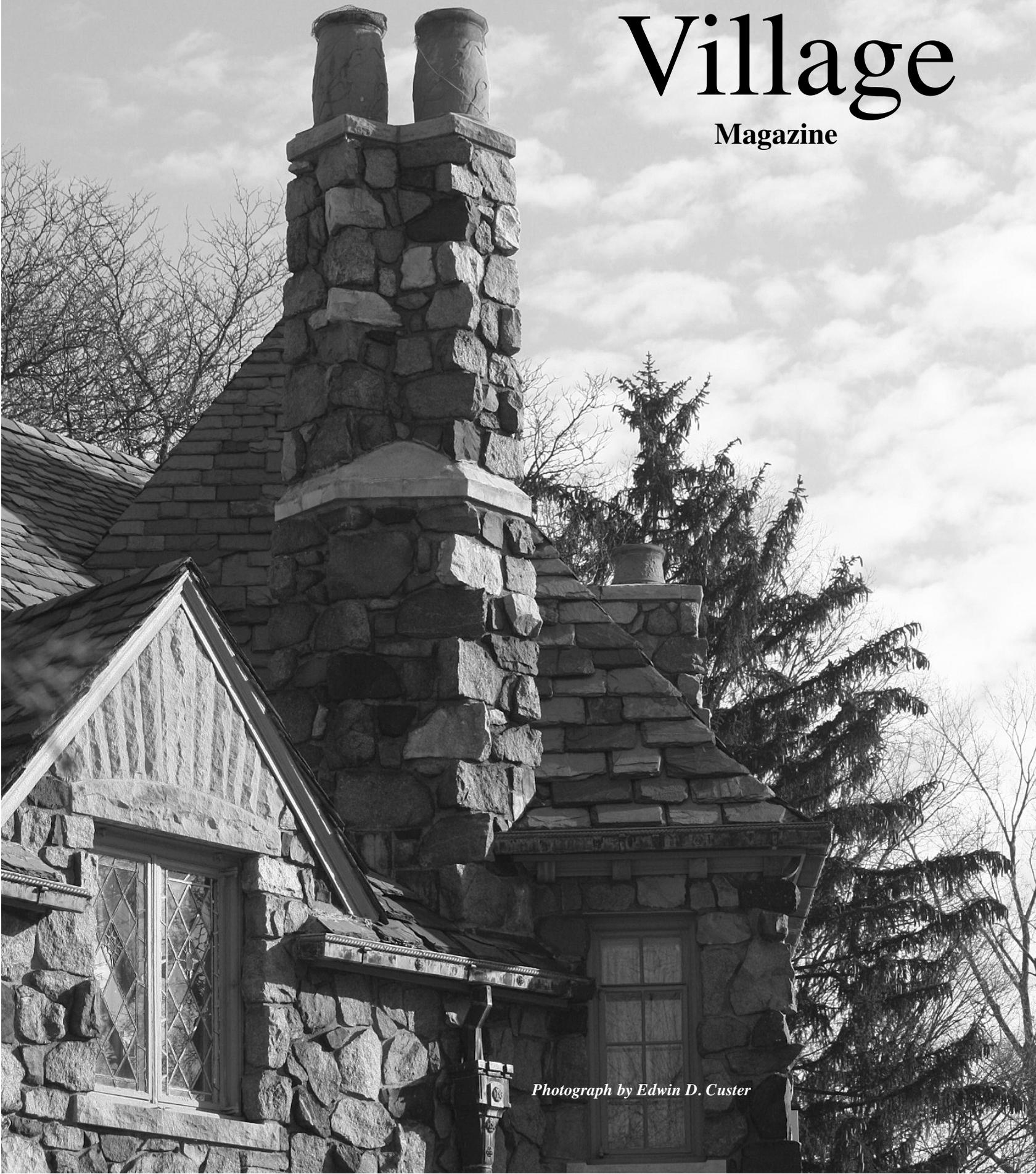


East Village

Magazine



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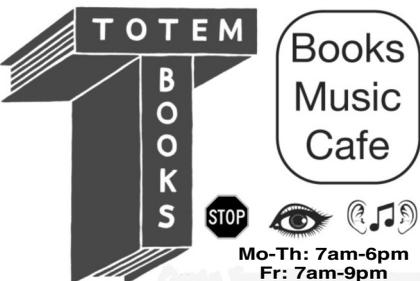
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Commentary

While we were dealing with water crisis ...

By Paul Rozycki

As Flint works its way through its water crisis, the range of problems seem overwhelming. Every time it looks like we've solved one problem, another rears its head.

At first it seemed that all we needed to do was replace the old lead pipes in the homes that had them, as difficult and expensive as that might be. But getting the lead out of the water may be more complex than simply replacing lead pipes – some of the homes with the highest lead levels had copper plumbing rather than lead. It also seems that there may be problems with galvanized pipes or fixtures inside the houses.

For as encouraging as Mayor Weaver's Fast Start program has been, right now it looks like it's time to say "not so fast" and make sure we are tackling the real cause of Flint's problems, before we invest all the money and effort in digging up the city.

To be sure, that will not sit well with an understandably impatient city that has been waiting too many months for a lasting solution to endless cases of bottled water, expert reports, celebrity visits and political promises. The impatience, frustration and anger is justifiable as the city tries to work its way through each new problem.

But it will happen. It won't be quick or easy, but it should be done right.

Having said that, all is not gloom and doom in Flint. Some of our more positive stories have been submerged in the water crisis stories. (I told you a few months ago it was hard to get away from these water analogies.)

The Karegnondi Pipeline

One of the best good news stories that's been overlooked is the impending completion of the Karegnondi Pipeline – the 80-mile-long pipeline that will connect Genesee, Lapeer and Sanilac counties to a dependable source of Lake Huron water.

(Karegnondi is a Huron-Petan Indian word for "big lake" and was an early Indian name for Lake Huron.)

While Flint has been embroiled in its water crisis the Karegnondi project has been progressing on schedule, and is \$15 million under its \$300 million projected budget. When was the last time a large government project like this came in on time and under budget?

With less than 10 miles of pipe left to install, it should be done by mid-summer, though water testing, as a result of Flint's problems, may delay the full usage of Karegnondi's water for about six months.

The project should provide Flint and Genesee County residents with a dependable, clean water supply at an affordable price. The hope is that it could be a boost to both agricul-

tural and industrial growth in the region. A few weeks ago Genesee County Drain Commissioner Jeff Wright presented an overview of the pipeline project at the Sloan Museum. Those interested in more details and Wright's presentation should check out the Karegnondi website, <www.karegnondi.com>.

Kettering's home loan program

The second project has nothing to do with water (finally). Kettering University, which has been a leader in the restoration of Atwood Stadium and the University Avenue Corridor, is offering its employees a forgivable \$15,000 loan if they purchase a home in one of three neighborhoods surrounding the college. Employees who already live in those areas can receive a comparable \$5000 loan to improve their property. For a city that has lost so much of its population (and tax base) this should be a boost not only to the Kettering neighborhood, but to all of Flint. Let's hope that Mott College, Baker and the University of Michigan-Flint (and other organizations) will consider similar programs. It's a step in the right direction to rebuilding Flint.

Remaking the Cultural Center

The third piece of overlooked news, as reported in January's *East Village Magazine*, is the revitalizing of the Cultural Center. Built in Flint's auto heyday and considered by many to be the "jewel of Flint," the Cultural Center will be seeing a major remake over the next few years.

The Sarvis Center is being demolished to make way for a dramatically enhanced Grand Lawn, which will provide space for a terraced amphitheater for musical concerts and a grand entrance to the Cultural Center. Plans are in place for the expansion of the Sloan Museum and a move of the Buick Gallery from its present location.

Similarly, the Flint Institute of Arts is looking toward its own expansion in the near future. The overall plan is to expand the Cultural Center to connect Mott Community College, the U of M-Flint and the downtown. What is remarkable is that the city and its leaders are able and willing to tackle this project now, when we don't have the auto industry money and jobs that we had when the Cultural Center was first built in the early 1960s. It says a lot about the commitment that Flint's major institutions have to the city – even in its most troubled times.

Flint hosts presidential debates

A final piece of good news is the way Flint handled the presidential debates, two days

(Continued on Page 7.)

Cover: Flint's famous stone house on Woodlawn Park Drive



Photo of the Month

Photograph by Edwin D. Custer

Marijuana dispensaries focus of Planning Commission discussion

By Nic Custer

Proposals for medical marijuana dispensaries at three Flint locations were the main topic discussed at the March 8 Flint Planning Commission meeting, that drew more than 60 people to the city hall's Dome Auditorium. Many audience members were College Cultural neighborhood residents who came for a public hearing about Bio-Med LLC's application to establish a medical marijuana dispensary in the former Family Video, 1835 E. Court St.

Most of the audience left, however, before commissioners heard from city planners about a proposed zoning standard that separates medical marijuana dispensaries from residential areas.

Park may preclude pot

Before the public hearing for the Court Street property could begin, Interim Chief Legal Officer Anthony Chubb, City of Flint, announced the city assessor had informed city officials there is "potentially a park within 300 feet" of the site.

He said if it is determined that the triangle-shaped green space at the intersection of Commonwealth, Windemere and Montclair avenues is a legal park, then the site would be ineligible to be zoned as a provisioning center.

He recommended the public hearing be postponed until the April 12 meeting. While the group did have a second meeting scheduled for later in March, the Open Meetings Act requires that neighbors get at least 15 days notice before a hearing is held.

Chairman Robert Wesley said if the site is determined to be a park, neighbors would receive notice in the mail as well. Associate City Planner Kevin Schronce clarified that even if it wasn't commissioned as an official park, the parcel's legal description is parkland.

After the meeting, Schronce told East Village Magazine that, according to the Genesee County Register of Deeds, the green space was deeded to the city of Flint in 1919 to be a public park for public use. As a result, he said, Bio-Med LLC will not be able to use the former Family Video for a medical marijuana dispensary.

Zoning reviews affect dispensaries

Planning commissioners have been reviewing the city's draft zoning code and approving articles a few at a time over the last two months. The group is currently discussing the code's ninth article regarding use regulations.

This section includes zoning restrictions for all additionally regulated uses including strip clubs and steam baths (class A), pawnshops, party stores and tattoo parlors (class B) and medical marijuana dispensaries (class C).

The current medical marijuana ordinance does not allow dispensaries within 1,000 feet of a school, park, church or another medical marijuana provisioning center or within 2,000 feet of 4 or more Class A businesses.

These regulations are also in the new draft zoning, but Schronce told the commission that

the planners were intending to add a locational standard to the zoning, which would mean that dispensaries cannot be established within 500 feet of a residential district. This type of locational standard already exists for the other additional regulated uses, which range from 300 to 1,000 feet.

Schronce said planners addressed comments they heard from the commission, investigated best practices from other communities and tried to make the zoning consistent with state law and the city's residential requirements for other additional regulated uses.

The draft zoning language states that the medical marijuana restrictions don't apply to businesses that have been open and conducting business at their current location since February 14, 2011, when the city first passed a moratorium on new medical marijuana dispensaries.

Davison Road hearing postponed

A public hearing for another dispensary at 2610 Davison Rd. was also postponed. Applicant Anna Shapova, who will be managing the business, did not turn in all of the required materials to have her application fully considered. Her attorney, John Tosto, said the proposed hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., the business will not be a compassion club and nothing will be grown on-site.

Commissioner Robert Jewell said handwritten portions of the application were illegible. He questioned her capability of running the business because her application did not include required site plan materials.

(Continued on Page 7.)

Flint Public Art Project anchors progress to local leadership

By Stacie Scherman

Flint Public Art Project (FPAP) is now under new local leadership as a result of recent changes to its organizational structure. Former director and FPAP founder Stephen Zacks stepped down into the newly created creative director position. He is succeeded by FPAP's new interim director, Joe Schipani.

Zacks has been commuting to Flint from his home in New York since founding FPAP in 2011 and said that it has been a challenge to manage the day-to-day operations of the organization.

"The most important thing for the organization is to have a new direction and new leadership [that is] grounded locally. This should facilitate better management of projects and a firmer grounding in a local set of interests and goals," Zacks said.

According to Schipani, the board of directors was also expanded to include seven new members local to Flint.

Schipani has lived in Flint for ten years and has been involved with FPAP since its founding. He said that his goals as interim director are to establish more partnerships throughout Flint and to move the Spencer's Center for Art and Architecture (SCAA) project forward.

According to the FPAP website, SCAA, located at 520 University Ave., will be a com-

munity art space for local and visiting artists with studios, a performance stage, meeting space, and outdoor garden and screening area. Schipani said that FPAP has four movie and live music nights planned this summer at SCAA beginning June 11.

Other planned events include six monthly art parades beginning April 28 at Ballenger Park, and the fourth annual Free City festival at Chevy Commons Aug. 19-20. Schipani said that the purpose of FPAP's projects and events is to bring attention to overlooked and abandoned spaces in Flint and to reimagine potential uses for those spaces.

According to Schipani, the Free City theme this year is Motion in Play. The festival will include live music, performances and art installations, including Desiree Duell's "A Body of Water," that uses empty water bottles to address the Flint water crisis.

Other art parade locations are planned to include Durant Park, Iroquois Park, Eldorado Vista Park, Kennedy Center and Potter Longway neighborhood. Schipani said that each parade will include a different walking route with temporary and permanent art installations and performances. He added that FPAP will clean up the site of each parade and host a block party "for everyone in the area and parade participants to celebrate and

have fun."

Jay Rowland, FPAP's new program coordinator, will work with Schipani to plan and facilitate all of the upcoming events, including planning art parade route logistics and coordinating artists and performers for the Free City festival. Rowland said that his new position combines the different roles he has filled over the last two years as a volunteer for FPAP.

Zacks said that as creative director he will return to Flint two or three times to do research, site visits, to assess how well the programs are running and make recommendations. He added that he will "continue to frame the organization and projects in a broader context of global art and design practices."

According to Zacks, the long-term goal of FPAP is to expand into five to ten buildings in a square block and use the spaces for things like studios, photo shoots, workshops, and office spaces. He added, "If I were to nudge the direction, it would be to also open up a space for a new imaginative architecture that could accommodate the programs -- whether it's an exhibition space or production workshop or even some kind of relaxation space for visiting artists and the community to use."

Staff writer Stacie Scherman can be reached at sscherma@umflint.edu.



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EPA handout summarizes Flint water use guidelines

By Jan Worth-Nelson

A two-sided color handout from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed explicitly for Flint details what many residents already know about the city's "new normal" until the water can be declared safe.

The handout, which local water response teams hope will soon be distributed city wide, clarifies in one compact summary what water to drink, what water to use, how to use filters and other strategies for coping with Flint's water crisis.

Jane Richardson, liaison for a communications workgroup of a larger coalition of community partners formed in response to the crisis, said the brochure was designed especially to inform residents with literacy issues or without digital access.

The basics summarized: Who should drink what

According to the handout, dated March 17, pregnant women, breastfeeding women, all kids under age six (including those on baby formula) should drink ONLY bottled water.

For kids older than six, teenagers, adults and pets, ONLY bottled water and filtered water are safe.

When unfiltered water is safe

The EPA advises that unfiltered water is okay for washing hands and bathing,



Photograph by Nic Custer

Willie Miller and Connie McNeal at a February water protest march

but says not to let the water get into your – or your kid's – mouth.

Unfiltered water is safe for washing dishes, the handout advises, except for washing baby bottles and kids' cups – for that purpose, filtered water is advised.

The new plumbing protocols

The handout calls for several daily plumbing-based rituals as well, advising:

- Every morning, run unfiltered cold water for at least five minutes to flush the pipes.
- Every week, clean the aerators in all faucets and clean the screens in your water filters.

Guidelines on filter use

The handout details guidelines, with illustrations included, for using filters as follows:

- First, check that it is NSF-Certified to remove lead.
- Follow the manual that comes with the filter for correct installation.
- Do not run hot water through the filter.
- Start with cold filtered water and then heat to cook.
- Flush the hot water heater tank regularly, following the manufacturer's

instructions or relying on a licensed professional.

- Change the filter when the indicator turns red.

In addition, the handout illustrates how to clean faucet aerators and lists resources for Flint residents. The handout suggests that for more information, residents can email flintwater@epa.gov, go to www.epa.gov/Flint, or call the EPA's hotline, 810-434-5122.

Jan Worth-Nelson is the editor of *East Village Magazine*. She can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.



Photograph by Jan Worth-Nelson

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GM historian donates archives

By Jan Worth-Nelson

Historian Lawrence R. Gustin, a Flint native and scholar of automotive and Flint history, has donated his personal archives covering decades of research on the founding fathers of General Motors to the Sloan Museum in Flint.

The gift includes a storehouse of personal papers of William C. “Billy” Durant, the colorful General Motors founder whom many consider to be Flint’s most important historical figure. Gustin wrote a critically acclaimed biography of Durant, issued in 1973 and updated in 2008.

Jeremy Dimick, curator of collections at the Sloan, said the collection, to be labeled the Lawrence R. Gustin Archives, will be accessible to researchers by appointment once inventoried and cataloged into the museum collection.

Gustin was a writer and editor at the Flint Journal from 1960 to 1984 and later was assistant public relations director of Buick, retiring in 2005.

In addition to the Durant biography, Gustin also wrote the first biography of David Buick, and both books, among other notable consequences, were recently translated into Chinese and published in Shanghai.

The archives detail Billy Durant’s rela-

tionships with Charles W. Nash and Walter Chrysler, both of whom became auto titans after working with Durant in Flint. Letters also document how Durant persuaded Charles Stewart Mott to relocate his axle company in 1906 from Utica, N.Y., to Flint to serve Buick – the beginning of Mott’s fortune that resulted in the Mott Foundation.

“I never learned very much about Flint history growing up. So when I found out what amazing industrial developments took place here and how many important auto pioneers worked here, I spent a lot of time trying to tell those stories,” Gustin said in an announcement of the donation.

“Flint has had an incredible history and I wanted folks to be proud of that heritage. I hope these files will be useful to new generations.”

Jan Worth-Nelson is editor of *East Village Magazine*. She can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.

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News brief: Libraries sponsor UM-Flint student spoken word performance

As part of their final project, 16 students from the University of Michigan-Flint will perform at the Flint Public Library from 5 to 6:45 p.m. Wednesday, April 13, according to an announcement from Eileen Button, community relations manager of the Genesee District Library.

The free performance is part of Dr. Traci Currie’s “Spoken Word as Art and Communication” class.

“For 15 weeks we have spent time together, allowing students to identify themselves using spoken word,” Currie said. “Students have wrestled with their identities. The stories are honest. It’s some tough material.”

Spoken word is a form of performance-based poetry that emphasizes word play and storytelling, Currie explained. Students will write their own material, but they will also pull from their favorite artists and authors.

“A lot of people in the class have been through things where other people have controlled their identity and I want them to break free of that. Breaking free sometimes means we hear uncomfortable things,” Currie said.

Currie, a Jamaican-American poet, writer, and lecturer at the University of Michigan-Flint, also will perform. Refreshments will be served.

The program is presented in partnership between the Flint Public Library and Genesee District Library. Flint Public Library is located at 1026 E. Kearsley Street, Flint. To register, visit thegdl.org.

... Crisis

(Continued from Page 3.)

before the Michigan primary, in early March. Many from the national media came to Flint expecting to see only the worst images of “Roger and Me” and “The City that Poisoned its Kids.”

There’s no doubt those images were there, but they also saw a well-organized debate, a welcoming city, all framed in the impressive setting of The Whiting. They saw a larger and brighter picture of Flint and more than a few of them said so in their reporting. In addition, the voters of Flint (and all of Michigan) came through as well, turning out in record-break-

ing numbers, surpassing the primary turnout in 1972.

And those are only four major developments that have been taking place while we have been overwhelmed with the Water Crisis. There are probably a hundred others that deserve our attention.

So, it’s worth remembering as we dig our way out of mountains of plastic water bottles, fact-finding reports, Congressional hearings, costly lawsuits, impassioned marches, celebrity visits and political pronouncements, that the new Flint is still quietly building for the future – just below the surface of its troubled waters.

Paul Rozycki is a retired professor of political science from Mott Community College. He has lived in Flint since 1969 and has been involved with and observed Flint politics for many years. He is author of Politics and Government in Michigan (with Jim Hanley) and A Clearer Image: The History of Mott Community College. He can be reached at paul.rozycki@mcc.edu.

... Marijuana

(Continued from Page 4.)

Commissioner Leora Campbell also reminded the applicant that she was required to submit a business plan with the application. Campbell later said that the commission does not have all the information it needs to make a determination and without that information the application cannot go forward.

Michael Herriman, the building’s owner, spoke in support of the application. He said the building was used for a noninvasive pain management center for several years and he is anxious to see it return to that use. He said he was impressed with Shapova and her desire to follow the proper steps to get city approval.

The application was postponed until April 12 and the applicant needs to provide a business plan, lighting plan, building security plan, signage plan and a revised application.

Center Road changes OK’d

Green Culture, a medical marijuana dispensary operating at 808 S. Center Rd., was unanimously approved to modify its layout. Applicant Justin Clark said the dispensary needed the modification to better accommodate its patients.

He said there is a married couple who are both paralyzed and use electric wheelchairs. The current layout doesn’t allow the business to serve them at the same time. He requested replacing three walls with a security door between the front and back of the business that would open up the back area for patient use.

Nic Custer, East Village Magazine managing editor, can be reached at NicEastvillage@gmail.com.

Village Life

Pretending to be happy: smart guys say it works

By Jan Worth-Nelson

This column first appeared in the April, 2009 edition. In light of the rough “Winter of the Water” and all of its depressing side-effects Flintoids have survived, it seems appropriate to remind ourselves of these ideas again.

Sheepishly, I admit it: two of my favorite words are “lugubrious” and “lachrymose.”

They’re fun to say. I dare you to say them out loud yourself, right now, in Steady



ODE TO A MUTT
By Grayce Scholt

If I could write a poem
sufficient for a wet nose,
neck ruff, tail loft,
spray of pee
from a leg lifted
on our maple tree,
I would.

But who can say
what should be said
about a best-bud, never bred
for shows, but “just a mutt”
who knows my touch,
my smell, my look
so when we
peer into each other’s eyes,
at least for then
we know that
life is good,
in spite of all
the evils
men devise.

Grayce Scholt is a retired English professor from Mott College who wrote art reviews for the Flint Journal. Her book of poetry, Bang! Go All the Porch Swings, is available online from Amazon. A personal narrative of the poet’s life in Europe in the early 1950s, Vienna, Only You, is available at gscholt09@comcast.net. The author’s new book of poems, Night Song, is available from Friesen Press (www.friesenpress.com) and Amazon.

Eddy’s or the Lunch Studio or Good Beans or wherever you are: LU-GU-BRIOUS – excessively mournful, and LACHRYMOSE – dolorous, showing sorrow, according to Wordnet. They sound like what they mean. Say “lugubrious” and the mouth pouts outward, the sides of the face falling. Say “lachrymose” and the throat slightly tightens, as if preparing for a good cry.

But if words are destiny, which as a writer I superstitiously believe, I think I should pull these morose syllables out of service from my personal lexicon, at least for now.

Times are tough, and we need relief. I don’t know about you, but I’m tired of being down.

So, I’ll establish myself as the East Village Idiot, once and for all, by declaring that this is a time to be upbeat. We need to smile at ourselves in the mirror in the morning and say hello. We need to smile at each other and say with gentle confidence, counter-intuitively, that things will be all right.

This is not, despite the sound of it, total lunacy. According to a growing body of research, finding a way to “act happy” might actually change our brain chemistry, our immune systems, and in time, improve the way we respond to the stresses of life. It’s a potent concept – that by choosing what we attend to and what we nurture, we can sometimes change what happens.

According to studies by Daniel Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence, and others by Paul Ekman at the University of California-San Francisco, for example, the action is in the amygdala, an area of the brain known to be the hub of “fear memory.”

In a 2003 BBC interview, Ekman said his research showed that Buddhists who regularly meditated, were “less likely to be shocked, flustered, surprised or as angry as other people.” In fact, he asserted, the experienced Buddhists in his study had achieved, via meditation and selective attention, what the rest of us so often seem to be short on: happiness.

Mystics and meditators have known this for centuries. As the 13th Century Perisan poet Rumi advised, “Water the fruit trees, and don’t water the thorns.”

One of my heroes is psychology superstar Martin Seligman, who coined the phrase “learned happiness.” A self-described pessimist, Seligman first achieved notice with his gloomy but path-finding concept of “learned helplessness,” in which his experiments suggested that people whose attempts to escape punish-

ment were continually thwarted eventually gave up trying, even after obstacles were lifted.

Sound like your depressed neighbor, or even you, at 4 a.m.?

Now, trying to turn the focus of how we think about mental health from pathology to well-being, Seligman is fruitfully noting that people can learn to change – and become happier. This turns out to be something, however, that a whole community must consider; as a solely individual matter, it can be impossible to sustain.

As he told Time Magazine in 2005, “We needed to ask, what are the enabling conditions that make human beings flourish?” Rumi’s ideas about getting to happiness called for, among other things, the brilliantly simple notion of moving the body. Rumi was a dervish. He breathed, twirled and spoke his poems while whirling. (Oh, how I would love to have been at those open mic nights) He considered that moving the body was an essential part of the meditation.

He prescribed other kinds of movement as well. In a recent NPR interview, Persian-American Rumi scholar Fatemeh Keshavarz, paraphrased it this way: “If you don’t plow the earth, it’s going to get so hard nothing grows in it. You just plow the earth of yourself. You just get moving. And even don’t ask exactly what’s going to happen. You allow yourself to move around, and then you will see the benefit.”

If we choose to twirl away from despair, in the spirit of Rumi, that means finding a path to practical love. A neighborhood can do what one person can’t.

So when I cheered Lil Ed and the Blues Imperials with my neighbors on a recent exuberant musical night at the UM-Flint theater, or when I see everybody gardening in these past glorious days – all of us out there raking, planting, pruning, or when we’re all getting re-acquainted with each other on our daily walks – pausing at corners to gossip and take in whatever sun the day affords, I think we’re moving, tentatively but undeniably, sweetly and gently, toward hope – resilient and resolute even in the face of a scary and depressing year.

Rumi said, “Get yourself a new language and then you will be able to see a new world.”

So, enough already of “lachrymose.” A pox on “lugubrious.” Let’s keep moving. It’s spring, and we have a neighborhood to love.

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