; his children, Shelly Staat and Jeff Sell, Mike and Diana Staat, and Brenda Staat-Tomlinson; seven grandchildren; ten great-grandchildren; his brother Jim Staat; and his sisters Rose Bush and Irene Wagner. He was preceded in death by his parents, John and Esther Staat; his siblings, John Staat, George Staat, Lawrence Staat, Jo Busscher, Lu Meyer, Hazel Vander Wal, Neal Staat, and David Staat; and his grandson, Ian Tomlinson.

Nick was known for his integrity, hard work, and generosity. A proud U.S. Army veteran who served before the Vietnam War, Nick went on to work as a supervisor at General Electric. In the mid-70's, he started Nick's Farm Drainage, a business he poured his heart into, enjoying the opportunity to work the land and connect with Michigan's farmers. "Most days in the dirt" were his best days.

Nick was a lifelong member of North Holland Reformed Church, where he faithfully served in various ways. His love for life shone brightly, and he made it his mission to bring joy to others, often saying that if he could make someone smile or laugh, it was a really good day.

Spring was Nick's favorite season, but in recent years, he marveled at the beauty of Michigan's autumn colors, declaring that fall, too, was a favorite. Beyond his love for nature, Nick's second passion was food, followed by fishing. He found immense joy in smoking salmon and sharing it with family and friends, a simple yet profound act of love that reflected his generous spirit.

Nick lived a life full of purpose, gratitude, and laughter. Everywhere he went he ran into someone he knew. He leaves behind a legacy of love and kindness, and his memory will continue to bring smiles to the faces of those who were blessed to know him.

A visitation took place on Tuesday, December 10 and the funeral service took place on Wednesday, December 11 at North Holland Reformed Church. Burial took place at Zeeland Cemetery.

Nick's grandson Trevor included this note when notifying us of his grandfather's passing:

"My name is Trevor Staat, Nick Staat's Grandson. I just wanted to pass along that my grandpa passed away last week Thursday.

I grew up reading all the MILICA newsletters and attending a few field days. I grew up around the farm drainage world my entire life. Digging connections all summer with him from 8-18 years old, even the often scolding for taking too long to probe in virgin clay, I only had the muscles of a 12 year old! To driving the truck behind his big Bertha Vermeer at 10, well before I was legally able to.

Though, it didn't make sense at the time, it makes sense why he did it now. He loved everything about land conservation, even if he made it right without getting paid for it.

He sure did leave behind a world better than he found it."

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