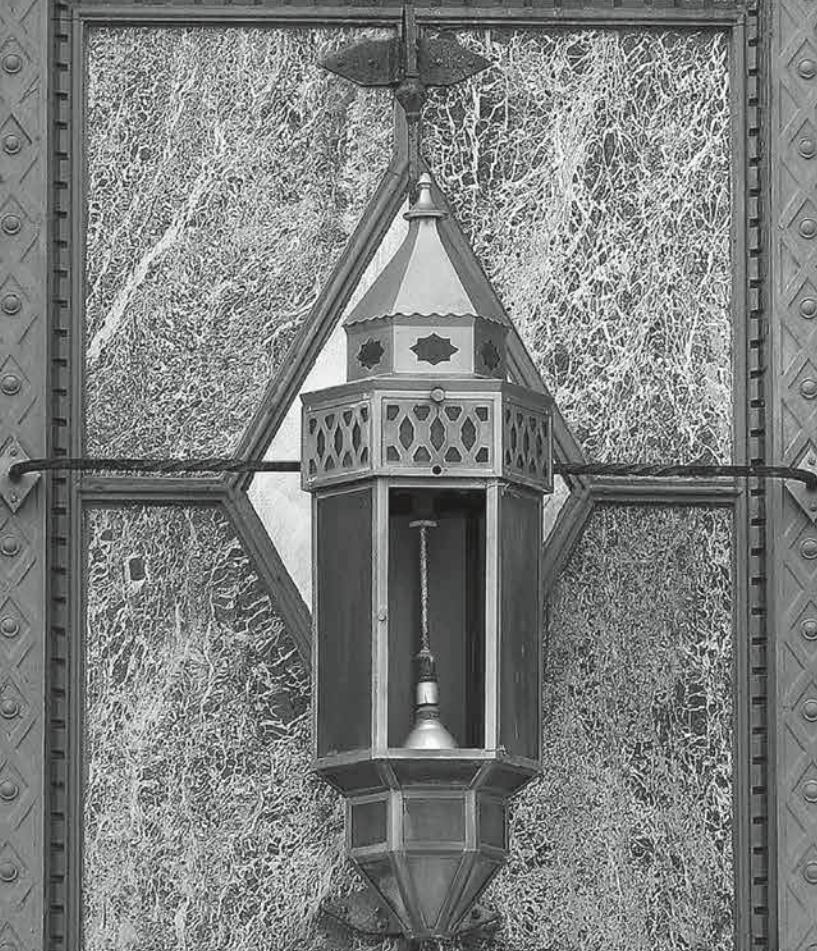


# East Village Magazine

May 2024



Photograph By

*Elvin D. Carter*

BUILDING



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**Founder** Gary P. Custer  
**Managing Editor** Kate Stockrahm  
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**Contributing Writer** Jan Worth-Nelson  
**Reporters** Harold C. Ford  
Patsy Isenberg  
Canisha Bell  
Liz Ireland-Curtis  
Miriam Zayadi  
Linkin Carlson  
Gordon Young  
**Columnist** Paul Rozycki  
**Photographer** Edwin D. Custer

**Distribution Staff**

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720 E. Second St.  
Flint, Mich. 48503

**Website:**  
eastvillagemagazine.org

**E-mail:**  
eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com

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Commentary  
**Will third parties and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. decide the 2024 election?**

*By Paul Rozycki*

Unhappy with the Republican and Democratic candidates for president this year? You have many third party options, but making those choices could have consequences you don't like.

Third parties have never elected a president of the United States. We've had Democrats, Republicans, Whigs, and Federalists as presidents, but we've never elected a Libertarian, Socialist, Green Party, Prohibitionist, or Communist party member to the White House.

But that doesn't mean that third parties haven't played a major role in who gets elected and what policies they pursue, whether by pulling votes away from major party candidates or raising legislative concerns for specific voting blocs.

And this year, because the rematch between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump is so close — and because many voters are disenchanted with both major parties — it's quite possible that a third party, and particularly the candidacy of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., could play a critical role.

**How third parties can decide who wins**

While they have never won a presidential election, third parties have historically pulled enough votes from one of the major parties to give the other side a victory in some elections.

In 1912, former President Theodore Roosevelt ran on the Bull Moose Party. He lost, but he drew votes from Republican President Howard Taft and thereby the Democratic candidate, Woodrow Wilson, was elected.

In 1968 George Wallace's third party run signaled the shift of the "Solid South" from the Democratic Party and laid the groundwork for Richard Nixon's victory and the Republican take-



**A button from George Wallace's presidential campaign.**

(Photo by Paul Rozycki)

over of the south in the following years.

In 1992, Ross Perot may have drawn votes from Republican George H.W. Bush to give Democrat Bill Clinton the victory, and many feel that the Green Party shifted just enough votes from Democrat Al Gore to give Republican George W. Bush the presidency in 2000.

More recently, some suggest that Jill Stein and the Green

*(Continued on Page 8)*

**Cover:** The door to the former Bell Telephone building on Beach Street in downtown Flint. The building is now occupied by AT&T.

*(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)*



**Photo of the Month:** Mid-April daffodils blooming in Flint. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

## Education Beat

# ***Could-be Flint students take \$100+ million in state aid to other school options each year***

*By Harold C. Ford*

Flint Community Schools (FCS) enrolls just 20 percent of the school-age students who reside within the district’s boundaries, resulting in a loss of \$100 million annually as the other 80 percent of its possible students take state funding elsewhere.

Other educational options for those students include: Schools of Choice, wherein public-school students can attend other public schools outside of the district they live in; nonprofit and for-profit charter schools; private schools, such as those offered by the Roman Catholic Church; homeschooling; or dropping out altogether.

An East Village Magazine (EVM) study of Genesee County school enrollment data shows that thousands of area students choose such other options — with each student choosing another option taking with them \$9,608 in state aid, annually.

### **Projected \$1 billion loss in a decade**

Of the 21 public school systems that are part of the Genesee Intermediate School District (GISD), the district most impacted by the transfer of its students elsewhere is Flint Community Schools.

The first count day of the 2023-24 school year showed that 10,661 of the 13,456 kindergarten to 12th grade students with Flint addresses did not enroll in Flint’s public school system. Doing the math, those 10,661 students took with them \$102,430,888 million in state aid.

Projected over a decade, that would equate to a staggering loss of more than \$1 billion to the Flint school district.

### **Where are they going?**

In recent decades, educational options have multiplied far beyond

the local public school system to include Schools of Choice, charter schools, private schools, and homeschooling. Below is a breakdown of how those options factor into Flint Schools’ enrollment loss.

### **Schools of Choice**

Since 1996, Michigan’s public-school students have been able to transfer to another public school system that participates in the state’s Schools of Choice option. That results in some public school systems in Genesee County enrolling more students than the number that actually live in the district, while other districts enroll fewer.

Each transferring student also transfers state aid to the district in which they enroll. That state aid amount for the 2023-2024 school year is \$9,608, according to the

*(Continued on Page 5)*

# Education Beat ...

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Michigan Department of Education.

Therefore, just ten students represent \$96,080 in state aid; 100 students represent \$960,800; and so on. Those amounts can significantly impact a school budget.

The table here is pulled from data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). It shows the 21 public school systems in Genesee County followed by student enrollment numbers – ordered largest to smallest – that existed at the start of the 2023-2024 school year.

Student enrollment numbers are followed by the number of students that reside in the school district with a plus (+) sign if student enrollment exceeds the number of student residents in the district, or a minus (-) sign if student enrollment is less than the

district’s number of student residents.

The final column on the right shows enrollment numbers taken on the second student count day of the 2023-2024 school year. (Please note: EVM used the first student count day numbers for purposes of this report.)

District	Student Enrollment	Student Residents	March 2024 Enrollment
1. Grand Blanc:	7,801	7,611 +	7,571
2. Davison:	5,582	4,971 +	5,470
3. Flushing:	4,074	3,882 +	4,099
4. Carman-Ainsworth:	3,841	4,847 -	3,772
5. Swartz Creek:	3,510	3,355 +	3,485
6. Flint:	3,141	13,456 -	2,888
7. Fenton:	3,089	3,014 +	3,014
8. Kearsley:	2,843	2,469 +	2,863
9. Clio:	2,626	2,650 -	2,537
10. Linden:	2,469	2,784 -	2,391
11. Lake Fenton:	2,005	1,601 +	2,003
12. Goodrich:	1,932	1,470 +	1,917
13. Westwood Heights:	1,907	848 +	1,565
14. Mt. Morris:	1,555	2,010 -	1,480
15. Montrose:	1,469	1,258 +	1,470
16. Lakeville:	1,071	1,521 -	1,041
17. Bendle:	1,047	901 +	1,032
18. Atherton:	759	880 -	692
19. Bentley:	748	799 -	718
20. Genesee:	731	564 +	685
21. Beecher:	595	1,237 -	581

Takeaways from the above data show that 12 districts enrolled more students than actually lived in the district this school year, while nine districts enrolled fewer.

Westwood Heights was the biggest winner, with enrollment more than doubling the number of K-12 students that live within the district.

Conversely, Flint was the biggest loser, with a loss of 13,456 students. Thus, while Flint started this school year as the sixth largest school system in Genesee County, the latest enrollment numbers indicate that Fenton has now bumped Flint into the seventh position — and that Kearsley, in eighth position, is just 25 students behind Flint.

In Genesee County, two high-school-college hybrids, Mott Middle College and Genesee Early College, offer an alternative to enrollment in the county’s public schools and are thus also considered Schools of Choice.

Mott Middle College opened in 1991 and operates on the campus of Mott Community College, and Genesee Early College is housed at the University of Michigan-Flint. Both schools offer students the opportunity to earn high school and college credits.

These high school-college hybrids do receive state aid for enrolled students, though enrollment numbers were not immediately available on their websites to determine how much.

## Charter schools

While some potential FCS students are opting for adjacent school districts, others land in charter schools around the county.

Charter schools have existed in Michigan since the 1990s. Like public schools in Michigan, public charters receive state funding, are required to administer standardized tests required by the state, and must be open to all students in terms of enrollment.

In Genesee County, 14 public charters are currently listed by the Michigan Department of Education.

(Continued on Page 6)



**Powers Catholic High School in Flint, Mich.**

(Photo by Kate Stockrahm)

# Education Beat ...

(Continued from Page 5)

They are (with enrollment numbers):

- Burton Glen Charter Academy (715)
- Eagle’s Nest Academy (158)
- Flex High North Flint (249)
- Flint Cultural Center Academy (596)
- Grand Blanc Academy (325)
- Greater Heights Academy (246)
- International Academy of Flint (890)
- Linden Charter Academy (791)
- Madison Academy High School (541)
- Northridge Academy (225)
- Richfield Public School Academy (565)
- New Standard Academy (779)
- WAY Academy of Flint (92)
- Woodland Park Academy (270)

The combined enrollment of public charter schools in Genesee County – 6,442 students – would make it the second largest school population in the county, trailing only Grand Blanc’s public school enrollment. They represent \$61,894,736 in state aid that might otherwise help fund the county’s 21 public school systems.

## Private schools

The largest collection of private school students in Genesee County are those enrolled in Roman Catholic schools.

The six area schools listed on the Powers Catholic High School website include: St. John the Evangelist in Fenton; St. Robert Catholic in Flushing; St. John Vianney in Flint; Holy Rosary Catholic School in Flint; Holy Family in Grand Blanc; and Powers Catholic High School in Flint.

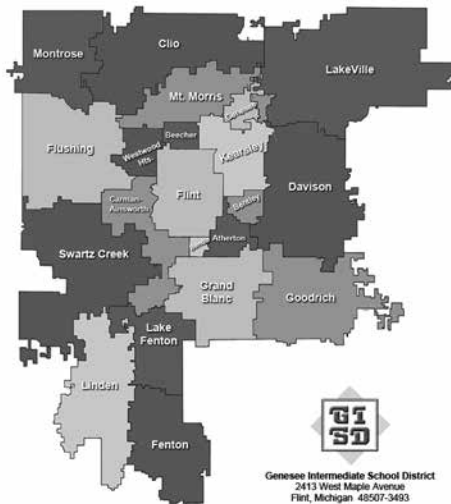
Most are pre-K to 8th grade schools, with the exception of Holy Rosary (K-8) and Powers (9-12). Not included in the Powers list is St. Thomas More Academy in Burton, which serves K-12 students.

While Catholic schools do not receive state aid because they provide religious instruction, each enrolled

student still represents state aid that might otherwise go to a public school system. Therefore, with a combined total of roughly 1,795 students, Genesee County’s Catholic schools’ student count equates to around \$17.3 million in state funding that might otherwise go to area public schools.

## Homeschooling and dropping out

Michigan is one of 11 states where parents are not required to notify anyone that they are homeschooling their child, and there is no registry of homeschool students. These factors make it near-impossible to determine the exact number of homeschool students and/or students who have dropped out in the state, let alone in Flint specifically.



(Image source: Genesee County Intermediate School District)

However, on a broader scale, Bridge Magazine estimated in a February 2024 article that about 150,000 students in Michigan are likely homeschooled or have dropped out of school altogether through a calculation of U.S. Census, private, and public school enrollment data.

As stands, the State of Michigan does not appropriate funding for homeschooling, though a local school district may receive some funding for home-schooled students enrolled in “non-essential courses,” as defined by Michigan law, at that local district.

## Attracting more students to Flint Community Schools

What’s happening to school enrollment in Flint’s public schools is not uncommon.

Bridge Magazine recently reported that one in four students in Michigan do not attend a public school in the district where they reside — an increase from one in six only a decade earlier.

Still, Flint school leaders are keenly aware of the financial impact of a diminished student population and looking to reverse the trend.

An April 2024 settlement agreement between FCS and the United Teachers of Flint (UTF), and both parties’ subsequent press statements, included multiple references to the need to bring students back to Flint’s public school system.

The agreement language spoke to the “vital needs of increasing student enrollment and retention,” and, at an April 10 press conference, FCS Superintendent Kevelin Jones said, “We need to focus on enrollment campaigns ... We also need new enrollees to come back to Flint Community Schools.”

Further, UTF President Karen Christian touted the agreement’s potential toward “helping to recruit students and making sure we keep this district viable.”

Enrollment concerns for Flint Schools go beyond the local level, too. Back in November 2023, Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Michael Rice also referenced Flint’s loss of students in remarks before the Flint Board of Education.

“You can’t have the current market share [student enrollment] and make it work,” he said. “You’ve got to grow that market share. You’ve got to bring people back.” ●

*This is the first in a series of stories covering high-level, ongoing public education concerns in Flint. Please visit [eastvillagemagazine.org](http://eastvillagemagazine.org) for more of Ford’s coverage.*

# An update on downtown Flint's 'LiveWell' development

By Kate Stockrahm

At the one year mark since its groundbreaking, "LiveWell on Harrison," a mixed-use development that will relocate the YMCA and Crim Fitness Foundation and boast 50 new apartments, is taking shape amid the downtown Flint skyline.

The development is helmed by HWD Harrison, Inc. which Joe Martin, Director of Development at Uptown Reinvestment Corporation (URC), described as "an affiliate" of URC that "also includes membership from the YMCA."

The housing component of the building is five stories tall and includes studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units with the majority — 41 out of 50 — available to residents "with incomes at or below" 80% of Genesee County's Area Median Income (AMI).

"Really, it's starting to take shape," Martin said of the apartment side of the building. "The framing is [up] and drywall is coming in, so you're really starting to see the formation of the apartments coming along — which is neat."

Martin told East Village Magazine that construction is progressing smoothly and he anticipates the building is on track to open its doors in the first quarter of 2025.

While he was reluctant to share an exact date when leasing applications will open, Martin did offer that "more marketing opportunities about those timelines" are expected to "roll out

over the summer... I would say July, August."

As for the building's YMCA component, the form of the 50,000 square foot, two-story complex can be seen framed out along Third Street, complete with its pool foundation dug out as of late April 2024.



**A view of the coming 'LiveWell on Harrison' mixed-use development from the corner of Fourth and Harrison Streets in downtown Flint on April 10, 2024.**

(Photo courtesy Flint YMCA)

Alongside its pool, exercise studios and full-length basketball court, the YMCA space will also feature a physical rehabilitation office run by Hurley Medical Center.

"I like to say this is going to be the new campus for health and wellness in downtown Flint," said Pam Bailey, the YMCA's Senior Director of Fundraising and Press Relations.

Bailey noted such a district was called for in Flint's 2013 Master Plan, and she's excited to be part of realizing that promise with LiveWell on Harrison.

"It's development like this that anchors that," she said. "It will allow that to truly feel like a 'district' versus a one off or two off."

Bailey's excitement at seeing the construction come together is also personal, she added, as her grandfather was a glazier in the area for 56 years before retiring.

"I remember hearing, as we would drive through Flint and he would point out buildings, 'I put the glass in that building,' and 'I put the glass in that building,'" Bailey said, smiling. "I'm excited to join a legacy and a family tradition of building things in Flint that stand the test of time."

The YMCA raised \$21 million for the construction component of the development, which will total a bit over \$40 million overall according to URC.

Bailey said the nonprofit is now fundraising another \$1 million for new equipment, technology and furniture for after-school programming and community meetings.

Flint's current YMCA facility, just a block over on Third Street, is close enough that YMCA staff and members have been able to watch the new site's progress ever since its groundbreaking in May 2023.

Bailey said the YMCA's current facility serves about 1,100 families, but with the new space, "every bit of research we've done has shown that we are going to double that easily." ●

## 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](mailto:eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com) with the subject line "Community Journalist."

## Third parties ...

(Continued from Page 3)

Party pulled just enough votes away from Hillary Clinton in 2016 to give Trump the advantage in a few key states.

Through all of this history, and perhaps because of it, major parties have been known to encourage and support certain third parties in the hope they will steal votes from their opponents.

### How third parties make policy

In addition to potentially affecting the outcome of an election, there are many examples of third parties defining issues for the major parties.

In the early 1900s, socialist parties advocated for workers unions and a system of social security, ideas later supported by Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s.

The Wallace candidacy in 1968 was a reaction against the civil right movement of the 1960s. The Libertarian Party, founded in 1971, helped set the stage for Ronald Rea-

gan's conservative administration in the 1980s. Perot's 1992 campaign championed reducing the deficit and balancing the budget. By the late 1990s, President Clinton did that.

So, while they rarely win seats, third parties often raise key issues for the two major parties.

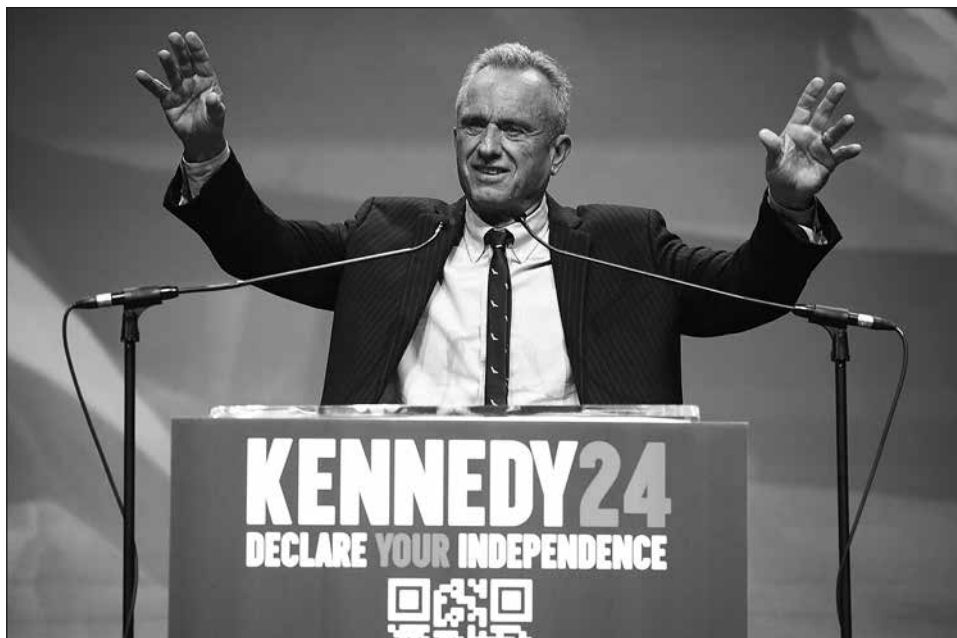
### The RFK Jr. candidacy

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has emerged as the most significant third party candidate in the 2024 race, with

a recent CNN poll showing him at 18 percent in Michigan, and various other polls showing him at 3% to 16% nationally.

The independent candidate has two things working for him.

First is his famous name. Some voters will hear the name Kennedy and assume he shares the views of his father — former attorney general, senator, and presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1968 as he ran for president — or his uncle, President John F. Kennedy. The name alone will bring much attention and perhaps votes, even though nearly all of the Kennedy family has spoken out against



Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. on the campaign trail for the 2024 race.

(Photo by Marc Nozell, accessed via Wikimedia Commons)

his candidacy.

Second, with his selection of tech entrepreneur and philanthropist Nicole Shanahan as his vice presidential running mate, he will gain access to major campaign funds that few third parties typically have.

### Robert F. Kennedy's views

Kennedy's views are an odd mix that could find support in both parties, making it hard to determine

how he may affect the 2024 election.

Kennedy is perhaps best known as an “anti-vax” conspiracy advocate who feels that vaccinations of many kinds should be avoided. He has said that “no vaccine is safe and effective” and that they can cause autism, in spite of scientific evidence to the contrary. He has also authored a number of books attacking those who promoted vaccinations during the COVID-19 pandemic, and those conspiracy theories and his calls to “drain the swamp” often find support within the Republican MAGA Trump camp.

On the other hand, Kennedy

has also spoken out on a number of environmental issues, won awards for his environmental activism, and is co-founder of the Waterkeeper Alliance, a network of environmental organizations fighting for clean water. Those views and his campaign against “corporate takeover” might find him support among some liberal Democrats.

Yet, most of

the backing for Kennedy seems to be coming from the Trump side of the aisle, at present, in the hope he will take votes away from Biden. Much of his funding is from groups that have supported Trump, and some of Kennedy's recent comments suggest that he is running an anti-Biden campaign. In a CNN interview he called President Biden “a much worse threat to democracy” than Trump.

(Trump himself recently tweet-

(Continued on Page 9)



## third parties ...

(Continued from Page 8)

ed that Kennedy was a “much better” option for Democrats than President Joe Biden, but at the same time he called Kennedy “the most radical left candidate in the race.”)

Though Democrats seem more concerned than Republicans about Kennedy’s candidacy, it remains uncertain which party he might hurt most, as a few polls show increasing support for Kennedy among anti-Trump Republicans.

Also, as an independent candidate, Kennedy needs to get on the ballot of each of the 50 states ahead of the November election, and that can prove to be a challenge as all state laws and deadlines differ.

Presently, his campaign claims that he has met the requirements to be on the ballots of Utah, Idaho, Hawaii, Nebraska, Nevada and North Carolina. In Michigan, Kennedy will appear on the November ballot as the nominee of the Natural Law Party.

If he manages to get on all or most state ballots, he will certainly be a major factor in the 2024 election. However, those who vote for him may end up helping their adversaries: if Kennedy draws more Democratic voters, it will give Trump a boost, and if Republicans turn to him, it will aid the Biden campaign.

### The other parties

While Kennedy is getting the most attention currently, he’s hardly the only third party candidate.

It’s likely that we’ll see candidates for the Libertarian, Green, and Prohibition parties; there are at least four socialist parties running for president this year; and political activist and social critic Cornel West is running in a number of



Presidential candidate “Vermin Supreme” in January 2016.

(Photo by Marc Nozell, accessed via Wikimedia Commons)

states under several party labels. Significantly, there will be third party candidates in all seven of the swing-states that could determine the outcome of the Electoral

College. In those states, even a few percentage points could make the difference.

But beyond the parties that are organized enough to get on state ballots, there are hundreds of others running write-in campaigns.

While most will never get on the ballot, some are serious, such as the Communist or Socialist parties; some are focused on a single issue, such as the Prohibition Party or the Legal Marijuana Now Party; and some are simply comic relief, such as “Vermin Supreme,” a performance artist who has run in every presidential election since 1992. (He campaigns with a rubber boot on his head, warns of a “zombie apocalypse” and promises “a pony for everyone.”)

So, there you have it. You have lots of other choices beyond the Democrats and Republicans in this year’s presidential election. But be careful, your third party vote might elect the candidate you disagree with most.

Or, you might get zombies and a pony. ●

## Unclassified Ad

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### Apartment for Lease.

Two-bedroom second floor apartment on cul-de-sac Avon St. near Kearsley St. Features appliances, dining set, laundry, off street fenced parking, large back yard, garden plot. On site management. \$850 a month plus electricity. Heat and water included. No pets. References and credit check requested. E-mail: [ecuster@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ecuster@sbcglobal.net) or write: Apartment Box 1, 720 E. Second St., Flint 48503.

### Apartment for Lease.

Three-bedroom two story apartment. Features hardwood floors, appliances, 1 1/2 baths, laundry, garden plot, off street fenced parking. In the center of it all on cul-de-sac Avon near Kearsley St. Walk three blocks or less to UM-F, MCC, Cultural Center, parks, Downtown. References and credit check requested. On site management. \$895 per month plus all utilities. No pets. E-mail: [ecuster@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ecuster@sbcglobal.net) or write: Apartment Box 9, 720 E. Second St., Flint MI 48503.

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# THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

A selection of events available to our readers is highlighted — beginning after our publication date of May 1. It's a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our June issue, email info about your event to [pisenber@gmail.com](mailto:pisenber@gmail.com) by May 20.

## MW Gallery

Now -Aug. 24

*From Her Perspective:*

*Intersections of Gender and Race*

A new exhibition of paintings, photography, sculpture, and works on paper by artists who explore Blackness, womanhood, and the female experience through their art.

MW Gallery

815 S. Saginaw St. and E. Court, Flint

For more info, visit [m-wc.org](http://m-wc.org)

or call 810-835-4900.

## The New McCree Theatre

May 9-25

A reprisal of the McCree's signature musical, *Sincerely: the Musical Odyssey of an Original Moonglow*, with performances Thursdays & Fridays at 7 p.m. and Saturdays at 2 and 7 p.m. Tickets: \$10 at the box-office or online at [thenewmccreetheatre.com](http://thenewmccreetheatre.com).

The New McCree Theatre

4601 Clio Rd., Flint

Phone: 810-787-2200

## Buckham Gallery

May 10-June 8

40 Years of Buckham Fine Arts Project

Wed-Sat at 11 am.-5 p.m.

Flint Artwalk: May 10, 6-9 p.m.

Buckham Gallery

121 W 2nd St., Flint

For more info, visit [buckhamgallery.org](http://buckhamgallery.org)

or call 810-239-6233.

## The NeverEnding Story

Thurs., May 16, 7 p.m.

This 1984 film is about a troubled boy who dives into a wondrous fantasy world through the pages of a mysterious book, rated PG.

Tickets: \$7 (plus fees)

Genesee County Residents get 50% off.

The Capitol Theatre

140 E. 2nd St., Flint

For more info visit [thefim.org/capitol-theatre](http://thefim.org/capitol-theatre)

or call 810-237-7333.

## Flint Roller Derby

May 18, doors open at 7:30 p.m. game at 8 p.m.

Flint vs. North Star Roller Derby

Tickets: \$12 advance, \$15 at the door

Rollhaven Skating Center

5315 Saginaw St., Flint

Phone: 810-694-4533

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# Digital Divide: The Michigan Times is a local news site. Or is it?

By Gordon Young

Technically, the Michigan Times still exists, but it's probably not what you think it is.

When the University of Michigan - Flint student newspaper let its domain name lapse last year, it was a clear sign that the Michigan Times was in trouble. The publication that covered the downtown campus for more than 60 years is now officially "sunsetting" and will shut down completely at the end of the academic year, a victim of declining student interest and, some argue, university budget cuts.

The domain "themichigantimes.com" was quickly purchased by another entity, and a new publication with the same name soon appeared online pledging to cover "all types of local news for the cities of Flint and Detroit in Michigan." It resembles a slickly produced version of the old student newspaper site, albeit one that is heavy on regional and state news.

It still claims a strong connection to the university and describes the staff as a "team of young people, consisting of University of Michigan-Flint grads." Another page identifies them as "former University of Michigan-Flint students" who "are committed to helping current students and being the place where their problems will be heard."

But with almost no campus coverage, readers might be left wondering: what exactly is this thing?

University officials confirm it is definitely not a student newspaper and has no connection to UM-Flint. It also appears to be misrepresenting its ties to alumni.

What it does have are many of the characteristics of an automated site that pulls stories from legitimate news sources; quickly scrambles and rewrites them using artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots; and publishes them under a different byline. In the process, it generates programmatic advertising revenue. Such robo-sites are a cheap

and easy way to repurpose the work of journalists to turn a profit, and they are proliferating online.

"It is unclear how to describe this new practice, including whether articles rewritten using AI constitute 'original content,'" write Jack Brewster, Macrina Wang and Coalter Palmer in a 2023 investigation by NewsGuard, a company that tracks online misinformation. "At best, it could be called 'efficient aggregation.' At worst, it might be seen as 'turbocharged plagiarism.' Whatever it is called — and courts are likely ultimately to decide — never before have sites had the ability to rewrite articles created by others virtually in real time, and in a manner that can often be difficult to detect."

Brewster details just how simple it is to get an AI generated site up and running in a recent Wall Street Journal story. He easily hired a developer to build a site dedicated to a U.S. Senate race in Ohio for about \$100. In two days it was capable of churning out thousands of articles with very precise parameters, along with headlines, photos and eye-pleasing graphics. He likened the process to ordering a meal on Uber Eats.

The new Michigan Times site promises to "strive to be the voice of the locals," but it's tough to figure out just who is trying to give residents a platform. Despite claiming to be UM-Flint graduates, there is no record of anyone with the same name as three of the staff members in the masthead — including the top editor — ever attending or graduating from the university, according to Robert King, director of Marketing and Communications at UM-Flint.

One of the names does match the name of a student who completed some coursework in the early nineties and another matches a student who graduated from UM-Flint in 2015, according to King. But it's unclear if those former students are the same people listed in the Michigan Times masthead, and staffers of the student newspaper from those times were unfamiliar with the names.

The site's IP address — the unique identifying number assigned to every device connected to the internet — is hidden behind a service which prevents malicious users from attacking and shutting down the site. It's an increasingly common practice, but the security measure also means you can't identify the server hosting the website, which could reveal the owner.

Likewise, the domain name registration is private, with no ownership information available. All contact information refers back to "Domains By Proxy," a service that masks personal

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## Digital Divide ...

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contact information. Many domains are private; it is often the default setting at registration. But many news organizations, such as the New York Times and National Public Radio (NPR), do not anonymize their domain information in the interest of transparency.

Attempts to clarify these discrepancies with the publication — or verify if any of the listed staff members actually exist — were unsuccessful. There is no phone number listed, and there was no response to more than a dozen requests sent to the only contact email on the site. There are no comment options on stories to offer feedback or ask questions. There are no X, Facebook, Instagram or other social media accounts linked to the site. This lack of information is rare for news organizations, which typically work to make interaction with the public as easy as possible.

Unusually, there are also no credits for any of the images on the site. The stories are a mix of copied and rewritten press releases and variations of stories that first appeared on other news sites without credit to the original author or publication. Instead, all stories carry the byline of a listed Michigan Times staffer.

A February 28 article by James Hamilton in the Michigan Times on the death of controversial Flint City Councilman Eric Mays, for example, closely mirrors the content of a story that ran two days earlier by Steve Carmody, a reporter for Michigan Public, the NPR affiliate in Ann Arbor. While the wording is slightly different, the sources, quotations, and information are identical. There is no new reporting in the Times version, which even links back to Carmody's story in a quotation from Mays' lawyer.

Vincent Duffy, the news director at Michigan Public, said he has dealt with numerous online publications who lift stories without permission. Typically, he simply contacts them and asks them to remove the unauthorized

material.

"This is the first time we've run into something where there's not even anyone to contact to say, 'hey cut it out,'" he said. "All media outlets, especially local, are facing challenging economic times. It doesn't help us if other people steal our content and claim it as their own."

A story on a Detroit police captain who was suspended after allegedly choking his wife follows a similar pattern. Steve Neavling broke the story on the morning of January 12 in Detroit Metro Times. Later that day, the Michigan Times ran what appears to be a rewritten version of the story by Madison Hicks with no new information. (This time the article did attribute a single quote to Neavling's reporting and link back to his original article.) Neavling checked in with his key sources for the story and none had been contacted by the Michigan Times.

"The frustrating part is that I did the original reporting, and then out of nowhere this poorly written story appears without anything new," said Neavling, a veteran investigative reporter who previously worked for the Detroit Free Press and Motor City Muckraker. "It's such a difficult time in journalism right now. People are losing trust, and now you have these AI generated stories that are going to erode trust even further. That really concerns me."

Neaveling points out that there's a disclaimer on the Michigan Times site that is highly problematic for any news organization striving to project trustworthiness. But it just may be the most clear-cut content on the site:

"The Michigan Times does not make any warranties about the completeness, reliability and accuracy of this information. Any action you take upon the information you find on this website...is strictly at your own risk." ●

*Gordon Young is a San Francisco-based journalist who grew up in Flint. He is the author of *Teardown: Memoir of a Vanishing City*, a book about the past, present, and future of Vehicle City.*

## Reclaiming the Name

By Gordon Young

UM-Flint students may have to come up with a new name if they ever want to relaunch the Michigan Times or restore access to the digital archive of past stories.

It is unlikely the university could raise trademark issues over the use of the Michigan Times name by another entity because it let the domain name lapse and the original student newspaper is no longer publishing.

"The thing with a trademark is that it must be used," Mike Hiestand, senior legal counsel at the Student Press Law Center, said in an email. "If a trademark is not actively being used it lapses, and those who had previously benefited from it will have no legal standing to challenge someone who takes it."

A legal claim of fraud or misrepresentation is also unlikely because the new publication is not trying to pass itself off as the old student newspaper, even though it claims to be run by UM-Flint graduates.

"Unfortunately, unless someone connected to these programs feels the need to protect or pay for their domains — just in case — there is little that can be done," Hiestand said.

UM-Flint is looking at alternative ways to get the archives back on the internet.

"It's frustrating to see the domain get taken over like this," said Scott Atkinson, a former Michigan Times faculty advisor and a member of the UM-Flint board that oversees student publications. "There's so much hard work that students put into the paper over the years and much of their work only exists online. The publications board is now trying to figure out how to best get the student work from the site published online elsewhere." ●

# Flint Book Review

## *Phil's Siren Song*

By Jan Worth-Nelson

Just to get it on the table right up front, I'm pretty crazy about Flint native Tim Lane's new novel, "Phil's Siren Song."

I know, I know: another book about a tribe of 20-something blue-collar Flint underachievers — this time in the 80s — straggling from one beloved downtown hangout to another, coming and going from attempted romances and the halls of academe, getting drunk and sometimes drugged up on Flint's east side? No thanks.

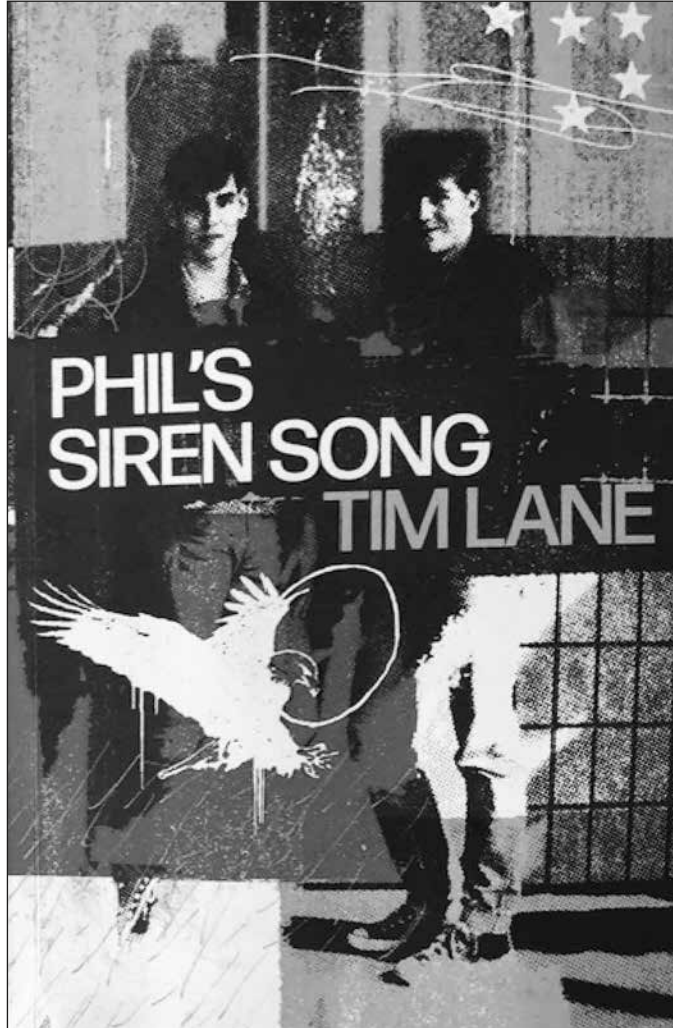
Regardless of what resistance you might have toward another Flint quasi-memoir, you should read this book. The writing is so good, the setting so vivid, the characters so well drawn, and the laughs on almost every page redeeming of the heartbreak, that I really want to invite you to take it in and savor it.

You'll find a buffet of plot lines about the local and national music scene, about struggles with cultural identity, dashed romance, class differences, family dysfunction and the resilience of a whole generation of kids who are now edging past middle age.

The story is told from the perspective of 20-ish Phil McCormick, who lives on Stone Street with a downtown music impresario named Joe, a genial enforcer and one of the grownups, it seems, within the tribe. Phil is halfheartedly taking classes at UM - Flint and working as a manager at Ruggero's at the former Windmill Place. He is also selling pills (which he refers to as "candy") at fictionalized venues like "El Oasis" and the former Rusty Nail.

While Phil is described as a "ladies man" on the book jacket, inside the story he's more often a "horn dog." Yet what could be inane disparaged in

some instances as political incorrectness is not so simple. Phil both loves and is sheepishly intimidated by women.



A copy of "Phil's Siren Song" by Tim Lane.

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

And the women of "Siren's Song" are formidable, generally running the show, calling out Phil's bullshit, and mocking him genially as a "doofus" or "goon boy."

A recurring theme is Phil's love of the waitresses at Thoma's, a diner very like the late, iconic Angelo's, where much of the story's action takes place.

"The waitresses are pure and lovely and tough: mothers, daughters, girlfriends, grandmothers," Phil declares. "I want to believe that what you

see at Thoma's is what you get in Flint, and if given the chance these women could save all of us."

Other characters include the mysterious Nigel, a reclusive poet and chess master whose work seems to fascinate his cohort; and Karen, a love interest who never quite falls for Phil despite romantic walks through Burroughs and Pierce Parks, a reverent visit to the Bray Gallery in the Flint Institute of Arts, and many other locales you will recognize.

But the focus of Phil's preoccupation is Stuart Page, or Stu, the main character of Lane's first novel, "Your Silent Face."

I'm relieved that the perspective of the story in "Phil's Siren Song" lifts away from Stu himself. In "Your Silent Face," Page, a seriously troubled kid, was found alcoholically blacked out on so many bathroom floors that I began to lose patience. It was just too dark and repetitive.

Here though, the character of Phil offers Lane a chance for a three-dimensional development of Stu, who struggles with his supposed Native American heritage throughout "Siren Song."

This is a return to a theme from the first book and a central theme for Lane himself,

whose own grandfather was native. Stu's grandfather "looked" native, was supposedly raised on the reservation and sometimes donned a headdress and smoked an Indian pipe, sitting wordlessly in his bungalow on the East Side. But Stu is red-haired and nobody seems to buy his lineage. What does it mean? Is he Indian or not?

Also, as in Lane's first novel, the importance of music underlies everything — offering community, solace,

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## Siren Song ...

(Continued from Page 13)

meaning, and joy to the often untethered characters. I confess that during that era I didn't go much beyond The Talking Heads and Laurie Anderson, so many of the musical references escaped me, but as readers we are strongly invited into the cultural and personal resonance of the bands and musicians of Lane's generation.

Despite revisiting some themes, this is a better book than Lane's first novel.

Structurally, I am grateful Lane indulged in chapter breaks this time around — a help to the reader trying to manage the flow of crises and emotions. His first book was unbroken, and that format annoyed me. (Of course in that case it could have been form and character working together, and here we may be seeing, structurally speaking, a reflection of Phil's relatively more orderly mind compared to Stu's.)

Also, this one's funny.

There are a hundred examples I

could note, many based around class differences and farcical incongruities, but one of my favorites is the discussion of what to name Stu's disastrous and barely competent band.

They pick "Haute Boys" to try to show how cool these very uncool boys are, and everybody has to practice how to say "haute" as opposed to "hot." But Stu isn't satisfied and suggests calling the group "Art Fags" instead, which was so Stu that I laughed out loud. (Fortunately, he is roundly voted down.)

Lane, 56, now of Lansing, long married, and with two grown kids, grew up in a variety of East Side venues. He started his education as a kindergartner at the recently demolished Washington Elementary, but for the rest of his K-12 years, he was a Catholic school student at the former St. Mary's and Powers High School.

As a blue collar kid, he said he felt "a bit like an outsider in a high school full of many affluent kids." He praises his Powers teachers, including Rick Morse and Mary Frillici, who "created safe havens" and introduced him to great books, films, essays, and poetry.

Of "Phil's Siren Song," Lane explained that his "Flint 70s and 80s experience was a mashup of Catholicism and Reaganomics, tenderness and violence, humanism and racism, loyalty and classism, ups and downs, silent love and silent hardship, family and friends and enemies, extremism and ignorance, encouragement and discouragement, freedom and repression.

"So many juxtaposed isms," he continued over email. "It takes novels and documentaries and songs and poetry and journalism and art to get at it. It was such a complex experience. I've always wanted to understand it, capture it and showcase it."

I won't give away the ending, but it's worthwhile to plunge into Lane's attempt to capture all this history — perhaps demonstrating the audacity only an East Side kid can muster.

Did he succeed?

As Lane suggests, Flint eludes simple understanding — acknowledging its complexity and contradictions with respect often missing from the city's many insulting fly-over and drop-in characterizations. But at the end of the day, I'm reminded of what somebody famous once said, that the essence of love is attention. If that's true, Lane's vivid, compassionate, complex work is indeed a gift of love to his unforgettable hometown. ●



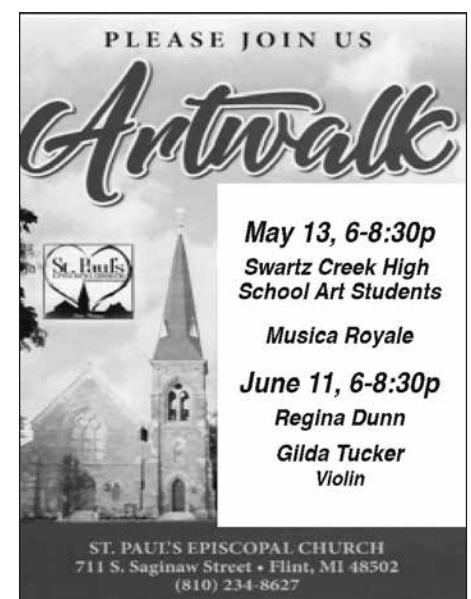
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## ***Village Life ...***

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they need to move through the body and be released, I try to think of the word “emotion” like e-MOTION for that reason. I wasn’t allowing my emotions to move through me. I was suppressing them, ignoring them, numbing them. I was literally scared to share my feelings, scared someone might label me as having depression or anxiety.

### **We grow through life challenges**

By the time I had my twins in October 2020, I was fully practicing “fake it til’ you make it,” so to speak.

My unaddressed sadness and anxiety was growing, going from occasional aches to a deep, prolonged grief. I did not feel like myself. I was functional, though, and seemed to “pass” as a “regular” human being in society. Or at least I thought I had everyone convinced.

But inside I was beginning to shut down.

It’s still hard to put into words the way I was feeling. Everything was just too much to handle. I could not stand to hear any bad news or stories. I had to take a break from social media. I had to dang near stop listening to any ads, the radio, any podcasts discussing pop culture. I would just feel really overstimulated by everything. I felt very sensitive and, frankly, like I was losing my mind.

I was never diagnosed with pre- or postpartum anxiety or depression or anything, but I know the major shift in my hormones also contributed to the way I was experiencing my life at the time.

I wasn’t getting any sleep, definitely not eating properly or enough, and not addressing or allowing myself to go through any of my emotions or feelings that were coming up.

Sometimes, it was hard to even sit through my children telling me about their day at school. Each story, every small incident they encountered, any small question, was like standing in line for that roller coaster for the first time. My heart racing, holding my breath, I

could feel the hair on the back of my neck stand up. I could feel the knot in my stomach. And they were just telling me about their day!

My anxiety and sadness were beginning to be overwhelming and ongoing. Even when I was resting, my mind wasn’t at rest. It was in overdrive. Every conversation, every toddler meltdown, each unexpected schedule change, every teenage eye roll, everything and everyone was just too much.

I became almost a shell of myself, a robot. I was going through the motions of life, but I was not really there. I had begun to dissociate and detach myself from my feelings.

Trigger Warning: this is when I started having suicidal ideations. The thoughts would cross my mind every once in a while at first, but they grew more frequent over the course of a year.

I noticed how comfortable I was in making plans to commit suicide, feeling more and more like it would give me peace of mind. Some days it was so hard to just feel good about existing. At this point though, my main thought was still on the impact it would have on my children and family.

My mind was so dark, so negative, I began to start considering how I would do it. Slowly convincing myself that my children and family would be okay, maybe even better off. I mean, I had to consider how my reactions to my anxiety were affecting them. I used this logic to help ease my thoughts about the impact it would have.

My idea of how I would do it came as I was taking the kids to school one day: the bridge we passed on our daily drive. I noticed the water under the bridge always seemed to be choppy and have a pretty strong current, and the bridge itself didn’t seem to have any barriers that I would get caught up on if I jumped. After dropping the kids off, I went back the way I came, but this time I pulled over. I put my hazards on and took inventory. Was there going to be anything I’d have to climb over? Was it a straight shot into the water?

Pulling away that day, I finally felt a sense of peace and autonomy. I’ll admit

that having a plan made me feel like I had control over my life for the first time in a long time.

### **We glow through life transitions**

After taking inventory at the bridge, I decided to just say out loud how I was feeling. I felt like I had nothing to lose, and I was pretty sure my family was beginning to think something was going on with my mental health anyway.

At the time, I thought it would be so hard. I had built up so much apprehension around it, and I’d felt embarrassed, weak, and ashamed for having mental health issues and suicidal thoughts.

But once I reached out and told those close to me what I was struggling with, it felt like such a relief. Like I had just gotten off that roller coaster instead of standing in line for it with my heart endlessly racing.

My doctor started me on a low-dose anti-anxiety medicine, which helped give me space to gain some clarity and respond to, instead of reacting to, my anxiety.

That space and clarity allowed me to get back into my personal meditation practices, check in with myself, and incorporate my practices throughout my day. (I’m not advocating for medication or meditation or anything like that. I’ve done both. I do both.)

So, in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, I hope that we all check in with ourselves and be honest with ourselves about what’s really there.

I’m so intentional now about observing my motions, taking time to feel, being honest with myself about my feelings, and honoring when I need to rest (and actually taking the time to do so).

Admiring Maya Angelou’s quote while also reflecting on my mental health journey, I’ve realized it doesn’t matter what stage of metamorphosis I’m in: we can transition between caterpillar and butterfly hundreds of times in our lifetimes, as we continue to go, grow, and glow. ●

## Village Life

# We Go, We Grow, We Glow: A Reflection on My Mental Health Journey

By Canisha Bell

*“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty...”*  
– Marguerite Johnson aka Maya Angelou

**Editor’s Note: The following article contains detailed mentions of suicidal ideation. Please proceed with care, and if you or someone you know is experiencing thoughts of suicide, help is available from the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by calling or texting 988, or by reaching out to Genesee Health Systems’ 24-hour crisis line by calling (810) 257-3740 or texting FLINT to 741741.**

**M**ay is Mental Health Awareness Month, and I find myself reflecting on my own mental health journey as it relates to that Maya Angelou quote.

I consider writing a Village Life column about my experience, going back and forth in my mind, nervous about my feelings of vulnerability in writing about such a sensitive time in my life. After all, so far I’ve only written news-focused articles for EVM, intentionally avoiding such a personal narrative.

But ever since the thought popped into my mind to share my own mental health story, I kept hearing and seeing references to butterflies, to that Maya Angelou quote I number among my favorites. So, I figured all those butterflies must be my sign to just do it.

And while I’m not quite sure which stage of “change” I’m in on my path toward becoming a butterfly — caterpillar? chrysalis? — I do know I’m much closer to beauty and understanding than I was just a few years ago.



(Photo by Yuichi Kageyama via Unsplash)

### We go through life changes

Do you remember the feeling you had standing in line for a roller coaster for the first time? Or let’s say you’re just driving along the expressway, going with the flow of traffic, and after rounding a curve, you’re met with a wall of red brake lights and stopped vehicles — you slam on your brakes just in time to avoid hitting the car in front of you. You’re on high alert, a little frazzled, but slowly your nervous system returns to a state of stability after the ride or the traffic clears...

That’s the best way I can describe my experience with anxiety. When I’m feeling anxious, I feel like I’m next in line for that roller coaster, or I just barely avoided a car accident.

I began to really notice my anxiety and depression in 2020, when I cycled

between mostly feeling anxious or extremely sad, with a few good moments of life sprinkled in between.

The pandemic seems to have had that effect on a lot of us. (I notice this when I strike up a conversation during a work event or after a meeting, read a blogpost, listen to a podcast or even just catch a snippet of a random conversation between others. Everyone seems to be going through something and just casually sharing stories of trauma — maybe without even considering that’s what it actually is.)

While the pandemic in general was very difficult to navigate, I’d say my pregnancy with my twins is what really exacerbated my mental health symptoms during that time.

I noticed I was feeling anxious a lot, being pregnant in what seemed like uncertain times. My school-aged kids were now schooling from home, and I was also working from home — a major shift in schedule and routine. I was constantly worrying if the twins were getting enough nutrients since I was always so sick and barely eating due to hyperemesis gravidarum — a medical term for severe nausea and vomiting during pregnancy.

The condition not only took the fun out of everything for me, it left me with this deep sense of sadness, and I felt ashamed to admit I was not really enjoying this time in my life. So, I just kept my feelings to myself, and, honestly, I just tried to ignore them.

But the thing about emotions is

*(Continued on Page 15)*