



Historically, AIA Saginaw Valley has held in-person events throughout the Great Lakes Bay area to tour various buildings, both new and old, or simply to meet with reps or manufacturers to learn of new products. Whether that was a stroll through the nation's longest canopy walk at Whiting Forest in Midland, or a factory tour of Blasius, Inc in Vassar, manufacturer of Cambria, we've spent the last few years struggling to create interesting in-person events that we feel our section would enjoy.

This of course fell to the wayside when Covid hit all of us, and so like the rest of the world, we donned our digital hats, and created what turned out to be our most successful event series yet, which we called Learning in Lockdown. Twice a month throughout the entirety of Covid we gave our reps a chance to sit down for a digital lunch and learn in order to help our members maintain CEU's after all of our major events were cancelled, and all of our firms had sent us home. It was a resounding success, and I would like to thank everyone that participated in even one of them. With the "end" of Covid happening in early fall of 2021, and numerous reps itching to physically show us their wares, we made the decision to go back to in-person meetings and have held a slew of interesting events since.

We kicked it off with an exterior rep showcase, sitting down at a couple various restaurants at Bay City's Feet on the Street, where we were finally able to meet some of the reps we had only seen digitally and reconnect with the old standards we already knew and loved. It was a great way to get back out there and still maintain some semblance of safety and social distancing. In 2022 we were able to tour Nash Dermatology in Midland, a fairly recent build for one of the preeminent dermatologists in our area. But I believe our most interesting event however, was a behind the scenes tour of the historical Hoyt Public Library in Saginaw, complete with the original architect from its 1950's modernist addition, to the project manager key to the renovations that have been turning the building back into the gem it used to be since the late 90's.

Into the fall we're currently working on setting up a tour of the Swiftwall factory in Midland, who manufactures a proprietary temporary wall partition system commonly used for work separations during renovations. And while Learning in Lockdown was largely our response to Covid, it's never truly gone away. We still talk with reps, who for one reason or another, would like to run a digital product showcase or CEU. At the moment, we have some lighting reps from out of state that Crites Tidey is helping us wrangle together so we can nab some CEU's in a return to our Learning in Lockdown series, sometime this fall. So please keep an eye out for that. And I would be remiss not to mention our [Re]Design program where we find high school age children interested in architecture and give them a weeklong crash course in design; complete with architect meetings, a program, and final critique. We're hoping to enlarge and revamp that program yet this fall, so I'm sure you'll hear more about that one as we work on retooling it.



All in all, I've been excited for the events we've held the last few years and look forward to many more. We want to ensure that our members have a solid grasp on our built environment and enjoy keeping them in the loop on at least some of the design and construction that's been happening in our area. There's just something exciting about finally being able to view that building you're always walking past or tour a new building to bounce questions off the architect. It also allows our small section plenty of opportunities to see what our little place in this world is actually capable of and just how much it really has to offer.

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