

# Ready, aim, fire!

## Partnership launches world-class archery facility

**A**lgoma Township (Kent Co.) officials saw more than an archery range when they were approached to help the West Michigan Archery Center with a grant.

Then-supervisor **Dennis Hoemke**, who has since retired, knew the proposed archery center had the potential to be a major draw to the West Michigan region. Getting involved with the project would take time, money and resources, but Hoemke was confident Algoma Township would see a major benefit as a result.

“You’ve got to have a vision,” Hoemke said. “You’ve got to look beyond your own interests, and be willing to be flexible and work with other people. I think there’s lots to gain through that process, but you have to look outside your own little tunnel and have a vision for something bigger than yourself.”

Algoma Township and **Plainfield Charter Township** (Kent Co.) joined forces with the West Michigan Archery Center to turn the center’s much-anticipated project into a reality. With the backing of private donations and a \$500,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant from the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the first phase of the new facility opened last summer.

Today, the archery center is home to education and training for everyone from casual bowmen to Olympic-level archers. The 10,000-square-foot center features a 3-D indoor range and a 90-meter outdoor range with an area for special needs shooters. Other assets, such as additional outdoor ranges, are still in the works and expected to be completed in the near future. It attracts visitors throughout the region and beyond to its special events and community programs.

Local leaders believe the archery center will serve as a key element in enhancing the recreational opportunities available in West Michigan.



The West Michigan Archery Center, located in Plainfield Charter Township (Kent Co.), is home to archery education and training for everyone from casual bowmen to Olympic-level archers.

Current Algoma Township Supervisor **Nancy Clary** is thrilled with the result of their hard work.

“As supervisor, I am pleased that Algoma Township and its partners in this project can serve the growing community of youth and adult archers in the region by providing them with a state-of-the-art shooting facility, where new archers can learn, competitive archers can practice and receive coaching, and where local, regional and statewide tournaments can take place,” she said.

The facility, and even the grant itself, would not have been possible without the partnership among local government and the private sector, Hoemke said.

“This is a tremendous example of government cooperation and private cooperation,” Hoemke said. “It’s typical of what goes on in West Michigan. We looked beyond our narrow world and thought about the whole region and how it would be impacted. The archery center is a great asset.”

The archery center was encouraged to apply for a trust fund grant, but it could not do so on its own. The DNR said it needed a local government sponsor to qualify for the money.

That’s where Algoma Township came in. After a board vote, the township essentially became the grant vehicle, providing legal work, accepting private donations for matching funds and securing property leases.

Initially, the project was planned for an Algoma Township property, but officials later learned that the site would not work after all. The search for a new location led to a Plainfield Charter Township property adjacent to Algoma Township, a former landfill owned by the Kent County Department of Public Works that was leased by the township for recreation. Already, the West Michigan Sports Commission had plans to use part of this property for a 300-acre park.

And so a five-way partnership began—two townships, a county, a state agency and a private entity. Each local unit of government spent hours working with the DNR grant staff as well as attorneys and other local government staff to complete leases, operating agreements and land transfers. By the end of December, Algoma Township approved the final project agreement with the DNR Trust Fund so that construction could begin.



Local leaders believe the West Michigan Archery Center is a key element in enhancing the recreational opportunities available in the region.

As neighbors, working together was natural for Algoma and Plainfield Charter Townships. Both saw the value in the project, and both boards supported the plans. It was just a matter of talking and communicating with one another.

Plainfield Charter Township Supervisor **Jay Spencer** said this kind of cooperative planning is just part of the region’s mindset. “I think West Michigan as a whole looks for these types of opportunities and what we can do in order to facilitate good growth, good planning and good opportunities for our residents,” he said. “If that means cooperating with other units of government or businesses, that’s what we do.”



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