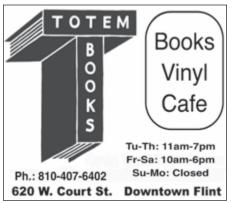
East Village

Magazine

September 2018

Photograph by Edwin D. Custes







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Fig. 100

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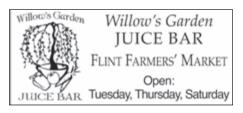
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Commentary Who votes, who doesn't, and why it matters

By Paul Rozycki

Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting.

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

Our American heritage is threatened as much by our own indifference as it is by the most unscrupulous office or by the most powerful foreign threat.

The future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter.

-Dwight D. Eisenhower

Guess who was the winner in the last election?

The Republicans? Nope!

The Democrats? Nope!

The Libertarians, the Green Party or the Socialists? Nope! Nope! Nope!

The real "winner" in the last election, and in nearly every election in American history, hasn't been Democrats, Republicans, or any other party. The real "winner" has been those who don't vote.

For example, in 2016, about 65.8 million citizens voted for Hillary Clinton, about 62.9 million voted for Donald Trump, and at least 92 million didn't vote at all. The non-voters had a nearly 30 million-person margin over either Hillary or Trump. And that pattern isn't unusual. In most presidential elections only about 60 percent of those eligible to vote actually vote. In 2016, it was less than that — about 58 percent. Of those who vote, about half vote for the Democrat, and half for the Republican in any given year.

But those votes for either party are outnumbered by the 40 percent who didn't vote at all. That's been true for most of American history. Even more striking is the fact that those numbers are for our most important election — the presidential contest every four years.

While we turn out about 60 percent of potential voters for the presidential election, only about 40 percent vote in midterm elections. In Michigan, our August primary usually gets about a 20 percent turnout. Though this year, we did set a record with about 27 percent of the voters showing up in August. But even that record-breaking turnout left 73 percent of the voters at home. In recent years, in Flint, under emergency managers, we've had several elections with less than a 10 percent turnout.

So what's the problem? People have the choice to vote or not, don't they? Yes, they do, but democracy depends on an active, informed electorate, and democratic ideals can disappear as easily from apathy as from outside attack. And those who vote have a louder voice in deciding what happens and what doesn't.

Who votes? Who doesn't?

While on average about 60 percent of us vote for president, some groups vote a lot more than others, and that explains why some policies are put in place very quickly, and others don't happen at all. Without running through a long list of numbers, charts, and percentages, people are more likely to vote if they are older, well educated, wealthy, and white.

For example, in the 2016 election, 71 percent of those over 65 voted, while only 46 percent of those under 30 did. Voters with less than a high school education only represented a 33 percent turnout, those with some college education voted at a 68 percent rate, and 81 percent of those with postgraduate work voted. Of voters with incomes over \$150,000, more than 80 percent voted, while only 46 percent of those with income under \$10,000 did.

White voters turned out at a 65 percent rate, only 59 percent of African Americans voted (a decline from 2012), and 47 percent of Hispanics voted.

With numbers like that it's not hard to see why so many policies favor some (Continued on Page 6.)

Cover: What a web we weave



Photo of the Month: Flint's love affair with the car survives and thrives at Back to the Bricks

Flint Youth Theatre becomes "The Rep" amidst celebration, protests

By Patsy Isenberg

The Flint Youth Theatre (FYT), for more than 60 years a haven in the Flint Cultural Center for local young actors and theater production buffs, is changing. Theater executives unveiled a new name, a new look, and a new emphasis at an announcement event Aug. 22.

Michael Lluberes, FYT producing artistic director, described the changes and offered a preview of the upcoming season.

The FYT has become the "Flint Repertory Theatre," or "The Rep." It will feature five productions including two musicals, with the hope that adults will see the theater as providing entertainment for them as well as for a youthful audience.

Protests

But the first thing guests saw on entering the parking lot were young people standing on on Kearsley Street carrying homemade signs of protest and handing out fliers explaining their aim.

They said they were protesting the word "youth" being removed from the name of the theater company. But it goes

further than that. For most of the summer, since word leaked out that the FYT was "rebranding" and changing its focus, the young thespians, many of whom have performed in productions at FYT for years, said they began to wonder what all this change meant for them and why they were not given a voice.

Edith Pendell, 12, who had a major role in this year's FYT production "The Geranium on the Windowsill Died But Teacher You Went Right On," attended a town hall meeting at McCree last month before the arts millage vote, hoping to find out what the proposed changes meant for her and her peers and to voice her concerns.

Rodney Lontine, Flint Institute of Music president and CEO, who oversees the FYT, was on the panel, and assured her youth would still be a big part of the new organization, especially in the area of education.

But at the protest, Pendell said she felt she still didn't get an answer to her most pressing question, which was whether there would still be roles in the company for youth.

The protestors have been supported and joined online and off by some parents and FYT alums, who say FIM leadership did little to reach out to the community about the proposed changes. They noted the timing of the announcement, *after* the Aug. 7 arts millage vote at which \$8.7 million/year in taxpayer money for the Flint Cultural Center and other Genesee County arts agencies was at stake.

The millage passed by about 3,000 votes, but a vocal block of opponents, say they continue to resent and bemoan the process and content of the FYT change. They say they fear the particular and conscious emphasis on youth theater — especially for local young actors — would be lost in the theater's attempt to expand its appeal to adult audiences.

Bryanna McGarry of Lansing, a longtime Flint resident who now works for State Senator Jim Ananich, and who was involved with FYT while growing up, posted a page

(Continued on Page 5.)

... Rep

(Continued from Page 4.)

about the change on Facebook.

Through the years the FYT had provided young participants "a creative and safe space to learn, strengthen their abilities as young artists, and feel comfortable in their own skin," McGarry wrote. "It saddens me that the young people in Flint won't be able to experience FYT ... restructuring FYT into an adult-focused Repertory Theatre is a huge mistake and ultimately robs the young people in Flint from an enriching, life-changing artistic experience that they do not have access to in school," McGarry said. She said her views were her own and not being offered as a statement from Ananich's office.

President of FIM explains the changes

"Nothing that the youth theatre was doing is being eliminated. We're adding," Lontine countered. He said the aim is to include more people in the community.

Lontine came to Flint from Colorado two years ago and said he has witnessed "repertory" theatre in many big cities. He said he thinks the theatre in Flint is worthy of the designation, as "an incredible facility," and ... "for a community this size it has all the bells and whistles."

He said he's heard from people who have lived in Flint their whole lives who have never been to the Cultural Center. Lontine said the FIM wants to help open up the theater to more participation.

He asserted that a show put on by The Flint Youth Theatre is "right off the top, taking your audience, and making it less than half." Lontine said he thinks people immediately assume those shows are only for kids.

He emphasized the youth theatre will remain part of The Rep however, through the shows it produces and its educational offerings. He said local youth still can audition for roles whenever they are offered..

What "The Rep" will bring to Flint

The new logo was quite evident at the entrance and inside the theatre at the Aug. 22 announcement. After a reception in the lobby, the group moved inside, where

Alina Trionne Oliver kicked off the announcement by singing "I am Changing," the Jennifer Hudson hit from the show "Dreamgirls."

Lluberes then took the mic to offer a rundown of the upcoming season and explain organization of the various divisions that make up The Rep.

But first, Lluberes summed up the theatre's transition. "There's changes everywhere," he said. "You may have noticed our new look, our new name, we're expanding the depth and breadth of our new programming and mission in transforming to The Flint Repertory Theatre. The season...is all about transformation."

Five productions are in the works,



including two musicals, in the Signature Series. There will be a world premier play, "The Boatman," "Assassins" (a musical), "The Wolves," "The Glass Menagerie," and "Songs About Stuff: The Music of Wally Pleasant."

"Assassins" will run Nov. 9 through Nov. 18, Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's Tony-award-winning musical. Mary Paige Rieffel, who plays Lynette Alice "Squeaky" Fromme, and Gage Webster who plays John Hinckley Jr. were there to perform the song.

The other musical, "Songs About Stuff: The Music of Wally Pleasant" is described as "an offbeat celebration of his (Pleasant's) music, humor, and quirky way of looking at the world." Wally Pleasant, from East Lansing, was also there to sing a song from his world premier show.

A separate designation for young people, Theatre for Young Audiences, includes two musicals. These are "The Little Prince" and an experimental, "underwater" production involving creatures, "Riddle of the Trilobites," its world premier. Young actor Joey Urgino did a reading that night from "The Little Prince."

Another division Lluberes introduced is the 2019 New Works Festival, described in the catalog as "staged readings of new plays and musicals" in January, 2019.

Lluberes also announced a 30 percent discount to Genesee County residents — a spinoff benefit of the arts millage approved by voters Aug. 7. That means the full package of seven shows, normally \$70, will be \$49. Other packages of tickets also are available.

Coming: Young Playwrights' Festival

A few days after the presentation, Lluberes reiterated, with Lontine, that the changes are about adding, not subtracting, elements of the theater. He said the new season will add programs specifically for young people.

"We will also be presenting our first Young Playwrights' Festival where children and teens will be mentored by theatre professionals and create a festival of original student-generated work ... our goal is to continue to provide that space here for youth while expanding to provide new opportunities for adults, college students and senior citizens to participate as well," he said.

EVM staff writer Patsy Isenberg can be reached at pisenber@gmail.com.

Pipes replaced so far in Flint: 6.957+

Source: press release from Candice Mushatt, City of Flint public information officer

The total includes 729 homes completed this year, in Phase 5 of the project, out of a goal of 6,000 for 2018. Mushatt said there are about 7,000 more to go.

Crews from the five area contractors doing the replacements have identified copper service lines at a total of 3,899 homes which did not need to be replaced.

The city aims to have all of Flint's lead-tainted service lines, variously estimated at nearly 20,000, replaced by 2020.

... Votes

(Continued from Page 3.)

groups and ignore others. Politicians and their policies go where the votes are, and they know all too well where the votes are and where they aren't. Elections matter and those who vote (and don't vote) determine who wins, who loses, and who makes policy.

In the view of most analysts, the outcome of the 2016 election was determined more by those who didn't vote than those who did. The evidence suggests that Hillary lost because so many of her traditional Democratic voters stayed home, rather than a dramatic new surge of voters for Trump.

Why don't we vote more?

So why don't we vote more? Most other democratic nations have a much better voting record than we do. The United States ranks 26th out of 32 developed, democratic nations in our rate of voting. Belgium, Sweden, and Demark all turn out more than 80 percent of their voters in a typical election. Canada and Mexico have a higher voting rate than the U.S. as well. In 2016, we had about a 58 percent turnout.

How we run our elections

One reason is the way we run our elections. We usually hold them on a Tuesday, when many people are working. We require that voters take the responsibility to make sure they are registered ahead of time, remember to reregister if they move, and increasingly we require that voters show official IDs to vote. Absentee voting or early voting is often difficult. Unlike many nations, we disenfranchise felons, and make it difficult for them to regain the right to vote once their time is served. Many nations with higher voter rates hold elections on weekends, often over several days. Some make Election Day a holiday. Many nations automatically register all citizens or make registration much easier than it is in the U.S. Some nations even require voting or offer financial incentives to vote.

Our cynical attitude toward politics

Perhaps the biggest reason for not voting is our attitude toward politics. We live

in a cynical time when trust in government, and many other institutions, is at an alltime low. That trust has declined for many decades, starting with the Vietnam War and Watergate in the 60s. Ask a non-voter why he or she abstains and you'll often hear, "I don't trust any of them," or "It won't make any difference," or "My vote won't matter." Our gerrymandered election districts encourage cynicism. When one party is so dominant, it's normal to feel that either your party is certain to win, so why bother to vote, or your party is certain to lose, so why vote? This decline in trust stems from many sources, but two stand out. How many candidates base their campaigns on running against Washington, bragging that they are outsiders and not part of the system? How many radio talk show commentators make their name by angrily ranting at whoever is in office?

Intentional restriction of the vote

Some elected officials in both parties have a vested interest in keeping turnout low.

For Republicans, they fear that an in increase in turnout will mean an increase in Democratic voters, so they have generally supported policies that discouraged easier voting. They have usually opposed early voting, easier absentee voting, automatic registration, and student voting on campus. They have often favored strict voter ID laws, and opposed laws that allowed ex-

felons to vote. In some states polling places have been closed in areas with minority voters, who usually vote Democratic. While it is probably true that increasing the voter turnout would help Democrats, several studies that suggest that non-voters' political leanings are not that different from those who show up at the polls.

Yet, Republicans aren't the only ones to restrict the vote. Long-term incumbents of either party might not be willing to expand the voter base, especially if that base has been electing them for a long time, and they don't know who the new voters are likely to be. It's also not uncommon for a school board or local millage committee to purposely schedule a vote for a time when few will turn out, in the hope that only their loyal supporters will show up, and pass the millage or bond issue.

What should we do about it?

We owe it to ourselves to become informed. Unfortunately, with the decline of traditional newspapers, political information is more fragmented and less reliable than in the past. There's certainly more information on line, but how much is true? We need to be wise consumers of news. Our schools should do more to encourage and develop civic literacy. One good source today is the League of

(Continued on Page 15.)

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"The Folks of Flint" exhibit open now at Capitol Theatre

By Patsy Isenberg

An exhibit of Flint native Dan White's 58 larger-than-life portraits, "The Folks of Flint: A Tribute," is open now at the Capitol Theatre through October. The labor of love reveals a lot about the city that White, a Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer, wishes to honor.

Visitors can see the pieces hanging in the lobby and theatre arcade 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The whole show, placed throughout the building, can be viewed 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. each Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Admission is free.

The prints are 44" x 60" color portraits. Some are well-known and some are "ordinary people" who attracted White's photographer's heart and eye.

The collection features local sports personalities, politicians, religious figures, students, musicians, style icons, activists, artists, children, heads of institutions, a playwright, entrepreneurs, brothers, sisters, power couples, and co-workers.

Beneath each portrait is a short com-

mentary. Most of the narratives, each one a mini-biography, were written by Ashley Nickels, a Kent State University professor and scholar who was in Flint doing research for a book, and *EVM* editor and writer Jan Worth-Nelson.

White said he wanted to "share these portraits and their stories in an honest and respectful manner that reflects all that is good in a city that has had more than its share of downturns."

White, 61, chose as his local assistant Will Alston of Davison. For the printing process, he used JD Photo Imaging on Corunna Road.

Born and raised in Flint, White started his journey as a photographer at 11 and worked part-time at *The Flint Journal* while still in high school, graduating from Flint Northern in 1975. He graduated in photojournalism from the University of Missouri.

Eventually he went to work for the Kansas City Star. A longtime Kansas City resident, White comes back to Flint several times a year and considers it home. He's now full-time as a freelancer and has traveled the world with his camera. Several of his completed collections can be seen on his website, *danwhite.com*.

EVM staff writer Patsy Isenberg can be reached at pisenber@gmail.com.

WHY I VOTE



James Jackson y

because of the many lives that have been sacrificed...It's a basic right; people died for that. It is imperative that you consider your vote to be one of

Anybody should

be able to vote

the most important votes there is.

VOTE

NOVEMBER



This issue of East Village Magazine is a call to community, and a call to citizenship. Our role as Americans is to participate. To be informed, to be involved in our democracy. If we forget or neglect this shared duty, the loss could be incalculable, no matter our political beliefs, our gender, our race, our age, our religion. This November is a perfect example of the need to strive, together, for a more perfect union. Why should we vote? We asked many people and shared their answers here. Please peruse and enjoy, and mark your calendar for a day that matters: Tuesday, Nov. 6.

-The Editors





Being a black American, I feel it's very important for me to get out and vote and everyone to exercise their right to vote. Especially during the era of civil rights, this was one of the issues that was fought for, for black Americans today to be allowed

Terence Green

to vote...it's very important, not just for black Americans, but any Americans to get out and exercise their right to

WHAT:





WHY I VOTE



It's our civic duty to vote. It's difficult to cry about...things that are wrong unless you contribute...voting is part of that. I encouraged my children to pick a party or person and examine that person and see if what they stand for...if you and

Sheila Fulmore

their feelings...are on the same page.

WHY I VOTE



Bob Hooks

It's the only voice we have. If you're happy with what's going on, vote, keep 'em in office. If you're not happy with what's going on, you have a chance to vote and remove people. Midterms, local elections. You can't gripe, you can't

complain unless you get to the polls and vote.

WHEN:

TUESDAY Nov. 6 2018

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Launched by the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) in October of 2006, *VOTE411.org* is a "one-stop-shop" for election related information.

An important component of VOTE411.org is the polling place locator, which enables users to type in their address and retrieve the poll location for the voting precinct in which that address is located. The League has found that this is among the most sought after information in the immediate days leading up to, and on, Election Day.

WHY I VOTE



get to vote on things that really matter. You've got two real choices...one more than they get in North Korea, I exercise what control I can.

I generally vote...

if you don't vote

what business do you have com-

plaining...I don't

think voting makes

a whole lot of dif-

ference. You don't

WHO:

CANDIDATES & ISSUES



Vote411.org also provides nonpartisan information to the public with both general and state-specific information on the following aspects of the election process:



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- Voter qualifications
- Voter registration forms

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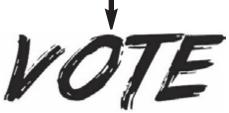


You can also register to vote at VOTE411.org, or verify your registration status there.

Registration Deadline: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9

STUDY THE CANDIDATES & ISSUES ENCOURAGE YOUR

ENCOURAGE YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS TO VOTE



Tuesday, November 6, 2018 (7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)

Thank you for being a good citizen!

Ruth Mott Foundation awards \$1.9 million to 25 projects

By Jan Worth-Nelson

In the third year of a strategy focused on Flint's north side, the Ruth Mott Foundation has announced new grants totaling \$1.9 million for 25 projects, both large and small.

RMF officials say results from their multi-year efforts, which rolled out concurrent to the worst phases of the city's water crisis, are beginning to blossom: "bustling neighborhood hubs where there were none, formerly incarcerated individuals who have developed skills to help them in transition...and young people who learn how to find and maintain employment," according to Raquel Thueme, RMF vice president of programs.

"When we developed our north Flint Strategy with residents in 2015, we did it with the intent to focus our grantmaking on an area with limited resources and longstanding challenges in order to have the greatest impact," Thueme said.

The grants, ranging from \$22,000 for the Active Boys in Christ "ABC Youth Project" to \$404,000 for the City of Flint's Imagine Flint-Neighborhood Planning Initiative, will support arts education, music classes, sports projects, advocacy for safe neighborhoods, and a student journalism program.

Of these, six are new grantees -- the ABC project, NEEC After School and Summer Program, Fint Beat-News Movement, STEMletics, Adult Skill Center Academic Training Program, and Advocacy and Engagement for Safe Neighborhoods in Flint.

That brings the Foundation's grantmaking to 47 projects or programs new to the Foundation since the north Flint focus began.

"We're pleased that word of the north Flint strategy is spreading and reaching new organizations that are making a difference," Theume said.

Foundation officials noted that more than half the grants were to organizations serving young people. That is "in accordance with the No. 1 funding priority identified by north Flint residents: Youth," the press release announcing the awards stated.

The Foundation's other priorities, clearly reflected in the grant distributions, include public safety, economic opportu-

nity and neighborhoods.

Below are all 25 recipients. More detail is available at eastvillagemagazine.org.

Youth

Active Boys in Christ – ABC Youth Project, \$22,000.

Catholic Charities of Shiawassee & Genesee County — Mr. Gaines Gardening Program PLUS 2018, \$106,000.

Eastside Compassionate Mission Center – Empowering through Employment 2018, \$27,348.

Flint Cultural Center Corp. — Educational and Cultural Youth Activities, \$39,722.

Flint Institute of Music – Community Programs 2018-2019, \$60,700.

Flint Institute of Music – Tapology General Project Support 2018, \$135,000.

GST Michigan Works – Jobs for Michigan's Graduates-Out of School 2018, \$54,000.

Institute of Rhymes – Building Men of Excellence 2018, \$30,000.

Metro Community Development – Mothers of Joy University Project 2018, \$24,000.

New Evolution Education and Youth Development Program – NEEC After School and Summer Program, \$25,000.

Project SYNcERE – STEMNETICS 2018, \$39,400.

Sylvester Broome Empowerment Village
– Flint Beat-News Movement, \$75,000.
United Way of Genesee County –
STEMletics, \$35,475.

Sphinx Organization — Sphinx Overture: Music Education and Youth Development 2018, \$108,500.

Public safety

Crime Stoppers of Flint and Genesee County – North Flint Project 2018, \$150,660.

Economic opportunity

Center for Higher Educational Achievement – Adult Skill Center Academic Training Program, \$34,770.

MADE Institute – General Operating Support 2018, \$77,500.

Re-Connections – General Operating

Support 2018, \$27,500.

United Way of Genesee County – Flint SOUP 2018, \$50,000.

University of Michigan – North Flint Unemployment Insurance Project 2018, \$40,000.

Neighborhoods

Asbury Community Development Corp. – General Operating Support 2018, \$112,500.

City of Flint – Imagine Flint-Neighborhood Planning Initiative 2018, \$404,000.

Crim Fitness Foundation – Advocacy & Engagement for Safe Neighborhoods in Flint, \$49,120.

Evergreen Community Development Initiative – Flint Development Center 2018, \$150,000.

Foundation initiated

Michigan League for Public Policy – Empowering North Flint Residents 2018. \$80,000.

Further detail and descriptions of the 25 programs are available at *ruthmottfoundation.org* and *eastvillagemagazine.org*.

EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.



Jenee Price

"First, there are too many people who died for me to vote. For me to not take advantage of the opportunity is like stomping on their blood. That's not OK for me especially as a person of color and as a woman. Second, there are issues that are so relevant that affect us directly

that we don't even recognize, we need to inform ourselves how they affect us. If we want to actually see change happen in the way that we want to see the change happen, we have to be politically involved. Change is not going to come if we don't do it right. Unfortunately, we get upset about how the system is and then we don't do anything to change the system."

WHY I VOTE



Ernest Steward

Voting is a must. People fought long and hard for us to have the right to vote. It should be an obligation for everyone to get out and vote because that's how we make decisions for our country.

WHY I VOTE



Tom Sumner

"It's what our fathers taught us" (a line from The West Wing TV show that I couldn't resist) For me personally ... I vote to add my voice to people who are standing up for things that matter to me - and all I care about.

WHY I VOTE



haven't always. I got into it more since I've been married. I go with him.

Yes, I do vote, but

Sheila Spratling

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St. Paul's Episcopal Church MUSIC IN THE HEART OF THE CITY

2018-2019 Concert Series

- Saturday, Sept. 15, 7:00 pm Rafael McDaniel, tenor
- Sunday, Sept. 30, 4:00 pm Avanti Guitar Trio
- Sunday, Oct. 28, 4:00 pm
 Tyler Kivel & Nicholas Schmelter, piano/organ
- Saturday, Nov. 10, 4:00 pm Choirs of St. Pauls & Mott Community College
- Sunday, Nov. 25, 4:00 pm Joshua Scheid, tenor
- Sunday, Jan. 27, 4:00 pm Dr. Townes Miller & Nicholas Schmelter, flute/organ
- Sunday, Feb. 24, 4:00 pm A² Youth Chorale
- Sunday, Mar. 31, 4:00 pm Nicholas Schmelter, organ

Admission:

\$10 Adults, \$5 Students, or Membership Pass

St. Paul's Episcopal Church 711 South Saginaw Street Flint, Michigan 48502 810-234-8637

COLLEGE CULTURAL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION ccnaflint@sbcglobal.net

Members meet Thurs., Sept. 20, 2018 7-9 pm in MCC's RTC Auditorium

Neighborhood Watch meets Thurs., Oct. 18, 7-9 pm, MCC's RTC Auditorium



Flint Community Schools face make-or-break challenge

By Jan Worth-Nelson and Harold C. Ford

Behind the scenes as Flint students and teachers go back to school this fall, a makeor-break drama is underway that significantly affects the future of the Flint Community Schools, its 12 schools and 4,600 students.

The district, which landed last year in the bottom five percent of districts statewide, has been placed in a category of "chronically failing schools," and given 36 months by the State of Michigan to pull itself up under state oversight.

If the efforts fail, according to a "partnership agreement" signed in July, the district could face three possible consequences: being absorbed by another district, being reconstituted, or being shut down. The district's motto, included with its logo, is "Expect More. Achieve More," in four words, a summary of what the state expects. To do this within the next 36 months, the plan for the district's rehabilitation has three targets:

- increase attendance of students to 90 percent.
- reduce out-of-school suspension by 10 percent, by implementing the "Positive Behavior Interventions and Support" (PBIS) system.
- increase course/state exam performance by at least 10 percent by strengthening and implementing K-12 math and literacy curriculum and effective use of instructional practices.



The agreement was forged between FCS and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), the State School Reform/Redesign Office (SRO), and the Genesee Intermediate School District (GISD).

In addition, a handful of powerful local stakeholders came to the table to support the district's efforts and co-sign the agreement.

While it was imposed from the state, the partnership agreement, according to state officials, is designed to maximize and retain local control. It is thus unlike the emergency manager approach applied else-

where, including the notorious EM years between the state and the City of Flint, an arrangement implicated in the water crisis. According to the agreement, the MDE, the GISD, and the FCS and its board are the "primary decision-making bodies." But the other community players were invited in and agreed to detailed supporting roles.

The full list of signing partners are the MDE superintendent; the MDE State School Reform Officer; the Flint Community Schools superintendent; the president of the FCS board of education; the superintendent of the Genesee Intermediate School District (GISD); the C.S. Mott Foundation; Michigan State University; the CRIM Fitness Foundation; and the Concerned Pastors for Social Action.

New superintendent weighs in

"The goals and benchmarks outlined in the Partnership Agreement outline critical identifiers of success in our district," the FCS's newest superintendent, Derrick Lopez asserted in response to a series of questions from EVM. "I will work tirelessly—along with the Board of Education, district administration, teachers and staff, and essential community partners—to not only meet, but exceed the measures set out by the agreement."

Addressing the "whole child"

"The foundation for meeting those goals, however, must rest in our identifying with particularity the ancillary challenges that the students and families of the Flint community face every day," Lopez continued. "These issues substantively impact student attendance, behavior, and classroom achievement, which are the 'ABC's' of the Agreement. Accordingly, we have to utilize our existing resources within a systemic framework that seeks to impact the 'whole' child, and not simply achievement scores. That is the work that must be taken to achieve the targets outlined in the Partnership Agreement."

In particular, Lopez said, addressing school attendance will be crucial, and suggested the broad community engagement components of the agreement will be needed.

"Students can't learn if they're not in

the classroom, and attendance will be a critical measure to increase student achievement," he said.

"Attendance for students in grades K-6 is often an indication that external factors may exist and we are committed to working closely with parents to address such factors and ensure students are in school all day, every day. We must address those barriers that are relegating school attendance for their children to secondary or even third order importance," Lopez said.



FCS headquarters on Kearsley Street (Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

"For our students at the secondary school level, they are making choices often that are against their interest. It is our hope to engage in a dialogue about the root causes of school absences, address those directly without speculation, and develop an action plan," he said. "The district, in partnership with community organizations, is committed to addressing all of the factors that impact attendance, and we believe that while the goal is ambitious, we can reach that target for the future of our students and the economic outlook for this region."

Decades of trouble

For decades the Flint school district has been plagued by funding decreases, enrollment declines, school closures and decimated test scores. Of 15,000 schoolage children living in the district, only about 4,600 are enrolled in the FCS.

That is compared to almost 48,000 in the public schools in the system's heyday (Continued on Page 13.)

... Challenge

(Continued from Page 12.)

in 1968.

The district has gone from 54 school buildings to 12, many of which are in deteriorating physical condition.

Broad-based community partnerships

According to the agreement, **The Mott Foundation** will provide a broader community focus, continuing to consider support for the identified needs of FCS and its stakeholders including Michigan State University, the Crim Fitness Foundation, and the Genesee Area Focus Fund (YouthQuest).

Michigan State University will provide professional development and technical support.

The Crim Fitness Foundation will support implementation and coordination of community school strategies.

The Concerned Pastors for Social Action will promote parent engagement and community involvement.

The form and practice of the agreement is authorized under a state law; of the state's 587 school districts, Flint was among 21 targeted for intervention and accountability measures.

The district was notified in May of the state intervention, and in a series of meetings since, the district, along with its community stakeholder/partners, developed a set of goals and strategies. The FCS was given 90 days to consider and sign off on the plan.

18- and 36-month benchmarks built in

According to the 19-page document, the purpose of the agreement is "to work collaboratively in setting 18-month benchmarks and 36-month outcome goals with intent to significantly increase student achievement ... and to determine the next level of accountability should this agreement not be ... met by the district."

The agreement calls for formation of an Advisory Council made up of all the signing parties and including FCS students. One role of the council is to produce a plan for the district that would stay in place during leadership changes.

The district has had a series of superintendents in the past decade; the last superintendent, Bilal Tawwab, was terminated abruptly last spring. An interim superintendent, Gregory Weatherspoon, was the signatory for the district but Lopez will lead the district's response.

The district's 12 remaining schools are: **Accelerated Learning Academy**/

Northwestern; Brownell STEM Academy; Doyle Ryder; Durant-Tuuri-Mott; Eisenhower; Freeman; Holmes STEM Academy; Pierce; Potter; Scott; Southwestern Classical Academy, the only remaining high school.

Included in the agreement was the district's projected 2019 budget of \$58 million described in the document as for "planning purposes only." That includes \$17.6 million for salaries; \$12.6 million for benefits; \$17.6 million for purchased services; \$1.6 million for professional learning; \$1.3 million for supplies and materials; and \$8.8 million for other expenditures.

Mott Foundation perspectives

Asked if she was optimistic or pessimistic about the district's chances of fulfilling the partnership agreement, Mott Foundation Flint Area Program Director Kimberly Roberson said she is hopeful.

"I do believe, based on our work with them and the types of supports they've asked from us, that they are focused on those three things (attendance, suspensions, test scores), and that they chose well based on where they believe they have both the need and where they have the capacity to move the needle," she said.

The three main goals "are appropriate places for the system to focus and things that matter to the students and to their outcomes," she said.

In an interview with *EVM* following the signing of the agreement, Roberson and Jennifer Liversedge, Mott Foundation Flint-area Assistant to the Chairman/CEO and program officer for the Foundation's Flint Area team, noted the Foundation has contributed \$54 million in support of the Flint Community Schools over the past five years.

That included technical support from the Rehmann accounting group for forensic accounting and helping the district restructure a \$21 million deficit into a long-term financed debt.

The Foundation also has covered the cost of all textbooks for K-12 students in all core subjects, and is funding the

revived community education initiative, run by the Crim Fitness Foundation, in all 12 schools. Repairs and improvements at Southwestern Academy also have been covered by Foundation money.

Roberson reiterated the Foundation's primary contribution is financial—"that is what we do" she said — but it also aims to put district officials together with "thought leaders" to help local educators proceed with best available strategies.

"We've been involved with the district for some time, of course, with our grant support. We were in ongoing conversations with them already, and we were aware when this emerged," Roberson said. "It wasn't news to them that they had challenges ... there were lots of things they wanted stronger proficiency on even if the state hadn't put them into the partnership list."

In the state's notice last spring, four of the district's schools were identified specifically as needing intervention: the Accelerated Learning Academy, Holmes STEM Academy, Northwestern High School (which closed at the end of the 2017-2018 school year), and Potter School. But district officials chose to include all 12 schools in the partnership agreement.

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WHY I VOTE



David Leyton

It's a privilege to be able to vote. We often take for granted the freedoms that we have in this country. They are hard fought for and one of them is the right to vote and the right to democratically select those who should represent us. I would think that folks

would want to have a say in who their elected officials are. I have made it a point my entire adult life to vote. If I'm not in town (I) get an absentee ballot. When I was the township clerk, I did everything I could within the law to make it easier for folks to vote. We need to make it even easier for folks to vote, not harder.

THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

"This Month" highlights a selection of interesting events available to our readers — beginning after our publication date of September 6. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our October issue, email your event to Managing Editor Meghan Christian at meghan.christian22@gmail.com by September 24.

Race: Are We So Different? Every day in September Mon. - Sat.: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sun: Noon to 5 p.m. Sloan Museum, 1221 E. Kearsley St. 810-237-3450 **Admission: Free**

Presented by UM-Flint and the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, the exhibit is the first in a series of events meant to explore three themes: the science of human variation, the history of the idea of race, and the contemporary experience of race and racism in the United States.

Small Worlds

Every day in September Noon to 5 p.m. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St. 810-234-1695 Admission: \$7

See an exhibition of glass paperweights from the 19th century. The exhibition highlights a variety of styles, techniques, and

Free Day at Children's Museum **Every day in September** All Day Event Flint Čhildren's Museum, 1602 W. University 810-767-5437 Admission: Free

Gain free entrance to both Sproutside and the museum. Sponsored by the Genesee County Department of Health and Human

Services.

Sacred Circle - Open Spiritual Discussion **Group**

Every Friday in September Sept. 7, 14, 21, and 28 Sacred Elements, 5353 Fenton Rd. 810-422-9125

Admission: Free

An open spirituality group that meets every Friday that is open to all faiths and belief systems. While admission is free, donations are accepted. If possible, bring a snack or beverage to share.

Boundaries

Sept. 7 and Sept. 8, 7:30 p.m. Sept. 9, 2 p.m. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St. 810-234-1695 Admission: \$4-6

The kick-off film for the 2018-2019 Friends of Modern Art film series. Come see the comedy-drama starring Christopher Plummer and Vera Farmiga, where a single mom is forced to drive her father (who deals pot) across the country to keep her family together.

Back to School Family Fun Day Sept. 8 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Charity United Methodist Church,

4601 Clio Rd. 810-275-7034

Admission: Free

Sponsored by the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, enjoy a free back to school event with entertainment, a bounce house, and more. There will be food and school supplies while they last, as well as resource information for parents.

Valley Area Agency on Aging: Diabetes Self-Management Education

Sept. 11 and Sept. 25 Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30 1 p.m. **Brennan Center and Park**, 1301 Pinegree 810-600-0633 Admission: Free

A six-week workshop on managing diabetes for adults given by certified leaders. Beginning Sept. 11 and going until Oct. 30. Snacks will be provided.

"RBG"

Sept. 13, 7:30 p.m. Sept. 15 and Sept. 16, 4 p.m. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St. 810-234-1695 Admission: \$4-6

The second installment of the Friends of Modern Art film series, featuring a documentary about Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. The film features interviews from notable people like Lily Ledbetter and Bill Clinton.

The Rider

Sept. 14 and Sept. 15, 7:30 p.m. Sept. 16, 2 p.m. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St. 810-234-1695 Admission: \$4-6

See a film about a young rodeo star struggling to redefine himself after a near-fatal injury. To celebrate FIA's 90th anniversary, the Friday showing will be free.

Fall Craft Show

Sept. 15 Register by Sept. 10 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. New Creation Church of God Gymnasium, G-3472 Lennon Rd. 810-732-0500 Table Rental: \$20

The scholarship committee at the New Creation Church of God is hosting a craft show and are looking for vendors interested in selling crafts, jewelry, baked goods, books, and more. Register for a table for only \$20 by Sept. 10 if interested in selling. Call 810-732-0500.

Trauma, Racism, and Midterm Election

Sept. 18 6 p.m.

The New McCree Theatre, 2040 W. Carpenter Rd.

810-845-1767

Admission: Free

Come learn how trauma like the Water Crisis and ICE deportation can have political implications, especially with the upcoming midterm elections.

Mustard's Retreat Benefit Concert

Sept. 21 6:30 p.m. Flint Public Library, 1026 E. Kearslev St. 810-423-9994

Admission: Free, but donations of water or non-perishable food items

accepted.

A folk group from the area since the 70's, Mustard's Retreat is hosting a benefit concert for the people of Flint in conjunction with the Flint Folk Music Society and the Flint Public Library.

International Day of Peace Celebration

Sept. 21 7 p.m. The Life Enrichment Center, 2512 S. Dye Rd. 810-733-1600 **Admission: Donations accepted**

Come enjoy a multicultural, multifaith background prayer and meditation service. With an opening meditation service, prayers, and more. Refreshments and fellowship will follow.

> Immigration, Racism, and the **Midterm Election**

Sept. 25 <u>6 p.m.</u> Flînt Public Library, 1026 E. Kearsley St. 810-845-1767 Admission: Free

Learn more about the role ICE deportations and DACA are playing in the midterm elections and for local residents.

Final Portrait Sept. 28 and Sept. 29, 7:30 p.m. Sept. 30, 2 p.m.

Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St.

810-234-1695 Admission: \$4-6

Directed by Stanley Tucci, see the film about renowned artist Alberto Giacometti as he paints the portrait of his friend, writer James Lord.

... Editorial: A free press is not the "enemy of the people"

(Continued from Page 16.)

The freeway obliterated Floral Park, a longtime African-American neighborhood, a vibrant business section along Lapeer Road, and cut through Central Park. Flint historians like Andrew Highsmith have been writing about the consequences of that decision ever since. Custer's worries were well founded. The loss of Walker Elementary on Kearsley Street as the neighborhood school was an equally important issue affecting the neighborhood. The aim of *EVM* from the start was to provide a voice for residents to influence the bureaucratic decisions affecting their neighborhoods before events were irreversible. And while their initial triggering campaigns did not stop I-475, those feisty citizens in *EVM's* early years did raise a ruckus. Some would say that was America at its best.

EVM has stood for telling the truths about our neighborhoods ever since — speaking truth to power and exercising our right to petition the government for redress of grievances. It is who we are and who we need to be.

Finally, we mourn the loss of those doing the work of the Fourth Estate, and honor them here — in particular, the five dead at the *Annapolis Capital Gazette*: Rob Hiaasen, 59, Wendi Winters, 65 Gerald Fischman, 61; John McNamara, 56; and Rebecca Smith, 34, While their murderer did not mention Donald Trump, the hatred toward them struck us as painfully raw, another reminder of what feels like greater peril today for journalists.

Those five were community journalists just like us, and we cannot afford to do without them.

It is our constitutional right, our privilege, our patriotic duty to continue this role and to support, with our small but stalwart voice, our call for the president to stop attacking the press—for doing what the Constitution calls the press to do. The country and its values are bigger than the president and his attempts to dismember and silence the free press. We will not be silenced. We will continue to do our job, with dignity and ferocity. In the meantime, we call upon the president to stop endangering us with his fiery, illogical rhetoric. We urge him to know and remember:

We are not the enemy of the people.

We *are* the people, the American people he took an oath to defend and protect. Our work is to honor and seek the truth. With all urgency, from our hearts and minds and our love for all the good that this audacious country stands for, we say to the president, do not disrespect us. Do not denounce us. Mr. President, we implore you: do your duty. Honor your oath.

... Votes

(Continued from Page 6.)

Women Voter's website, *Vote411.org*, which offers an overview of all the candidates. A visit to the Genesee County Clerk's website can give one the opportunity to see all the candidates and issues on the ballot before Election Day.

Issues on this year's ballot

This year, there will also be two issues on the ballot that can offer an opportunity to expand the vote. One proposal will attempt to limit partisan gerrymandering by creating an independent commission to draw election districts. East Village Magazine has covered this in past issues and will review it again before November. A second proposal that might be on the ballot, backed by the group Promote the Vote, would encourage voting through a list of measures including automatic registration, absentee voting for anyone, straight party ticket voting, and assuring that those in the military receive their ballots on time. There's a lot more to

both proposals and they could be a step in the right direction.

In the next eight weeks, take the time to inform yourself. Go to candidate forums. Look in the *EVM* and other sources for information on all the proposals and candi-

dates that will be on the Nov. 6 ballot.

And don't forget to vote. It's what democracy is all about.

EVM political commentator Paul Rozycki can be reached at paul.rozycki@mcc.edu



Design by Dean Paxton



The Free Press Is Not The Enemy Of The People

FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

By the East Village Magazine Editorial Board

To speak truth to power. This is what the press must do. This is what the American press must do. This is what the American press has always been called to do. And now is the moment to stand up for our Constitutional right.

East Village Magazine only rarely issues editorial statements. But here we reprint what we published online Aug. 16, when we joined more than 300 newspapers and journalists nationwide to express our urgent support for freedom of the press and a strong reproach to the president for his attacks on the press. This must stop. Our president's attacks must not curtail or deprive the press of its freedom of speech.

The First Amendment is first for a reason. The United States was born in response to tyranny. We were rebels against a monarchy in which only some voices counted — the voices of a hereditary king or queen. Many of us studied the story of John Peter Zenger, arrested in November 1734 — even before the crafting of the Constitution and the First

Amendment — for "seditious libel" for what he published that was critical of the king and his colonial government. Zenger was taken to trial where he was defended by Andrew Hamilton and William Smith; fortunately, he was acquitted. His case, many historians think, was influential in the crafting of the First Amendment's freedom of the press guarantee. Interestingly, the press is the only occupation, other than political positions, mentioned in the Constitution and given explicit protection. The Founders understood.

Our essential principles of equality and justice, our collective morality, brought us back again and again from the temptations of authoritarianism since the Bill of Rights were ratified in 1791. That's 227 years. We have not always gotten it right. But for more than two centuries, the country has wrestled with challenging, sometimes raucous, often passionate debates about these ideas — these guarantees. These five freedoms: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of

the press, the right to peaceably assemble, and the right to petition the government for redress of grievances — all these have set our country apart in the world as a citadel against tyranny — a bulwark of civilization in which there was no tolerance for a dictator, no tolerance for squashing the voice of the people.

We have always had the right to call out our leaders, to criticize the powerful, to halt an unfettered flow of tyranny. To speak the truth, even when it hurts. Even when truth leads us, as it so often does, away from the precipice of injustice, oppression, nihilism, and demagoguery.

East Village Magazine was born out of a moment when Flint citizens sought a redress of grievances. Our founder, the late Gary Custer, and a group of other East Village neighbors were upset about I-475 being built—an action propelled by monied and powerful interests in the city — and which Custer and others believed would disastrously affect the neighborhoods in its path.

They were right.

(Continued on Page 15.)