

Local

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PAUL KORTMAN, ON RUNNING HIS BUSINESS WHILE TRAVELING THE WORLD WITH HIS FAMILY



The Kortman family visit Camps Bay near Cape Town, South Africa, with Lion's Head in the background in August. The family recently returned from a six-month tour of the globe that allowed them to temporarily live in 30 locations around the world. (Submitted by Paul Kortman)

GRATTAN TOWNSHIP

‘Location independence’ helps family of four travel the globe

By Jim Harger
jharger@mlive.com

Paul and Becky Kortman are not going to be tied down running a business and raising a family with four young children.

As “location-independent” entrepreneurs, the West Michigan natives spent the past year living in the Philippines, Thailand, South Africa and now, a farm house overlooking the Flat River in Grattan Township.

Paul Kortman, who started Connex Social, a digital marketing company, in 2010, said they decided to travel once the business was established and successful.

“We could make more money, but then I would have to work more,” said Kortman, 34. Instead, they decided to sell their home near Newaygo and see the world with their children.

“We saw a whale,” 8-year-old Josiah chimed in about the three months they spent in Cape Town, South Africa.

After visiting 30 locations in six months — all while Paul continued to manage his digital marketing firm — the couple has created nomadtogether.com, an online community aimed at helping other families who want to achieve “location independence.”

The subscription-based site is designed to offer the type of advice you would not get from a travel site or guidebook, Kortman said. For example, some cities might be great as tourist destinations, but they may not have the Internet bandwidth needed to conduct business, he said.

Some cities might be too expensive for long stays, while other

cities might have a large expatriot community that is supportive of location-independent entrepreneurs. They found that atmosphere in Chiang Mai, Thailand, a gathering spot for hundreds of digital nomads from around the world.

Becky Kortman said families also need information about local car seat rules, sources for school supplies, family-friendly restaurants and everyday shopping trips.

The Kortmans met at Kuyper College while he was studying youth ministry and she was studying office administration.

They shared a love of travel. After they married in 2004, they lived abroad for a year — six months in South Africa and six months in Kazakhstan — before settling down in Newaygo County. Four children followed, three biological and one adopted.

While Paul Kortman was able to stay in touch with his clients and a worldwide network of contractors he hires to run his company, ConnexSocial.com, Becky Kortman home-schooled the children.

Home schooling while traveling made it difficult to stay disciplined with frequent moves, she said. But their children’s exposure to other cultures overcame the deficit in classroom time.

“We accidentally started un-schooling,” she said, adding she will evaluate their progress at the end of each trip. “Our biggest concern is to continue to create a love for learning.”

Traveling with an entourage of six is not only more expensive, it also is more complicated, the couple said. Finding accommodations for a long-

term stay is more difficult. They usually start with an Airbnb and find accommodation for a longer stay once they arrive in a city.

Despite the complications, it also can be cheaper to live in some developing countries, Paul Kortman said. In one of their stays in the Philippines, they were able to rent a large house in a gated community with a caretaker and chef.

The family cut short their plans to stay in tropical venues when they discovered one of their children suffered from heat exhaustion in hot and humid climates.

They were able to stay flexible by traveling on one-way tickets via Air Asia and traveling light: Each family member carried a backpack, and they carried the rest of their belongings in two large duffel bags.

“We got rid of stuff at every stop,” Paul Kortmans said of their growing comfort with traveling light.

Although they were planning just a short visit to see college friends in South Africa, they ended up staying three months after they found a vacation home with the view of the ocean they could affordably rent during the off-season.

Looking ahead, the family is planning its next trip, which probably will take them through Mexico and possibly as far south as Quito, the capital of Ecuador, during the next 18 months. Why Ecuador?

“Why not?” Paul Kortman responded with a grin.

GO ONLINE

Read more about the Kortmans’ travels at Paul Kortman’s travel blog, homealongtheway.com

HOLLAND

City working with Red Cross on disaster pilot program

By Greg Chandler
grnews@mlive.com

American Red Cross officials are working with the city of Holland in developing a pilot program for making sure the community is prepared should it face a major disaster.

Pat Burroughs, disaster services program manager for the Red Cross’ Ottawa County chapter, gave a presentation on the initiative Wednesday to the City Council.

As a volunteer Red Cross responder to the Jersey shore more than two years ago after Hurricane Sandy, Burroughs wants to see Holland avoid some of the major problems that affected both residents and responders because of holes that were found in the region’s disaster plan.

“What I found was a big disconnect between what the people needed, where the resources were and (where the) people were themselves,” Burroughs said.

“What we found was these (plans) were out of date, incomplete or in many cases, were just plain wrong. It was a bit frustrating.”

The goal of the so-

called “Community Resiliency” project is to put together a community-based framework to assure the right resources will be in place should a disaster occur.

That process includes an assessment of the city’s existing resources, raising community awareness and planning to fulfill needs.

“We, together with community leaders, partners and other stakeholders have built community capacity and capability to survive, to minimize suffering and to recover quickly after a disaster or emergency,” Burroughs said. “Together, we have made preparedness a cultural norm.”

The process will include a community stakeholders’ forum at 10 a.m. Feb. 12 at Herrick District Library, 300 S. River Ave.

At least 40 stakeholders already have been interviewed as part of plan development, Burroughs said.

The plan is expected to be completed and presented to the community by this summer, and could expand to include neighboring jurisdictions at a later date, Burroughs said.



An employee works at Perrigo Co.’s manufacturing facility in Allegan. (MLive.com files)

ALLEGAN

Perrigo Co. declares quarterly dividend, payable March 17

By Al Jones
ajones5@mlive.com

The board of directors of store-brand products maker Perrigo Company PLC has declared a quarterly dividend of 12.5 cents per share.

The dividend is payable March 17 to shareholders of record Feb. 27.

In November, the board declared a dividend of 10.5 cents per share for the preceding quarter. It was payable Dec. 16 to shareholders of record as of Nov. 28.

The world’s largest maker of over-the-counter and generic prescription pharmaceuticals sold under the labels of major retailers also is set to release its second-quarter sales and earnings results at 8 a.m. Thursday.

Joseph C. Papa, chair-

man, president and chief executive officer of the company, is to host a conference call with financial analysts, interested investors and others at 10 a.m. that day.

The conference call will be available live via webcast to interested parties via the investor relations section of the Perrigo website: perrigo.investorroom.com/events-webcasts.

It also can be accessed by calling 877-248-9413. Callers will need to provide reference ID#66179145.

A taped replay of the call will be available from 1 p.m. Thursday until midnight Feb. 20.

The replay is accessible via 855-859-2056. Callers will need to provide access code 66179145.

GRAND RAPIDS

GRCC hosting open houses for manufacturing partnership

By Brian McVicar
bmcvicar@mlive.com

Grand Rapids Community College is hosting two open houses next month for a job training program that pairs eligible students with West Michigan manufacturers.

The open houses for GRCC’s Advanced Manufacturing Partnership are scheduled for 5:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday at Steelcase’s wood plant, 4100 68th St. SE in Kentwood, and Monday at Herman Miller, 855 E. Main Ave. in Zeeland, from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

Under the college’s Advanced Manufacturing Partnership, eligible students work part time for a participating manufacturer and attend GRCC part-time to learn more about the field they’re now working in.

The company a student is paired with pays the student’s tuition, according to the college.

Upon completing their education, a student may be offered a job at the manufacturer they were paired with.

Participating manufacturers include

Alliance CNC, Anderson Global, Autocam, DeWys Manufacturing, Herman Miller, Paragon Die and Engineering, Padnos, Rapid-Line, RoMan Manufacturing, Transmatic, Wolverine Coil Spring and Woodward, according to GRCC.

The manufacturers work with GRCC to determine students’ curriculum and schedule. The program is run in cohort fashion, meaning that classes are scheduled and reserved specifically for participating students, the college said.

“The Advanced Manufacturing Partnership is a great opportunity for anyone with mechanical aptitude who’s interested in hands-on learning,” Amy Koning, associate dean of operations for GRCC’s School of Workforce Development, said in a news release.

“A student receives on-the-job training with their sponsoring company and a free associate degree.”

The program, which has limited space, had its largest cohort in fall 2014, with 21 students participating.

WALKER

Area tanning business robbed

By John Tunison
jtunison@mlive.com

A man wearing a mask and implying he had a weapon robbed a Walker tanning business.

The robbery was reported about 1:20 p.m. at Sun Tan City, 3515 Alpine Ave. NW.

Police dispatchers were told the man was wearing a black stocking cap and

black bandana to conceal his face.

The suspect got away with an unknown amount of cash.

Police called in a tracking dog to try to locate the man.

Police also were looking for a green Jeep seen leaving the scene about the time of the robbery.