



MERIDIAN MONITOR

Major Companies Re-Invest in Meridian

Anthony Sabella

Over the years, Meridian Township has proven to be a place where businesses can be successful. Since 2008, major businesses have re-invested over one hundred million dollars in the township.

In 2008, Delta Dental began renovations to their Michigan headquarters on Okemos Road. Fast-forward three years, and \$91 million later, the changes are numerous. The headquarters expanded from 160,000 square feet to 188,000 square feet. In addition, a new 90,000 square foot office building was added to the north end of the original building as well as a 22,000 square foot data center on the property's east side. "This additional space will accommodate growth and enable us to keep providing exceptional service to our millions of customers and thousands of participating dentists", said Dr. Thomas Fleszar, President and CEO of Delta Dental.

Solving Crime Through Social Media

Kevin McElroy

Whether it is solving crimes or alerting the public to dangerous situations, more and more law enforcement agencies, including Meridian Township, are engaging in the benefits of social media.



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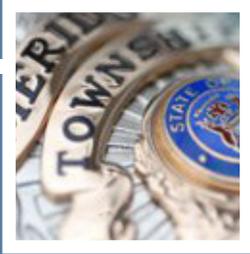


State of the Art Emergency Medical Care

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"If you end up on video, or on our Facebook page, or ultimately in the media, then you are probably going to get caught." ~ Lieutenant Greg Frenger, Meridian Twp. Police



Solving Crime Through Social Media continued from Page 1...

According to a 2010 survey from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), 80 percent of law enforcement agencies use social media in some manner and 68 percent have a Facebook page. Of the agencies not presently using social media, 62 percent are discussing adopting it. The Meridian Township Police Department has taken advantage of social media as an additional option to solve crimes.

Chief David Hall was drawn to the value of social media when Patrol Sergeant Andrew McCready researched the subject as part of a paper for Michigan State University's Police Staff and Command School in early 2011. "Not only is there value in alerting citizens to crimes and emergency situations, there is value in communicating items of community interest such as traffic bulletins, crime prevention tips and information regarding our community policing efforts. Social media has demonstrated to be a very successful endeavor," stated Chief Hall.

Social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs have proven to be successful tools in solving crimes for the Township. For example, in September 2011, two teenage girls shoplifted at the Ulta cosmetic supply store on Marsh Road. They stole more than \$500 in merchandise; however, what they didn't realize was that store security cameras captured clear pictures of them. Meridian Township police posted the photographs on the Department's social media outlets. Identified by friends, the suspects were forced to turn themselves in to the police.

Lieutenant Greg Frenger is optimistic that social media will continue to be an asset in solving crimes in Meridian Township. Frenger gives this warning to people who may consider breaking the law in Meridian Township, "If you end up on video, or on our Facebook page, or ultimately in the media, then you are probably going to get caught." ■

Meridian Parks Expand Healthy Opportunities

Zachary Peña

In 2011, the "5 Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan" was adopted which outlines everything parks-related, including additions to the Townships' already broad array of options to improve residents' overall health and wellness. Meridian Township's Parks and Recreation Department has been hard at work this past year to further strengthen its mission: "To enhance the quality of life for Township residents and visitors by providing diverse park facilities and recreation opportunities..."

The popular attraction to Eastgate Park's bicycle pump track has spurred additional transformations expanding the pump track into a bicycle skills park. Renovations in 2011 included new obstacles to create a bicycle skills loop trail. Resident Steve Brunner, who played a major role in its creation, said "the pump track and skills loop trail is only the start of efforts to promote cycling in the area. It's an activity for the entire family and most importantly... it keeps people moving and active." Eastgate Park is actually just one-third of the Meridian Riverfront Park, which is composed of Eastgate, Harris Nature Center and Legg Park.

2011 also saw a new accessible fishing dock was recently added to the pond in the Historical Village along with fishing poles and tackle boxes for everyone to use. Fishing licenses and bait are available for purchase nearby at Walmart and Dick's Sporting Goods. This is a new opportunity that is local and family friendly.

Among the Parks and Recreation Department's Master Plan significant common denominators are universal accessibility, maintenance, and volunteer support. This means improvements to pathways and facilities to accommodate all users; maintaining high maintenance standards; and actively engaging community members in various park improvements. Visit the Parks and Recreation section of www.meridian.mi.us to view the "Wish List" of volunteer and donation opportunities. ■

"To enhance the quality of life for Township residents and visitors by providing diverse park facilities and recreation opportunities..."

~ Parks and Recreation Department Mission

Get Active! Get Involved!

The Parks and Recreation Department publishes the "Family Fun Guide" which provides hundreds of programs and activities as well as recommendations for healthy living.

Look for the spring/summer issue in your mailbox in early March!



Check out the Police Dept. Blogspot meridiantwppolice.blogspot.com/





“Four major commercial stores have announced redevelopment projects.... It’s a good indication...”

~ Mark Kieselbach, Director of Community Planning and Development

Leading Community Health Movements...

Indoor Farmers’ Market

The Meridian Mall has become a leading partner in the community health movement by providing the venue for the Meridian Township Indoor Farmers’ Market throughout the winter months. The Market operates on the first and third Saturdays from 10am-3pm in the JCPenney wing with over 30 vendors.

www.meridian.mi.us

Go to the Farmers’ Market tab, under the Parks and Recreation Home page for details.



Senior Exercise Program

The Meridian Mall also supports the Townships Senior Exercise Program with over 100 participants over the age of 65. The class meets in the Food Court every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30-9:30am. ■

Major Companies Re-Invest in Meridian continued from Page 1...

Since the completion of the Delta Dental headquarters in August, four other major commercial stores have announced redevelopment projects; Walmart, Kroger, Target and Meijer having requested building permits for special projects.



“Walmart is looking at doing about a \$1.9 million dollar remodeling project, Kroger completed interior remodeling, and Target is looking to add more shelf space for grocery-type products”, stated Mark Kieselbach, Director of Planning and Development for Meridian Township.

While Kroger has already completed their renovations and the Walmart renovations have not yet been scheduled, Target and Meijer are beginning their projects in mid January 2012. Both stores will undergo full scale remodels. “We’re planning to re-do everything from the floor to the ceiling”, Said Dave Peterson, Public Relations Manager for Meijer Corporation.

The \$4 million dollar Meijer project will begin in January and go through July. It will consist of moving the produce section closer to the front doors and adding a drive-thru pharmacy. According to Meijer officials, remodels happen methodically at each store. “It’s been a while since the Okemos Meijer has been redone”, said Peterson. “It’s important because it’s successful and in a high-traffic area”.

For these stores, it’s about expanding. “We’re going through what we call a ‘P-Fresh’ remodel”, said Joel Trim, Executive Team Leader of Target. “It will be very extensive, expanding in all areas of food”. For Director Kieselbach, these remodels show a willingness to invest in Meridian Township. “I think it’s a good indication that they want to keep these stores viable.”

The over \$10 million dollars worth of re-investments by these 4 major companies are scheduled to stay open during the redevelopment process. ■



Meridian Growing Greener

Cindy Harb

Michigan State University may be just around the corner, but going green has another meaning in our community. Dozens of “green” initiatives are underway in Meridian Township. In 2011, efforts included community gardens, greenspace protection, energy efficiency improvements, water conservation, Complete Streets, pathway extensions, park improvements, nature education, recycling drives, and much more. Monthly e newsletters are sent highlighting green efforts. To receive monthly e news, send a request to recycle@meridian.mi.us.

A recent survey conducted of Meridian Township residents indicates a strong interest in preserving the environment and reducing pollution. The survey found that nearly 64% of people in Meridian Township are looking to recycle pharmaceutical waste. In response to that, Meridian Township is teaming up with the Ingham County Health Department to offer pharmaceutical recycling at the next big recycling event on April 28, 2012.

Quarterly Green Conversations

Join “green conversations” with local experts about environmental issues that matter most to Meridian residents.

Location: Service Center
Nancy Moore Park/Gaylord C.
Smith Court in Okemos

Time: 7 pm - 8 pm

March 12 June 11
September 10 December 10

The Township has invested in major energy improvements within 5 buildings including lighting, insulation, heating/cooling systems, and energy monitoring. These improvements will pay for themselves in less than five years, saving taxpayers thousands of dollars annually. ■



Deer Management Pilot Program

Audrey Dahlgren

Due to the rampant population of deer within the township, Meridian Township implemented a managed deer hunt in 2011 from October to December, during the regular bow and firearm hunting seasons. The deer hunt was so popular that Meridian Township received a Damage Control Permit from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to conduct an extended deer harvest through February 29, 2012.

Jane Greenway, Meridian Township Parks & Land Management Coordinator, received numerous calls from township residents stating they'd lived here for years, and had never seen anything like the current population of deer.



“We receive numerous complaints from residents regarding the deer over-population issue and many of the complaints are regarding damage to landscaping,” said Greenway. “It’s beyond them (deer) just eating their flowers. It’s thousands of dollars of landscaping and vegetable gardens and the deer are voracious. Residents are also concerned about deer/car accidents and threats to public health. From a land management perspective, the over-population of deer poses a threat to the ecological balance of our parks and land preserves.”

Hunters for the highly-managed pilot program to harvest deer were hand selected by the Township based upon certain requirements. A volunteer hunter had to be eighteen years of age, a Meridian Township resident, and had to attend a workshop that included hunter safety, a proficiency test, and an equipment check. “We wanted people who were very experienced hunters, and were familiar with the area,” said Greenway; “that made other neighbors feel more comfortable that it wasn’t an outsider coming in. Other hunters including residents were interested in supporting the program and were very experienced local hunters who contacted me and wanted to get involved.”

Hunters were allowed to keep the first deer, but all remaining deer were donated to Merindorf Meats in Mason. Michigan Sportsman Against Hunger, a non-profit organization, paid for the processing and donated the deer meat to local food banks.

So far, 41 deer have been harvested with over 300 pounds of venison being donated to the mid-Michigan food bank. According to the Deer Management Pilot Program Report, “It is estimated that one pound of venison equals five meals, so 1,500 meals were donated through the deer management program”. Read the full report at www.meridian.mi.us. ■

“It is estimated that one pound of venison equals five meals, so 1,500 meals were donated through the deer management program.” ~ Deer Management Pilot Program Report



For all things recycling go to: recycle.meridian.mi.us
or [facebook.com/GreenMeridian](https://www.facebook.com/GreenMeridian)



Don't Feed the Deer

Lauren Ragan

Residents of Michigan are warned against feeding deer. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is trying to inform people of the outcome feeding deer causes. According to the DNR website: "Feeding wildlife is nonessential, the animal's instincts take over and help them evolve over time, and though it might be something fun to do, it hurts the animal in the end." The DNR website also points out:

- It is harder for deer to digest food that is not natural to their diet
- Deer will eat anything that is given to them; picking food given to them over their natural diet can cause them to starve, even with a full stomach
- The amount of food that it receives can cause an overpopulation

For more information about feeding deer; contact DNR Deer Program Biologist Ashley Hippler at 989-732-3541 ext 5044 or visit michigan.gov/dnr. ■

Planning a Community Garden

Cindy Harb

Residents may have noticed more community gardens blooming around the Township last spring. The number of community gardens increased over the years, from only 3 in 2008 to 8 this past season. Besides fresh free healthy food, community gardens offer many benefits including an increased sense of community, increased property values, physical activity, and enjoyment.

In partnership with the Greater Lansing Food Bank "Garden Project," the Township will be able to provide several mini grants to start or expand community gardens in 2012. Grants can help with purchasing seeds and supplies, tilling, soil amenities, storage units, or other needs. ■



It's not too soon to start planning. For helpful tips on starting a community garden in your neighborhood, school or apartment complex, visit recycle.meridian.mi.us/garden

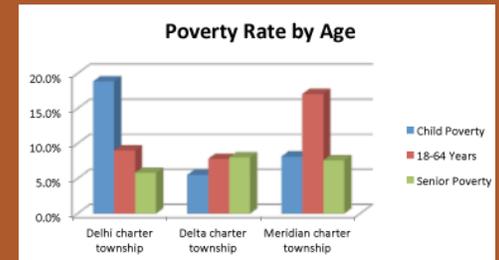


Helping Community Members in Need

Kelly Reeves

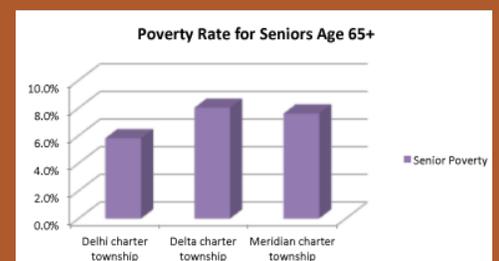


Although Meridian Township is a seemingly prosperous community, many residents find themselves in a financial crisis. According to the American Community Survey and the U.S Census Bureau, data reflects that 14% of Meridian Township's overall population lives below the poverty level. Social Policy Analyst, Melissa Smith of the Human League of Services points out that Meridian Township's working aged adults are at a high poverty level (See chart) with 7.6% of seniors in need of assistance.



The Meridian Township Community Resources Program (CRP) hopes to ease these financial burdens through help and contributions from the community. "Without Community Resources Program assistance, many of these residents would be faced with the possibility of hunger or homelessness," stated Darla Jackson, Human Services Coordinator.

The CRP works with many organizations to deliver a variety of services to senior citizens and low-income Meridian Township households including shelter, furniture, food, utilities, clothing, transportation, and medical services. The program also coordinates delivery of more than 500 holiday baskets to low-income households annually. ■





Videos and an online version of the “Meridian Monitor” can be found on the Township website www.meridian.mi.us by clicking “Township Publications” under the “Media Room” tab.



Pathways to Health

Patrick Lyons

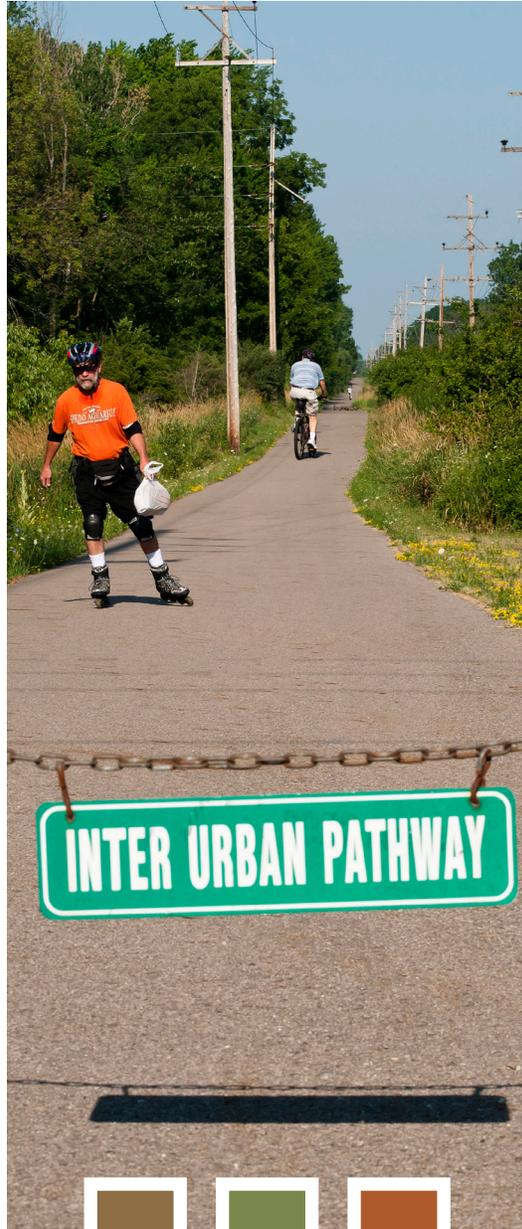
Described as a scenic corridor full of natural beauty, the newest Meridian Township off-road pathway system runs from Burcham Drive east of Park Lake Road to Marsh Road along the old Inter-Urban railway. This newest section for off road users provides a safe and healthy bicycle/pedestrian stretch for area residents. Another off-road pathway runs between Okemos Road and Hulett Road, along and north of the Consumer Energy line, and continues into Hartrick Park. The connectivity between communities, parks, neighborhoods, schools, and business districts are part of Meridian Township’s continued support for pathways to a healthier community.

Meridian Township’s pathway system includes 4.55 miles of off-road pathways and over 70 miles of 7 foot wide pathways adjacent to the roads. The Pedestrian/Bicycle Master Plan also includes over 40 miles of on and off-road still to be constructed.

Director of Public Works and Engineering, Ray Severy explains the planning process, “It fits in with the Complete Streets concept Meridian Township planners have been developing. Residents are certainly a part of this process in discussing modifications to the Township’s pathway system master plan. We need to provide facilities for all modes of transportation. There are a lot of people who walk and ride their bikes, in addition to those who ride the bus or travel by car.”

The Township Board recently held a Public Hearing to hear public comments on amendments to the master plan including a pathway along the south side of Kinawa Drive from Okemos Road to the west of Channing Way. Severy says it would increase the safety of children walking to Chippewa and Kinawa schools. Also considered are additional pathways on the East and South sides of Hulett Road from Capeside Drive to Okemos Road and on the east side of Dobie Road from Kinawa Drive to Hamilton Road. The master plan’s purpose is to provide easy access for pedestrians and bicycles to reach major attractions such as schools and libraries, and also to make all pathways safe for the public.

Severy says it’s not too late for public comment; the Township Board is looking for public remarks at their February 7th meeting. Residents are encouraged to voice their opinion about enhancements they’d like to see with Meridian Township’s streets, sidewalks, and pathways. ■



Presidential Primary February 28, 2012

- January 30, 2012: Last day to register for February 28, 2012 Presidential Primary Election
- July 9, 2012: Last day to register for August 7, 2012 Primary Election
- October 9, 2012: Last day to register for November 6, 2012 General Election



Running for Meridian Township Office

- An Affidavit of Identity can be picked up at the Clerk’s office and must be filled out, along with;
- Signed petitions with at least 50 valid signatures of registered voters.
- All paperwork and applications are due May 15, 2012 by 4 p.m. in the Township Clerk’s office.

Visit the Clerk’s Department for election information and becoming a registered voter:
www.meridian.mi.us



State of the Art Emergency Medical Care

Staff

“Advanced Life Support (ALS) has been a saving grace to the Meridian community. We continually raise the bar to meet the expectations of our residents,” stated Meridian Township Fire Chief Fred Cowper. ALS treatment and transport services have become the hallmark for the transporting agencies in the Tri-County area. Providing Advanced Life Support care makes the emergency response teams premier mobile agencies.

Of emergency calls received in which the Fire Department is dispatched, approximately 85% are medical in nature requiring ALS. One of the reasons Meridian Township’s Fire Department Emergency Services is successful in response time and treatment, is due to having a full time Training/EMS Chief. This position serves as the medical liaison for emergency calls, coordinating training, and addressing unique patient concerns.

Training/EMS Chief Bill Priese states; “We are able to provide state of the art, advanced life support to our residents and visitors to our community.” When asked about his position, Chief Priese expressed appreciation for the opportunity to oversee the medical operations of firefighters that provide care and compassion daily. “Meridian Township paramedics are able to deliver prompt advanced life support care such as; in-depth patient assessments, cardiac therapies, respiratory therapies, drug administration and much more. “A quick, accurate assessment and definitive treatment often bridges the current medical condition to the patient’s long term recovery,” said Chief Priese.

In Meridian Township, all firefighters are paramedics trained in advanced life support care. It’s not all just about saving a life at the moment of an emergency. More and more emergency medicine looks at patient outcomes throughout the medical system. The goal in providing ALS is to minimize the lasting effects on patients after a medical or traumatic emergency. ■



twitter.com/MeridianTwpFD



facebook.com/MeridianTownshipFireDepartment



Keeping Neighborly

Staff

Snow Removal

Meridian Township’s snow removal ordinance requires residents to clear the snow and ice from the sidewalks along their property within 24 hours following a snow fall.

The ordinance has been amended to include that if more than 2 inches of snow or ice remain after that first 24 hours, the owner will be notified by the Township that it must be cleared. Owners will then have an additional 24 hours to clear the snow or ice. If it is not cleared within the second 24 hour period the Township will remove it and bill the house owner. This payment must be made within 30 days of receiving the bill.

Ray Severy, Director of Public Works and Engineering, said “this process will ensure that the snow (or ice) is removed and the ordinance is enforced to ensure the safety of residents.”

Severy also stated that residents who will be out of town are expected to make arrangements for snow removal.

Brush Removal

In keeping the sidewalks clean, Meridian Township holds property owners responsible for removing brush and obstructions, including overgrown bushes and low hanging tree limbs.

“This will not be an infraction the township will actively look for,” explained Ray Severy, Director of Public Works and Engineering. “If we get a complaint about low hanging brush we will send [the property owner] a letter and say ‘please get it cut down’,” he said.

The home owner then has one week to comply. If the designated area is not cleaned up within the allotted time the recipient will receive a \$75 fine. In general, Severy said, “Trees above the sidewalks should be cut to 8 feet, preferably 9 feet, above the sidewalk and a foot off the sides of the sidewalk.”

This ordinance will ensure pedestrian safety allowing people to walk or ride their bicycles on township sidewalks with ease and leisure. ■

“Trees above the sidewalks should be cut to 8 feet, preferably 9 feet, above the sidewalk and a foot off the sides of the sidewalk.”

~ Ray Severy, Director of Public Works and Engineering 7





MERIDIAN MONITOR



Watch These Stories and Others ONLINE!

HOMTV Government Access Channel student interns gain invaluable multi-media journalism experience by interning in the Communications Department and jointly working on collecting research data, writing articles, and producing accompanying videos to this newsletter. Read more about the HOMTV internship program at www.homtv.net. Watch the videos by scanning the QR Code or www.meridian.mi.us by clicking "Township Publications" under the "Media Room" tab. ■



NEW Automatic Payment Options for Taxes

Brandie Hansen

Residents can avoid the last day rush of paying taxes by enrolling in the Township's NEW automatic ACH payment plan. By participating in the payment plan, residents will have the option of an automatic withdrawal of funds from their bank account instead of more traditional methods.

"Many taxpayers are busy or traveling and don't want to forget to mail their payment in. Other taxpayers want to pay on the due date, but don't want to wait in the long lines associated with last day payment. Automatic ACH payment allows the customer to enroll in the program and have their tax payment automatically deducted from their account," said Township Treasurer Julie Brixie.

To enroll in Meridian Township's automatic bill payment plan for Winter taxes, residents must fill out the Automatic Bill Payment Enrollment Form located on the Meridian Township website www.meridian.mi.us by February 1st. ■



**ECRWSS
CAR-SORT POSTAL CUSTOMER**

**Meridian Township
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48864
(517) 853-4600**