

# MLICA Scoop

LAND IMPROVEMENT CONTRACTORS ~ MICHIGAN CHAPTER

2023 ISSUE 3

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## From the Lead Plow, Russ Talaski, President MLICA

Welcome new Members and new Associates. It was great to have the opportunity to meet with some new suppliers of different products for our industry at our recent Field Day. We invite you to get involved with LICA and attend our meetings. We would like to thank Brent Welke, his family, and workers for being so helpful in making our Field Day so successful. I know that I had to ask for a lot of things to be done to keep things rolling and they did it with no question. For all the Associates that donated tile and products, we also say **THANKS** and we appreciate all you do for us all year. The speakers that we had from MSU did a great job and added to our educational goals for the day. And not to forget our membership and their employees who helped in any way, the Field Day wouldn't have been so great.

We invited representatives from MISS DIG to attend the Field Day to learn more about what we do as contractors and what we need in the field to be safe while maintaining productivity. After attending our Field Day, they said that they have a better understanding of what our needs are and what we do.

Now on another note, we are in the final planning for our Winter Convention and Annual Meeting in the Lansing Area. We would like to hear topic or speaker suggestions that may help you with your business. Please call any Board Member, Sarah or myself to let us know your ideas.

Thank You and Be Safe!

Russ Talaski

## FEATURES

**DIARY OF AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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# Diary of an Executive Director

*As I'm sitting here working on this newsletter, I have the lyrics to the Eagles song Fly Like an Eagle "Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin' Into the future" running through my head. My summer flew by so quickly with a jam-packed calendar that I'm glad a new school year has started so I can get back into a routine.*

*In July my family took a road trip to Lincoln, Nebraska so we could attend the National LICA Summer Meeting. It was neat to see the different landscape including terrace farming along the way. I really enjoy attending the National meetings because I get the chance to learn and share with other state executive directors. I also gain a lot when I attend committee meetings and educational seminars. The chance to site-see other parts of the country is an added benefit. The relationships I've built with LICA members around the country are pretty great too!*

*Last November, during an Executive Director Zoom meeting, a revised list of work categories for National LICA was announced. State Executive Directors were given the task to update each member's categories for the 2024 Directory. The work categories help us recommend LICA Member Contractors when potential customers reach out to us. Please take the time to mark your work categories and return your updated contact information with your dues renewal payment, so I can make sure your directory listing is accurate.*

*Lastly, Convention is just around the corner. Our Convention schedule will look different this year...details are still being determined, but the dates are set! Mark your calendars for January 8-9, 2024. Also, if you have any educational session ideas, please reach out. This is YOUR Convention so we want to make sure it benefits you the most that it can.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MICHIGAN LICA 2024 WINTER CONVENTION & ANNUAL MEETING

Okemos Event Center | Comfort Inn Okemos  
January 8-9, 2024

### 2024 NATIONAL WINTER CONVENTION Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront Virginia Beach, Virginia February 13 - 17, 2024

### 2024 NATIONAL LICA SUMMER MEETING Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania July 9 - 13, 2024



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## 2023 Field Day Highlights

The Michigan Land Improvement Contractors Association (MLICA) partnered with Michigan State University Extension for an exciting field day on August 8th & 9th, hosted on the expansive 114-acre property owned by MLICA member Brent Welke. This event was all about improving land and sharing knowledge.

The focus of the event was on retrofitting existing tile, covering approximately 56 acres of the site. The existing tile spaced at 66' was split twice into approximately 22' spacings providing a practical and hands-on demonstration that showcased techniques in land improvement.

But that wasn't all. Field demonstrations also featured the installation of two saturated buffer strips and multiple water control structures, including a water-gate valve. These demonstrations provided valuable insights into managing water resources efficiently and sustainably.

MSU Extension was a key partner, offering informative speaker sessions on crucial topics such as soil health, nutrient management, and water management. Attendees had the opportunity to earn CCA CEUs (Continuing Education Units) for their participation, making it a win-win for those looking to expand their knowledge in the field.

The field day was made even more vibrant with the participation of nearly 20 Michigan LICA Associates, who set up display booths showcasing their companies and the latest equipment. Their generous donations of tile and equipment added to the overall success of the day.

All in all, the Michigan Land Improvement Contractors Association August 2023 Field Day was a fantastic gathering of experts and enthusiasts in the field of land improvement. It provided hands-on learning, informative sessions, and a platform for networking and collaboration, all against the stunning backdrop of Brent Welke's 114-acre property. It was a day that highlighted the commitment of Michigan's land improvement community to sustainability and innovation.



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# LEGAL UPDATE

# MICHIGAN

## Michigan Restricts the Use of Mobile Devices While Driving

On June 7, 2023, Michigan adopted [House Bill \(HB\) 4250](#) and enacted restrictions on the use of mobile electronic devices while driving. Individuals that violate these driving restrictions may be subject to civil fines and mandatory community service.

Employers that require their personnel to drive for work-related purposes should become familiar with these restrictions and update their driver policies and procedures to comply with these requirements.

### Using mobile electronic devices

Under HB 4250, using a mobile device includes:

- ☒ Sending or receiving a telephone call;
- ☒ Sending, receiving or reading a text message;
- ☒ Viewing, recording or transmitting a video;
- ☒ Accessing, reading or posting to a social networking site; and
- ☒ Reaching for a mobile electronic device if, in doing so, drivers are no longer in a seated driving position or restrained by a seat belt.

### Notable Exceptions

Notable exceptions include using electronic devices for:

- ☒ Emergency purposes, including calling or texting a 911 system or making an emergency call;
- ☒ Using a global-positioning or navigation feature of a mobile electronic device if the information is not entered by hand into the global positioning or navigation system feature of the mobile electronic device; and
- ☒ Voice-operated or hands-free mode if the operator of the motor vehicle does not use the operator's hands to operate the device (some exceptions apply).

### Important Definitions

**Mobile electronic device** means “an electronic device that is not permanently installed in a motor vehicle, including, but not limited to, a device capable of text messaging, voice communication, navigation, entertainment, accessing the internet, or producing email.”

**Operating** means “to drive or assume physical control of a motor vehicle on a public way [...] including operation while temporarily stationary because of traffic, road conditions, a traffic light, or a stop sign. Operate does not include a motor vehicle that is lawfully parked.”

***Employers should update their driver policies and procedures to comply with these requirements.***

Provided to you by **Prins Insurance, Inc.**

This Legal Update is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as legal advice. Readers should contact legal counsel for legal advice.  
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## How Small Businesses Can Address Talent Shortages

As talent shortages persist across industries, an increasing number of small businesses are grappling with the need to adapt to this “new normal” to address this challenge effectively. Small businesses are encountering a significant shift in which they find themselves dealing with an inadequate number of applicants or insufficient resources (e.g., budget and staffing) to meet the high demand for candidates. In certain scenarios, some organizations are facing both issues at the same time. This article explores the reality of ongoing talent shortages and how small businesses can address them.

### Understanding the New Normal

Many organizations are starting to accept that talent shortages are the new normal. A 2023 global trends report from talent experience platform HireVue found the following about the current hiring landscape:

- A lack of qualified candidates was the top hiring barrier for employers for the third consecutive year.
- Many organizations faced reduced hiring budgets due to economic uncertainty, despite their hiring needs.
- One in 3 hiring leaders turned to technology to meet hiring demands with fewer resources.
- Continued resignations have resulted in employers increasing compensation, investing in learning and development allowances, and doubling down on internal mobility.
- Employers emphasized internal mobility to address hiring challenges and added contractor roles.

## Addressing Ongoing Talent Shortages

Talent shortages aren’t going away any time soon, so small businesses will have to continue pursuing creative ways to do more with the resources they have. Strategies small businesses can implement to address and combat talent shortages include:

- **Prioritizing skills-based hiring**—While specific qualifications may be valuable for some roles or industries, small businesses can consider candidates based on desired skills rather than experience or education.
- **Supporting internal mobility**—Small businesses shouldn’t forget about their current workforce. Many employees are willing to transition to job roles within the organization for higher compensation, better work-life balance and new learning opportunities.
- **Focusing on retention**—A renewed focus on retention can help small businesses avoid having additional open positions to source or recruit for.
- **Leveraging technology**—With limited time and resources, small businesses can use technology to streamline tedious and time-consuming processes and workflows and expand recruiting efforts with online platforms.

### Employer Takeaways

It’s critical that small businesses explore alternative hiring approaches relentlessly to maximize their existing resources. The most successful organizations are those that can be agile amid uncertainty and focus on workers’ skills instead of only experience or education.



# Why LICA?

I joined LICA to learn more about the tiling industry after getting into the business. I've continued with LICA so I can share knowledge with others as a payback to LICA.

~ Russ Talaski, MLICA President

I joined LICA because of FAMILY TRADITION...both my grandfather and father were members. I continue to stay a part of LICA because LICA keeps us informed about issues that affect our bottom line.

~ Dave Kemp, MLICA VP

I grew up going to LICA events, but as I got older and more involved in the business I saw it as a necessity to help the business continue to grow. I continue with it because even after all these years I still take something valuable from every meeting, and the colleagues I've gained through it are irreplaceable.

~Adam Cook, National LICA Region III VP

Since I'm a younger contractor, I originally joined LICA so I could meet other contractors and equipment manufacturers in the drainage industry. I've continued to be involved with LICA for a couple of reasons: It's a great space to share new ideas and reminisce with fellow members at field days and conventions. LICA has also helped me hone some of my professional skills such as public speaking and networking.

~ Jed Bushey, MLICA Board Member



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## Time & Money: A Heartwarming Story

SUBMITTED BY MIKE COOK

Some 23 years ago I was granted permission by Art Halfmann to install half a mile of main thru his farm to get to a customer to drain his land. Art's only condition was that he could use it in the future to tile his own farm, so we sized the main accordingly. 3 years ago, after Art passed away three-quarters of the farm was sold, with the other quarter purchased from the estate by his son, Tim Halfmann. This summer we tiled the land, including Tim's portion. Tim asked to come up from Northfield, Illinois to watch us install on his land. While riding in the plow with me, he explained how he kept some of dad's land as the family has owned it over 100 years. He said how dearly his father wanted to tile. In talking, Tim stated, "While you were installing the main, at the supper table Dad told us kids while holding his pocket watch, 'if I only had time & money to tile I would.'" I was surprised when Tim asked if he could lay that watch by the tile at a connection. When he did, he said a prayer to his father looking up to heaven. I and my workers were totally humbled. I am sure there are endless stories similar to this across the land we tile. I believe Michigan LICA contractors are here "to help improve God's earth."



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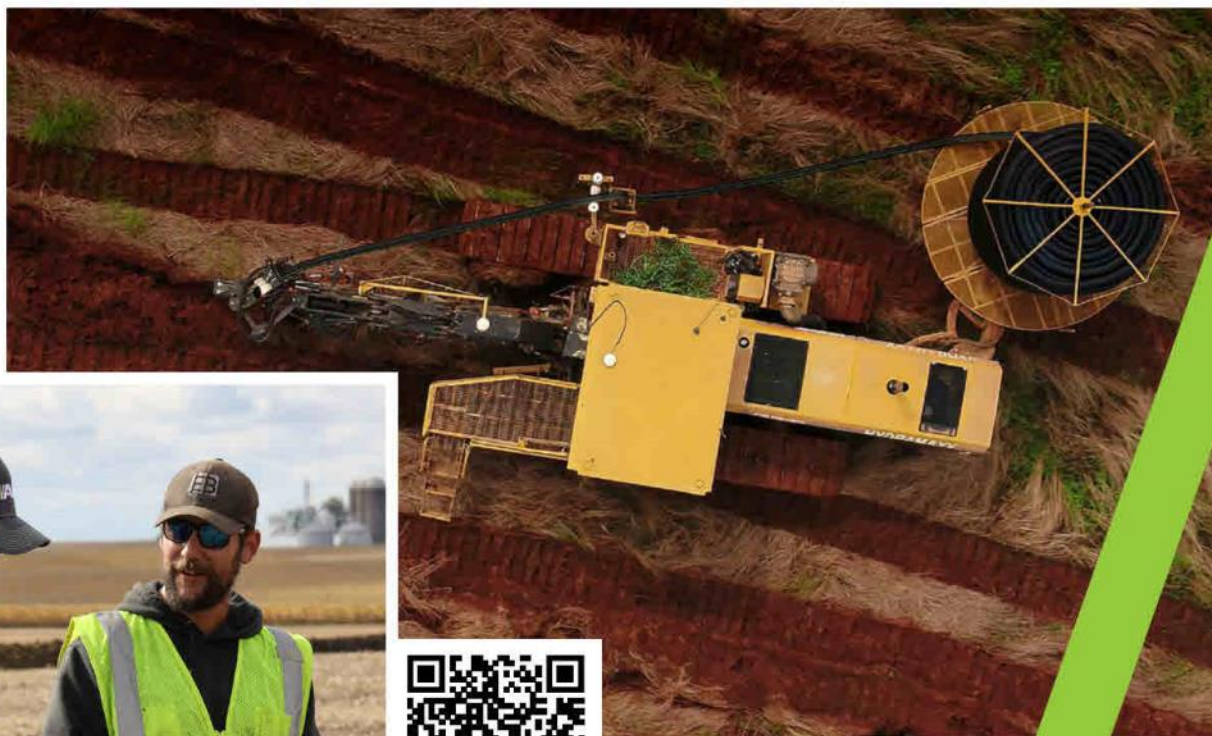
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# NATIONAL HAPPENINGS: MEMBER BENEFITS

National LICA (Land Improvement Contractors of America) has always been dedicated to supporting its members in the construction industry. As a National member, you are offered a range of exclusive benefits tailored to enhance productivity, safety, and financial well-being.

**1. Heavy Equipment Benefits:** As a National LICA member, you have access to discounted rates and preferential leasing options for heavy equipment. This ensures that you can acquire and maintain the latest machinery without breaking the bank, enabling you to undertake projects efficiently and effectively.

**2. Safety Tools and Training:** Safety is paramount in the construction industry. National LICA provides you with specialized safety training, resources, and access to cutting-edge safety tools and equipment. This initiative aims to reduce accidents and create a safer working environment for all employees.

**3. Time Tracking Tools:** Efficient time management is crucial in construction projects. As a LICA member you can now benefit from state-of-the-art time tracking tools and software. These tools assist in monitoring work hours, project progress, and streamline reporting processes, ultimately improving project timelines and outcomes.

**4. Member Discounts:** Being a National LICA member comes with perks beyond the construction site. Exclusive discounts on a wide range of services, products, and professional development opportunities help you save on essential business expenses and invest in your growth and development.

**5. Business and Family Finance Assistance:** Financial stability is vital for both businesses and personal life. National LICA offers financial counseling and guidance to assist you in managing your business finances effectively. Additionally, you receive assistance in financial planning for your families, ensuring a well-rounded approach to financial security.

These exclusive benefits showcase National LICA's unwavering commitment to the growth and prosperity of its members. By providing access to essential resources, equipment, safety tools, and financial guidance, National LICA empowers construction industry professionals to thrive in a competitive market while prioritizing safety and financial well-being.



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- Sell & purchase used equipment
- Legislative Updates
- Upcoming event details
- State Chapter contact information
- And of course...full list of National Benefits

Scan the QR Code with your phone's camera to see the National LICA Benefits. Each benefit has a downloadable flyer that contains details on the benefit and contact information to get started.





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# Mary Ellen Word Obituary



Mary Ellen Word, 74, of Camden, passed away Friday, August 25, 2023 at her home surrounded by her family. She was born September 10, 1948 in Bryan, OH to Harold and Ladyne (Keller) Kurtz. She married William "Bill" Word on June 22, 1968 and he preceded her in death on December 24, 2020.

Mary graduated from Edon High School, Class of 1966. She spent 22 years working at Camden-Frontier School in the cafeteria and volunteered many hours for various projects around the school and community. Mary enjoyed traveling with her husband in the RV and spending time with her children and grandchildren.

Survivors include her children, Wendy (Vincent) Giner of Brewster, NY, Will (Melissa) Word of Camden, Joe (Heather Chapman) Word of Salisbury, NC, Jacob (Suzie McConahay) Word of Angola, IN, and Matt (Megan) Word of Reading; five grandchildren, Tonya and Jara Giner, Logan Word, Chloe and Weston Word; siblings, Carolyn (Bob) Richmond, Tom Kurtz, Elaine (Ken Houghton) Lirot, Steve Kurtz and Jane (Tom) Lambcke;

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Bill; brothers, Don and Bill Kurtz; and sister-in-law, Vickie Kurtz.

Funeral services for Mary Ellen Word were held Tuesday, August 29, 2023 at 11:00 AM at the Eagle Funeral Home-George White Chapel in Reading with Rev. Alan Fenstermaker officiating. Burial followed at West Woodbridge Cemetery. Visitation was held Monday from 4-8 PM and again on Tuesday from 10:00 AM until the time of service.

Memorial donations are suggested to the Camden-Frontier High School Band drum line in honor of her grandsons, Logan and Weston Word, Elara Caring Hospice, or St. Jude's Children's Hospital.



Sarah,

Thank-you for making the trip down to the visitation and for the wonderful lantern. I feel very grateful to belong to the LICA family.

Will, Melissa & Logan

Just knowing that in countless ways our friends and family are with us makes the way easier.

Thank you for sharing our sorrow.

The Family of  
Mary Word



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517-282-1083

**Nikki Payne, Treasurer**  
269-612-2648

**MLICA Mailing Address**  
4372 S. Wright Road  
Westphalia, MI 48894

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The MLICA Scoop is the official publication of the Michigan Land Improvement Contractors Association, dedicated to the professional conservation of soil and water.

The MLICA Scoop welcomes letters, subject to editing for accuracy and brevity. The MLICA Scoop also welcomes articles relevant to the land improvement industry. All letters and articles can be emailed to [scook@michiganlica.org](mailto:scook@michiganlica.org). Please include your name and phone number for verification purposes.

