

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022

**Meredith Place**  
Clerk | Register of Deeds





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# MESSAGE FROM THE CLERK | REGISTER OF DEEDS

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It is my privilege to serve Kalamazoo County as Clerk & Register of Deeds and to report to you on the office's achievements in 2022. Last year was marked by technological growth and the development of key staff.

In October 2022, we transitioned from an outdated legacy records management software to an upgraded, accessible land and vital records management system with Fidlar Technologies. **I want to thank our entire staff**, especially our forward-facing Deputy Clerks and the County's Information Technology team for the many hours of hard work necessary to complete this undertaking.

The work we did in 2022 laid the foundation for what I am confident will be a more accessible, comprehensive, quality records system for those who ultimately rely on us – **the residents of Kalamazoo County**.

We are interconnected with county departments and the Board of Commissioners, **our success is dependent on one another as we strive to achieve extraordinary governance for our residents**. In this Annual Report, you will find updates on how we have utilized board-allocated resources and delivered on goals set out in previous reports.

**I am grateful for the opportunity to share some of the great work carried out by staff in this office, and to serve as your County Clerk & Register of Deeds. Thank you for your support in 2022!**

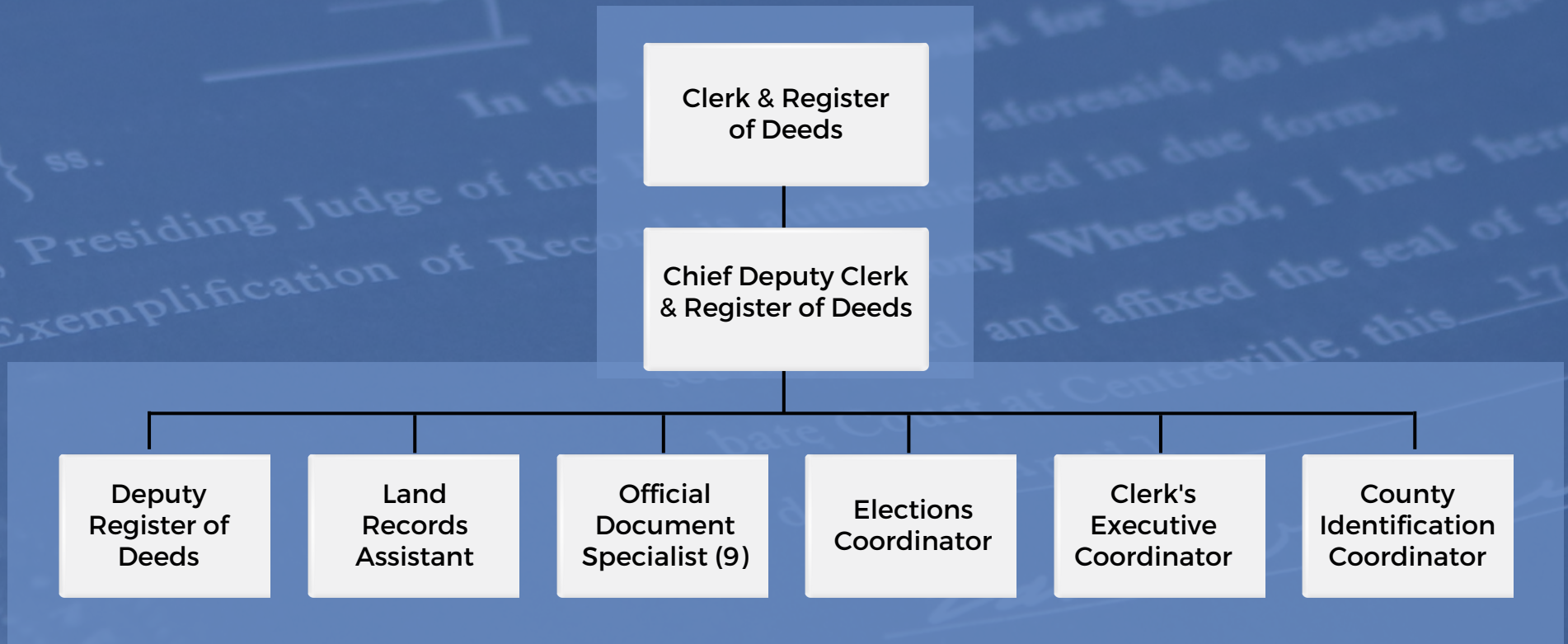


**Meredith Place**  
County Clerk | Register of Deeds



# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

## OFFICE OF THE CLERK | REGISTER OF DEEDS



# 2022 GOALS ACCOMPLISHED



EFFICIENCY

## IMPROVED SOFTWARE SYSTEM

Doing business in Kalamazoo County's Clerk and Register of Deeds Office has never been easier! In October 2022, we implemented a new vital and land records management software system through Fidlar Technologies.



INTUITIVE

- This system has allowed for **greater online access for customers** by adding Concealed Pistol Licenses, Business Filings, Notary Public, and Marriage License online applications.
- The new technology **expanded service** by integrating with existing systems in both the County Treasurer and City of Kalamazoo Treasurer's office, allowing title companies, financial institutions, and others to electronically record warranty deeds.
- Instead of waiting up to 7 days, customers recording land records now receive their documents and receipt of recording back in real-time and have the option to receive documents back via email!
- We launched **"Property Fraud Alert"**, a free service giving residents peace of mind when they sign up to be notified when a document is recorded with their personal or business name.



INTEGRITY



INTEGRATED

# 2022 GOALS CONTINUED

## BUILD AND DEVELOP OUR TEAM

- In April 2022, the Board of Commissioners created a position in our office to carry out our statutory duty of serving as the secretary to the Board of Commissioners; a role that includes recording and maintaining the permanent record of all the actions of the Board.
- In 2022, we continued to build a workforce that looks like Kalamazoo County. Three official document specialists were hired and trained. **Our office now includes 2 Spanish-speaking and one French-speaking bilingual staff available to serve customers from different language backgrounds.** Staff participated in training to enhance DEI practice and understanding, such as “Respecting Differences” and “Resiliency: The Trauma-Informed Workplace,” as well as hours of training on technological advancements related to software, phone system, and electronic recording upgrades.

## LAND RECORDS DIGITIZATION PROJECT

- In 2022, the Board of Commissioners awarded our office an ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) **grant of \$620,000 to complete a digitization project spanning a century of land records from 1836-1985.** This project protects critical, irreplaceable infrastructure and ensures the land records of the County are preserved, accessible, and searchable for the future.

# VITAL RECORDS

## ABOUT THE VITAL RECORDS DIVISION

By law, the County Clerk serves as the local registrar for the county. The Vital Records Division is responsible for the preparation, filing, and preservation of information on the births, deaths, and marriages within Kalamazoo County. On any given day, five full-time Official Document Specialists multi-task between the customer service counter, phones, internet orders, and back-office processing work to provide certified copies of these documents to customers. They manage a high-paced customer service environment while strictly adhering to statutory standards for accuracy and eligibility for the documents in question.

Certified copies can be obtained by visiting our office located in the County Administration Building, by mail, or by use of [our online request system](#).

## CONCEALED PISTOL LICENSE (CPL)

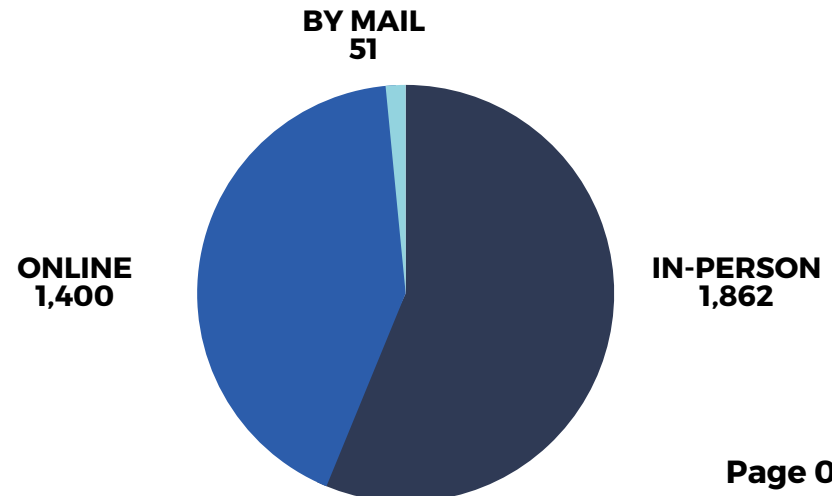
The Vital Records Division accepts and processes CPL applications for residents of Kalamazoo County. In Michigan, a resident must obtain a concealed pistol license (CPL) to carry a pistol concealed on their person. Individuals applying for a new CPL are required by law to apply at the County Clerk's office. A CPL may be renewed at the County Clerk's office, by mail, or online with the Michigan State Police.

The County Clerk is responsible for storing and maintaining all records; issuing the license; and issuing statutory disqualifications, notices of suspension, and revocations.

In 2021, the Kalamazoo County Clerk's office added new fingerprinting equipment. This enabled us to fingerprint CPL applicants on demand in our office. **In 2022, our first full year offering this service, the fingerprinting station generated enough revenue to pay for the cost of the equipment.**

## 2022 CPL APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS

**TOTAL: 3,313**



# VITAL RECORDS

## BUSINESS FILINGS

Business registrations filed at the county level are administered and overseen by the Vital Records Division. All businesses that operate in Kalamazoo County are required to register with our office unless they are a corporation, a limited liability company, or a limited liability partnership. **Our office processed 1,005 new business registrations during 2022.**

## NOTARY PUBLIC

A Notary Public is an officer appointed by the Michigan Secretary of State to attest to the authenticity of a person's signature, to administer oaths, and to witness acknowledgments. **Our office processed 453 notary applications in 2022.**

“I would like to express my sincerest gratitude for the speed in which [Redacted]'s birth certificate was processed and issued. Every individual we interacted with via phone, email, or in person was very helpful and courteous.”

**Vital Records Customer, May 2022**

2022

TOP



NAMES

BOYS	GIRLS
JACOB	JESSICA
MICHAEL	ASHLEY
NICHOLAS	SARAH
JOSHUA	SAMANTHA
TIMOTHY	HANNAH

**TOP BABY NAME  
AMONG COUNTY CLERKS  
GENEVIEVE!**





	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Total Certified Copies (Birth, Death, Marriage)</b>	18,825	19,313	13,972	17,984	17,225
<b>Deaths Recorded &amp; Filed</b>	2,978	2,897	3,427	3,519	3,318
<b>Births Recorded &amp; Filed</b>	4,914	4,770	4,525	4,539	4,347
<b>Marriage Licenses Issued &amp; Filed</b>	1,571	1,486	1,213	1,473	1,530
<b>Business Registrations Filed</b>	1,230	1,206	1,018	1,074	1,005
<b>Notary Commissions Issued, Bonds Filed</b>	479	488	319	494	469
<b>Military Discharge Recording</b>	9	1	2	1	5

## VITAL RECORDS **BY THE NUMBERS**

# REGISTER OF DEEDS

The Register of Deeds is the official recording office for all land records in Kalamazoo County. The Register of Deeds is a constitutional office established by the Michigan State Legislature as the custodian of legal documents pertaining to real property.

In 2022, the Register of Deeds (Land Records Division) transitioned software programs to database and search programs administered by Fidar Technologies. Lending institutions, abstract offices, realtors, surveyors, attorneys, and the public can select an appropriately scaled search account from our new Laredo and Tapestry search systems to obtain copies of recordings.

Once a document is recorded it can be reviewed and/or copied by anyone. All records are open to the public during business hours. We do not prepare documents, nor do we answer legal questions.

The work of the Register of Deeds office does not end after a document is recorded. After the document is imaged, certain important information contained in the document, such as the legal description and the name of the buyer and seller, is indexed in our computer system so that the public can easily review information regarding the ownership history of a particular piece of property. Maintaining an accurate index system is crucial as it is used to prove a chain of title or property ownership. All documents are handled many times before the recording process is complete and instruments are ready to be returned.

“I can’t begin to tell you how kind, polite and professional she was, as she explained everything to me with great detail...She has a very pleasant, personality and demeanor, and I absolutely want her to be recognized for the exemplary attitude and professionalism as well as her thorough understanding of her position.”

**Land Records Customer, October 2022**

# LAND RECORDS DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

## EXPANDED ELECTRONIC RECORDING CAPABILITY

Our recent technological upgrades have seen **added electronic recording capabilities for our customers' convenience**. Through an integration with Kalamazoo County Treasurer's Office and the City of Kalamazoo Treasurer, we are now able to accept Warranty Deeds electronically and have added the ability for tax clearances to be done electronically.

We launched "SWIFT" locally, **a module that electronically returns paper documents** back to submitters once the document has been accepted by our office.

## PROPERTY FRAUD ALERT



In 2022, as part of new services offered by Fidlar Technologies, our office launched a **free Property Fraud Alert service for Kalamazoo County residents**. Visit [PropertyFraudAlert.com/MIKalamazoo](https://PropertyFraudAlert.com/MIKalamazoo) and sign up by entering your personal and/or business name and you will be notified when a document is recorded with your name match.

[PROPERTYFRAUDALERT.COM/MIKALAMAZOO](https://PropertyFraudAlert.com/MIKalamazoo)



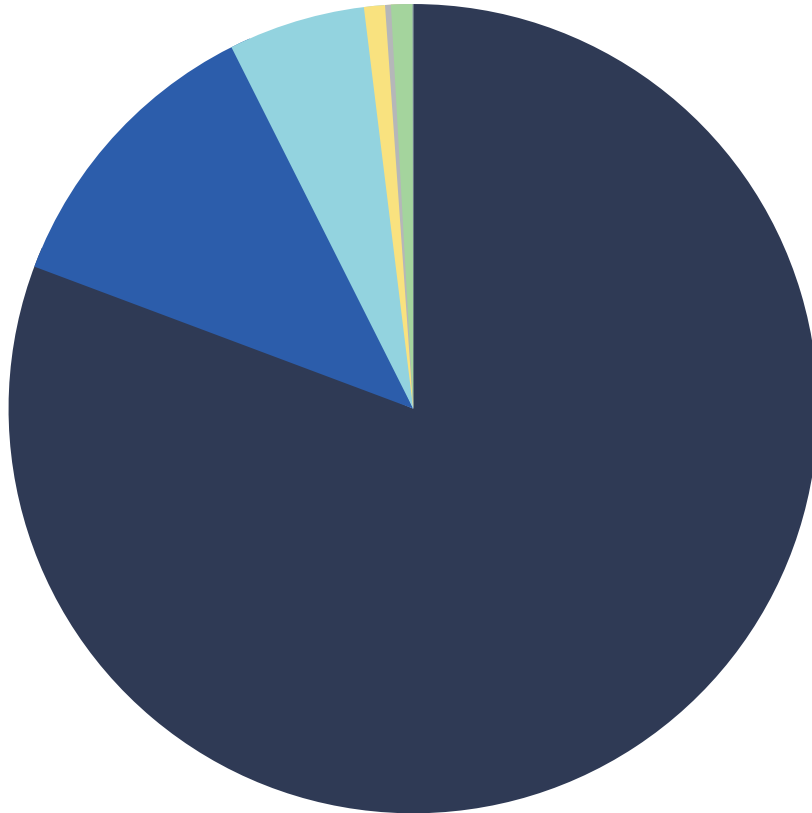
## LAND RECORDS SEARCH UPDATE

In October 2022, we launched our new land records search platforms, "Laredo" and "Tapestry." They are products of the office's new software partner, Fidlar, that are compatible with our records database. **Laredo provides an enhanced search experience for performing searches for some of our most active customers**, along with a variety of optional features and search criteria for retrieving accurate results. Searchers can select from a menu of monthly subscription options based on how often they expect to need to search for records in Kalamazoo County. **Tapestry is a web-based search service that allows users to search land records and index information**. This service has a \$6.95 fee per search and is ideal for one-time or casual searching.

## INCREASED BULK IMAGE REVENUE

**2022 revenue generated from bulk image sales increased to \$129,650.40, a 98% increase over the prior year** representing \$64,150.40 in revenue growth. Michigan statute specifies a \$1.00 per copy fee for records purchased from the Register of Deeds. New software and policies implemented in just the 4th quarter of 2022 that are aligned with both statute and best practices throughout the state have allowed the county to fully recoup its costs for maintaining a land records database. We look forward to continuing this growth in 2023 and beyond.

# FUNDS RECEIPTED



- STATE TRANSFER TAX**  
\$12,207,090
- COUNTY TRANSFER TAX**  
\$1,96,138
- RECORDING FEES**  
\$827,292
- RECORD SEARCH FEES**  
\$1,530
- REMONUMENTATION**  
\$126,459
- WEB & COPY SALES**  
\$35,413
- BULK IMAGES**  
\$129,650.40
- SEARCH SUBSCRIPTIONS (10/22 - 12/22)**  
\$1,707.84

**39,369**

**DOCUMENTS  
RECORDED**

**20,544**

**DOCUMENTS RECORDED  
ELECTRONICALLY**

**52%**

**OF DOCUMENTS RECORDED  
ELECTRONICALLY**

# 2022 ELECTIONS

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The Kalamazoo County Clerk is the chief election officer in Kalamazoo County. This involves overseeing the programming, printing, and distributing of ballots and coordinating the county canvass of federal, state, county, city, township, and school elections.

The Clerk receives and canvasses petitions for countywide and district offices, accepts campaign finance disclosure reports from local candidates, coordinates the administration of school elections for school districts that are contained within more than one city or township, trains precinct inspectors, and assists with the administration of Michigan's Qualified Voter File system.

We held election inspector training before each election in 2022, including four successful in-person training with over 80 in attendance.

The Elections Division provides guidance and instruction to the local jurisdictions that conduct many of the day-to-day elections operations and performs oversight to ensure that the proper administration of elections is adhered to.

The Elections Coordinator makes every effort to assist candidates with the process of running for office and to align Kalamazoo County filing policies with the ever-changing Campaign Finance Law governed by the Bureau of Elections in Lansing.

**In 2022, we executed the first Primary and General elections** during my term in office, and I am proud to say on behalf of our 19 local clerks and County Elections division that they were secure, safe, and successful elections.

We also conducted the first of many more public "Conversations with the Clerk" events where we invited the public to dialogue and education about the election process.

# 2022 ELECTIONS RUNDOWN

	VOTER TURNOUT	TOTAL BALLOTS CAST	% VOTES BY ABSENTEE BALLOTS
MAY 2 SPECIAL ELECTION	15.16%	31,643	80%
AUG. 3 PRIMARY ELECTION	24.48%	53,030	57%
NOV. 2 GENERAL ELECTION	55.51%	117,098	46%



**212,038**

REGISTERED VOTERS  
IN KALAMAZOO  
COUNTY



**201,771**

TOTAL BALLOTS CAST



**3**

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS  
ON ELECTIONS



**124**

CAMPAIGN FINANCE  
FILINGS

# BOARD OF CANVASSERS

The County Clerk is responsible for convening and coordinating the activities of the Kalamazoo County Board of Canvassers. The Board of Canvassers is composed of two Democratic and two Republican members. Board members are responsible for canvassing and certifying results for all elections that take place in Kalamazoo County. In 2022, canvassers included:

- Frances Brown (R)
- Wendy Flora (D), Chairperson
- Tony Lorentz (R)
- R. Vincent Lavieri (D)

The Board of Canvassers was busy in 2022! In February, they met to inspect and certify every ballot container used in Kalamazoo County, a process completed every four years. They worked overtime to carry out high standards of diligence in certifying the primary and general elections, then carrying out our local role in a statewide recount after November's election.



Our office worked on the November 2022 General election audits into early 2023 as we thoroughly reviewed the work of local election workers and repeatedly confirmed the veracity of local election results.

# PROPOSAL 2022-2

The November 2022 election saw Michigan voters overwhelmingly approve Proposal 2, which will:

- Recognize fundamental right to vote without harassing conduct;
- Require military or overseas ballots be counted if postmarked by election day;
- Provide voter right to verify identity with photo ID or signed statement;
- Provide voter right to single application to vote absentee in all elections;
- Require state-funded absentee-ballot drop boxes, and postage for absentee applications and ballots;
- Provide that only election officials may conduct post-election audits;
- Require nine days of early in-person voting;
- Allow donations to fund elections, which must be disclosed;
- Require canvass boards certify election results based only on the official records of votes cast.

As of this writing, state legislators and the Bureau of Elections are working on implementation measures that will carry out the provisions of Proposal 2 and in all likelihood will greatly increase both the accessibility of elections to local voters and the responsibilities of county and municipal clerks to comply with the new law.

**As a result of Proposal 2, it is likely that County Clerk offices will be more involved in the administration of polling locations than ever before seen in Michigan.** This would require investments in equipment and staff necessary to perform duties that have never been expected of the Clerk's office before. In the months to come we will be following what the State of Michigan's implementing statute and accompanying appropriations look like and how they will impact elections in Kalamazoo County.

# LARRY PROVANCHER KALAMAZOO COUNTY ID PROGRAM

The Larry Provancher Kalamazoo County Identification Card is a local government photo identification (ID) available to Kalamazoo County residents ages 11 and older.

The County ID is intended to recognize all Kalamazoo County residents and enable them to connect with public safety, civic, and community services.

To receive an ID card, you must be able to show proof of residence in Kalamazoo County and provide proof of identity.

The County ID program's work is carried out by a full-time County ID Coordinator, a volunteer advisory board, support from Official Document Specialists, and student workers from Kalamazoo College's Civic Engagement Center.

## 2022 COUNTY ID PROGRAM ADVISORY BOARD

- Chair, Dr. Francisco Villegas
- Clerk Meredith Place
- Sheriff Richard C. Fuller
- Captain Logan Bishop
- Commissioner Jen Strebs
- Commissioner Monteze Morales
- Charmelle Abdullah
- Luanda Louise Wheatley
- Tiffany Burns
- Katie Hurley
- Andy Sanford
- Adrian Vazquez
- Hon. Larry Provancher

**7,097**

IDs ISSUED TO DATE  
(Includes New, Renewal & Replacement Cards)

**2,175**

IDs ISSUED IN 2022





## NEW FULL-TIME COUNTY ID COORDINATOR

Thanks to the Board of Commissioners' support for an additional 0.5 FTE, in 2022, we were able to make the County ID Coordinator position a full-time role for the first time in program history! We were thrilled to promote Jazmin Ortiz-Ash to the role in October. Jazmin previously worked in our office as an Official Document Specialist and has more than ten years of work experience at the Consulate of Mexico in Calexico, California, and Detroit, Michigan. She is originally from "the city that captured the Sun," Mexicali, Baja California. Her bilingual capability is critical to serving Spanish-speaking members of our community (our office as a whole now proudly boasts two staff fluent in Spanish and one fluent in French to better assist customers of diverse language backgrounds).



## KALAMAZOO COUNTY FOUNDATION GRANT FUNDING

In 2022, we received continued support from our long-term program partner, Kalamazoo Community Foundation (KZCF). **Thank you, KZCF, for this generous gift of \$25,000 that provides operational support and funding for scholarships** so that cost is not a barrier to anyone who needs the County ID.

“

I feel very honored to be able to support our community with this program and to be able to expand the knowledge of the service we provide, it really is something beautiful to see the joy of each of the people who obtain their County ID. For some, it may mean obtaining a job, the opportunity to obtain housing, and above all, the opportunity to be able to identify themselves.

”

**Jazmin Ortiz-Ash**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>New IDs Issued</b>	1,517	1,152	226	996	1,254
<b>Replacement IDs Issued</b>	50	209	53	355	663
<b>Renewal IDs Issued</b>	—	—	—	364	258
<b>Gift of Life Sign-Ups</b>	46	51	62	68	188
<b>Mobile Unit Events</b>	—	—	—	27	27

## COUNTY ID PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

**"The county ID changed the course of my life"**

**College Student Receiving County ID, September 2022**

# 2023 GOALS

## IMPLEMENT HONOR REWARDS



Honor Rewards is a nationally recognized program that enables local veterans to receive discounts and benefits at participating area businesses by showing their Honor Rewards ID cards. Honor Rewards will prompt individuals from the community to have their military records recorded with our office.

## CONTINUE DIGITIZATION PROJECTS



We are in the progress of digitizing all Kalamazoo County land records dating back to 1836. We will continue to preserve and make accessible more and more public records through digitization.

## ENHANCE PUBLIC DEEDS SEARCH



We are working toward an enhanced, free online search option to help infrequent searchers who may not need a monthly subscription to readily access land records.

## CAMPAIGN FINANCE ONLINE



Our Elections Division will launch an upgraded online campaign finance platform in 2023 for candidates to conveniently file electronically and to improve transparency for the public to search campaign finance records online.

## BUILD LEADERSHIP ROLES FOR STAFF TO GROW INTO



As outlined in my 2023 New Funding requests, my office does not have a front-line supervisor, thus creating one manager to 14 staff member ratio. Staff managed by one person are performing different types of work within four different divisions of the office. This organizational structure is not recommended by Human Resources, does not provide for any upward mobility/advancement of staff into supervisory roles, and impacts the work environment of every employee.

With the addition of the supervisor positions in my budget request, five staff in each of our two largest divisions would report to one supervisor, allowing them to receive more coaching, direction, and mentoring, which helps employee retention and engagement. By way of comparison, my office is one of the only offices of its size in the County without a supervisor, and compared to other like-sized County Clerk/Register Offices, the average manager/employee ratio is 1:5.



# THANK YOU

MEREDITH PLACE  
CLERK | REGISTER OF DEEDS

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