

East Village

Magazine

June 2024

Photograph By

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Commentary

A primer for the August primary: Know your ballot, and be sure to vote!

By Paul Rozycki

While so much attention has been on the November election between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, Michigan's August primary may be just as critical to determining who will govern us in the next few years.

Because our primary takes place in August — when many are thinking of SPF rather than GDP — the turnout for primary elections is usually much lower than for fall's general election. That's unfortunate because in many areas of the state where one party is dominant, the winners of the primary election tend to decide who wins in the general.

So, in the hope of seeing you at the polls this summer (or turning in an absentee ballot before hitting the beach) here's a look at the candidates running for the Democratic and Republican parties on the national, state and local levels, as well as the proposals and nonpartisan candidates in our area this August.

The U.S. Congress

U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow and U.S. Representative Dan Kildee, both Democrats, will be retiring this term, making area congressional races more competitive than ever with no incumbents running.

With the party balance so close in both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House, Michigan elections could play a key role in deciding which party controls the

next congress.

U.S. Senate

Running to fill Senator Stabenow's seat in the U.S. Senate are Democrats Beydoun Nasser, Hill Harper, and Elissa Slotkin and Republicans Justin Amash, Sherry O'Donnell, Sandy Pensler and Mike Rogers. Former U.S. Representative Peter Meijer, one of the few Republicans who voted to impeach Donald Trump, withdrew from the race in April.

The winners for each party will face each other in November.

U.S. House

Flint falls within the state's 8th Congressional District, which includes most of Genesee County, all of Saginaw and Bay counties, and portions of Midland and Tuscola counties.

When Kildee announced he was not running for reelection in November 2023, it meant that for the first time since 1962 there would not be a Kildee name on the ballot in the Flint area.

Running to replace him are Democrats Matt Collier, Kristen McDonald Rivet, Pamela Pugh and Republicans Mary Draves, Anthony J. Hudson, and Paul Junge.

Flint Mayor Sheldon Neeley also announced a bid, but he withdrew from the race in late April citing that he was "persuaded" he had more he wanted "to accomplish here at home."

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Cover: A late May view down Saginaw Street.

(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)



Photo of the Month: Mayapples in the woods. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Five years later, Flint’s Every Nation Church remains committed to ‘racial reconciliation’

By Harold C. Ford

Five years after the merger of two Flint congregations – one predominantly white and located in the center of Flint, the other a Black congregation that left its church home near Flint’s north side – the co-pastors of Every Nation Assembly of God Church remain committed to the union.

“We never look back,” said Every Nation Co-Pastor Michael Stone, who led his congregation’s departure from its former Beecher, Mich. house of worship, Power of God Ministries, to their new home at Every Nation.

“Racial reconciliation has been a big part of mine and my wife’s focus here,” added Every Nation Co-Pastor Tom Mattiuzzo. “It hasn’t been everybody’s cup of tea.”

Until 2019, Mattiuzzo was the sole pastor of the former Riverside Tabernacle Assembly of God Church in Flint’s Central Park neighborhood — now Ev-

ery Nation Church. The building is sandwiched between the city’s downtown district and University of Michigan-Flint campus to the west and Flint’s Cultural Center and Mott Community College to the east.

“I [became] so tired in this town of going to all-white funerals and all-Black funerals,” Mattiuzzo told East Village Magazine (EVM) in late May. “We’re all going to heaven together, we believe, but yet we can’t worship together and serve together.”

Segregated Sundays in a segregated city

In 1964 American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. famously observed that “11 a.m. Sunday is our most segregated hour.”

His observation remains largely true today.

A 2016 report by Equal

Justice Initiative (EJI) entitled “Racial Segregation in the Church” found that “86 percent of American churches lack any meaningful racial diversity.”

A May 2023 Axios report that polled 5,872 adults reconfirmed EJI’s finding: “The vast majority of U.S. churchgoers ... report that they belong to congregations where most people are of their race or ethnicity...”

A visit to local houses of worship in Genesee County would likely confirm the same findings. After all, Flint is still evolving from its status as one of the most segregated U.S. cities of the 20th century. As Andrew Highsmith wrote in his book, “Demolition Means Progress”:

“By the close of the 1930s, the widespread use of restrictive covenants [in real estate] had helped make Flint the third most segregat-

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ed city in the nation, surpassed only by Miami, Florida, and Norfolk, Virginia.”

“Southern city”

Mattiuzzo discovered vestiges of Flint’s racially segregated history when he and his wife migrated from Buffalo, N.Y. to Flint in 1992.

“I was surprised by the ‘southernness’ of Flint, by the southern culture of Flint ... the racial equations in Flint,” Mattiuzzo said. “I didn’t foresee that Flint would be such a southern city.”

That included the Flint church – Riverside Tabernacle – that hired Mattiuzzo as its new pastor.

“Riverside Tabernacle was exclusively white at that time. There were no Black families in the church at all and most of our families didn’t live in Flint any more,” he said. “They lived in Grand Blanc ... Swartz Creek ... Davison ... Fenton ... Clio. They would come pulling in Sunday morning, lock their doors, run into the church, run back out of the church, and lock their doors and get out [of Flint] as fast as they could. For some years we were pretty much a suburban church meeting in downtown Flint.”

Planning for change

“If we don’t change, we don’t grow,” wrote the American author and journalist Gail Sheehy. “If we don’t grow, we aren’t really living.”

About 25 years ago, according to Mattiuzzo, Riverside Tabernacle began planning to change the

incongruent relationship between the urban setting of its building and its white, mostly suburban membership.

“We started leaning into the city [of Flint] more,” Mattiuzzo recalled. “We started seeing some African American adults ... coming to the church ... [who] came in and saw people who looked like them, who were part of our church family and well respected.”

Mattiuzzo and his church



Michael Stone (left) and Tom Mattiuzzo (right) are Co-Pastors of Every Nation Assembly of God Church in Flint, Mich.

(Photo by Harold C. Ford)

leadership team helped grow African American membership at Riverside Tabernacle to about 30 percent.

“As we did that, it wasn’t everybody’s cup of tea,” Mattiuzzo repeated. “But there are lots of suburban, white churches they can go to.”

“We became friends”

Later in the 1990s, Stone’s then-Power of God Ministries and Mattiuzzo’s then-Riverside Tabernacle began partnering.

“We have, over the years, partnered with Pastor Tom, using his facility [Riverside Tabernacle] ... the fellowship hall or the sanctuary,” Stone explained. “We became knowledgeable of each other; we became friends.”

Over time, the partnership deepened.

“I would shut down my church once a month,” Stone explained, when his congregation would participate in Sunday morning worship service at Riverside instead.

Mattiuzzo acknowledged the sacrifice made by the Power of God Ministries congregation as part of the merger.

“It takes a lot,” he said, “because when you close up your own service ... that costs money [as] you don’t get the offering you get in our own church.”

Creating “a church that looked like heaven”

The pastors’ partnership eventually morphed into talks of merger.

According to Stone, the idea of merger was initially promoted by Beau Norman, one of his three personal pastors.

After a lunch conversation with Mattiuzzo, Norman advised Stone to connect with him.

“You and Pastor Tom need to get together ... maybe you guys can hook up,” Stone recalled Norman saying.

Two years of inaction followed until Norman asked Stone if he’d been in touch with Mattiuzzo, which spurred Stone and Mattiuzzo to start serious talks about a merger.

“That’s where it began,” Stone recalled. “We sat there and talked about, ‘How could we make this work? ... Wouldn’t it be nice if we created a church that looked like heaven?’”

Norman recommended a Canadian model of co-pastoring that

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divided areas of responsibility for managing a church into “pillars.” Stone and Mattiuzzo agreed to manage three pillars each as co-pastors, with each pastor having input on the other’s pillars, too.

A consultant assisted the newly-created Every Nation Church during the initial phases of the merger, according to the co-pastors. The consultant met separately with stakeholders at Power of God Ministries and Riverside Tabernacle.

“He [the consultant] was really important,” said Alan Lynch, a former member of Riverside Tabernacle and current member of Every Nation Church.

The consultant told merger aspirants “it’s like a marriage.” Linda Wortham, former Power of God Ministries member and current Every Nation Church member, told EVM.

“You got to learn how to work it together,” she recalled the consultant saying.

Challenges

“We’ve [Riverside Tabernacle’s congregation] had to accommodate and make room for other ways of doing things,” Mattiuzzo said of the merger. “They’ve [the Power of God congregation] also had to accommodate and make room for other ways of doing things.”

Mattiuzzo added that the diminishment of pastoral autonomy has been a major trial for both he and Stone in the merger.

“One of the challenges we’ve faced is the reality ... neither one of us makes unilateral decisions,” Mattiuzzo said. “All of us are less now than we were ... in terms of church decisions, but we’ve both become more,” he added.

Stone and Mattiuzzo ultimately agreed upon a 50-50



Every Nation Assembly of God Church in Flint, Mich.

(Photo by Harold C. Ford)

formula for sharing of the pulpit on Sunday mornings, with exceptions allowed for guest ministers and special occasions.

“We try to come into every day without ego,” Mattiuzzo said. “Every decision, we come to each other, we discuss it ... the decisions are made together.”

A second significant challenge of merger was crafting church governance documents, namely Every Nation’s new constitution and bylaws. That process, undertaken by a 20-person board with equal representation from both former congregations, is now more than 90 percent completed, the co-pastors said. Further, nametags and added signage at the Every Nation campus have helped resolve issues of unfamiliarity.

The result?

“Together with these beautiful people,” Stone said of his and Mattiuzzo’s congregants, “we’re growing a church.”

“It’s going to work”

Lynch told EVM that he and his wife had been church-shopping for eight months after moving to Flint from Minnesota.

“We found Riverside because ... in the first sermon,” Lynch recalled, “Pastor Tom said, ‘We’ll know that

we’re a church in the City of Flint when we look like the City of Flint.’”

I was praying and I thought, ‘God wouldn’t it be great if you could bring a Black and a white church together?’” Lynch recollected. “Two months later, Pastor Tom said Pastor Stone had approached him and said, ‘I think we can do something better together.’”

“In my mind, it was a done deal,” Stone said of those early discussions. “We’re going to merge, and it’s going to work.”

Wortham had followed her son, a musician, into the Power of God Ministries, where she evolved into the role of praise team leader.

Wortham’s biracial mother, whom she reverently remembers as “my foundation,” helped her to reflect deeply about the possibility of merger with a church that was about 70 percent white at the time.

She’s the one that made me think about it,” Wortham reflected.

“Is this my church?” Wortham said she wondered at the start of the merger. “But we worked that out really quick.”

She said she came to think, “This is your church, feel at home, do what you have to do.”

Ultimately, Wortham said, “the merger was a good thing.”

“What heaven will look like”

It was Mattiuzzo’s turn in the pulpit on May 19, 2024, Pentecost

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Sunday, when this writer visited Every Nation Church.

The church's large, modern, half-circle sanctuary featured the flags of 18 nations extending outward from the second-level balcony, and the 100 or so parishioners — not counting youth groups and others elsewhere in the church — frequently rose from their seats, sang, and swayed gently to the first 30 minutes of service led by the Praise and Worship Team.

Many, with arms outstretched, softly uttered "Amen" and "Thank you, Jesus."

Mattiuzzo and Stone were both casually attired. "We're not trying to be imperial," Mattiuzzo later said, adding, "sometimes a suit and tie can be a barrier."

Aside from what seemed a well-delivered, smoothly run service, notable that Sunday morning was Mattiuzzo's decades-long vision — "We'll know that we're a church in the City of Flint when we look like the City of Flint" — seem-

ing rather realized, too.

In terms of race and age, the people in Every Nation's pews more closely reflected the demographic diversity of greater Flint than any other recalled by this writer.

"You really cannot find something completely comparable to what we're trying to do," Mattiuzzo would say later about the merger that led to that experience.

"We think that this thing is going to explode ... going to grow, going to be a model," said Stone.

In closing out the pastors' interview with EVM, Mattiuzzo summed up a chief success of the merger in his estimation.

"More and more the Power of God [Ministries] people are accepting of me as a pastor, equal to Pastor Stone," he said. "And I know, more and more, the Riverside [Tabernacle] people are more accepting of Pastor Stone as equal to me."

However, as both senior pastors approach retirement, the durability of their merger may be tested.

"Neither one of us want to

be doing this five years from now," Mattiuzzo said.

Still, even with the challenges, current and ahead, Stone concluded: "This is a church that probably ... look[s] like what heaven will look like." ●

The Every Nation Assembly of God Church is located at 429 Chavez Drive. Service and event information can be found on the church's website, everynationflint.com.

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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."

Commentary ...

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State House of Representatives

Aside from federal races, primary voters will also nominate and elect the 110 members of the Michigan State House of Representatives in Lansing. State representatives serve two year terms, and Genesee County voters nominate candidates in seven districts.

67th District (Northeast Genesee County): Democrat Anissa Buffin is unopposed and will face either Republican Sherri Cross, Phil Green or Sherry Marden in November.

68th District (East/Southeast Central Genesee County): Both incumbent Democrat Tim Sneller and Republican David W. Martin are unopposed for their party nominations and will face each other in November.

69th District (West Central Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat Jasper Ryan Martus and Republican Patrick Duvendeck are both unopposed and will face each other in November.

70th District (City of Flint): Incumbent Democrat Cynthia R. Neeley faces Michael Floyd Clack for the Democratic Party nomination. The winner will face Republican Rob Waskoviak who was unopposed for his party nomination.

71st District (Southwest Genesee County): Democrat Mark Zacharda is unopposed for his party nomination and will face either Republican Brian BeGole or Kevin Rathbun in the general election.

72nd District (South Central Genesee County): Both Democrat John Dolza and incumbent Republican Mike Mueller are unopposed for their party nominations and will run in November.

97th District (Northwest Genesee County): Democrat Mark Putnam and Republican Matthew Bierlein are unopposed and will face each other in the November election.

Genesee County Elections

All Genesee County officials are elected to four year terms of office. Here's whose expected on the August primary ballot:

Prosecuting Attorney: Though no Republicans have filed to run, incumbent David Leyton is facing a challenge for the Democratic nomination from Trachelle C. Young.

Sheriff: Incumbent Democrat Christopher R. Swanson is unopposed for his party nomination and will face unopposed Republican Jeff Salzeider in November.

Clerk/Register of Deeds: Incumbent Domonique Clemons faces a challenge for the Democratic nomination from William E. Swanson. No Republican has filed to run.

Treasurer: Democrat F. Jack Belzer is running against Sam E. Muma for the party's nomination. No Republican has filed to run.

Drain Commissioner: Democrat incumbent Jeff Wright is unopposed and no Republican has filed to run.

Surveyor: Incumbent Democrat Kim R. Carlson is unopposed and no Republican has filed to run.

County Commission District 1 (Northeast City of Flint): Incumbent Democrat Delrico J. Loyd is unopposed for the nomination, and no Republican has filed.

County Commission District 2 (North Central City of Flint): Incumbent Democrat Charles Winfrey is opposed by Holly Wilson for the party nomination. No Republican has filed to run.

County Commission District 3 (East City of Flint and Burton): Incumbent Democrat Ellen J. Ellenburg is opposed by Drew Marsh and Brian Ashley for the party nomination. Gary L. Goetzinger and Sandra L. O'Dell are seeking the Republican nomination.

County Commission District 4 (South Central Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat

Beverly Brown is unopposed for her party nomination. Republicans Steve Minnock and Michelle Sheeran are running for the Republican nomination.

County Commission District 5 (Southeast Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat James Avery is unopposed for his party nomination, as is Republican John C. Wellington.

County Commission District 6 (Southwest Genesee County): Republican incumbent Shaun Shumaker is unopposed for his party's nomination, as is Democrat Donna Anderson.

County Commission District 7 (Northwest Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat Martin L. Cousineau is unopposed for his party nomination and will run against Republican Jeff Salzeider in November. Republican Lutullus Penton withdrew from the race.

County Commission District 8 (Western Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat Dale K. Weighill is running against Joseph R.A. Karlichek for the party nomination. The winner will face Republican Dennis W. Cramer who is unopposed for his party nomination. Republican Rod Shumaker withdrew earlier.

County Commission District 9 (Northeast Genesee County): Democrats Mo A. Abo-neaj and Wendy Wolcott are competing for their party's nomination. Incumbent Michelle Davis, Brian K. Flewelling, and Daryl Simpson are all seeking the Republican nomination.

City of Flint Elections

City of Flint Ward 1 (Northwest Flint): A non-partisan primary election is being held to nominate candidates to finish the term of the late Eric Mays, which runs until Nov. 18, 2026. Appointed incumbent Leon El-Alamin is running against Liberty

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C. Bell, Carol McIntosh, Rosemary Morrow, John Billings and Cynthia Haynes. The top two candidates will compete in the November election.

City of Flint Ward 7 (East Central Flint): The August election will serve as a general election to complete a partial term ending on Nov. 19, 2026, once belonging to former Flint City Council President Allie Herkenroder. Incumbent appointee Candice Mushatt is running against JanMarie Arbor for the position.

Judicial Elections

There are several judicial elections on the August ballot as well. A number are unopposed. All terms are for 6 years.

Probate Court Judge: Incumbent Ariana E. Heath is unopposed.

2nd District Judge of Court of Appeals: Incumbent Adrienne Young is unopposed.

2nd District Judge of Court of Appeals Non-Incumbent: Two to be elected. Matthew Ackerman, Lisa Marie Neilson, Randy J. Wallace and Latoya Marie Willis are all seeking the position.

7th Circuit Judge of Circuit Court: Two positions to be elected. Both incumbents Elizabeth Kelly and Brian S. Pickell are unopposed. 7th Circuit Judge of Circuit Court (Non-Incumbent): Two to be elected. Mary Hood and Nancy Chinonis are unopposed.

67th District - 4th Division Judge of District Court (Non-Incumbent): One to be elected. K.C. Baran, Jeffrey Clothier, Elias Fanous, and Amanda Odette are running for the position.

67th District - 5th Division Judge of District Court: Two to be elected. Incumbents William Crawford and Herman Marable, Jr. are unopposed.

Township officers and Precinct delegates

Voters in Genesee County will also be nominating individuals for township offices in the county. They will also be electing precinct delegates to the local Democratic and Republican parties.

Ballot Proposals

There will be three county-wide proposals on the ballot.

The Genesee County Mass Transportation Authority Millage Renewal Proposal requests a 1.225 millage renewal for the purpose of providing a variety of public transportation services in Genesee County. If passed, the millage would restore an earlier levy after the millage was rolled back to 1.2095.

Senior Services Millage Renewal Proposal requests renewal of the .6852 millage to provide services to senior citizens in Genesee County.

A proposal for 9-1-1 system funding requests a levy of \$3.00 per month for landline, wireless and voice internet services to provide for enhanced 9-1-1 services for Genesee County.

In addition there will be ballot proposals for an Atlas Township Recreation millage, Clayton Township Fire Department, Flint Township fire safety and road millages, Montrose millages for fire safety and emergency equipment, City of Burton police millage, and a Byron area school sinking fund.

Early Voting

While August 6 is the official date for the primary election this year, registered voters can also cast their ballots early, either in-person or absentee. So, whatever your vacation plans may be, take the time to learn about the candidates and vote!

After all, the primary is of primary importance. ●



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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 June 1. It's a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our July issue, email info about your event to pisenber@gmail.com by June 20.

Foodie Commons

Wed. & Fri. Now - September, 11:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Community First Inc.'s food truck park is back for the summer. Stop by to order something delicious, listen to music, and support local businesses.

402 W. Court St., Flint

For more info visit communitiesfirstinc.org.

"Spring Awakening"

Wed thru Sun. June 7 -23

Winner of eight Tony Awards, this musical explores the journey from adolescence to adulthood through "an electrifying fusion of morality, sexuality, and rock & roll." in the Elgood Theatre. For mature audiences.

Flint Repertory Theatre

701 University Ave. Flint

For more info visit

thefim.org/event/spring-awakening or call 810-237-1530.

Flint City Bucks vs. Midwest United FC

Sat. June 8 at 7 p.m.

Flint's semi-professional men's soccer team will host Midwest United FC.

Tickets: \$5 for kids 12 and under, \$12 for adults, and \$18 for VIP.

Atwood Stadium

701 University Ave., Flint

For more info visit flintcitybucks.com.

3rd Annual Flint Pride Coloring Party

Tues. June 11 from 5 to 8 p.m.

Flint Handmade and Wellness Services are offering an, all ages, outdoor fundraiser for the Flint Pride Festival. The first 100 participants will also receive a FREE

coloring kit to use at the party and take home!

Tenacity Brewing

119 Grand Traverse, Flint

For more information, visit Flint Handmade's Facebook page.

Some Like It Hot

Thurs. June 13, at 7 p.m.

The classic film starring Marilyn Monroe, Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis will be shown at the historic downtown theater.

Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$2 for children.

Capitol Theatre

140 E. 2nd St., Flint

For more info visit tickets.thefim.org/somelikeithot.

Frog & Toad Night Hike

Sat. June 15 from 9 to 10 p.m.

this FREE event will teach the calls of native frog and toads. Then the staff at For-Mar will take visitors on a night hike to collect data for The Michigan Herp Atlas.

For ages 5 and up accompanied by an adult.

Pre-registration by June 16.

For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum

2142 N. Genesee Rd., Burton.

For more info visit

genesecountyparks.org

or call 810-736-7100.

Juneteenth Celebration @ Parkville

Max Brandon Park (3606 Dupont St.)

Wed. June 19 from noon to 4 p.m. The parade will be followed by an Afrobeats Party in downtown Flint's Riverbank Park. There are also a host of other Juneteenth activities happening from June 1-19. A listing can be found at sloanlongway.org/Juneteenth.

Open Mic Night at Totem Books

Fri. June 21 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Totem Books

602 W. Court St., Flint

For more info visit totembooksflint.com

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The Black Power Mixtape Concert featuring The Last Poets and special Guest Mama Sol

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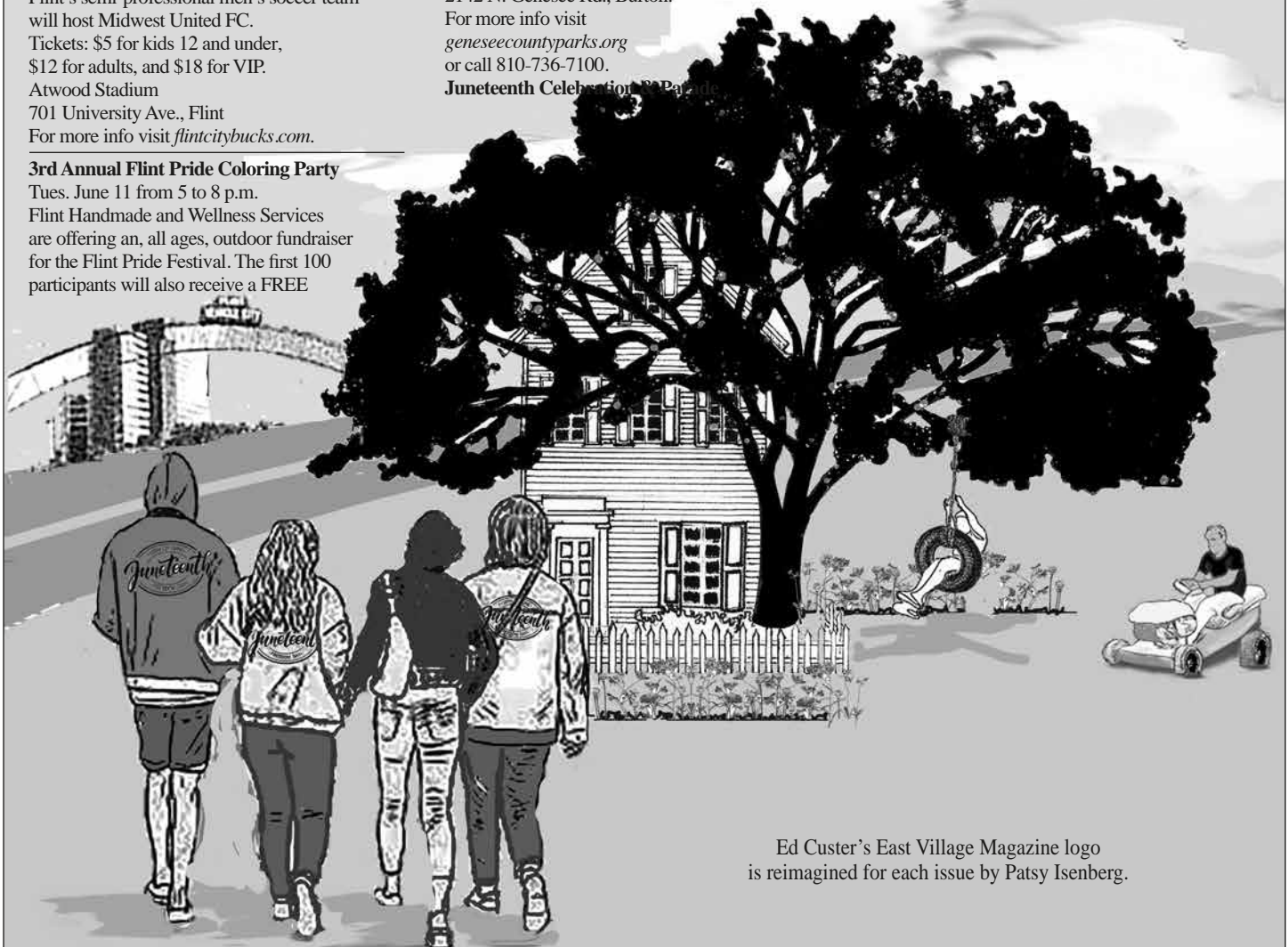
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Ed Custer's East Village Magazine logo is reimaged for each issue by Patsy Isenberg.

Flint Public Art Project is ready to put paint to paper with new mural book series

By Madeleine Graham

The Flint Public Art Project (FPAP) is launching a book series to showcase the hundreds of murals artists have painted on structures across the city since its founding over a decade ago.

“People have been requesting books of the murals,” Joe Schipani, former FPAP executive director, told East Village Magazine of why the nonprofit is pursuing the series.

While Schipani stepped down from his executive director role last year, he continues to be active on the FPAP board and works on some special projects, like the upcoming books.

According to Schipani, the series will feature three separate volumes.

The first will be titled “Flint Public Art Project Mural Project” and span 275 pages of mural photos and artists’ names; the second will be “Flint Public Art Project, Placemaking Through Murals” and feature behind-the-scenes stories of artists and their works; and the third book will be “Flint Public Art Project: Mural Poems,” which will be completed in coordination with Flint’s Southwestern Classical Academy, as the poetry portion of the FPAP’s work comes from the high school’s students.

As for the series’ sale, Schipani said FPAP would presell the books at \$50 each “through a crowdfunding site” that will be posted on the Flint Public Art Project’s website on June 15, 2024.

“As soon as we raise the money to sell them, Totem Books will carry them,” he explained of the nonprofit’s expected sales model. “Once we raise the funding to buy 1,000 copies and get them in,” he added, sales will also take place through Amazon.com.

Before moving to Mexico in 2023, Schipani estimates he hosted around 150 artists for FPAP at his former home in Flint’s Carriage Town neighborhood.

Those artists — who came from roughly 20 countries, including Belarus,



A mural by Flint artist Johnny Fletcher on the side of the former Flint City Hard Cider building in downtown Flint, Mich. (Photo by Kate Stockrahm)

Canada, Japan, Nigeria, Peru, and the United Kingdom, Schipani said — painted over 300 murals throughout the city of Flint and surrounding areas.

When asked about which murals he favors, he noted: “The hardest question I’m asked is to pick my favorite murals. It’s like asking to pick your favorite child, because each mural is not only beautiful, but they also have amazing memories and magical moments tied into them for me.”

However, Schipani was willing to mention a few pieces that remain notable to him: a mural by Bandit that depicts the progression of life, located at Big Gunz Tattoos on the corner of Davison Road and

Franklin Avenue, for one.

He also mentioned a mural by Malt; Johnny Fletcher’s mural on the former Flint Hard Cider building, which features a starry night background and a child in a makeshift robot costume and symbolizes the loss of imagination that today’s technology has sparked; Kevin Burdick’s bird and flower piece where MLK and Root St. meet downtown; and Aylo and Seca One’s mural on a former church at Gillespie and Buick Street.

Murals provide a way to give everybody a voice, Schipani said.

For those interested in touring FPAP’s murals in-person ahead of the book series’ release, the nonprofit has an ongoing partnership with PixelStix, which offers a map of current murals as well as a phone app that allows users to interact with the map and artworks. ●



At 136 years, Garland Street Literary Club returns to its origins

By Jan Worth-Nelson

In 1888, seven upper-class women, all neighbors in what was then considered one of Flint's most elegant neighborhoods, walked along leafy streets to an early afternoon gathering at 718 Garland. It was the home of Mrs. Sarah Durand, wife of a prominent local judge, George Durand.

The meeting was not just tea and crumpets. The women were intent on forming a club, and they got right down to business. That day, November 14, they handwrote a constitution.

Article I read, "The organization shall be called The Garland Street Literary Club. Its object shall be reading study and mutual improvement."

Remarkably, 136 years and many societal, cultural, and demographic changes later, the club still exists, making it the oldest continuously meeting women's group in Flint according to its historian, Mary Ann Cardani. (The St. Cecelia Society also started in 1888, she points out, but it was not a women's group).

Over time, some of the fancy houses disappeared, the club's original members died or moved on, and the neighborhood changed, so by the 1920s the group no longer met on Garland Street.

But, perhaps out of tradition and loyalty to the founders — and that late 1800s constitution — each succeeding generation of members kept the club's name.

On a recent Monday afternoon, a dozen current members came back to meet on Garland Street for the first time in 100 years.

The return was made possible by the emergence of Queens' Provisions,

a woman-owned wine and charcuterie shop that opened just last year at 421 Garland.

A woman-owned business was unheard of to the club's original charter members, who were known socially through their husbands' ventures.

Besides Judge Durand, for example, their husbands included John

theless limited by their status in life and "tired of knitting and crocheting — they wanted to expand their minds...to improve their knowledge."

Although it's now 2024, sitting with today's members, sunlight streaming over the charcuterie board, wine bottles, and easy chairs of Queens' Provisions, one can almost imagine that other era.

But things are clearly different today. Partly because the club has met exclusively during standard workday hours, the membership is almost all older, retired women — a silver-haired circle, noisy with frequent laughter and overlapping conversation.

They are mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers, aunts and great-aunts. The average age of the club's members

is mid-70s. Cardani is 80, and Michele Talarico, another member, is 75. Caroline Stubbs, member and retired hospice executive, is 74.

Talarico and Cardani both joined in 2013, and the current president of the Garland Street Literary Club, Caroline Boegner, joined in 2018.

Many told East Village Magazine they came on board because of family or neighborly connections. But significantly, unlike the women of the 1880s, they are distinguished not by their husbands, but by their own careers — in health care, education, law, social work — professions unthinkable for the club's founding members.

They say the club helps them stay connected and keep active minds.

"Once you retire, unless you make yourself visible, you become invisible," Talarico said. "When I come [to



From left to right, Ruth Goergen, Michele Talarico, Mary Ann Cardani, April Baer and Bobbie Goergen attend a meeting of the Garland Street Literary Club on May 13, 2024.

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

Hotchkiss, a manager for the Paterson Carriage Company; Dr. Luke Beagle; Zach Chase, a bookkeeper at the Crapo Lumber Company; William Hubbard, owner of a grocery store; Frank Jones, a hatter and travel agent; and Nell Randall, who ran a lumber and coal business.

As upper-class women, Cardani said, the club's founders could afford "help" in their homes and could leave for a few hours during the day. Yet they were almost wholly defined by their husbands, whose names — Dort, Hasselbring, Nash, and more — would later adorn Flint's streets and schools. In fact, early members were so defined by their husbands that finding out their own names (instead of "Mrs. William Hubbard," for example) was a research project of the club in recent years.

Cardani noted the Garland Street Literary Club founders were not academics, but intelligent women none-

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Literary Club ...

(Continued from Page 12)

meetings], I feel listened to, I feel valued. I know that I value every single woman in this group.”

The club has never had a male member, and no man has ever tried to join.

“We’re invisible. Why do they want to be invisible?” one member offered in wry explanation during the Queens’ meeting, soliciting laughter from the gathered ladies.

The club’s 13 current members say while their lives are radically different than the founding members’, they still cherish their memory and value the original goals and pleasures of each others’ company to read, discuss, and learn new things.

“Women are looking for something” in a polarized and often isolating age, Cardani said.

“There are not a lot of ways for women to be together and share their lives these days,” added Talarico, a retired educator and former director of youth health advocacy programs.

“The ladies are so interesting... they bring their stories, and their stories are different than my stories, but they’re interested in mine,” she said.

Barbara Mills, the club’s oldest current member at 86, is a retired teacher of science and English.

“Learning is my life,” she declared. “I love being around women who are inquisitive and who want to know things...that’s always been important to me.”

Mills recently presented a paper, roundly praised by other members, on Aleda Lutz, a little known World War II nurse who was killed in action.

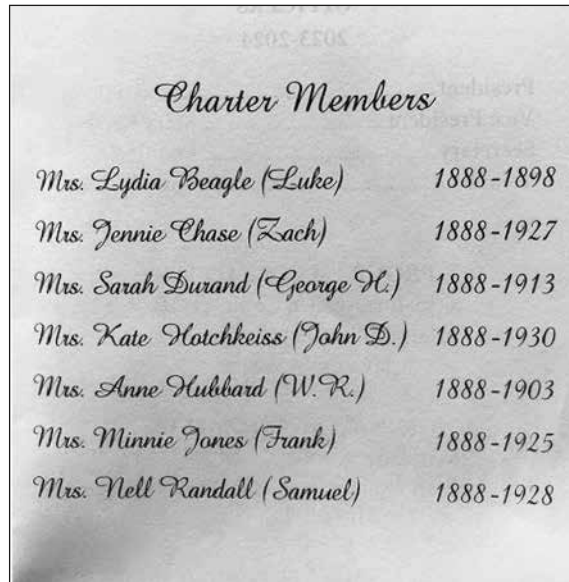
According to club rules, all members must present a research paper and host the group once every two years.

Originally, Cardani said, women presented on different countries of the world. Over the decades, though, topics have become much more varied — the club’s current theme, selected by group vote, is “Women Warriors and Peacemakers” — and the meetings have been held outside of members’ homes from

time to time.

Still, the group meets religiously at 1 p.m. on the second Monday of the month, and dues are \$10 per year. During the pandemic, members managed several Zoom gatherings, though Cardani said a few months ultimately had to be missed.

In 1988, the late Alice Lethbridge, a long-time Flint Journal reporter, wrote a history of the group for a University of Michigan-Flint archives publication.



The list of original Garland Street Literary Club members.

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

In the introduction to Lethbridge’s history, Marie S. Crissey noted that “since admission to members was by recommendation of active members, it was natural that new members similarly came from the community elite and represented the somewhat more ‘intellectual’ element. The fact that the Garland Street Literary Club was not purely a social club, but required that the members present a paper of some merit in at least alternate years, also formed an obstacle to some aspirants.”

The club, then, was “a product of its times and its setting. That it has survived a full century attests to its vitality, [and] is evidence that it has filled a needed role in the community...” she concluded.

Mary Jo Kietzman, an English professor at UM-Flint, is helping the

group consider its future, as members say they understand that if they are to survive they’ll have to recruit new women.

With several others, Kietzman is designing an “adjunct group” for younger and working women to reflect greater diversity. The adjunct group would meet in the evening and still pursue some of the group’s goals.

The club’s recent gathering was a meet-and-greet with some of those potential new members — though the youngest to attend was 56, and current members noted they are still aiming for more racial diversity.

Clara Blakely, the only woman of color to attend the meet-and-greet, said that’s at least a start.

“To have diversity you have to have intention,” she told East Village Magazine. “A lot of folks don’t want to go someplace where nobody else looks like them, but I don’t care.”

Kietzman and the club’s veteran members said they are paying attention and hope to make the next iteration of the club more welcoming to younger women and women of color.

“Self-education was a big deal in the 19th century and early 20th century America,” Kietzman said. “It was recently touted as one of the defining features of the good life in the Midwest.”

Noting that in a recent class, only two of her students had heard of Flint’s 1936-37 Sit-Down Strike, Kietzman said, “The question remains: what ought to be carried forward out of Flint’s history? There is so much at risk of being lost.”

“It is a big problem that we are losing civic associations and fraternal lodges,” she continued. “What is replacing them?”

The women of the Garland Street Literary Club hope their so-far remarkably durable history will provide one ongoing option.

Considering that the meeting at Garland Street was like “coming full circle,” with the club’s history, member Jeanette Mansour concluded, “We’re capable of looking at the past, but also looking forward.” ●

Flint Book Review: ‘Hollywood’ by Connor Coyne

By *Patty Duffy*

Connor Coyne’s 2024 novella, “Hollywood,” provides a window into the experience of a 20-something woman as she navigates life on the edge of self-discovery.

The story opens with Ophelia stepping off a Red Line train in a big midwestern city, ready to leave her struggles from the fictional Rust Belt town of Rockville behind her. But, nearly upon arrival, she loses both her roommate and her money.

Loneliness and the relentless beat of music playing upstairs drive Ophelia to a party in her new apartment building. As she makes her way through the diverse, raucous group of merrymaking strangers, Coyne offers snippets of conversation:

“You’re not from here?”

“Nope.”

“Me neither. I get that.”

“Most of us here are from somewhere else... My friend’s aunt was a serial killer.”

Ultimately, Ophelia gets drunk with the upstairs revelers who then take her to the shore of a lake where she’s sure she sees an enormous shark, bigger than life. Its splash soaks her clothes through, but will anyone believe her when she tells them what she witnessed?

In full disclosure: I attended an event at Totem Books where Coyne read the opening pages of “Hollywood,” and hearing that first scene convinced me to purchase a copy. I had to find out what happened to Ophelia.

Having now read the novella, described as “a new American myth” by publisher Lethe Press, I can confirm Ophelia is a character to cheer for. She represents the upheavals and reinventions that give women of all ages enduring strength.

In her reflections on her home in Rockville, “It wasn’t a matter of what had gone wrong. Rather nothing ever seemed to go right.” She recalls a former life that helped her make the decision to stay in this foreign, much more urban setting.

“She’d run away herself a few times as a kid... her parents... were always leaving her and her brother alone for hours, sometimes days in a row with peanut butter



Hollywood
(Image from Lethe Press)

in the pantry and beer in the fridge.” The reader grows to admire Ophelia’s survival skills and wonder at the trauma that is left unsaid.

It seems Ophelia’s life is all risk, no safety, and Coyne’s fast-paced scenes ramp up the tension to make the reader anxiously hope for Ophelia’s well-being.

To add a layer to her already complicated situation, throughout the novella Ophelia is also unpacking her attraction to her would-be roommate, Tasia, a friend (or maybe more?) who left her with the apartment she can’t afford alone.

Coyne believably handles Ophelia’s confusion over her sexual identity as she battles her fears to figure out who she is and what she wants. The reader feels Ophelia’s doubt at the unfolding of her identity. Just as she wants to be believed for her shark sighting, she wants to be accepted as a young adult able to make her way in the big city.

And speaking of the shark, despite the many other things going on in her life—culture shock, a new roommate, a job hunt—the shark doesn’t “recede into the haze of memory” for Ophelia. Instead, it becomes “ever more distinct and real in its absence.”

This made me question what the shark means to her, and what it represents in the grand scope of her self-discovery.

Ophelia is constantly experiencing change that she doesn’t understand, but yet she longs for the shark that left her somehow both confused and certain. “She felt the transformation it had wrought on her,” Coyne writes.

Over time Ophelia begins to feel she’s fitting in with the nerds, artists, and other quirky residents she’s met in her new city, and she dares to trust herself in a relationship, let go, and have a little fun. She longs to keep this newfound feeling of stability, but of course, life can’t stay the same. Changes made by those she cares about force her to make difficult decisions.

Throughout “Hollywood,” Coyne captures the feeling of being young and on your own, figuring a way through life’s pitfalls and triumphs. In this, readers can connect Ophelia’s story to similar experiences of opening new chapters in their lives.

While his protagonist can’t always articulate her experiences when she’s in the middle of living them, Coyne seizes on that frustration for readers to encounter along with her, and scenes of affable mayhem at apartment parties and the lakeside shark sighting blend character and setting to create memorable moments.

The preconceived notions I had about the names “Hollywood” and “Ophelia” brought outside connections for me, as well. Thoughts of Hollywood’s glittering reinvention and the Shakespearan Ophelia’s love and loss work with the experimental nature of the narrative.

Coyne’s fast pace of changing scenes in the city contrasts with Ophelia’s backstory of the long-held conflicts she had in Rockville, and the plot moves smoothly from party dialogue between friends to reflective moments as she tries to make sense of her urban experience.

Coyne ends “Hollywood” without a definite conclusion but with multiple possibilities.

Although I would have preferred a heavier hint as to the direction Ophelia chooses, I see the value of the open-endedness when her friend Clyde says, “I

(Continued on Page 15)

'Hollywood' ...

(Continued from Page 14)

wouldn't be me today if I wasn't with you yesterday."

Ultimately, Ophelia's imaginative pluck makes us cheer for her as we wish we had for ourselves at 20-something, and Coyne's departure from his usual magical noir novels is therefore well

worth the read. ●

Patty Duffy is a Michigan teacher and author who grew up in Flint. She is the author of the historical fiction novel, Song of the Pearl and Oyster, a book based on three generations of area women who grew up in a farmhouse on Hill Road in Genesee County.

YOUR VOICE IS NEEDED:

Help Shape the Flint Cancer Feasibility Assessment

The National Minority Quality Forum (NMQF) is seeking public input on the Request for Proposal (RFP) to conduct a community feasibility assessment on cancer concerns in Flint, Michigan.

Your feedback during this period is critical to ensure that our final proposal accurately reflects the needs and priorities of the Flint community.

This is an important opportunity for the Flint community, including Flint residents, healthcare providers, researchers, public health experts, community advocates, and leaders to share your perspectives and insights.

By working together we can build a stronger proposal that drives meaningful impact.

The Process

- Review the RFP and submit your comments at <https://flintcancerfeasibility.org/>
- All feedback will be carefully reviewed and incorporated into the Public Comment Response Summary
- The final proposal will be updated and shared based on the community's feedback

Your Input Will Make a Difference Every voice matters in this transparent process. Your personal stories, concerns, and ideas will shape how this feasibility assessment addresses the impact of cancer in Flint.

Don't miss this opportunity to get involved. Submit your comments by June 14th and be part of the change by building a healthier future for Flint together.

Unclassified Ads

Apartment for Lease.

Large two-bedroom apartment on Crapo St. just off Kearsley St. Enjoy concerts, dance, art galleries, theaters, planetarium, library, museum, horticultural gardens and art classes, all across the street. Five minute or less walk to UM-Flint, MCC, downtown, Cultural Center, Farmers Market. Featuring sunroom, smokeless fireplace, hardwood floors, laundry, storage, garage car space and on site management. \$895 per month includes water. No pets. References and credit check requested. E-mail: ecuster@sbcglobal.net or write Apartment Box 6, 502 Crapo St. Flint, MI 48503.

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 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 or write: Apartment Box 9, 720 E. Second St., Flint MI 48503.

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MORE INFORMATION at SloanLongway.org/Juneteenth

Village Life

It's hard to be blue at Bluebell

By *Kate Stockrahm*

With construction happening nearly everywhere one can walk downtown this summer, I decided to spend a recent afternoon break at a place that always feels light-years away from the noise and dust of the city: Bluebell Beach.

Google describes Bluebell as a “lakeside park along the Flint River Bike Path featuring a sandy beach, a splash pad & shade kites,” but as I was walking past a couple on the way from the park’s mostly empty car lot, the gentleman turned to his companion and said “I bet there’s a ton of seagull shit in that water.”

Both descriptions feel correct.

But honestly, at least for me, that’s part of Bluebell’s charm.

It’s part escape, part exactly what you’d expect of a public, man-made beach from the 1970s. And that’s its particular magic.

Sure, you won’t arrive to see pristine white sand and lapping turquoise waters, but also, what a delight to have the option of sand and water at all so close to Flint’s northeast border.

And yes, there will be teenagers testing out how many times they can say the f-word while out of mom’s earshot, but there will also be a soft breeze and a free, sun-soaked bench to read from for however long you want.

And before this veers into an odd pseudo-promotion for Bluebell Beach, I should admit why I have a particular fondness for this Genesee County enigma: it’s one of my first memories of moving to Flint.

It was a very hot Fourth of July weekend in 2021. I’d just come back

home to Michigan from New York City two weeks before, and I knew absolutely no one in Flint except for the folks (my new colleagues) who had kindly invited me to join their beach-side picnic.



A view of Bluebell Beach, a public park bordering northeast Flint, on a late May afternoon.

(Photo by Kate Stockrahm)

Hoping to be viewed as a good addition to the team, I went to the store and picked up some sunscreen, snacks and pre-cut fruit, paper plates and disposable forks — even a few pool floats printed in classic summery patterns like palm fronds and bright pink flamingos. (What the heck, they were on sale.)

Haul secured, I drove the 15 minutes — “15 minutes!” I’d thought. “I can visit this place whenever I want!” — to Bluebell and found my

party happily gathered around the one grill left open in the hubbub of holiday beach-goers.

This was a good day of introduction to Bluebell.

All the pavilions were full of families and music and laughter. The blue and white sun shades lining the beachfront provided much-needed respite to the lucky few who had arrived early enough to secure them. The sun shone high overhead, and even though the weather was hot and sticky, we were having too much fun trying to figure out how to blow up those stupid pool floats without a pump to notice.

Me and my soon-to-be friends spent all day munching on Koegel’s hot dogs (“the only brand you should ever buy here,” one of them told me) and potato chips, learning about each other and intermittently napping as we floated in the lake’s deep green water, listening to children’s shouts of “Marco Polo” nearby.

It was absolutely fabulous, and I cherish that memory to this day — long after all of those friends have moved on from Flint.

So, given my affinity for the strange, wonderful lakeside park, it may not surprise you that I couldn’t help myself as I overheard that couple’s seagull dropping discussion.

“It probably is full of shit,” I said, laughing with them. “But on a hot day, you don’t mind so much.”

The man paused and thought about it.

“You’re right,” he said as he and his companion began walking down toward the water. “It won’t kill you.”

Ah yes, I smiled, another glowing review of Bluebell Beach. ●