

Cornerstone Alliance

First Choice in Michigan's Great Southwest Testimonials



First Choice in Michigan's *Great Southwest* is an affiliate of Cornerstone Alliance and Chamber of Commerce. Founded in September of 2001, the program was formed based upon requests from several area companies who know and understand the importance of quality of life issues in relocation decisions. The staff of First Choice wants to make sure that each candidate's visit to Michigan's *Great Southwest* provides them with all the information they'll need to make the important relocation decisions ahead of them.

Rex & Janet Miller

<<Our tour with a First Choice guide was the perfect welcome to the St Joseph/Benton Harbor community. We were feeling optimistic about a potential move from Iowa to the area and after our tour we were sold! The first thing we did was to tour high schools. This gave our 15 year old daughter a chance to see and choose the high school she thought would be the best fit. It helped her feel less apprehensive and gave her the opportunity to be part of the decision making about our move. Our tour guide, a mother of teenagers, was very sensitive to our daughter's needs and made her feel very comfortable. >>

—Rex Miller, Director Global Compensation Corporate, Whirlpool Corporation

Kym, Jim, Ashley, & Caelan Harshaw

<<We have moved many times in the past and know the chaos surrounding the process, but First Choice made our move here the easiest and most comfortable move yet. By showing us around town, setting up days for our children to go to the schools, and introducing us to recreational programs, we felt like we had already lived here before we ever moved.

Our First Choice representative tailored her services to our needs by first quizzing us on our lifestyle and what we needed from our community. As with most families with children, schools were our number one priority. First Choice arranged for our children to spend a half day visiting the two schools we thought would work best. Once we determined that both schools were great, it made choosing a place to live a lot easier.

From our discussions, our representative also knew that soccer is a big deal in our family - both my children and my husband play. With that knowledge, she made sure we had all the information we needed to get involved with the local soccer programs. Now, every night and weekend is filled with soccer!

Our representative also made sure that we knew everything that the area had to offer. She spent half a day touring us around the area. She showed us everything from the new restaurants and the Arts District in Benton Harbor to the Village of Stevensville and everything in between. During the tour, she discussed the many activities that the area had to offer including festivals, skiing, state parks for running, and ice skating. Thanks First Choice for making our move to Southwest Michigan one of the smoothest moves we've had. We love the area and are grateful to you for making sure that we know all that Southwest Michigan has to offer!>>

—Kym Harshaw, Legal Counsel, American Electric Power, Cook Nuclear Plant

Chris McSwain

<<First Choice did a wonderful job of listening to us and making sure we were presented with good information in making our decision to relocate. They were very honest and straightforward in answering our questions and worked hard to be sure we had a very comprehensive tour of the area.

Additionally, they were objective in answering questions regarding relocation; providing many of the pro's and con's for each area of consideration. As a matter of fact, before we made a final decision to purchase, we asked for their feedback on the specific property.

Everyone was friendly, patient and very focused on helping us make a good decision. Thank you First Choice! >>

—Chris McSwain, Director, Global Benefits, Whirlpool Corporation

Antoinette, John, Andrea & Nicholas D'Aquila

◀◀Our family had the real pleasure of touring southwest Michigan with a guide from First Choice. We instantly fell in love with the place. We got a great feel for the community and that was instrumental in our making the decision in whether or not to move from Canada.

On school tours, the Principals took the kids around and made them feel like celebrities. Our guide had communicated with the Principals, telling them exactly what the children liked and the schools gave them a list of clubs they could join and things they could do. It was just really great.

Our guide took the children to lunch while we toured homes in the community. First Choice directed us quite a bit to tell us where to go and find things as we were dealing with the legal documentation, Visas, looking to buy a home here and selling a home there. She took away those worries. First Choice went out of their way to make every member of the family feel welcome. World class. >>

—Antoinette Armenio, HR Director, GIS, Whirlpool Corporation

Cristofer F. Rieli

◀◀When I came to interview with and tour the hospital in St. Joseph, I traveled from 460 miles away and was not at all familiar with the area. Through a community tour, First Choice was very helpful in showing me and my fiancée shopping areas, business districts, schools, housing, and recreational activities. The First Choice tour helped us make the decision to move to Southwest Michigan because we felt we had an idea as to what life outside of the workplace would be like.

After I accepted the position and came down to find housing, First Choice again helped and went out of their way to make sure we found a suitable rental house. Getting to know the area a little and finding a house to move into helped us make a well-informed decision to relocate.

Our First Choice guide was great to work with - cheerful, outgoing and knowledgeable about everything we wanted to know. We are glad we had the opportunity to be involved in this program. >>

—Cristofer F. Rieli, Histology Technologist, Laboratory, Lakeland Regional HealthCare

Rick & Kathi Martin

◀◀The First Choice program is a real gem! Our work with the tour guide from the First Choice program was extremely helpful in our decision to come to the Saint Joseph/Benton Harbor area for a job with Whirlpool. Prior to our trip up for an interview, our tour guide talked with me and my wife a couple of times to find out what kinds of things we needed to know about the community. We were moving from Columbus, Ohio and were a little anxious about moving to a small community. We were relieved after our first visit - we had seen some parts of the community we would never have found on our own - arts, restaurants, parks. The personal touch really made us feel welcome. The transition up here was made easy when our tour guide set up appointments for us to see homes to rent. The First Choice program really helped us feel connected to this community. What a great resource!>>

—Rick Martin, Sr. Change Management Consultant, Whirlpool Corporation

Brittany Eddy

◀◀At first, the idea of moving to Southwest Michigan, three hours from home, was a little overwhelming but First Choice really helped put my mind at ease. My tour guide definitely played a big part in my deciding to take the job at Lakeland. She was very friendly, kind and welcoming and was excited for me to have the opportunity to move here. You could tell she really loved the community and enjoyed living here. She told me about all the fun places to hang out, eat, shop and get coffee. Also, we visited apartment complexes, markets and, of course, the beautiful beach. I was sold on area after my First Choice tour and couldn't wait to move there.

I also really appreciated the community book that she put together for me. It was filled with maps, pamphlets, booklets, and phone numbers ~ really anything I would need to know about the area after moving here. My First Choice guide gave me her phone number and e-mail address just in case I had any questions or needed anything at all. >>

—Brittany Eddy, Ultrasound Technologist, Radiology, Lakeland Regional HealthCare

Hank & P.J. Marcy

◀◀First Choice provided a very balanced view of the community. They pointed out opportunities for growth, and some of the issues that are being worked on and how Whirlpool is involved. We found that very positive. The services provided by the First Choice program definitely played a strong and active part in our decision to move here. We went on driving tours, and had appointments with school personnel, a piano instructor, and even a yard maintenance service. We're very happy that this is such an easy place to get involved. >>

—Hank Marcy, Vice President Technology, Whirlpool Corporation