



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Lakeshore Advantage Seeks Input from Young Professionals

*New survey aims to identify key opportunities and barriers to local talent retention*

**ZEELAND, Mich.** – Lakeshore Advantage, the nonprofit economic development organization serving Allegan and Ottawa Counties, is launching a new survey to gain insight into the key factors influencing young adults' decisions to stay in the region or relocate.

"We know that ensuring our employers have access to the talent they need is vital to our long-term economic health," said Jennifer Owens, president of Lakeshore Advantage. "Here on the lakeshore, we've consistently led the way from an overall population growth perspective. However, securing our future workforce in high-demand positions starts with retaining our young talent. This survey will help us identify what we can do to that end."

According to the latest census data, 45% of the Lakeshore region's population falls within the age range of 18-34. This vital segment of our community represents the future of our local economy and workforce. However, data from the 2022 American Communities Survey reveals that over a one-year period, approximately 12% of 18-34-year-olds in Allegan and Ottawa Counties moved to a different county or a different state. The potential continued migration of a significant portion of our current and emerging workforce underscores the need for more proactive efforts to retain and attract talent.

The Lakeshore Emerging Worker Survey is open to adults ages 18-34 who live, or have lived, in Allegan or Ottawa Counties and who are working, or preparing to work in, high-demand industries identified in the region, including manufacturing, construction/energy, agribusiness, health sciences, and professional and administration.

Survey respondents will be asked a series of questions to help determine what they like most about the lakeshore region, what barriers can make living in the region difficult, and what could make the area more attractive to them in the future.

Lakeshore Advantage is working with various community stakeholders to disseminate the survey to current and former Allegan and Ottawa County residents including Allegan Area Chamber of Commerce; Allendale Area Chamber of Commerce; The Chamber Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg; Hudsonville Area Chamber of Commerce; Otsego-Plainwell Chamber of Commerce; Wayland Area Chamber of Commerce; Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce; Allegan Area Educational Services Agency, Grand Rapids Community College Lakeshore Campus; Grand Valley State University Career Services; Hope College Boerigter Center; Latin Americans United for Progress (LAUP); Ottawa Area Intermediate School District; and Hello West Michigan!.

The Lakeshore Emerging Worker Survey is currently available online in English and Spanish via the Lakeshore Advantage website at <https://lakeshoreadvantage.com/survey-young-professionals>. Eligible respondents who complete the survey by September 6<sup>th</sup> will be entered into a drawing for one of five \$100 VISA gift cards.

The Frost Research Center at Hope College was contracted by Lakeshore Advantage to develop and administer the survey.

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### **About Lakeshore Advantage**

Lakeshore Advantage is the economic GPS for West Michigan's Ottawa and Allegan Counties. The nonprofit economic development organization grows primary employers at all stages of development, plans to ensure long-term economic health, and solves economic challenges and identifies opportunities. Lakeshore Advantage was established in 2003 by forward-focused business and community leaders to assist primary employers—from startups to established global corporations—as they navigate growth in the lakeshore region.

In 2023, Lakeshore Advantage supported 26 business growth projects consisting of \$3.2 billion in private investment and \$634.3 million in support funds leveraged in the two counties. Business growth projects resulted in 1,091 new and retained jobs. In addition, Lakeshore Advantage provided economic support to 285 primary employers and 73 startup companies in the two counties. Find out more at [www.lakeshoreadvantage.com](http://www.lakeshoreadvantage.com).

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