



East Village Magazine

August 2025

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Commentary

Michigan's 2026 ballot proposals: Take the time before you sign

By Paul Rozycki

Given the turmoil that the second Trump administration has generated, many are looking to next year's midterm elections with the hope that voters will set the nation in a different direction.

The party out of power usually does well in the midterms, and Democrats are working to take control of at least one house of Congress and block some of Trump's most extreme initiatives. Much of the political news over the next year and a half will likely be focused on that possibility.

But while the nation reacts to the Trump presidency, there are many other issues that will matter here on the state and local level, too.

In Michigan, voters will soon have the opportunity to weigh in on a number of proposals, and they will be asked to sign petitions to place those proposals on the 2026 ballot as they browse summer's final art fairs and farmers' market offerings.

So, with one proposal already slated and six on track to gather the needed signatures, it seems a proper time to discuss them all.

State Constitutional Convention

The one issue already slated for the 2026 ballot will ask voters if they want to hold a constitutional convention to write a new state constitution.

The Michigan Constitution requires that a question of a new

constitutional convention be placed before voters every 16 years, and 2026 is the required time for the vote.

Since the current state Constitution was approved in 1961, the proposal for a new convention has been defeated every 16 years, usually by a 2-1 margin. While there is little organized opposition or support for a new convention, many on both sides of the aisle fear that today's divisive politics would produce a deadlocked convention.

Aside from the convention question, the State Board of Canvassers has approved proposals regarding voter citizenship, ranked choice voting, income tax increases, property tax elimination, and the minimum wage.

All but the minimum wage proposal will need to collect about 445,000 valid signatures (10% of the votes cast for governor in the last election) by July of 2026 to place the issue on the ballot. (The minimum wage proposal is actually a voter referendum, so it would require about 224,000 valid signatures, or 5% of the votes cast for governor in the last election.)

Photo ID and proof of citizenship

One of several proposals dealing with voting would amend the state Constitution to require photo identification and proof of citizenship in order to register to vote.

Those who support this proposal argue that fraudulent voting

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Photo of the Month: The Claudettes perform at Totem Books as part of the Levitt AMP Concert Series on July 22, 2025.
(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Education Beat

Flint Ed Board members dismayed by assessment data

By Harold C. Ford

At its June 18, 2025 meeting, some members of the Flint Board of Education (FBOE) seemed surprised and dismayed by Michigan Department of Education (MDE) assessment data presented by Windell Greene, president of the Mississippi-based Greene Education Services.

Greene's tactful but straightforward opening comment that "Flint schools have some needs, for sure," foreshadowed the tenor of his report.

Aside from noting "serious challenges" such as graduation rates and academic performance landing below targets, chronic absenteeism, families choosing to leave Flint Community Schools (FCS), and the threat of state takeover, the consultant shared hard numbers.

Greene highlighted MDE data covering the district's English Language Arts (ELA) and math proficiency from 2020 to 2023, noting that while several schools showed a pos-

itive trend, overall all Flint schools were below an 11% proficiency as of 2023.

He went on to discuss data from the 2023-2024 school year, asking the Board to focus on what MDE calls the "bottom 30," or the students scoring in the lowest 30% on state-administered standardized academic tests.

"So your bottom 30 percent, none of the kids showed proficiency ... that's kind of expected," Greene said, pulling up a chart of growth percentages by school. "But then you have none of your kids actually showing growth according to your state data – in all schools – for math and ELA, which makes it somewhat difficult to reach those other levels across the board."

"Can we stop the bleeding?" asked Board Trustee Melody Relerford in response. "This is surprising. I mean, I can't speak for the board,

but just as me, the numbers speak for themselves."

Relerford went on to say that "it's ugly" but something she thinks the district can grow from, citing a trip to Mississippi that five Flint BOE members took in March to see Greene Education Service's work first-hand.

"We just – I can't speak for any other board member, but this is not acceptable," she said of the presented data.

"You kind of left us a little bit speechless here," FBOE President Joyce Ellis-McNeal added after echoing Relerford's hopes that hiring Greene would result in a positive change for the district.

Despite some board members' apparent surprise, Greene's analysis of the district's recent assessment data simply confirmed information already available for many years on the MDE website: Flint's standardized test data,

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Ed Beat ...

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when measured against other districts in Michigan, is disheartening.

“Accountability is not blame, it’s ownership”

Later in the June 18 meeting, FBOE members heard a second analysis of assessment data from Kelly Fields, FCS director of academics. Fields spoke frankly and essentially confirmed what the Board had heard from Greene.

“One of the things that was outstandingly clear from the data,” said Fields, “is that there is a direct correlation between schools that had the lowest amount of chronic absenteeism and the schools that had the highest amount of absenteeism.”

“And the correlation was clear,” Fields continued. “Eisenhower [Elementary] fared very, very well with their progress in making proficiency and growth, but they also had the lowest chronic absenteeism as well.”

“When students are present, they learn,” Fields concluded.

Fields also cited the growing number of uncertified teachers as another

reason for poor student academic performance. “Across the board, in the buildings where they have an overwhelming number of uncertified teachers or long-term subs... we showed the lowest growth as well.”

In example, Fields shared that “Doyle/Ryder has the highest number of uncertified teachers” while noting that the school also has “the correlation of low growth and proficiency.”

“Accountability is not blame,” Fields advised, “it’s ownership.”

Editor’s note: FCS did make a move to course-correct its uncertified staffing in late April 2025 by offering a \$12,000 “commitment bonus” to certified teachers and ancillary staff. However, the outcome of that, and the rest of the new agreement with the Flint teachers union, is not yet evident in available data.

“A problem across the state”

Though FCS assessment numbers are not sublime, Fields also noted that the district is not alone in its data.

“We have a problem across the state,” she said. “Sixty percent of students in Michigan are not proficient [in English language arts].”

A 2024 report by Bridge Maga-

zine confirmed Field’s assertion, noting that about 40 percent of Michigan third graders are proficient in English language arts based on an analysis of ELA scores on the Michigan Standard Test of Educational Progress, or M-STEP.

“The new results suggest Michigan is not improving its literacy problem,” Bridge reported. “The state was ranked 43rd in the country for fourth grade reading on the 2022 National Assessment for Educational Progress.”

Fields told the Board that “growth data tells the truth.”

“Pockets of success are just not enough,” she said. “Too many students are stuck, especially in math and early literacy.”

Fields added that the district “cannot expect different results with the same behaviors” and that “every day matters and every instructional move matters.” ●

* * * * *

The next meeting of the FBOE is scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. August 20 at Potter Elementary, 2500 N. Averill Ave. Meetings can be streamed via YouTube. The 2025-26 FCS school year begins Sept. 2.



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Commentary ...

(Continued from Page 3)

has been a significant problem in past elections. Opponents say that there has been little evidence of major voter fraud and that requiring proof of citizenship and a photo ID would discourage many potential voters who may not have – or have the means to obtain – the appropriate documents. In 2024, state officials found only 16 potential cases, out of millions of votes cast, where non-citizens may have attempted to vote.

A second, similar proposed amendment to the Michigan Constitution would simply require that only U.S. citizens could vote in elections.

Having two similar proposals on the ballot could make passing either more difficult and make it more confusing for those who might choose to sign one or the other. If both should pass, however, the one with the most votes would take effect.

Ranked choice voting

This proposed amendment would allow for ranked-choice voting for most elections, where voters could list their first, second, or third choices of candidates.

It would require that candidates receive a majority of votes to be elected, require the use of paper ballots in all elections, allow voting for write-in candidates, and require notice of any changes of polling locations. If no one candidate received over 50% of the vote in an election, the last place candidate would be eliminated and the second and third choices would be reallocated until a candidate received a majority vote.

Supporters say that ranked choice voting would reduce political polarization and conflict. Critics argue that it makes elections too complex and confusing for voters and election officials. The history

of ranked choice voting is mixed, with a few states approving it and others rejecting it. Interestingly, some Michigan cities like Kalamazoo and East Lansing have adopted local ranked choice voting ordinances already, but current state law prohibits implementation.

Property tax elimination

The proposed “Prohibit Property Taxes” amendment would prohibit taxation on real and personal property. It would also require 60% voter approval to raise local taxes and a two-thirds majority in the



state legislature to raise state taxes. It would require the state to direct more tax revenue from marijuana, tobacco and alcohol sales to local governments to make up for the lost property tax revenue.

This proposal failed to make the ballot in 2024, so 2026 marks a second attempt. Supporters argue that the state is overtaxed while opponents feel that the loss of revenue would limit both the state and local government’s ability to provide services.

Income tax increase

The “Michigan Fair Share Surcharge on Annual Taxable Income” initiative would require a 5% surcharge on annual taxable income

of more than \$1 million for joint returns and \$500,000 for single returns. The money collected would then go to fund local public school districts.

Supporters say that the funds are needed to support and improve Michigan’s school system. Opponents say it would hurt Michigan’s economy and cause investors to go to other states.

Minimum wage

The Michigan Minimum Wage for Tipped Workers referendum would repeal Public Act 1 of 2025, which reduced the minimum wage for Michigan tipped workers, established a new schedule for increasing the state minimum wage, and changed the way future inflation adjustments for minimum wage increases will occur.

Supporters argue that the proposal would assure a fair wage for tipped workers, while opponents say it would place a burden on small businesses and hurt Michigan’s economy.

Before you sign, take the time

Since 1986, a bare majority of ballot proposals have been approved by Michigan voters. There have been 65 proposals since that time and 34 were approved and 31 were rejected. So it’s hard to tell where these, or other possible proposals to come, will land in the statistics.

But there is a good chance that in the months ahead you will be asked to sign (or not sign) a petition to support any of these measures. So, before you pick up that pen, I encourage you to take the time to learn what is behind the one line title or the 100 word summary of these proposals.

While some of the details can be complex, a good place to find more information is ballotpedia.org and other Michigan news organizations like www.bridgemi.com. ●

Poetry

And what of good government?

By Teddy Robertson

And what of good government?
the ancients supplied its taxonomy
civic virtue and democracy
the health of the body politic

phrases from the past like periwigs and togas
I loved them more than I knew

back in that time of respected opinions and endorsements,
canceled subscriptions and social media switches
initial shock and outrage,
I feared censorship and isolation

now the newspaper of record displays riches
that disgust
power
that does not awe—
once prized column inches of
trivia prove sufficient to gag me,
a citizen
once well-informed

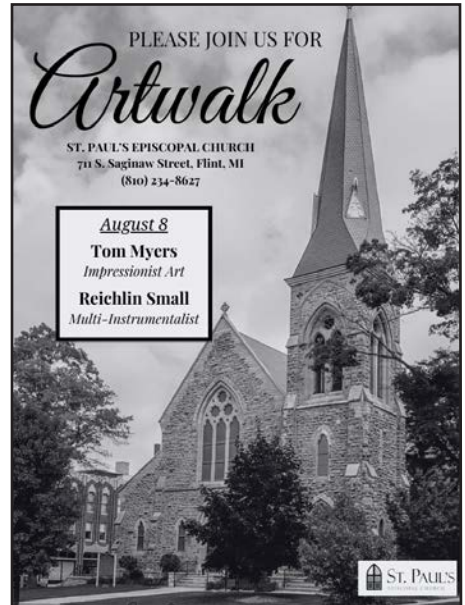
I miss the nation's homage to clichés about its past
skewed stories of uniqueness and destiny
barely concealing murderous expansion and greed
the vaunted idealism now faint
yet the values American
naive and optimistic

I miss too the rhetoric of reform and redress
the routines of ordinary patriotism
when hypocrisy still left room for protest and satire,
venality and virtue in their uneasy human balance—
we calibrated our compromises

the very stuff of politics and democracy
I remember you

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East Village
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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

Below is a selection of events available to our readers, beginning after our August publication date. To submit events for our September issue, email information about your event to eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com by August 29.

Free Yoga Wednesdays

Wednesday, Aug. 6 | 5:30 - 6:30 pm
Nearly every Wednesdays Howl & Heal Sanctuary, LLC hosts a beginner-friendly, slow-flow yoga session at Flint Local 432. The class is completely free and open to all levels. Just bring yourself, comfortable clothing, and a yoga mat if you have one. (We have a few extras if you don't).
Local 432
124 W. First St., Flint

Patio Night at the FIA

Friday, Aug. 8 | 5 - 8 pm
Friday nights in August, the FIA and FIM's Music Around Town series will host Patio Nights on the Palette Cafe patio. The event is free, with drinks and food available for purchase. Arrive early for a seat on the patio, or bring a chair or blanket to lounge on the FIA lawn. Music plays from 6-7:30 pm, and the museum will stay open until 8 pm for guests to explore galleries and exhibitions.
Flint Institute of Arts
1120 E Kearsley St., Flint

Mott Lake Regatta: War of the Wake

Saturday, Aug. 9 - Sunday, Aug. 10 | 10 am - 5 pm
It's time to wake the lake! This thrilling, family-friendly event is set to rev up Genesee County with the adrenaline-pumping speed of Inboard Hydroplane Boat Racing. Head to Bluebell Beach for front-row seats to all the action, where you can enjoy delicious fare from food trucks, kick back in the Beer Garden, and children can cool off at the Kid's Splash Pad. \$20 a day per vehicle or \$30 for both days per vehicle.
5500 Bray Rd., Flint

Dropfest XIII

Saturday, Aug. 9 | Noon - 10 pm
Flint Drop Fest is celebrating 13 years in production! This year's free festival includes dozens of performers including one of the pioneers of dubstep, Em-alkay. Visit flintdropfest.com for more information.
Buckham Alley, Flint

810 Day

Sunday, Aug. 10
A series of events will take place across downtown Flint in honor of the city's annual "810 Day" celebration. Announced events include a fashion show at 4 pm at 401 Martin Luther King Ave. and a 6:30 p.m. concert at the Capitol Theatre featuring Flint's own The Dayton Family, Top Authority, and Jake the Flake with a special appearance by 8Ball & MJG. More information and tickets are available online.

Telling Our Stories Panel

Thursday, Aug. 14 | Doors 5:30 pm, Event 6 pm
MW Gallery presents a timely panel discussion entitled "Telling Our Stories." Featured panelists Bob Campbell, Mario Moore, Tunde Olaniran, and Shani Womack will discuss why we tell our stories and the importance of remembering and embracing our narratives with moderator Lisa Ze Winters. Refreshments provided.
MW Gallery
815 S. Saginaw St., Flint

Back to the Bricks

Saturday, Aug. 16 | 10 am - 7 pm
Back to the Bricks is celebrating 21 years of bringing cars, community, and history together in Downtown Flint. Join us for a full day of classic vehicles, live entertainment, great food, and family fun.
Downtown Flint
125 E. Kearsley St., Flint

FLOOD 25 Launch Party

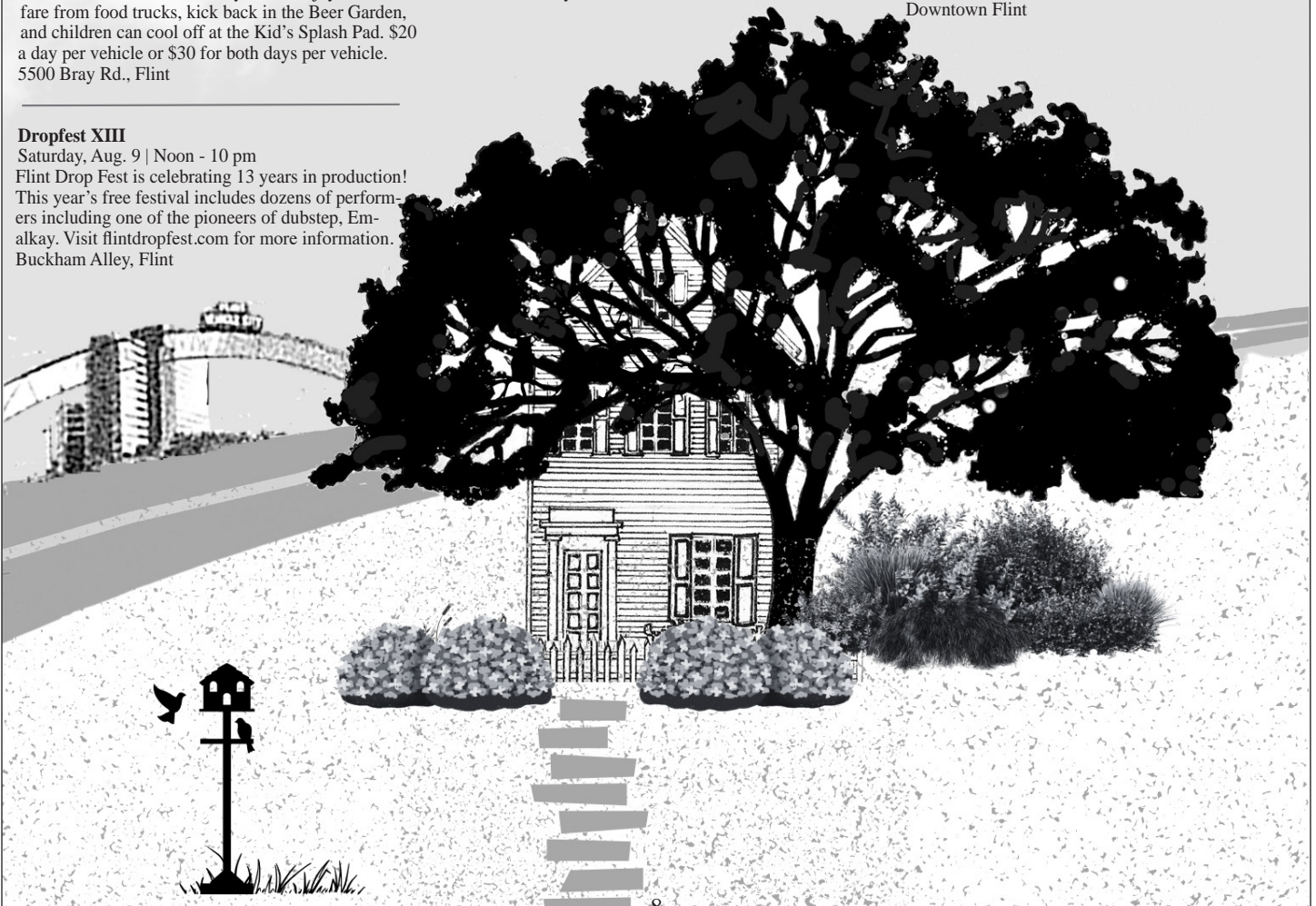
Saturday, Aug. 16 | 7-10 pm
Gothic Funk Press will host a launch party for its new print anthology, FLOOD 2025, at Queens' Provisions. The event is free and open to the public, though a \$10 donation is requested to help defray the cost of publication. The party will include readings by contributing writers, a propitiation of water spirits, and a fundraising drive to support the work of Gothic Funk Press in the years to come.
Queens' Provisions
421 Garland St., Flint

Levitt AMP Flint Music Series: The Camisas

Tuesday, August 19 | 6:30 - 8:30 pm
This eclectic concert series on Tuesdays throughout the summer will feature local Flint band, The Camisas, and their original Americana sound, on Aug. 19 with Kommunalux (from Ukraine) to follow on Aug. 26 with their self-styled "Odesa urban folk" vibes.
Totem Books (back lawn)
620 W. Court St., Flint

Crim Festival of Races

Saturday, Aug. 22 - Sunday, Aug. 23
Join us on for the 48th HAP CareSource Crim Festival of Races! We'll be celebrating 48 years of the Crim with all our events, which include the signature 10 Mile, Half Crim 5 Mile, 5K, Michigan Mile, and Teddy Bear Trot. More information available at crim.org/races.
Downtown Flint





Seeking Writers

East Village Magazine is searching for community journalists! Ideal candidates are curious, engaged Flint residents who want to help keep their neighbors informed of the local news that affects them most. EVM writers receive free training, story writing and editing support, and payment for each published story. (We also have pretty great snacks at our monthly writers meetings.) If you're interested in getting involved, please email us at eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com with the subject line "Community Journalist."

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East Village Magazine debuts new website

By EVM Staff

East Village Magazine has a new look!

While the Flint magazine's well-loved black and white print pages will remain unchanged, its online presence received a facelift on the evening of July 27, 2025.

"We're hoping that a cleaner, faster website will improve our online readers' experience and make our

writers' work easier to find in the years to come," said EVM editor Kate Stockrahm. "We want everyone to view East Village Magazine as a resource, and as a resource we need

to be accessible and easy to navigate wherever readers might find us."

For his part, EVM webmaster Dean Paxton has been working behind-the-scenes since late last year to migrate and redesign the publication's site.

"Migrating the website from its decade-old design to a modern,

standards-compliant framework was a careful balance of introducing new technology while maintaining familiarity," Paxton explained. "While we embraced contemporary web practices for better performance and accessibility, we preserved key elements of the old site to ensure longtime visitors still feel at home. The result is a refreshed experience that honors the past while fully embracing the future."

Although the EVM team is excited to premier the new website and hopeful readers will enjoy it, Stockrahm added that they also hope for ongoing feedback from online

visitors.

"We've grown a lot over East Village Magazine's nearly 50 year history, but so has our community and what it needs from us," Stockrahm said. "We always welcome feedback on how we can best serve our audience, whether they read us in print or online." ●



SHOW SCHEDULE

July 15-August 24



Tues-Sun @ Noon



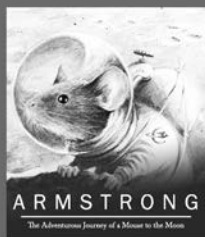
Tues-Sun @ 1 p.m.



Tues-Sun @ 2 p.m.



Tues-Sun @ 3 p.m.



Tues-Sun @ 4 p.m.



Fri & Sat @ 7 p.m.



Fri & Sat @ 8 p.m.



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Village Life ...

(Continued from Page 12)

tance and I started listening to the CD, and he shared how he too had been at the show that night, you can't imagine the thrill it gave me to know that we had already shared this intimate, obscure concert experience. Finding this random connection was truly miraculous to me!

I also experienced a similar episode, this time brought on by a book, with the woman who eventually became my sister-in-law.

On her first visit, as she was looking through my library of favorite reads, she pulled one off the shelf that I hadn't read in years: "She's Come Undone." It had hit me hard, this really intense book by Wally Lamb, so when she told me that she'd also read it and was influenced by it, it endeared me to her that much more. I'm sure this whole exchange might have been rather unremarkable if it weren't for

the fact that the title was published decades before our meeting.

Over the years, I've moved so many times that my media collection has taken quite a hit.

In addition to having to purge much of it, last year I was dealt a hard blow when my small stereo CD player with the dual cassette deck quit playing CDs. The tape deck still works though – yes, I still have a few mixed tapes! – and when my neighbor offered to loan me his 20+ disc changer, I was able to hook it up to the stereo and get it to play through the detachable speakers.

Now, it is pure joy to pull out my CDs (all alphabetized, of course) and throw them in there, listening to each one from the very first to very last song. But it also kind of saddens me that generations after X (my generation) don't know the thrill of listening to a full album and getting the stories that the musician might tell, or the careful curation of where each

song fell, the album cover, and even its inside cover, which often shared personal stories from the band about how the album was made, their influences, or the lyrics to the album's songs.

(I especially liked when the writer of each song was listed so I knew exactly which band member was responsible for my favorite track. Sometimes that lyricist was a member from a totally different band that I had yet to discover, or maybe even another one of my favorite bands. It was always incredible to learn who was responsible for those haunting lyrics that touched my soul.)

And while I am the first to credit the portability of today's digital media, I do rather miss the fun of getting to know people by looking through their library of music, books, and movies. So I, just like that 2004 home improvement show's featured homeowner, want everyone to know that I still have a bit of mine left for those interested in looking. ●

Nosey Parker
with special guest Audrey Dupuis



Music Around Town
Flint Under the Stars
Women in the Lead

Wed., Aug 20
at 7pm

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Registration is required


thefim.org/noseyparkerev

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Flint Repertory Theatre

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Wednesday, September 3, 2025

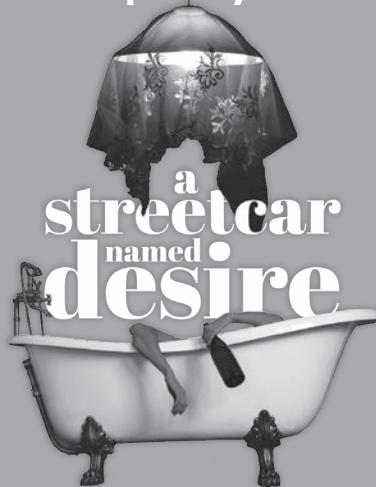
Try to Remember: Highlights
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7:30pm at Elgood Theatre Lobby
(transformed into an intimate
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FIM Flint Repertory Theatre 


Flint Repertory Theatre




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named desire

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by Tennessee Williams

September 19 - October 5, 2025
University of Michigan-Flint Theatre

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and to purchase tickets,
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FIM Flint Repertory Theatre 

Village Life

Social media of another sort

By Christina Collie

Often while working I like to throw on a home remodel show in the background. I do this in the hope that I might learn something new to benefit SARAH (the name I've given my East Village home) through osmosis, I guess.

Recently I had on an old show (circa 2004, if I remember correctly), and a simple conversation between the show's designer and builder took me back to a time that I had nearly forgotten.

They were discussing how important it was to showcase the homeowner's extensive CD collection – probably 300 or more discs – to ensure that it had a place of honor in the living room. This casual dialogue brought me back to when I was growing up in the 90s, and a person's media collection of books, music, movies, and even video games, was usually on proud display in the living room.

Back then, when media was regularly a feature in one's home, it served as a quick way to get insight into a person's personality.

I always enjoyed looking through these collections and having others look through mine. I liked finding media we had in common, discovering new music or books to borrow,

and the excitement of suggesting items I could loan someone based on items they already had in their collection.

For example, maybe that homeowner had everything Prince ever released, but they were missing Morris Day and the Time. A good collection of dime-store murder mystery novels was great, but oh the excitement if they had some Sherlock Holmes or Daphne du Maurier in their collection!

An avid reader and audiophile since early grade school, I would al-

they also read that obscure Stephen King book of short stories.

One such incident happened to me about 10 years ago (because yes, I still like to display my books and music). A fairly new acquaintance was looking through my music collection and found a rare CD from Flourescein, an L.A. band that got some brief recognition back in the late 90s/early 2000s but never really made it big.

I originally discovered Flourescein's music while at one of many concerts I attended while a student at College for Creative Studies in Detroit. The show was at St. Andrew's Hall, where I was handed a tape with just two songs by one of the band members. They'd just opened for the headliner that I no longer remember, and the band seemed to be passing their tapes out to anyone who would take one.

Ultimately, I was so taken with the two songs on that tape that when it died, I found a copy of the CD online and eventually purchased it.

Anyway, this new friend recognized the Flourescein's name among my collection. (Keep in mind, this was now decades later, and even the person I attended that show with had long forgotten it!). So when this new acquaint-

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Collie's current, temporary music set-up. (Photo by Christina Collie)

ways peruse others' media shelves like an explorer voyaging through new lands that hold a thousand mysteries. For although a new acquaintance's media was interesting in and of itself, it also told the story of the person who owned it. Most exciting of all was finding a kindred spirit through these shared media adventures – someone who you didn't know well but immediately felt like an old friend because