

East Village Magazine

October 2024

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for many more stories from Flint!



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Commentary *The 2024 election: What's on the ballot and what's at stake?*

By Paul Rozycki

In a year when we've seen a sitting president step aside from his certain nomination, a former president facing criminal convictions over payments to a porn star and two assassination attempts, the nomination of the first African-American/Asian woman to be president, and unfounded claims about pet dogs and cats being eaten by Haitian immigrants, no one can say we're witnessing a typical presidential election.

But with less than a month remaining before the November 2024 election, we should focus not only on the national offices, but what's on the ballot for our state and local governments, too. So, here's a look at what we're voting on in Flint this year.

NATIONAL

The presidential election

The presidential contest between Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris and former Republican President Donald Trump has generated the lion's share of media attention. It seems like there is a new poll on who's ahead every 15 minutes, and while Harris looks to be gaining a narrow lead, most results are still within the margin of error and it may come down to a few key states to decide the outcome in the Electoral College.

As one of the key swing states, Michigan has been visited by both candidates in the election run-up. It will be

worth watching to see how those in Dearborn vote after many expressed anger over President Biden's strong support of Israel. Same goes for the unions. Though most have endorsed Harris, Trump has been picking up significant working class union support in recent years, and the Teamsters declined to endorse either candidate for the first time in decades. Harris may also regain support among those Black voters who have been less supportive of Democrats in recent years.

The Michigan U.S. Senate race

With Democratic Senator Debbie Stabenow choosing not to run this year, Democrat Elissa Slotkin and Republican Mike Rogers are seeking to fill the open seat. Most current polls give Slotkin a lead, but the race remains competitive. This year Senate Democrats face a particularly challenging election season: 20 Democratic and 10 Republican seats are up, as are 3 independent senators who vote with the Democrats. If Dems hope to keep a majority in the Senate, they can't afford to lose a single contest.

The 8th District U.S. House election

With incumbent Dan Kildee's retirement, for the first time since 1962 there won't be a Kildee name on the ballot in Flint. Most pundits are calling

(Continued on Page 7)



Photo of the Month: A detail on the old National Guard Armory Building. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Education Beat

Klee leads Beecher bid for students on Flint's north side

By Harold C. Ford

The Beecher Community School District (BCSD) on Flint's near north side has shared more information on the \$20 million renovation of its mostly-abandoned Beecher High School campus at the corner of Saginaw Street and Coldwater Road.

The district's superintendent, Richard Klee, provided details on the project in a presentation to BCSD retirees in Frankenmuth on Sept. 25, 2024.

"The big news is facilities"

"The big news is facilities," Klee told the retirees. He said most of the \$20 million budget would be used to upgrade what locals in Beecher, Mich. refer to as "the Old Building," which was constructed in 1926 and closed due to low enrollment roughly 20 years ago.

Upgrades to the building are already underway, Klee explained, including roof replacement, gutting of the interior, and the ordering and installation of new windows. The campus's nearby industrial arts and music buildings are also being demolished

as part of the overall project.

"The goal remains for an opening in the Fall of 2025," Klee said, "although that is contingent upon supply chain and worker availability."

"Guardian angel"

The renovation project was inspired, said Klee, "with the help of a guardian angel, Matt Rizik."

Rizik is CEO of Rocket Companies, a business founded by well-known southeast Michigan entrepreneur Dan Gilbert. Klee called Rizik a "tax guy" for Gilbert at Rocket Mortgage, although Rizik's responsibilities far exceed that description.

Prior to the renovation announcement earlier this year, Rizik had also helped funnel financial support to BCSD for athletic upgrades that included new locker rooms and basketball hoops in the Lacy Field House, football helmets, and weight lifting equipment.

"Our athletic department is tripped out," said Klee, proudly.

Rizik and BCSD leaders had been envisioning a new high school

for Beecher for about two years before the project came together. Klee said an earlier plan to demolish the Old Building and build a new high school was abandoned when the team realized that the 1926 building was structurally sound and a makeover was a less expensive option.

Two buildings to three

Beecher students are currently housed in two crowded buildings that face one another on opposite sides of Neff Road.

Dailey Elementary serves students in pre-K through 6th grade and Beecher Middle/High School, located in the former Dolan Middle School building, serves the school district's 7th to 12th graders.

If the plans for a newly renovated high school are realized, students in grades 9-12 would attend the new campus at Saginaw Street and Coldwater, the Dolan building would serve students in grades 5-8, while Dailey would house pre-K to grade 4 students.

(Continued on Page 5)

Education Beat ...

(Continued from Page 4)

Since taking up the superintendent role four years ago, Klee has led the first meaningful campaign to rid BCSD of abandoned buildings and properties.

At its zenith in the late-1960s and early-1970s, Beecher boasted 11 school buildings within its 5.9 square miles. All had been abandoned in recent decades save two -- the aforementioned Dailey and Dolan.

“We’ve sold off everything,” Klee said, except the former Summit Middle School building and Henderson Field, a patch of land used as a practice facility by footballers of yesteryear.

“We have our ten million”

A 61-page proposal document on the \$20 million renovation shared with East Village Magazine (EVM) detailed the sources of the project’s financing. They included:

- \$500,000 from a Michigan Enhancement Grant;
- \$1.5 million from a Michigan Department of Education Grant;
- \$2 million from a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Project Funding Grant;
- \$5 million from a State of Michigan Budget Allocation;
- about \$500,000 from private donors.

“We have our ten million,” Klee said, adding that the district anticipates a matching \$10 million from a yet-to-be-identified Michigan-based foundation.

“Reimagined Beecher High School”

The proposal includes a “reimagined Beecher High School” with the creation of a “Beecher health sciences career pathway.” Every incoming freshman, Klee explained, would take a health occupations class that exposes them to possible health

careers. That would be followed by “work-based learning” in students’ junior and senior years with on-the-job experience at nearby health facilities.

Klee explained that health careers were a popular choice based upon recent surveys of senior year students. “In the greater Flint area there are plenty of health care jobs they can do,” Klee added.

Klee said a new room at the renovated high school will house a health clinic, while another will house a business and technology lab.



Beecher High School
(Photo by Harold C. Ford)

The proposal document also described the intent of a “Career Academy” at the high school:

“The proposed Career Academy will transform Beecher High School into a hub of innovation and skill development, offering specialized programs in fields such as healthcare and the business industry. Our goal is to provide students with hands-on learning experiences, industry certifications, and pathways to both higher education and immediate employment.”

“A lot of progress”

“Beecher has seen a lot of progress in the four years I’ve been there,” Klee said. He noted that, when he arrived at Beecher, one-third of its teachers were not certified, academic scores were low, enrollment was dropping, and the budget was in the red.

“Within the first year we went from the red to the black, settled a three-year teacher contract with seven

percent, six percent, and five percent pay increments over a three-year period. We moved the Beecher teachers’ salaries from the bottom of the county to off the bottom [with] a generous insurance package.”

Klee said all teacher vacancies but two have been filled, and “everybody’s certified or on the path to certification.”

He added that the district’s test scores have also risen, as has its graduation rate.

Scramble for students on Flint’s north side

Beecher’s \$20 million high school upgrade is not only an improvement for current students but also a bid to draw others back to the district – a goal for every district when each Michigan student brings with them almost \$10,000 in state aid.

Accordingly, schools everywhere are scrambling to attract students with improved facilities and attractive academic offerings, and the plan for Beecher High School enters at a time of great competition in the area.

Within a four mile diameter around the two Beecher campuses are three other schools vying for the same students: New Standard Academy — which enrolled 779 preschool through 12th graders last school year as compared to BCSD’s 600; Flint Community Schools’ Brownell-Holmes campus, currently undergoing its own \$40 million upgrade and serving scholars up to grade 8; and Hamady Middle High School – which regularly pulls more than half of its students from outside its district boundaries.

Despite this landscape, Klee seemed optimistic that the renovated Beecher campus could double the district’s high school enrollment from 200 to 400 in the next two to three years.

But, he added, “It’s going to be a battle.” ●

Commentary ...

(Continued from Page 3)

the 8th District a toss-up between Democrat Kristen McDonald Rivet, a Bay City State Senator, and Republican Paul Junge. Though Kildee won by almost 10 points against Junge in 2022, with no incumbent most expect this contest to be very close.

The 8th Congressional District includes Genesee, Saginaw, Bay and parts of Midland and Tuscola counties. Genesee County has voted Democratic for years, Saginaw and Bay counties have been more marginal for the Democrats, while Midland and Tuscola lean Republican.

STATE

State House of Representatives

Voters will elect the 110 members of the Michigan State House of Representatives in Lansing. State representatives serve 2-year terms and Democrats currently have a 56-54 majority in the State House.

Newly drawn districts around Detroit may make keeping that majority more challenging. Genesee County voters elect representatives in seven districts. Here's who's on the ballot:

67th District (North East Genesee County): Democrat Anissa Buffin will face Republican Phil Green.

68th District (East/South East Central Genesee County): With the recent death of incumbent Democrat Tim Sneller, Matt Schlinker was nominated to replace him and faces Republican David W. Martin.

69th District (West Central Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat Jasper Ryan Martus and Republican Patrick Duvendek are facing each other.

70th District (City of Flint): Incumbent Democrat Cynthia R.

Neeley will face Republican Rob Waskoviak for the Flint district seat.

71st District (South West Genesee County): Democrat Mark Zacharda faces Republican Brian BeGole.

72nd District (South Central Genesee County): Democrat John Dolza faces incumbent Republican Mike Mueller.

97th District (North West Genesee County): Democrat Mark Putnam and Republican Matthew Bierlein are competing for the seat in northern Genesee County.

University Boards and State Board of Education

Michigan voters will also elect members to the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University Boards as well as the State Board of Education. All are elected to 8 year terms.

The State Board Education, two to be elected. Democrats Theodore Jones and Adam Frederick Zemke are running against Republicans Tom McMillin and Nikki Snyder.

Regents of the University of Michigan, two to be elected Democrats Denise Illitch and Shauna Ryder Diggs are running

against Republicans Carl Meyers and Sevag Vartanian.

Trustee of Michigan State University, two to be elected. Democrats Rebecca Bahar-Cook and Thomas Stallworth are running against Republicans Mike Balow and Julie Maday.

Governor of Wayne State University, two to be elected. Democrats Mark T. Gaffney and Rasha Demashkieh are running against Republicans Michel Busuito and Sunny Reddy.

GENESEE COUNTY

Genesee County officials are elected to 4-year terms. A number of them face no opposition in the November election.

Prosecuting Attorney: Incumbent Democrat David Leyton won his nomination in August and is unopposed in the general election.

Sheriff: Incumbent Democrat Christopher R. Swanson faces Republican Jeff Salzeider.

Clerk/Register of Deeds: Incumbent Democrat Domanique Clemmons is unopposed.

Treasurer: Democrat Sam E. Muma is unopposed.

Drain Commissioner: Democrat

(Continued on Page 7)

ELECT CHAD SCHLOSSER

Flint Board of Education

Vote Nov. 5th, 2024

Paid for by Chad Schlosser for Flint Board of Education

Commentary ...

(Continued from Page 6)

incumbent Jeff Wright faces no Republican opponent, however David Niggenmeyer of the U.S. Taxpayer Party is opposing him.

Surveyor: Incumbent Democrat Kim R. Carlson is unopposed.

Genesee County Commission

Genesee County Commissioners serve a 4-year term and are elected from nine districts.

County Commission District 1 (North East City of Flint): Incumbent Democrat Delrico J. Loyd is unopposed.

County Commission District 2 (North Central City of Flint): Incumbent Democrat Charles Winfrey is unopposed.

County Commission District 3 (East Flint City and Burton): Incumbent Democrat Ellen J. Ellenburg is running against Republican Gary L. Goetzinger.

County Commission District 4 (South Central Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat Beverly Brown is opposed by Republican Steve Minnock.

County Commission District 5 (South East Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat James Avery is running against Republican John C. Wellington.

County Commission District 6 (South West Genesee County): Republican incumbent Shaun Shumaker is opposed by Democrat Donna Anderson.

County Commission District 7 (North West Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat Martin L. Cousineau will run against Republican Lutullus Penton.

County Commission District 8 (Western Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat Dale K. Weighill is

running against Republican Dennis W. Cramer.

County Commission District 9 (North East Genesee County): Democrat Wendy Wolcott is facing Republican Brian K. Flewelling.

Mott Community College Board

While many local contests have little opposition, this year's election for the Mott Community College Board of Trustees has 14 candidates running for three seats following controversy over the selection of an interim president for the college. The candidates are: Mary Davis, Kenyetta V. Dotson, incumbent Board Chair Andy Everman, Anne Figueroa, Aron Gerics, Gail L. Johnson, Rose Marden, Candice Miller, Virginia A. Sepanak, incumbent Jeffrey Swanson, Richard Wagonlaner, Amanda Wares, Andrew Watchorn and Perci Whitmore.

Four other members of the Board, Janet Couch, John Daly III, Art Reyes, and Wendy Wolcott are facing potential recall elections in the future.

CITY OF FLINT

Flint City Council

City of Flint Ward 1: Appointed incumbent Leon El-Alamin is running against Carol McIntosh to finish the term of the late Eric Mays, which runs until Nov. 18, 2026.

City of Flint Ward 3: Incumbent Councilman Quincy Murphy was facing a recall election prior to his passing in late September. His name will be on the ballot along with others, however in line with state law, the recall votes will not be counted and Flint City Council will appoint a councilperson to replace him and a schedule special election in the future.

Flint School Board

Positions for most local school boards in the county are on the

ballot this November. Flint Community Schools will be electing one member. The candidates are Chad Schlosser and Linda Boose.

JUDICIAL ELECTIONS

State Supreme Court: Voters will choose two State Supreme Court Judges in non-partisan elections.

(Continued on Page 9)

Unclassified Ads

Apartment for Lease

Three-bedroom two story apartment. Features hardwood floors, appliances, 1.5 baths, laundry, 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: edcvster@gmail.com or write: Apartment Box 9, 720 E. Second St., Flint MI 48503.

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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

Below is a selection of events available to our readers, beginning after our publication date of October 4. To submit events for our November issue, email information about your event to eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com by October 25.

Flint Residents for Stronger Neighborhoods Speaker Series: Henry Grabar

Thursday, Oct 10 at 7:30 p.m.

Join FRSN as we welcome Henry Grabar, Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and author of *Paved Paradise: How Parking Explains the World*, for a conversation about the history of parking policy in America, how it shapes our cities, and what policies we can enact to build more walkable, vibrant communities.

Free coffee, tea, and hors d'oeuvres will be available for all attendees, and there is no cost to attend. Cafe Rhema

432 S. Saginaw St., Flint

Flint Artwalk

Friday, Oct. 11 | 6-9 p.m.

Walk around downtown Flint and visit the many merchants, galleries, restaurants and other venues displaying art by area artists and showcasing the talents of local musicians.

For more info visit greaterflintartscouncil.org or call 810-238-2787.

Andrew Heller Book Signing and Meet & Greet

Saturday, Oct. 12 | 3-5 p.m.

Totem Books will host a book signing and meet & greet event with Andrew Heller, Flint Journal columnist from 1989-2016. Many may fondly remember his Heller High Water column. East Village Magazine's own Jan Worth-Nelson will serve as a special guest.

Totem Books

620 W. Court St., Flint

Skeletons at Work Haunted House

Sat. & Sun., Oct. 12-13, 19-20, 26-27

Get into the fall mood with Sloan Museum of Discovery's brand new haunted house! On Saturdays and Sundays thru October, this family friendly, special display will be available and full of fun with things that to tickle your funny bones. All ages welcome, \$5 ticket after general admission. 1221 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For more info visit sloanlongway.org/halloween/

Community Candor LIVE: Philanthropy's Impact & Perspective

Tuesday, Oct. 15 | 8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Join Glenn Wilson, President and CEO of Communities First, Inc. for a discussion with Ridgway White, President and CEO of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation as they discuss philanthropy's impact and perspective in the Flint area. Attendance is free and breakfast will be provided.

General Motors Factory One

303 W. Water St., Flint

For more info or to sign up, visit tinyurl.com/CCLIVEOct24

First Frost Fine Arts & Crafts Fair

Saturday, Oct. 19 | 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday, Oct 20 | 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The Flint Institute of Arts and its Founders Society will host the FIRST FROST Arts & Fine Crafts Fair at the Flint Cultural Center Academy, just a block away from the FIA. Admission is \$5 but kids 12 and under are free. The fair will showcase giftable art and fine hand-crafted items for the start of the holiday shopping season.

Flint Cultural Center Academy

214 Robert T Longway Blvd, Flint

Spooky Science Family Halloween Workshop

Saturday, Oct. 19 | 10:30 a.m. - noon

Join us as we engage in some family-friendly science!

Create a simple bat flier, go on a pumpkin hunt in the Longway garden, and engineer a "spooky" scenery that you can eat! Event is for families of children age 7 and younger, and tickets are \$8 per person.

Longway Planetarium

1310 E. Kearsley St

For more info at sloanlongway.org

Meet & Greet with the Mott Community College Board of Trustee Candidates

Thursday, Oct. 24 | 6-7:30 p.m.

The League of Women Voters - Flint Area will host a meet and greet event with the MCC Board of Trustee candidates at the Gloria Coles Flint Public Library ahead of the Nov. 5 election.

Gloria Coles Flint Public Library

1026 E. Kearsley St., Flint

Gothic Garden Party

Saturday, Oct. 26 at 12 p.m.

Established in the 1850s, Glenwood Cemetery is not only an old cemetery but also boasts the final resting place for many of Flint's famous departed, making it the perfect place to meet just before Halloween!

Event will feature an afternoon of picnicing, poetry reading, and more! There will be a food truck and other vendors at this free event, which is perfect for those wanting a fun chance to dress in their Gothic or Victorian attire and stroll through a historic cemetery. Stop by the McFarlan plot while you're there for a complimentary donut and cup of cider!

Glenwood Cemetery

2500 W. Court St., Flint

Downtown Flint Dog Walk

Sunday, Oct. 27 | 11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

The German Shepherd Walkers of Genesee County are hosting the first of many planned downtown Flint dog walking gatherings. All breeds welcome. Meet at the corner of 7th and Harrison by 10:45 a.m. for an 11 a.m. departure.

1204 Harrison St., Flint

Witches Brew Bingo Brunch

Sunday, Oct. 27 | 11 a.m.

Dress in your witchiest attire for this bingo brunch. There will be \$100 gift card for best dressed and a \$25 gift card runner up. Seating available for 100 people with two bingo games going at once (one in the bar and one in the heated pavilion area. Doors open at 11, bingo starts at Noon. Call hosts Heather & Marissa to book: 810-652-6575

The Agitated Grape Bar & Restaurant

310 N. Main St., Davison

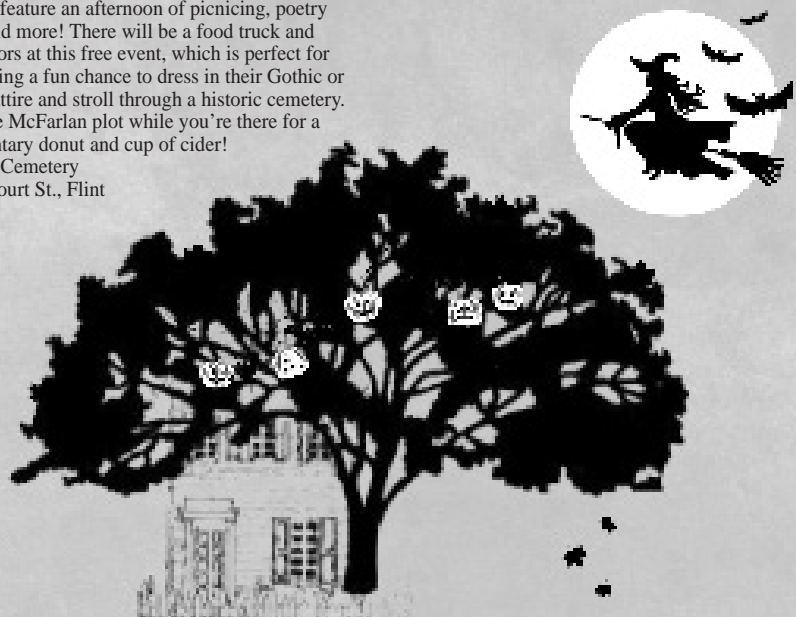
Whaley House's Halloween Night Party

Thurs., Oct. 31 | 7-11 p.m.

Have you ever wanted to spend Halloween Night in a 166-year-old Victorian Mansion? You're in luck! For the second year in a row, the Whaley House Historic Museum is pleased to say that we will be open for trick-or-treaters and Halloween revelers! Our "House in Mourning" decor will surely match the vibe you're seeking on All Hallows' Eve. This FREE event includes light refreshments and themed activities. Halloween Costumes are definitely encouraged!

624 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For more information email: director@whaleyhouse.com or call 810-238-7228.



Commentary ...

(Continued from Page 7)

For an 8-year term Andrew Fink and Kimberly Thomas are competing for one position.

For a partial term ending on Jan. 1, 2029, Kyra Bolden and Patrick O'Grady are seeking to fill a single position.

For many other judicial elections the candidates are unopposed.

2nd District Judge of Court of Appeals, 6-year term: Two to be elected and incumbents Adrienne Nicole Young and Randy J. Wallace are unopposed.

2nd District Judge of Court of Appeals, Non-Incumbent, 6-year term: One to be elected. Matthew Ackerman and Latoya Willis are running for the position.

7th Circuit Judge of Circuit Court, Incumbent, 6-year term: Two to be elected. Incumbents Elizabeth Kelly and Brian Pickell are unopposed.

7th Circuit Judge of Circuit Court, Non-Incumbent, 6-year term: One to be elected. Mary Hood and Nancy Chinonis are competing for the position.

Circuit Judge of Circuit Court, Incumbent, partial term ending Jan. 1, 2029: One to be elected. Incumbent Khary Hanible is unopposed for the position.

Probate Court Judge, 6-year term: Incumbent Ariana Heath is unopposed.

67th District - 4th Division Judge of District Court, Non-Incumbent, 6-year term: One to be elected. Jeff Clothier and Amanda Odette are competing for this position.

67th District - 5th Division Judge of District Court, Incumbent, 6 year term: Two to be elected. Incumbents William Crawford II and Herman Marable Jr. are both

unopposed.

BALLOT PROPOSALS

Genesee County voters will also decide several ballot proposals in the November election.

City of Grand Blanc voters will vote on a proposed .50 mill tax increase for the support of city parks.

Gaines Township voters will vote on a proposed 1 mill tax increase to purchase new firefighting equipment.

Carmen-Ainsworth school district voters will vote on borrowing \$65,200,000 to repair and maintain a variety of school buildings and facilities.

Lake Fenton School district voters will also be deciding on borrowing 68,250,000 for the improvement and maintenance of school facilities.

Swartz Creek School district voters will vote on borrowing

\$38,800,000 for upkeep and maintenance of school buildings.

Westwood Heights school district voters will decide on an 18 mill tax renewal for the district.

With so much at stake this election, be sure to take the time to learn what's on your ballot and vote. For all the attention given to the presidential contests, we have learned that state and local elections can matter just as much.

The election is Nov. 5 but early voting and absentee voting are options for all voters in Michigan. More information about deadlines, registration, where to vote, and what's on the ballot in your area is available at www.VOTE411.org or www.michigan.gov/vote. ●

PONY PARTIES & PRIVATE PONY RIDES
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RIVERBEND FARM
DAY WITH A DIFFERENCE
OCTOBER 11-13, 2024
9:00am-12:00pm

Music Around Town
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3rd Degree Burns
Rock
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Free to attend
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thefim.org/3rddegreeburnsrock

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Review

Flint Rep dives into new season with a big splash in ‘Godspell’

By Patsy Isenberg

The Flint Repertory Theatre’s new season has opened with a delightful interpretation of “Godspell” – originally a rock musical about the Gospel of St. Matthew adapted to 1970s New York City – now set in a swimming pool.

But more on that later.

“Godspell” has been performed many times through the years since it came on the scene as playwright and director John-Michael Tebelak’s master’s thesis at Carnegie Mellon University in 1971.

With music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, it was picked up rather quickly and traveled from venue to venue, first presented off-off Broadway and then simply off-Broadway at the Cherry Lane Theater in New York City.

In the musical’s 1972 opening in Toronto, many major names took the stage: Eugene Levy, Martin Short, Gilda Radner, Victor Garber, and Andrea Martin. These actors went on to help launch “Saturday Night Live” and “Second City Television,” which makes sense, as “Godspell” is a product of improvisation by its cast.

In its playbill description, the musical’s evolution is explained as

such: “the clownery, bits, and lines of dialogue outside of the biblical came from inside the rehearsal room,” and apparently, such a tradition has been upheld for the many productions that have followed since the musical’s premiere.

The Rep’s version is true to that improvisational history but adds in a swimming pool. No kidding: the whole story takes place in and around a swimming pool! In fact, audience members are cautioned by ushers that if they sit in the Rep’s first two rows for the performance, they may get wet.

Without giving too much away about this added element, expect the pool to act as a friendly party setting, a kind of baptismal font, and a way to make the well-rehearsed choreography of Cy Paolantonio that much more interesting throughout the performance.

While the musical’s second act gets a bit more serious than its first, the musical remains overall joyful as the character of Jesus begins to reveal who he is and that someone in the group will betray him: a pivotal moment in the gospel as well as “Godspell.”

Producing artistic director for

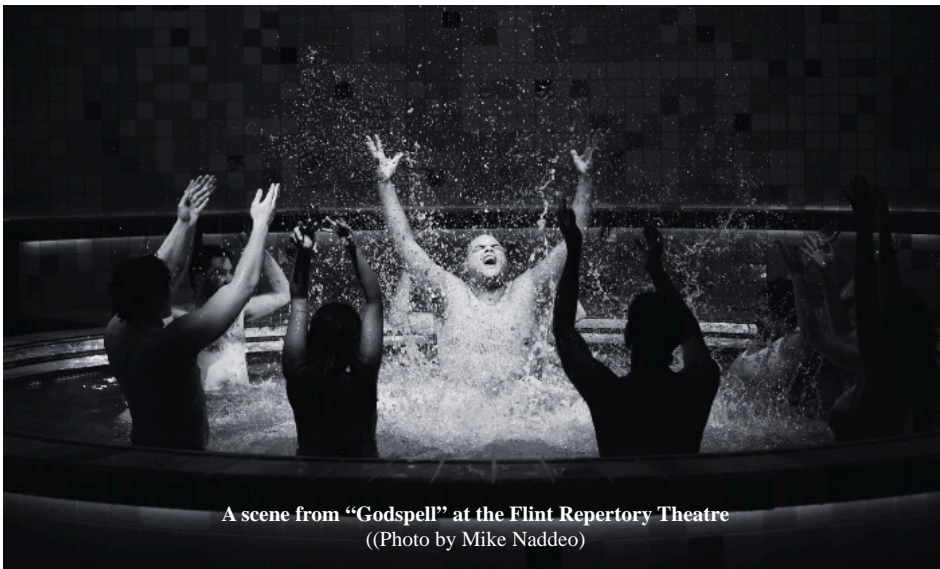
the Rep, Michael Lluberes, directed the season opener himself and explained the water feature as follows:

“To me, Godspell is not a show about religion. It’s a show about community. A group of disparate people come together to create a new way of living. Water can be playful, mysterious, and healing. It seemed the perfect container for this musical about joy, renewal and hope.”

This reviewer was impressed by how well the musical’s ten actors moved in and around the pool so effortlessly, and she found herself wondering what a challenge it must have been to achieve well after leaving the theater.

But beyond the surprises and acrobatics from its performers, “Godspell” is colorful in its own right, too. The lighting and set design by Chelsie McPhilimy and A.J. Guban is a visual feast, and when you add great performances and a literal swimming pool to the mix, it’s hard not to enjoy – even if you’re not into musicals.

“Godspell” will be presented through October 20. Tickets and schedule can be found at thefim.org/event/godspell. ●



A scene from “Godspell” at the Flint Repertory Theatre
(Photo by Mike Naddeo)



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SARAH ...

(Continued from Page 12)

After another disappointing day of walk-throughs, I started flipping through the magazine that night. While there weren't really any places listed that looked promising in the classifieds, what I did find was the zip code for the magazine's office – and by extension where I knew I wanted to live in Flint!

Many viewings later, I narrowed my search down to two fantastic late 1920s homes that were overflowing with character and charm.

One was move-in ready, while the other (SARAH) looked like it hadn't been loved for many years. I put an offer in on the former because it was the rational thing to do, but after the home inspection I couldn't help feeling like I was making a mistake.

It wasn't that anything specific came up at the inspection, but rather because SARAH's pull on me was already strong. Despite the house's nasty, peeling 70s paint; unattached gutters; broken doors and windows; and lights dangling from the ceiling by fraying wires, I saw and felt so much potential in SARAH and her two-car garage – perfect for an artist's needs – that I couldn't shake the feeling that we belonged together.

In the background, of course, was the fact that according to NPR and foreign news media (where I get most of my news in order to keep myself sane), COVID-19 was hitting European and Asian countries hard, and common sense told me that it was already here and spreading. My biggest fear was that once it hit the U.S. like it was those other countries, my choice to move would be gone. I ended up stopping the sale on the first home and putting in an offer on SARAH instead.

My closing date was the end of March, literally the day everything in the state shut down. With paperwork in-hand, I spent four hours debating whether or not I was making the right choice – the thought going through

my head, "Well, how long could this shutdown last? A week, two weeks?"

I bit the bullet and signed on the dotted line.

Though I moved to Flint to care for my grandmother, COVID meant I basically became a hermit in order to prevent getting her or Bob sick. It was awful taking her to her dialysis appointments and not being able to go in and sit with her, but I was grateful to even spend the time in the car with her.

Once things started opening back up, I would don full personal protective equipment and go in and sit with her again. My grandmother and Bob were able to come visit a few times for dinner, and I can't put into words how pleased I was to have her – the woman who decorated and maintained the rentals she and my grandfather owned together for so many years prior to her illness – sing SARAH's praises on those evenings.

My grandmother passed in 2022, after finally convincing Bob to let her stop dialysis, and then sadly Bob passed unexpectedly this year.

While I miss them both every day, and SARAH has become a bit of a never-ending project, I wouldn't change a thing about my choice.

I am so grateful to East Village Magazine for connecting me with not only SARAH, but with the wonderful community and friends who I've made since my move here to Flint. ●



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Village Life Meeting SARAH

By Christina Collie

SARAH and I met in 2020. She's not so much a "who" but a "what," and her name comes from a sci-fi tv show called "Eureka" that ran from 2006-2012.

In the show, SARAH stands for "Self-Actuated Residential Automated Habitat," a house-of-the-future outfitted with an AI consciousness that controls everything from food service to security communications. In my life, though, SARAH is the lovingly ironic name for my 100-year-old Flint home – which I can assure you has no AI frills.

But the real story here isn't where SARAH got her name, it's how we came to find each other.

In 2016, my grandmother, Rita, a master seamstress and local landlord who walked the Crim so many times that I joked that she was in better shape than me, became very ill. She went to Hurley, and we didn't think she'd be coming home.

Luckily, her significant other – "Grandpa" to me and "my Bob" to her – was able to get her transferred to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. There, my grandmother was patched up enough to go home after being hospitalized for almost two months.

Over the next few years her condition declined to the point where she needed to start dialysis. Eventually, she had to go three times a week for about three hours each session. I would drive up from my home in Detroit to visit and try to help out with

her care.

Thanks to the constant construction on I-75, sometimes it would take a couple hours just to get to her place in Swartz Creek, especially if I got stuck driving up during rush hour traffic (which was often).

And, since I usually had to get to work the next morning, that delay meant I'd only be able to visit for an hour or two before needing to leave again.



SARAH's warm and inviting front room.
(Photo provided by Christina Collie)

It would break my heart every time she said "You just got here!" while she implored me to stay the night or at least a bit longer.

So, in 2019, I decided to move closer to my grandma and her Bob.

I started researching homes in the Genesee County area, and as chance would have it, my artist booth was next to an artist from Flint at an event that spring.

I got to chatting with the artist's mom, who was helping her out for the day, and my interest was piqued when she told me about all of the great things going on in Flint and how much her daughter loved living here. From there, I began researching

the city a bit more and in November Crain's Detroit Business issued a special edition on Flint. It focused on the start-ups and organizations helping to make Flint a city on the rise.

By then I had started working with a realtor in the area.

The system went like this: I would search listings online or sort through the ones my realtor sent me; I'd let him know which places I was interested in seeing in person; and then I'd drive up to Flint to take a look, usually with my dad in tow.

I knew I wanted to be close to downtown, but I didn't know zip codes to be able to clarify exactly what that meant. (Despite growing up in Grand Blanc for a short time as a kid and having family in the area most of my life, my exposure to Flint had been pretty limited – a trip to Auto World, a few concerts at the Capitol while in high school.)

Many of the homes I found online were around Kettering University, both too far from where I really wanted to be and in need of more love and repairs than I was prepared to offer.

Then one fateful January day, my dad and I were having lunch at Blackstone's before heading out to meet my realtor. As we were finishing up, the manager came over, and we got to chatting about my house hunt. He asked if I'd looked through East Village Magazine, as it sometimes had properties listed. I wasn't familiar with EVM then, but he told me it was also just a great source of info on what was happening around the city, so I grabbed a copy. (Continued on Page 11)