

A black and white photograph of a park scene. In the foreground, a curved concrete wall with a metal railing runs across the frame. Behind the wall, three people are walking. The background is filled with large, leafy trees and several multi-story city buildings. The title 'East Village Magazine' is printed in a large, white, serif font, and the date 'September 2025' is printed in a smaller, white, serif font below it.

East Village Magazine

September 2025

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Elvis D. Carter



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Commentary

The 2026 mid-term elections, gerrymandering and democracy

By Paul Rozycki

As the conflict and division over President Trump's second term grows with his tariff wars, retribution against his opponents, and slashing government programs and personnel, many are turning to next year's midterm election in the hope that a Democratic majority in the U.S. House could act as a barrier to the worst of his actions.

A shift of only three seats could give the Democrats a majority in the House, and mid-term elections are usually bad news for the party in the Oval Office.

Since 1946, presidents whose popularity was below 50% have lost, on average, 37 seats in the House during midterm elections. Of the 19 midterm elections since that time, the president's party lost seats in 17 of them and gained seats in only two — 1998 and 2002.

Because so much is at stake in next year's election, both parties are using every trick in the book to give themselves the edge. In particular, Republicans in Texas are attempting to use one of the oldest election strategies: gerrymandering, or the drawing of election districts to favor a particular party. In an attempt to block the move, Democratic lawmakers briefly left the state, but in the end their move proved unsuccessful.

In response to Texas' gerrymandering for five more seats, California has threatened to redraw their districts, as well, to give Democrats an advantage. Several other states have indicated that

they might take similar action to help one party or the other.

History of gerrymandering

Gerrymandering goes back to the earliest days of the nation, when Elbridge Gerry, vice president of the U.S. and governor of Massachusetts, drew an odd-shaped election district to help his party in 1812. His opponents said it looked like a salamander and therefore called it a "gerrymander." Over the last two centuries since the term's coining, both parties have used gerrymandering to gain an advantage.

The legal requirements

It may surprise some to learn that when election districts are drawn, the legal requirements are few.

Based on Supreme Court decisions in the early 1960s, the population of election districts must be equal, so each member of the House speaks for the same number of people. Prior to that time there were wide variations in the number of people in each election district.

Congressional districts are usually redrawn every ten years after the census is taken to adjust for population changes. After the 2020 census there were about 760,000 people in each congressional district, according to a 2021 Library of Congress Report.

Further, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 says that gerrymandering can't be used to prevent the elec-

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Photo of the Month: Competitors run by the University of Michigan-Flint campus during the Crim Festival of Races' "Michigan Mile" race on August 22, 2025. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Sports Beat

Flint Firebirds 2025-26 Season Preview

By Nathan Waters

After a long, hot summer, the ice is now frozen and the Flint Firebirds are set to kick off their 2025-26 OHL campaign.

With the Firebirds' loss to the Kitchener Rangers (who would go on to lose to eventual OHL and Memorial Cup champions, the London Knights) their 2024-25 season ended in the first round of playoffs.

But a new season brings changes, and the Firebirds are no exception. In the priority selection draft, Flint's junior ice hockey team selected 15 new players with the help of extra draft picks in the third and tenth rounds acquired via trade. The list of newly drafted Firebirds is to the right on Page 5.

Additionally, three players were selected in the U18 priority selection draft. Whereas the standard priority selection draft is for players all around North America, the U18 priority selection draft is reserved for

players who are 17 or 18 years old, not currently on an OHL team, and not on any of the 50 player protected lists compiled by each team in the OHL.

Each team is required to select two players, one from each round of the draft. If one of the players that is selected in those first two rounds is a goalie, the team may elect to select another skater in an optional third round.

In this draft, the Firebirds opted to select Chase Pettipiece in the first round, a center from Merlin, Ontario. The second round brought goaltender Lucas Carpino of Aurora, Ontario, and with the selection of a goaltender in round two, Flint used its optional third round selection for center Michael Pavlovich from Thornhill, Ontario.

Further, a draft for international players, known as the "import draft," was held in July. During this draft,

each team is allowed a further three players (up from two players in past seasons) that are from outside the OHL's normal geographic boundaries. The import draft allows the teams to reach their "balance" of players to reach the maximum.

Flint's import draft selections came from neighbors in continental Europe. Defenseman Darels Uljanskis, born in Riga, Latvia previously played in the Paradaugava Riga youth system. He has been drafted by the Anaheim Ducks of the NHL in 2024, but has yet to sign a contract.

Uljanskis will partner on the defensive side with Belarusian netminder Yevgeni Prokhorov. Drafted by the Buffalo Sabers in this year's NHL draft, Prokhorov played 28 games last season in the Russian Junior League (MHL) at Dinamo-Shinnik Bobruisk winning 17 with a .903 save percentage (shots on

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Sports Beat ...

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target stopped divided by total shots on target).

Not every face on the draft selection sheet will make the ice this year, though. Typically players drafted at the age of 16 will not sign a contract as they develop further in the Junior A leagues like the Ontario Junior Hockey League (OHL) or wherever else they may currently be playing.

Some of this year's draft class were offered contracts with Flint. Eighth overall pick Charlie Morata, 33rd pick Lucas Nutting, and 55th pick Mason Courville signed and will see the ice this season. They will follow alongside two players who were drafted in 2023 – Luka Grazianno, who has committed to play college hockey at Harvard,

and Dryden Allen, who has committed to Michigan State, signed their contracts with Flint this summer.

In the past, when a player signed a contract, they would be forfeiting their amateur status and would be ineligible to play college hockey in the NCAA. Starting this year, however, players who have played Canadian Hockey League (CHL) hockey – which includes the OHL, Western Hockey League (WHL) and

the Quebec Maritimes Junior Hockey League (QMJHL) – will be able to play college hockey when their major junior careers end. They will still need to qualify academically and have not been compensated above actual and necessary expenses prior to enrolling in college.

Alongside the drafted additions, the Firebirds saw several free agent signings and players acquired via trade.

Zack Bleick, a defenseman

player, or a player over 20 years old, of which each team may have three. This will be his last season in the OHL per the overage restrictions. He played 25 games for Kingston last season, winning 11 with a goals against average of 3.03.

Only 68 games stand between now and the 2026 playoffs, half of which the Firebirds will play at Dort Financial Center.

Home games against local rival the Saginaw Spirit will be held on

Saturday, Oct. 18; Wednesday, Nov. 26; Friday, Jan. 9; and Wednesday, Feb. 11. A few of these rivalry games coincide with promotional nights at the arena, including “810 Wednesday” on Feb. 11, during which there will be discounted tickets available for Genesee County residents.

For the games that are out of town, the CHL and FloSports have agreed to

a seven-year partnership deal to watch all CHL games via subscription on their Flohockey platform. This will include the OHL, WHL and QMJHL.

The Firebirds are set to kick off their season with an away game against the Saginaw Spirit on Sept. 20 before skating their first game of the season at Dort Financial Center against the Niagara Icedogs on Sept. 27. ●

Round	Pick	Name	Position	Birthplace
1	8	Charlie Murata	LW	Toronto, ON, Canada
2	33	Lucas Nutting	D	Isleworth, United Kingdom
3	55	Mason Courville	G	Palmyra, PA, United States
3	63	Brayden Lappalainen	LW	Tecumseh, ON, Canada
4	79	Ethan Wyttenbach	LW	Roslyn, NY, United States
5	90	Carter Beauchesne	C	Ottawa, ON, Canada
6	121	Hayden Stroud	D	Clarksburg, ON, Canada
7	127	Landon Pickersgill	D	Windsor, ON, Canada
8	161	Chase Partridge	RW	St. Catharines, ON, Canada
9	167	Lincoln Cumming	C	Toronto, ON, Canada
10	191	Malcolm Rose	G	Barrie, ON, Canada
10	201	Sutter Smith	D	Grimsby, ON, Canada
11	211	Jaden Switzer	C	Landsberg am Lech, Germany
12	231	Emmett Mather	D	Tilbury, ON, Canada
13	251	Jacob Turpin	G	Ottawa, ON, Canada

Key: LW = “left winger,” RW = “right winger,” C = “center,” D = “defender,” and G = “goaltender”

invited to spring training, was signed as a free agent. He split last season between the Cleveland Wildcats and St. Ignatius High School. George Komadaski, a defenseman whose father played hockey in the American Hockey League (AHL), has also signed. He has committed to play at Notre Dame.

Flint also acquired goaltender Mason Vaccari from the Kingston Frontenacs. Vaccari is an overage

Commentary ...

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tion of minorities, as was often the case in the old south and elsewhere.

And that's about it.

So while the law requires that the population of each district be equal, it says little about the shape of those districts and who should create them. That's where gerrymandering comes in: how the districts are shaped and who draws them can play a major role in determining which party wins or loses.

There are several ways political parties can gain the advantage when drawing election districts.

Packing and cracking

One gerrymandering technique is known as “packing” wherein all the voters of a single party are placed in one district, giving them a huge victory but denying them any significant support in a number of surrounding districts.

A second technique is called “cracking,” wherein all the voters of a single party are divided so they can't be a majority in any surrounding district.

The below charts are examples of how both might work.

In a state with 60% Democrats and 40% Republicans, it's possible for the Democrats to win all the seats if they “crack” the Republican support, so they don't have a majority in any district. Similarly it's possible for the Republicans to win three of the five seats if they “pack” most of the Democrats into two districts.

A few other techniques that are sometimes used are “hijacking,” where two incumbents are placed in the same district assuring that one of them would lose, and “kidnapping” where an incumbent is placed in a new district where they may be little known and have little chance to win.

All of this might be considered inside baseball – of interest only to political junkies – except for the fact that there is so much at stake in the next election.

The implications of gerrymandering

While the current Texas version of midterm gerrymandering is a reflection of the Republicans' fear that they could lose their razor thin majority in the U.S. House, it's hardly an exception. The current

attempts are just more blatant than usual because they are taking place in the middle of a decade. However, over the years both parties have made use of gerrymandering for their own advantage.

For example, in 2022, New York's Court of Appeals rejected congressional maps that were seen as favoring Democrats, as reported by NBC.

Division, dysfunction, and distrust of democracy

When the selection of members of any elective body is based on gerrymandered districts it leads to at least several major problems.

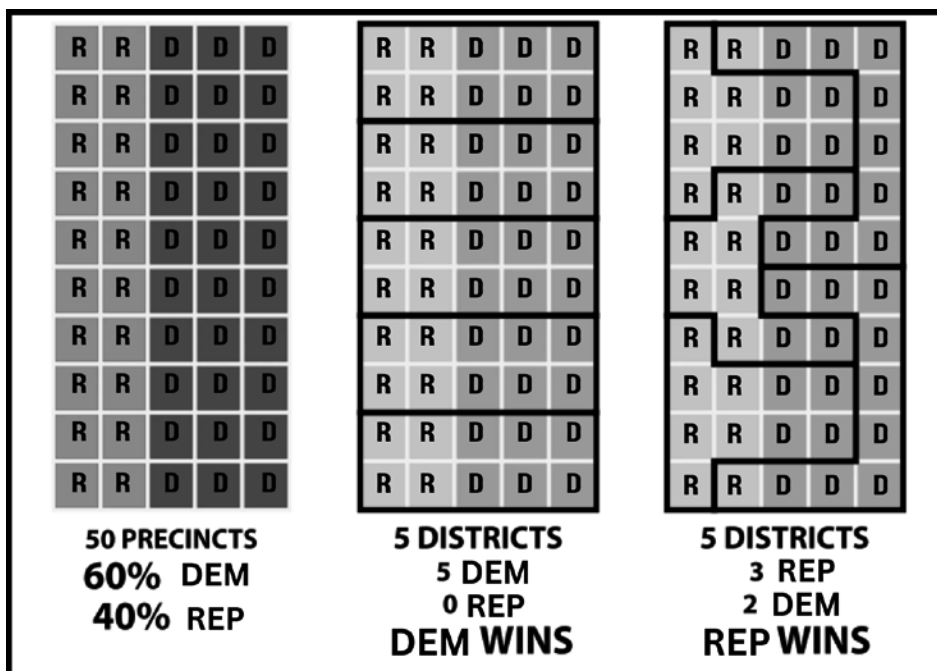
For starters, it can lead to deeper divisions in Congress.

Today, the great majority of members of Congress are confident of reelection once they are nominated by their party. In 2025, only 40 of the 435 districts were truly competitive according to the Cook Political Report, and gerrymandering is a significant factor in that lack of competitiveness. Thus, the “real” election tends to be the primary, where a candidate only needs to appeal to the activist base of their party.

Often this means that strongly liberal Democrats and strongly conservative Republicans are elected, and both have little motive to work with the other side. Those deep divisions make compromise and policymaking more difficult and may mean that little gets done except attacking the other party—leading to a dysfunctional democracy.

And if democracy can't function well, it leads to widespread distrust of the whole system and perhaps democracy itself. We've seen much of that in recent years. That distrust also tends to manifest a decline in voter participation – because if you don't trust the system, why vote? Or, in the case of gerrymandering more directly,

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Graphic adapted from image by Steven Nass, accessed via Wikimedia Commons

Commentary ...

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if you know your party is going to win (or lose) regardless of how many in your party turn out on election day, why bother to vote?

What to do

While gerrymandering isn't the only cause of our political problems, it's a significant one. So how can it be solved?

About 13 states, including Michigan, have created Independent Redistricting Commissions, where a non-partisan or bi-partisan commission directs the redrawing of election districts every 10 years. Several other states use various, modified (and perhaps less independent) versions. The results haven't been perfect, and partisans of both parties are often displeased with the results.

(According to the Harvard Kennedy School, some states like Michigan, California and Arizona have been most successful in creating fair maps with their commissions. Other states, even some with independent commissions, like Ohio or Virginia, have simply continued the problems with gerrymandering.)

While gerrymandering isn't the only problem we face with our elections, it is a major one, and dealing with it could be a big step forward in restoring trust in our elections and democracy itself. ●

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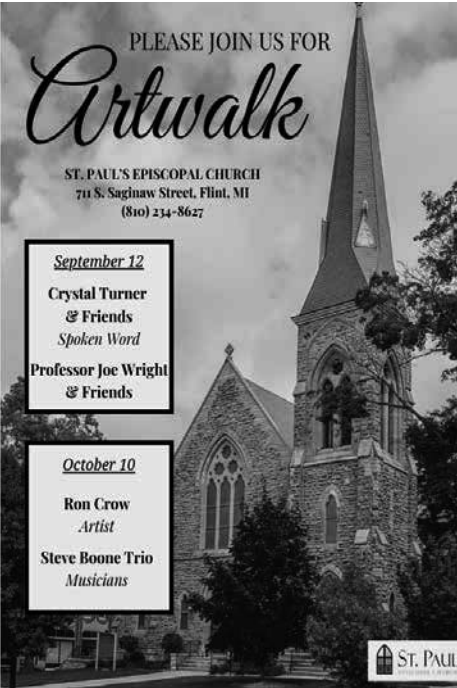
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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

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Noche de Culturas: A Latinx Gala

Saturday, Sept. 13 | 6 - 11 pm

Join us for an unforgettable evening celebrating Latinx culture at the beautiful Flint Golf Club.

We'll be on the rear lawn behind the clubhouse, so you can enjoy the stunning scenery. Your \$108 ticket includes traditional Latin American food, signature cocktails, and live music to keep you on your feet all night long. For tickets and more information, visit: <https://shorturl.at/tFwza>

Flint Golf Club

3100 Lakewood Drive

Harvest Day at Applewood

Thursday, Sept. 18 | 11 am - 2 pm

Come enjoy apple and apple sauce tasting, butter making, Applewood exhibit and self guided tours, lawn games, a puppet show, music, and more!

Applewood Estate

1400 E. Kearsley St.

Bark for the Arts

Friday, Sept. 19 | 5 - 8 pm

Celebrate art, music, and our canine companions in one fun-filled night! Enjoy a relaxing evening outdoors with live music on the Palette Café patio starting at 6 pm, specially crafted food & drink specials, and a pet printmaking demonstration.

Admission is free and leashed dogs are welcome. Only service animals are allowed inside the museum.

Flint Institute of Arts

1120 E. Kearsley St.

Flint Roller Derby

Saturday, Sept. 20 | 8 pm

Flint Roller Derby will compete against Kalamazoo in their third home game of the season. Doors open at 7:30 pm, with the first whistle at 8:00 pm sharp. Tickets \$12 in advance (available from any League Member or Rollhaven), \$15 at the door. Military discount at the door.

Rollhaven Skating Center

5315 S. Saginaw St.

World Ballet Company: The Great Gatsby Ballet

Sunday, Sept. 28 | 6 pm

Immerse yourself in the jazzy world of flappers and champagne with this new and entirely original production from World Ballet Company. Experience the glitz, glamor, and tragic romance of F. Scott Fitzgerald's timeless novel live on stage. Remaining tickets starting at \$40, available at tickets.thefim.org.

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Buckham Alley Theatre presents DOUBT!

Friday, Oct. 3 - Sunday, Oct. 5

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St. Paul's Episcopal Church

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Wellness Day: Free Mammogram Event

Saturday, Oct. 4 | 9 am - 4 pm

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Hamilton Community Health Network

2900 Saginaw St.

Ms. Senior Flint Pageant: Age of Splendor

Saturday, Oct. 11 | 1 - 4 pm

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Free City Mural Festival brings 17 new artworks to Flint

By Kate Stockrahm

In today's economy, it's rare to get anything for free – but apparently no one told Flint Public Art Project (FPAP) that.

From late August through the first week of September, the organization behind the Free City Mural Festival again brought together nearly 20 muralists to paint Flint's walls for residents and visitors to enjoy at no cost.

The result? 17 new murals scattered across all quadrants of the city – from Soggy Bottom Bar to the silos on Second Street, from a westside business to a north end barbershop, and hosts of locales in between.

"I hope to see a positive impact on the community," said Steven Barber, Board President of Flint Public Art Project, of the 2025 festival. "I know the murals have helped a lot of people mentally and, you know, just even turn some of the blight and neglected infrastructure around us into something that's a little bit more appealing."

The Free City Mural Festival began in 2019 under former executive director of FPAP Joe Schipani, who would literally house visiting artists in his Carriage Town home during the annual event. Barber said FPAP's current board believes just as much in showing the muralists – who hail from as far as the Philippines this cycle – that Flint is a wonderful, welcoming community between trips to their paint sites.

"Most publications don't show the positive [in Flint]," Barber said, which is why FPAP's focus beyond beautifying disused spaces is "showing [the artists] that there's more than what's out there in the news."

A quick look through the organization's Facebook posts emphasizes the board president's point: this year's cohort of 19 muralists can be seen frequenting multiple downtown businesses, smiling with locals, and enjoying a backyard meal together.

"I mean, there's very few other festivals that take care of the artists

the way we do," Barber said. "And, you know, that's a proud moment for the organization."

Still, it's been a year of change for FPAP, as Schipani stepped down in early 2025 and the organization is operating with less-than-usual funding – somewhere near \$100,000 short of their target, by Barber's estimate.

He added that he and the rest of the board are learning together ("I've certainly never ordered 2,000 cans of paint!"), and grateful to Schipani for all he'd been shouldering for the organization and its signature festival. Barber said his hope is to find additional resources and partners in the coming months so as to pay artists more and grow FPAP's year-round programming in Flint.

But if there have been hiccups this festival, they haven't seemed to faze returning artist Krystal Cooke, who told EVM she's honored to be painting a wall of the iconic Soggy Bottom Bar.

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Artist Krystal Cooke works on her mural on the north side of Soggy Bottom Bar for the 2025 Free City Mural Festival on September 3, 2025. Cooke, a former Flint resident, has taken part in the festival since 2020. (Photo by Kate Stockrahm)

Free City ...

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“When I initially moved to Flint like seven years ago, Soggy Bottom Bar is actually one of the first places that I got to experience,” Cooke, who now lives out-of-state, explained. “And going to jazz night on Tuesdays was a regular thing – every Tuesday I came to jazz night with all of my new Flint friends.”

She said those early memories, combined with the existing aesthetic of the area, inspired her mural’s design.

“I really wanted to just embody the history and what’s relevant to this space,” Cooke said. “And I figured painting a saxophone player was very fitting for jazz night... I picked kind of like this vintage background to fit the aesthetic outside, and also to kind of match some of the New Orleans influences on the other side of the building.”

Cooke, who tends to paint

portraits and favor hyperrealistic artwork, said her goal is to create for those who call the area home.

“I really want to paint things that are relevant to the communities that I’m painting for,” she said before a group of passersby came over to compliment her partially-completed work.

Cooke’s completed mural can be viewed on the north side of Soggy Bottom Bar, located at 613 Martin Luther King Ave. She is one of a handful of current or former Flint artists featured at this year’s Free City Mural Festival alongside other national and international muralists. A map of all mural locations and artists can be viewed on FPAP’s website. ●

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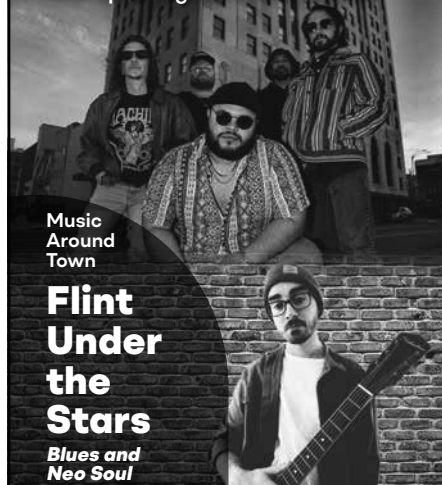
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Village Life ...

(Continued from Page 12)

ready for it. You had to know when to jump out of that pew and dash toward the hallelujahs and outstretched arms at the altar.

If you missed the moment, the kind and welcoming parishioners would be long gone, the bell rope tied up to its hook in the foyer, the evangelists with their yee-hah holiness well down the road to the next clapboard church and clutch of needy sinners.

And though I know it's a myth, this "starting over" business, I've never really lost my taste for it. This fall, I myself am experiencing a fresh start, a new job of significance for me. And I am pleased. It is a rare moment of beginning again.

These days, I prefer to think of life as One Continuous Mistake, a Zen phrase writer Gail Sher celebrates as the title of her book about writing. She asserts, "We tie ourselves in knots to

sabotage the energy that might be unleashed if we move resolutely ahead. The risks of making changes are great, especially great changes."

But she concludes, "actually, the risks of not making change are great. We risk missing our lives."

I know that the past haunts and follows us, heavy on our shoulders like a clumsy backpack. But the complications and consequences of that experience – including the mistakes – are what enrich these ochre days of autumn. ●

Editor's Note: This Village Life column originally appeared in the September 2010 issue of East Village Magazine. It is reprinted and updated from Jan Worth-Nelson's book, "That's My Moon Over Court Street: Dispatches from a Life in Flint," which is available at Totem Books, Sloan Museum, Amazon.com, and the Flint Institute of Arts.

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Spacious one-bedroom, East Village apartment on Avon St. near Kearsley St. Central air conditioning, hardwood floors, smokeless fireplace. Comes with furnishings for living room, kitchen and bedroom. Private washer and dryer, off street fenced parking. In the center of it all on cul-de-sac Avon St. Walk or bike four blocks or less to UM-Flint and MCC campuses, Cultural Center, Public library, downtown, Farmers Market, Mott horticultural gardens, four parks and easy freeway access. A great space for a responsible and mature tenant. No pets. References and credit check requested. On site management. \$845 a month plus utilities. E-mail: edcvster@gmail.com or write: Apartment Box 11, 720 E. Second St., Flint MI 48503.



East Village
Magazine

Flint Repertory Theatre

GHOST LIGHT

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One-night-only cabarets featuring curated music, captivating stories, and a fresh theme each month



Up next:
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For more information and to purchase tickets, please scan the QR code or visit thefim.org/broadwayev.

FIM Flint Repertory Theatre



Flint Symphony Orchestra

Heroic Reflections

Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben* (A Hero's Life)
and Ravel's Piano Concerto in G

Enrique Diemecke
music director and conductor

Marika Bournaki piano



Saturday, October 11, 2025
7:30pm at Whiting Auditorium



For more information and to purchase tickets, please scan the QR code or visit thefim.org/fso1ev

FIM Flint Symphony Orchestra



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Brandon Z. Smith

Originals and Inspirations



Friday, October 17, 2025
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FIM Flint School of Performing Arts



Village Life

I love new starts

By Jan Worth-Nelson

I feel sorry for people who don't get to experience a fresh start every September. It is one of the gifts of the academic calendar.

I love the way classes start just after Labor Day, after a summer of absences and reinvigoration. I love the new shoes, new notebooks, new haircuts, new students, the fresh paint, new carpet and even a new professor or two.

I love the new surface of it, like the way wood smells when it's just been sanded.

This fresh start in fall just feels so right. It corresponds with primal human rhythms, after all. As the days shorten and temperatures drop, ancient survival adrenaline grips us. There's a pinch of fear behind it, if you ask me, the energy of starving off mortality. Winter lurks - not all of us will get through it alive.

But that's a dark take. I'm here to celebrate second chances, the promise more relevant in September than in May. When autumn hits, galvanized by the pungent air, we clean up and reassess, having harvested whatever we could from our urban gardens, our trips to battlegrounds and beaches, our nights with lightning bugs and barbecues.

Really, how can Midwesterners not be smitten by the notion of fresh starts? What could we do other than expect them, with our seasonal turmoils and cycles of renewal?

So, after a summer's wrap up we mutter, "No regret," knowing that we're full of it. But we can't lollygag, with the prospect of "wintery mix" and

black ice coming on. We just take it for granted - we will get hold of ourselves and start again.

The concept is bred into my Protestant bones. Mine is the tradition of the Resurrection, after all. Our Jesus rose from the dead, calling up Oscar-worthy special effects.

I grew up with that persistent and nowadays banally politicized phrase "born again." What an idea! We could be "born again" in the spirit, our

my father's parish in Nellie, Ohio.

After he delivered a rip-roaring and terrifying jeremiad about the imminent end of the world, I rushed down the hardwood aisle to the waxy kneeling rail and confessed my sins. I was, I knew, meant to be Born Again.

Of course, it was already too late. The evangelist showed up just before puberty - and my simmering skepticism - mushroomed into power like an A-Bomb.

I think I was already a doubter, but I lost myself in the persuasive melodrama. It was irresistible to be so moved, to be a player. It couldn't have hurt the preacher's portfolio to say that he'd "saved" a local apple-cheeked kid.

So I did my part. "Going forward," and then accepting the promise of starting again, among other acts of Protestant compliance, was a way of saying bravo, encore, way to go. I didn't have much to confess at that dolorous rail, except for having kissed Larry Thatcher on the back porch way after dark as the neighborhood stray cats wound around our ankles. But the shot at starting over was addictive.

Forgive me. I didn't set out to be cynical. I meant to be fond and affectionate, to celebrate the undying, unfailing optimism of my Midwestern upbringing. We believed people were rotten to the core, born into original sin, of course. But we also believed people could change. We believed our God would give us second chances.

Along the way, I learned that second chances often were part of a larger, grander drama. You had to be

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sinful selves cleansed by the Blood of the Lamb.

How audacious. As if the trail of chaos caused by all those lapses of judgment, all that gluttony, greed, lust, sloth, wrath, pride and envy, all that serial killing and arson, all the human foibles we collectively call evil, could be wiped away.

I "went forward" to altar calls as a kid. The last time I was about 13, when a hail-fellow well-met traveling evangelist engineered a convincing Elmer Gantry drama in a little church in