

Tour tracks water from toilet to tap

By **TONY WITTKOWSKI - HP Staff Writer** | Posted: **Monday, October 17, 2016 6:00 am**

ST. JOSEPH — Water is an essential element to life, which is why Michigan’s Great Southwest Sustainable Business Forum created the Full Circle Tour.

The Business Forum partnered with the Benton Harbor/St. Joseph Joint Wastewater Treatment Plant and The Livery to offer two behind-the-scene tours by following the fate of water from a residential home to the treatment plant. The tour, which runs from 4:30-7 p.m. on Wednesday, is a way to find out what happens when flushing.

Marcy Hamilton, a Sustainable Business Forum board member, said they wanted to make a signature event that would focus on clean water and craft beers.

“Most people don’t think about what it takes to clean the water we flush down the toilet,” Hamilton said. “We want to provide you with an opportunity to see how the water is cleaned to keep our rivers, beaches and Lake Michigan safe and healthy for us to enjoy. Then we will visit The Livery to enjoy water that has been crafted into beer while the owner and head brewer takes us on a rare behind the scenes tour of the beer making process.”

Daniel Schoonmaker, administrator for the Business Forum, said this is one of four signature events they hold each year. In between each quarterly event, the Forum holds smaller networking events.

The Business Forum has been around Southwest Michigan since 2010, Schoonmaker said.

“The intention behind the event was to create an appreciation for the cycle of water that our community undergoes in a given time,” Schoonmaker said. “We draw water from the lake and use that water for any number purposes. Then that ends up at the wastewater treatment plant along with other kind of things we would rather flush away.”

The signature event, which has the tagline of “Drink, Flush and Finish,” has been a few months in the making. The tour will begin at the St. Joseph plant at 269 Anchors Way.

Participants will be at the plant for two hours from 4:30-6 p.m, before moving to the Benton Harbor brewery from 6-7 p.m. The brewery is at 190 5th St.



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Tim Lynch, manager of the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph Joint Wastewater Treatment Plant, shows off one of the plant’s final settling tanks Friday afternoon. The plant is one of the stops on the Full Circle Tour, sponsored by the Michigan Great Southwest Sustainable Business Forum on Wednesday from 4:30-7 p.m.

“The treatment plant works on putting water back into nature,” Schoonmaker said. “So, we thought that The Livery would be a good way to drive that ‘Full Circle’ home. This was the best way to connect the water that we drank to the water that we want to drink. They’ll gain a pretty strong understanding of an extensive and expensive process. And they may encounter some smells along the way.”

Tuesday, Oct. 18, is the last day to file for registration. Space is limited. To register, attendees can visit <https://mgssbf.org/signature-event-registration-payment>.

It costs \$10 for forum members and \$15 for nonmembers. Pricing includes two tours and one craft beer.

The Sustainable Business Forum is a nonprofit promoting business practices that demonstrate environmental stewardship, social responsibility and economic vitality. For more information and a list of member companies and organizations, visit www.mgssbf.org.

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