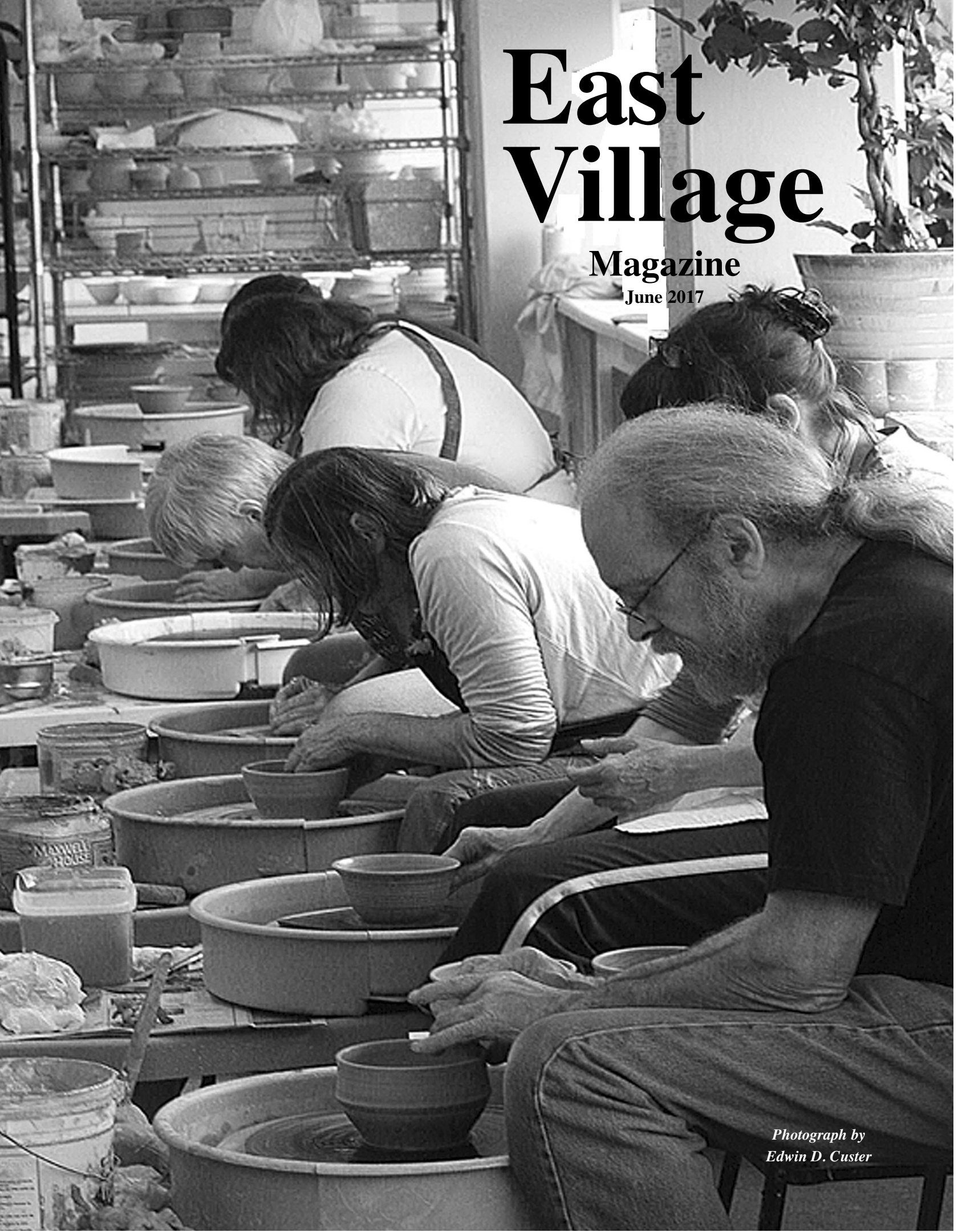


East Village

Magazine

June 2017



*Photograph by
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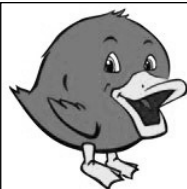
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Vol. LV No. 6 June 2017

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Layout by Ted Nelson. Printing by Riegle Press Inc., 1282 N. Gale Rd., Davison, Mich. 48423.

The *East Village Magazine* is a program of the Village Information Center Inc., a nonprofit corporation. We welcome material from readers, but all submissions become the property of the publication and if published will be edited to conform to the editorial style and policies of the publication. All inquiries about the publication should be mailed to *East Village Magazine*, Village Information Center, 720 E. Second St., Flint, Mich. 48503. Distribution is the second Saturday of each month. Display advertising rates are \$34 a column-inch plus any other costs. Unclassified ads are \$2.50 a printed line or part of a printed line. Rates subject to change without notice. The deadline for advertising is 10 days before each publication date.

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Commentary

Will a cool spring give us a hot summer?

By Paul Rozycki

After a fairly mild winter, spring has been rather cool, gray, and rainy. However, what's been true for the weather may not be true for this summer's political outlook. More than a few political issues offer the prospect of being very hot.

On the national level

On the national scene, President Trump's firing of FBI director James Comey, growing rumors of a possible Russian involvement in the 2016 campaign, and the apparent release of classified information to Russian diplomats, have led to demands for special prosecutors, congressional investigations, and even impeachment threats — all in the first four



months of the Trump administration. We will see if President Trump's visits to Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Rome changed the picture now that he's back. Even after shaking hands with the leaders of three of the world's major religions, all those investigations and committees are still waiting for him.

Governor's race in Michigan

On the state level, the election for governor is still a year and a half away and candidates are lining up in both parties to replace the term-limited Rick Snyder. U.S. Rep. Dan Kildee's decision to forgo the governor's race and remain in the U.S. House seems to leave field open to ex-state Sen. Gretchen Whitmer. However, with



Kildee out of the gubernatorial contest, trial attorneys Geoffrey Fieger and Mark Bernstein might emerge as serious competitors. In addition, businessman Shri Thanedar,

Detroit Health Director Abdul El-Sayed, Xerox executive Bill Cobbs, and Kentiel White, health care worker, are also in the running for the Democratic nomination.

For the Republicans, two names are leading the pack. Attorney General Bill Schuette has long been considered the most likely nominee. Even without a formal declaration, he has been running for governor for much of his career. Lt.

Gov. Brian Calley might give him a challenge. But Calley's ties to Gov. Snyder might be a formidable barrier while the Flint water crisis remains a major issue. Dr. Jim Hines has also formally announced his candidacy. Among others who are also mentioned as possible Republican candidates are Michigan Secretary of State Ruth Johnson, former U.S. Rep. Candice Miller, and state Sen. Colbeck.

While most analysts give Whitmer and Schuette the inside track to the nomination, it's worth remembering that recent years have been very good for outside challengers. The victories of Barack Obama in 2008, Rick Snyder in 2010, and Donald Trump in 2016, have shown that voters are more than willing to turn from the obvious frontrunners and pick an unlikely nominee.

Hot water for Flint?

But the hottest part of the political summer may be reserved for voters in Flint.

At the moment, it seems that Mayor Karen Weaver's decision to stay with the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) is likely to be the next step in resolving the Flint water crisis. But making that decision stick won't be easy. Several members of the city council, after reviewing the contract with GLWA, have expressed serious doubts about the wisdom of staying with Detroit water, instead of managing our own system via the Karegnondi Pipeline. A meeting to explain and discuss the issue last month turned into a shouting match, resulting in several arrests. Whatever the final decision, it won't be stress-free and it could get very hot.

One of the highlights of Mayor Weaver's administration has been the "Fast Start" program where some 18,000 homes are expected to have their lead pipes replaced in the next three years. One problem has emerged. About 22 percent of the homes scheduled for new pipes already have copper pipes and don't need replacement. The city records are so old and inaccurate that contractors can't be sure where they need to replace the old lead and galvanized pipes and where they don't.



Recent lawsuits have raised questions about

(Continued on Page 11.)

Cover: Empty Bowls fundraiser workshop for Eastern Michigan Food Bank



Photograph by Edwin D. Custer

Photo of the Month: Good place to start over

Water woes worsened by politics: KWA Chief

By Jan Worth-Nelson

Attempting to explain the city's probable move to stay on "Detroit water" for the next 30 years, Genesee County Drain Commissioner Jeff Wright, who also is CEO of the Karegnondi Water Authority (KWA), said what might once have been options for the city have been made less viable by "emotional damage" and politics.

Wright offered his views at the May meeting of the College Cultural Neighborhood Association.

He was there to review the proposal to keep Flint on water from the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), a hotly contested plan that means the Karegnondi Pipeline will play a much reduced role in supplying water to the city, although in a partnership with its former competitor — the GLWA.

Residents can submit questions and comments about the proposals via email at flintwatersourceinfo@cityofflint.com.

Wright's full PowerPoint presentation is available at karegnondi.com.

Flint Mayor Karen Weaver recently extended the review time for the proposal to June 12, at which point the Flint City Council is scheduled to vote.

Discussions about the plan have been contentious, with one town hall on the subject resulting in rancorous interchanges from the residents and six arrests.

Under the proposal, Flint will sign a 30-year contract with the GLWA, with KWA as the "emergency backup source." The GLWA will have access to the raw untreated water from the KWA but can only resell it within the city limits, he said.

Crucial to the agreement is a complicated financial arrangement through which the GLWA will pick up a \$7 million/year bond payment to the KWA that had been part of an original agreement with the city and the KWA.

As Wright put it, "If this comes to fruition, basically the contracts between the county and the city will be something of history; all contracts with the city from now on will be with the GLWA."

In the face of numerous questions from residents about the effect of the GLWA proposal on individual water rates, Wright said he did not know how to answer, with many factors still in the works.

One exasperated resident, hardware store owner Sally Kagerer, noting that she believes access to water will increasingly be "precious," asserted, "Detroit will control us from here on in — whatever they say goes. We have no control over our rates or our economic future."

Use of the Karegnondi pipeline had been in the works for years before the water crisis hit, and played a role in the complicated series of

events surrounding it. For many years, Flint received Lake Huron water supplied out of Detroit — formerly the Detroit Water and Sewage Department (DWSD), reorganized and renamed a year ago as the GLWA. However, Flint was paying the highest rates in the system, based in part on a rate structure determined by its distance from the source.

Before the arrival of the city's emergency managers, in 2010, former Mayor Dayne Walling and others first convened the KWA. In succeeding years, a move to build the pipeline was deemed by Rowe Engineering to be the least expensive option for Flint's water supply, when compared to continuing with Detroit or refurbishing Flint's water treatment plant. The pipeline was scheduled to be completed this year.

"The whole concept of the KWA," Wright said, "was that you guys [Flint residents] were being taken advantage of and we were going to give you an alternative." He said he had always tried to act in support of the city's self-determination.

"When Flint joined the KWA, the state tried to get me to accept a contract that was only signed by the State of Michigan," Wright said. "I stood up and said this is not happening until the city council votes up or down on joining this."

(Continued on Page 5.)

... Water

(Continued from Page 4.)

"That is still my position," he said. "It's up to the people of Flint, the Flint city council and administration, what they say, going forward. If they decide to stay with the KWA, fine. If not, I have to be sure KWA is not negatively affected."

In 2013, the Flint city council, with the support of former Mayor Dayne Walling and then-emergency manager Ed Kurtz, voted to buy 16 million gallons a day from the 77-mile-long project connecting the city to Lake Huron water. The idea was that Flint would have more control over its water supply and save money.

Within two weeks after that decision, however, as is well known to students of the crisis, Wright explained how Detroit notified the city that it would be taken off the DWSD within 12 months. Since the KWA pipeline wasn't yet ready, state officials running the city opted to use the Flint River as an interim supply source and resurrect Flint's dormant water treatment plant, which had not been used for 50 years. Thus began the city's water troubles.

[Dayne Walling, in a recent interview with *Easr Village Magazine*, stated that he and the Flint city council of the time had never considered using the Flint River as an interim water source — that option, he asserted, was made by the state.]

Although he said everybody benefits from the so-called "Grand Bargain" to resolve the city's water source supply needs, Wright added since he was presented with the proposal at a meeting in March, his job has been exclusively to make sure the KWA and Genesee County were not negatively affected.

Wright said the Flint water treatment plant, which had been planned as a key part of the city's move to the KWA pipeline, is capable of treating not only lake water — as had been expected using the KWA pipeline — but even river water. Noting that 68 percent of all water served to people in the country comes from rivers, Wright said from a technical standpoint it can be done.

However, he said, the catch is "the emotional damage in Flint has been too hard."

Further, he said he does not believe Flint is capable of treating its own water because of personnel issues — getting qualified staff in place. The day of his presentation, JoLisa McDay, the city's water treatment plant manager, had resigned. He noted the city pays 30-40 percent below the going rate for such positions, so could not get the high caliber of people needed. "Couple that with the fact that Flint will be under the microscope for the next several years by the EPA, the DEQ, the nonprofits, the professors, the universities — the people who do have the licenses to operate a facility like that are going to be leery," he said.

Asked if there was a way the county and city might work together for an arrangement that would replace the GLWA proposal — for example, to expand use of the county water treatment facility to accommodate Flint's needs and bring in money through the KWA pipeline — Wright said, "the parochialism and politics between the county and the city are such that it would never happen."

He said county officials likely would see themselves as unfairly bailing out the city, and city representatives would see the county as compromising city control.

Before the water crisis hit, Wright

explained, the city and KWA authorities had envisioned a partnership between Flint and the rural counties east of the city. He noted Sanilac County, already one of the partners in the KWA, is the largest agricultural county in the state — number two in asparagus and number three in cranberries, he said.

He said at present those products are grown and picked here, then shipped to Texas for packaging and then shipped back to be sold. Instead, KWA planners had hoped to create a processing and packing industry in Flint. He said agricultural production uses raw, untreated water and thus would not need a processing plant.

EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.

Pipes replaced so far in Flint: 1,139

Source: May 23 press release, City of Flint

Lead-tainted service lines at 253 homes have been replaced so far in Phase 4 of the city's FAST Start program, which aims to replace pipes at 6,000 homes in 2017. That brings the total of residential pipe replacements so far to 1,139.

Mayor Karen Weaver said she hopes to have all of Flint's lead-tainted service lines — nearly 20,000 — replaced by 2020.

Although the water quality has been declared improved, residents still are urged to drink only filtered water and replace filters when needed.

Andrew Custer awarded Fulbright

By Jan Worth-Nelson



Andrew Custer Board.

Custer, a graduate of The Valley School, is the nephew of *EVM's* late founder and publisher Gary Custer and son of Casey and Edwin Custer, *EVM's* longtime photographer and distribution director.

He will be in Colombia from July 2017 to May 2018 as part of a program to support the teaching of English as a lecturer at La

Universidad Escuela de Administracion de Negocios — a school of business administration — according to the official announcement from the Fulbright program.

In addition, Custer, who has been teaching secondary ESL in Houston for the past two years and speaks fluent Spanish, said he expects to be engaged in the community and to bring "mutual understanding between our cultures."

He said his decision to apply to Colombia specifically had something to do with being from Flint.

"I chose Colombia for work in the first place because the majority of what is known of the country by foreigners is negative stereotypes. Flint often gets painted a certain way as well. I want to learn about the place to get a more accurate picture," he said.

"It's an honor to be selected as a Fulbright Fellow," Custer said. "I am told it is a life-altering experience."

Custer studied Spanish at Michigan State, taught English to international students, and has traveled to Peru, where he also taught English. He says learning a second language has had numerous benefits, professionally and personally.

"Spanish allows me to see or explain the world in a different way," he said. "Language shapes the way I think, and having this second language takes away some limits. It allows me to be more creative. And it sounds cool."

Custer is one of more than 1,900 U.S. citizens who will conduct research, teach English and provide expertise abroad in the 2017-2018 year through the Fulbright program, according to a Fulbright press release.

EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.

Glory days in rearview mirror for Flint high school sports

By Harold C. Ford

New administration lays plans for resurrection

Ed. note: space limitations mean that much of this story could not appear in the EVM hard copy. Thus, what you read here are excerpts. For the whole analysis, please go to eastvillagemagazine.org.

Decades of Flint high school athletic excellence was branded into the nation's sports persona when four "Flintstones" led Michigan State University's basketball program to national prominence, culminating in a collegiate championship in 2000.

Mateen Cleaves, Morris Peterson, Charlie Bell, and Antonio Smith were, among other things, the products of a Flint public school system that embraced its student athletes, as if family, from elementary to high school.

Dramatic changes are in the air: Flint officials have already announced that the athletic programs at Northwestern and Southwestern will be combined for the 2017-2018 school year. Jamie Foster, newly appointed Flint Schools athletic director, said, "Now we're working our way down to one high school. We're two high schools right now with one athletic program." As a result, Flint Schools will have a pick of the best facilities at their two campuses, plus Atwood Stadium.

Varsity track and field and football contests are likely to be held at the "North Campus" (Northwestern) while softball and baseball are likely to be held at the "South Campus" (Southwestern). The baseball field has already been renovated, according to Foster.

Flint Schools, with substantial input from students, has already chosen their new mascot (Jaguars) and school colors (teal and black). Those choices will be announced to the public at the June 7 meeting of the Flint Board of Education.

But whatever happens in the years to come, Flint's glory days in high school sports appear to be clearly in the rearview mirror.

This article, based on extensive research and interviews with eight area sports aficionados and school officials, aims to examine why. Further, with our sources *EVM* examined whether plans are under way to restore the viability and competitiveness of the Flint public school athletic programs.

Interviews included conversations with Bilal Tawwab, Flint Schools superintendent;



Bilal Tawwab

Duncan Beagle, Judge of the Genesee County Circuit Court; Jamie Foster, newly-appointed Flint Schools athletic director; Norm Bryant, principal founder of the Greater Flint Afro-American Hall of Fame; Courtney Hawkins, Beecher Schools athletic director; Mike Maienbrook, director of community athletics, Flint Schools; Mike Williams, Flint teacher, Beecher boys basketball coach; and John McGarry, Atwood Stadium director and United Way Youth Recreation Initiative.

For full accounts of these interviews, please go to eastvillagemagazine.org.

Here are some excerpts:

From 1930 to 1995, Flint's four public high schools — Northern, Central, Southwestern, and Northwestern — produced athletic teams that captured 47 state championships. Northern bested all area schools with 29 state championship teams; Central won 7, Southwestern 6, Northwestern 5.

Sixty-five years, forty-seven team championships for Flint public high schools. In the past 22 years since 1995, the tally is zero.

The steady decline of Flint high school sports may have reached its lowest point when the Northwestern girls basketball team was disbanded this past February partway through their 2016-2017 season. This once-proud program that won three MHSAA championships in 1983, 1984 and 1995, was winless before disbanding. They dropped games by scores of 77-13 to Davison, 70-19 to Bay City Western, and 63-6 to Hamady. The girls' basketball team at Flint Southwestern fared little better as it finished with a winless record in the Saginaw Valley League South.

Among the reasons for the decline:

Loss of population:

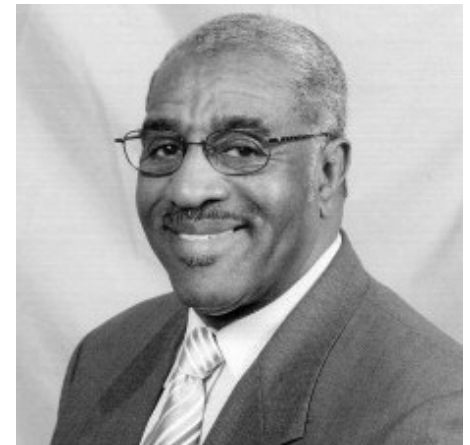
At the top of nearly everyone's list is a loss of population. A city that once bustled with a population of 200,000 has fallen below 100,000. Economic stress, crime, the water crisis, and other forces are likely to extend Flint's depopulation trend into the future.

Loss of students led to the closures of Flint Central in 2009 and Flint Northern in 2014. According to Tawwab, Flint school officials plan to consolidate and move all high school students to a single campus at the old Flint Central site by the year 2020. Flint Schools' student population, which peaked at nearly 47,000 in 1970, has now fallen to about 5,000.

"Yes, absolutely," was the response of Flint Athletic Director Jamie Foster to the notion that immeasurable athletic talent was moving to the suburbs. "Right now we just want to work with what we have. It'd be nice not to lose any more. We would like to stop the hemorrhaging," he said.

Poverty and its effects:

Norm Bryant, who starred in football and track at Flint Northern in the late 1950s, is con-



Norm Bryant

cerned about the flight to the suburbs. "A lot of people couldn't afford to leave the city ... and then what's left?" he mused. "People can't leave; some of these, not all of them now, but some of the people ... they could care (less) whether their kid went to school or not," he said. "You've still got people with interest in their kids but some of them just don't care."

The 2016 report of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission about the Flint water crisis asserted Flint residents "have been subject-

(Continued on Page 7.)

... *Glory*

(Continued from Page 6.)

ed to unprecedented harm and hardship, much of it caused by structural and systemic racism that have corroded your city, your institutions, and your water pipes for generations.”

“Among those conditions were ‘redlining’ practices in real estate and housing over decades that led to spirals of white flight and barriers to black home ownership, employment discrimination against blacks, the loss of revenue sharing, depletion of local resources and a shrinking tax base due to industry departures, the decline of neighborhood schools, and a consequent neglect over time of basic infrastructure.”

Thus, it’s not a stretch to conclude that the same destructive forces that led to Flint’s water crisis have adversely impacted its school system, including its athletic programs.

Poverty and academics:

Flint’s Foster plans to ramp up academic assistance for his Flint athletes with tutoring and study tables. Beecher’s Hawkins agrees with the interconnectedness of athletics and academics. “I view sports as the biggest carrot in Beecher to get them to graduate,” he said. “I know it should be academics first ... (but) if getting you to play on our team will get you to do better in school, which gets you to walk across that stage, and take pictures with your mom and dad after graduation, then so be it. Who cares the order? Let’s get it done.”

Beecher boys basketball coach Mike Williams agrees: “Kids want to be successful, they want to be disciplined, they want to be taught the right things,” he asserted. “We want to send them out as better, not just as players, but young men. My philosophy is the basketball court is no different than life; you got your boundaries; you get outside of your boundaries, there’s a penalty. You can get knocked down and you gotta get up. Ultimately, you’re going to be judged not by ... all the wins and losses; you’re going to be judged by how you play the game.”

Facilities:

“Probably for Beecher and Flint, the biggest thing I see that’s the difference in the decline are facilities,” he told *EVM*. “We have a lot of people migrating to Grand Blanc because they have the best facilities, or Flushing, or Davison, or Hamady; Hamady just built a gym,” Williams says.

Hawkins hopes for an enrollment spike from students who might be drawn to the newest track in Genesee County and the most

recently upgraded football field. In 2013, Beecher voters approved a \$2.2 million bond proposal that funneled about half that amount for the new track and football field upgrade. Hawkins is still waiting for that spike.

Coaches:

Where are the modern-day versions of Bill Frieder, Dorothy Kukulka, Leteia Hughley, Norbert Badar, Stan Gooch, and Grover Cleveland who coached Flint high school athletes to dozens of state championships? Most fingers point in the direction of Beecher’s Hawkins and Williams when those in the know now look for the gold standard in Flint-area coaches. Hawkins has led his Beecher football team to the MHSAA playoffs 10 of 12 years. Williams has guided the Beecher boys basketball team to the MHSAA Class C state championship five of the last six years. In the Flint area, Beecher’s 23 state championships is second only to Flint Northern.

As a former high school official who was awarded the Jim Massar Service Award in 1996 for “strong dedication,” Beagle knows a good coach when he sees one. “Courtney Hawkins knows what’s going on,” he asserted. “Beecher, until Courtney Hawkins arrived, was not exactly a football power. When Courtney Hawkins arrived with his background — NFL, Beecher guy — it was almost like he was ‘God’ coming into this community and he didn’t do that overnight, but so many people believed in (him).”

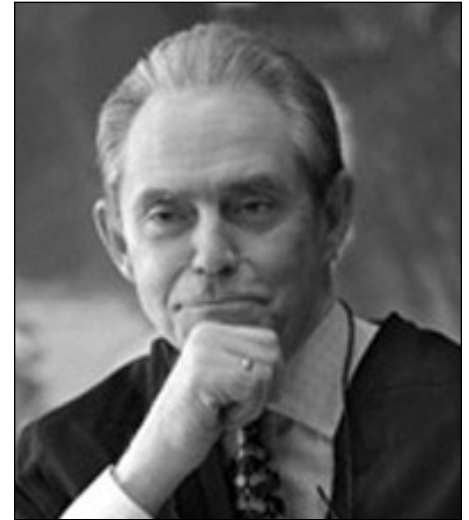
Bryant agrees that coaching is critical. “Coaching means a lot,” he said. “Back at the time that Guy Houston coached at Northern, he had blacks, he had Polish, he had Romanians, Hungarians, but he put them all on the team. He was the type of coach that if he went up to you and if he thought hittin’ you up upside the head would get the most out of you, he’d do it. But if he thought doing that to you would turn you off, he wouldn’t do it. He knew how to get to each one of his players.”

Family Dysfunction:

Judge Beagle believes the breakdown of the family unit causes lower rates of participation in athletics. Beagle has served on the bench for 25 years. He is currently one of five Family Court judges in Genesee County. He also presides over three specialty courts — a Drug Court for neglectful parents, an Attendance Court for severely truant students, and ADAPT Court to improve efficiency of increased number of paternity cases.

“I think the reason you’re more effective out in Beecher (despite poverty and single-

parent households) is you’re all in it together and you’re all family,” he observed. “In many urban communities there’s been such a break-



Judge Duncan Beagle

down in the family unit and I see it.” He is frustrated by the parade of absentee fathers and overburdened single-parent mothers in his courtroom. “Some of them are outstanding mothers, but they’ve got so much on their plate ... that sometimes getting their kids to practice or to sports is not a top priority.”

Distractions/Inhibitors:

Finally, a potpourri of factors that distract or inhibit youth participation in high school athletics resulted from *EVM*’s conversations with local sports aficionados. They include competition for students’ time including jobs, scholarship program commitments, family obligations, and church activities. Beyond that, many students are not inclined to devote the necessary time and resources to being an athlete even if they can.

In short, the glory years of Flint’s yesteryear and its attendant Flintstones sports persona are not likely to return. Restoration of respectability, though, is a realistic possibility given sufficient resources, effective planning, and capable leadership. “We’re not going to be some powerhouse,” cautions Foster. “We should be a little more competitive.”

Flint Schools Superintendent Bilal Tawwab said, “We’re paying close attention to ... the quality of our athletics program. We’re going to be very strategic and really pull together our talent. Athletics are important to providing a quality education to kids so we’re going to make the changes we need to make now. Stay tuned.”

EVM staff writer Harold C. Ford can be reached at hcford1185@gmail.com.

Flint Pride celebrates history, struggles of LGBTQ community

By Meghan Christian

Since 2000, June has been recognized as “Pride Month,” also National LGBTQ History Month. In Flint, activists annually join in the observance, both by offering a hometown event and by reflecting on the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender life here and nationally.

The Flint Pride festival will be held from 2-8 p.m. Saturday, June 24 in Riverbank Park. This seventh annual celebration, coordinated by the Flint Wellness Services, will include live music, food, merchandise booths, children’s activities and educational information.

A word about the acronyms. Local activists note that what seems like an “alphabet soup” is continually changing as society’s understanding of gender identity evolves. Genevieve Field, part of the Equality Caucus of Flint, for example, said the added “Q” refers to “queer” for some people and “questioning” for others. Some have recently added an “A” to the acronym for “allies” or “asexual.” Some, like Wellness, call for putting a “+” at the end to indicate inclusivity. Some, Field said, advocate using the word “queer” to include all members of the community, because, as she put it, “it is a word, not an acronym,” and as a way to positively co-opt what was formerly a slur. For this story, *EVM* has opted to use “LGBTQ” throughout.

Organizers say Flint Pride is an occasion for the LGBTQ community to celebrate one another, to take a stand against violence and discrimination and to honor the sacrifices made by those in earlier times.

Contemporary LGBTQ life in Flint has evolved greatly since the last century, and now offers many more opportunities for the LGBTQ community, such as the activism of the Equality Caucus and hangouts like the Pachyderm Bar. Less known, according to Tim Retzloff, a former Flint resident and scholar of LGBTQ life, is the history of that community in Flint



Photo by Rick Yuille

Tim Retzloff

in the last century.

Pride festivals are held during June to commemorate the Stonewall Rebellion — a series of riots that occurred on June 28 and 29, 1969, in New York City. During a police raid of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar packed that night with revelers, the patrons fought back. Over that night and the next, violence spilled out into the street and surrounding neighborhood.



Photo by Betty Leonard

Melva Earhart and patrons at The State Bar, late 1950s

Thirteen were arrested and many hospitalized.

While raids on establishments catering to LGBTQ people were not uncommon, resistance like that was, Retzloff said. Stonewall helped make the struggles of the LGBTQ community visible, when it had been hidden. While Stonewall was one of the first events to put issues around the LGBTQ community in the foreground, he added, it was not the beginning of LGBTQ life in America and certainly not in Flint.

Retzloff has been studying the Flint LGBTQ community since he attended UM-Flint in the 90s — where he was the co-editor of *The Michigan Times*. After graduating from Michigan State, he received his Ph.D. in history from Yale.

In his research, Retzloff examined old court cases, the earliest from 1938. Those court cases offer a glimpse into the discrimination and violence leveled back then against the gay community.

“A guy was cruising Willson Park and was arrested ... and there’s at least a police report and some court transcript available,” Retzloff said. “The judge asked the guy if he wanted [the judge] to order him castrated if that would solve his problem.”

For many of these cases, the charges were gross indecency and sometimes sodomy. If found guilty, a man could spend up to five years in prison. If not prison, many were sent to a psychiatrist because homosexuality was still considered a mental illness up until 1973, when it finally was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

It wasn’t until the late 1940s that a more positive sense of LGBTQ life began to emerge. In 1948, Melva Earhart, a lesbian, opened The State Bar on Union Street. It was one of the first bars to serve both straight and gay patrons. The State Bar, and bars and clubs that followed,

gave the LGBTQ community a place to gather quietly together in peace. Most were still unable to be open with their sexual orientations, but the beginnings of safe spaces were monumental to the Flint LGBTQ community, Retzloff said.

But it took until 1975 for the first LGBTQ organization to be established in Flint. The organization was called Dignity and it was established for gay Catholics, Retzloff said. While the group was not exclusive to men, the majority were men. A few years later in 1978, Moonrise was established, the first lesbian organization in Flint.

During the 1980s, Redeemer Metropolitan Community Church, originally on Chevrolet near Welch, offered outreach and services to the LGBTQ community. It is now meeting again at the Unitarian Universalist church on Ballenger, Retzloff said.

In the 1970s and 1980s, while Flint’s network of support for the city’s LGBTQ community grew, there still were no laws passed protecting the LGBTQ community. Finally, in 1991, the city council unanimously passed a non-discrimination ordinance.

The State Bar moved to its Dort Highway location in 1968 and closed in 2013. Earhart died in 1985, and her longtime partner, Betty Leonard, died in 2013.

“Our contemporary LGBTQ world did not spring out of nowhere,” Retzloff said. “It has a history and it’s important to know that history because it’s important to know the kinds and degree of oppression that people endured. It is also important to know that they did endure; that there was resilience, there was a sense of community and fun. Just because it was forced to be invisible doesn’t mean it wasn’t there.”

Mark Blake, a transgender teen from Grand Blanc, attended Flint’s Pride festival last year and said he not only had fun, but also gained a sense of belonging.

“I attended Flint’s Pride last year around this time, and I felt at home. The LGBTQ+ community came together and created a huge safe zone for us to express ourselves and receive little to no judgement. People always associate Flint with negative things, but that was amazing,” said Blake.

Many members of the LGBTQ community say Pride festivals are a way for LGBTQ people to challenge the view that there are only two kinds of gender identity, and to show that all expressions of love, regardless of gender, are real and valid.

(Continued on Page 9.)

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... Pride

(Continued from Page 8.)

“We grow up believing that straight relationships are ‘normal.’ Many people of the LGBTQ community will admit that they didn’t know that they had the option to love or transition to the opposite sex,” Blake said.

“Being a part of the LGBTQA+ community is not abnormal, but people of our community often feel alone and like their relationship is invalid. Pride is the perfect opportunity to show people that they are not alone by showing your pride for who you are and coming together to celebrate our community.”

EVM Managing Editor Meghan Christian can be reached at meghan.christian22@gmail.com. EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson contributed to this report. She can be reached at jan-worth1118@gmail.com.

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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

“This Month” is a new *EVM* feature highlighting a selection of interesting events available to our readers — beginning after our publication date of June 8. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city.

Discover 30+ Historic Vehicles

30+ historic cars tied to Flint & Genesee County. Includes Flint-made carriages & GM concept cars from 1895 to 1987.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
Friday, Saturday & Sunday	Exhibit	Buick Gallery
JUNE 9-11 10 A.M. – 5 P.M.	* Admission: \$7 adults, \$6 seniors 60+,	303 Walnut St.
JUNE 16-18 10 A.M. – 5 P.M.	\$5 youth ages 2-11, and free for mem-	
JUNE 23-25 10 A.M. – 5 P.M.	bers and children under 1 year of age.	

Chamber Music Series

The Flint School of the Performing Arts and the Flint Symphony Orchestra holding free concerts during June. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. followed by a reception. Seating is limited to 270, the capacity of the hall. Free parking off Crapo Street behind the FIM. Sponsors: Patricia Cumings Dort Fund and the David T. Dort Fund. More info: theFSPA.org or theFSO.org.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
FRIDAY, JUNE 9: 7 P.M.	Strings and the Ravel String Quartet	MacArthur Hall,
FRIDAY, JUNE 16: 7 P.M.	Strings and Winds, featuring Walton Façade	Flint Institute of Music
FRIDAY, JUNE 30: 7 P.M.	Clarinet and String, featuring Mozart Clarinet Quintet	1120 E. Kearsely St.

Euchre Tournament

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
FRIDAY, JUNE 9: 6:30 P.M.	Euchre Tourn. *Admission: \$5	St. George Orthodox Church, 5191 Lennon Rd.

Flint Area Multiple Myeloma Support Group

Support group for survivors/caregivers to learn about latest news in management and treatment of multiple myeloma.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
THURSDAY, JUNE 15: 6:30 P.M.	Support Group *Admission: FREE	McLaren Hospitality House, G-3170 Beecher Rd.

The Flint Community Players: “The House of Yes”

By Wendy MacLeod, “The House of Yes” follows a dysfunctional family on Thanksgiving as their weekend is disrupted by not only a hurricane, but also an unexpected guest. This show is for mature audiences only.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
FRIDAY, JUNE 16: 7:30 P.M.	Performance	Flint Community Players,
SUNDAY, JUNE 25: 2:30 P.M.	*Admission: \$10	2462 S. Ballenger Hwy.

Jazznite — Enjoy a night of jazz performed by Pat Cronley and friends.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 5:00 P.M.	Performance *Admission: FREE	White Horse Tav., 621 W. Court St.

Movie under the Stars: “The Lego Batman Movie”

This free, family friendly event is one in a summer-long series of movie showings. Each showing has a different movie and special events around each film like costume contests and petting zoos. The June 23rd event will have bounce houses and attendees are asked to wear their favorite superhero costume.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 7:30 P.M. (Movie begins at dusk)	Movie *Admission: FREE	Flint City Hall

Flint Pride Festival

The 7th Annual Flint Pride Festival will be held in Riverbank Park. The event will feature vendors, entertainers, and more. This event is a positive stance against the violence and discrimination against the LGBTQ community and to help increase visibility and to build a sense of community. Allies of the LGBTQ community are also welcome to attend.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 2–8 P.M.	Festival *Admission: FREE (\$5 suggested donation)	Riverbank Park, downtown

Neighborhood Art Parade

The Flint Public Art Project continues their Neighborhood Art Parade. Partners and community organizations create neighborhood attractions out of under-appreciated sites. Local music, a free barbeque, and an actual parade through the streets.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 5 - 8 P.M.	Parade *Admission: FREE	Kennedy Park, Mary St and Saginaw St.

Red Cross Blood Drive

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
THURSDAY, JUNE 29, NOON - 6 P.M.	Blood Drive	Lamb of God Lutheran Church, 2051 W. Maple Ave., Flint

New managing editor for EVM



Meghan Christian, 23, of Davison has joined *East Village Magazine* as managing editor. Her responsibilities will include generating story ideas and coordinating assignments, working one-to-one with reporters, and editing the magazine.

Meghan Christian

Christian, who graduated this spring from the University of Michigan-Flint with a bachelor's degree in English, was editor-in-chief of *The Michigan Times*, UM-Flint's student-run newspaper. She said she discovered her love of words and editing at UM-Flint, adding that telling Flint stories has become one of her passions. In her free time, Christian said she enjoys reading, writing short stories, and spending time with her boyfriend and her cat. She can be reached at meghan.christian22@gmail.com.

"We are delighted to welcome Meghan's energy and fresh perspective," Jan Worth-Nelson, *EVM* editor, said. "Her proven editing expertise, intelligence, and deep interest in Flint will help *East Village Magazine* enrich and continue its tradition of first-rate community journalism."

... Summer

(Continued from Page 3.)

the mayor's payments to several major advisors and many have criticized her attempts to replace Flint's current Republic trash service with the scandal-tainted Rizzo service.

Recall against Mayor Weaver

All of that has led to a recall campaign against the mayor. Begun by activists and critics Arthur Woodson and Alex Harris, it seemed that after several unsuccessful attempts to win approval for petitions, the campaign would end up going nowhere. However, Woodson's most recent petition drive has been accepted and, at the moment, it looks like he might have a decent chance of getting the required 5,800 signatures.

If that happens, as a result of changes in state law, we will see a very different recall campaign for mayor.

In the past, recalls were usually two-stage affairs. Voters would first vote yes or no on whether to recall an official. Then, if they were recalled, an election would follow, and the recalled official could not run.

Because of the frequency of recalls in Michigan, the state law changed in 2012, limiting the time frame for recalls, and requiring a single election for recalls, rather than a several-step process. (Prior to that time, Michigan had at least 457 recall elections between 2000 and 2011, the highest in the nation.) If the recall petition against Mayor Weaver gathers enough

signatures of registered voters within 60 days, a single election will follow. The incumbent would be on the ballot, as well as anyone else who chose to run. Qualifying for the ballot would require about 900 signatures on a petition. It could be a very long list of candidates and the candidate with the most votes, not necessarily a majority, would win. If there were ten candidates, someone with 11% of the vote might be elected. If there were 20 candidates a 6% vote might win the election. You get the idea. There's a chance that whoever wins might not have anything close to a majority. (In a 2003 California gubernatorial recall election there were 135 candidates on the ballot.)

The city council is also up for election this year, with a primary in August and the general election in November. Even without the recall, with competition in every ward, the Flint City Council races will generate their own share of friction for the next several months. It's not yet clear whether a council member could run for both a seat on the council and the mayoral election at the same time.

In any case, the recall has the potential to be more of a dusty cattle stampede than an election.

It could be a very hot summer.

EVM political columnist Paul Rozycki can be reached at paul.rozycki@mcc.edu.

... Love

(Continued from Page 12.)

students and their families know they are listened to, appreciated, and most importantly, loved. Loved for who they are. Loved for their unabashed faithfulness to their religious beliefs. Loved for their willingness to open their lives and community for this Christian woman.

I have found my place in the world within a community not my own but who welcomed me without reservation. My prayer is that all people of this world we call home would open their hearts to love.

John Lennon stated it most clearly when he sang "Love Is All You Need." Love is truly all we need. Everything else is of little consequence. If we would open our hearts and love others, the world would indeed be a better place. I am thankful to have even more love in my life because of this new experience. Love conquers all, and in my little corner of the universe, love teaches in a middle school English classroom.

New EVM staff writer Aubrey McClain lives in the College Cultural neighborhood and teaches at the Genesee Academy.

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Village Life

How a Christian teacher finds, gives love at an Islamic school

By Aubrey McClain

“You can do this, Aubrey,” I repeated to myself over and over as I sat in the parking lot of my new school. My heart raced. I thought it might jump out of my chest. I had started over at new schools before so this should be nothing to make me so nervous.

“You can do this, Aubrey,” I repeated again, a feeble attempt at a dose of courage.

I'll Not Disturb You, Little Bird

(For David)

By Grayce Scholt

I'll not disturb you, little bird
this chilly morning, when
apple blossoms close again
thinking it is spring,

when last night's prowler
masked and hungry
grasped and mouthed
the crumbs that squirrels
dropped before
they scurried up the
tree to sleep.

This morning only bits remain
for tiny tweezer beaks,
for feathers rumpling
in the pricks of wind
that though it's spring
still sting.

So pick at what is left, dear bird,
the specks of corn, of millet
seeds, in spite of
all the million mouths
across the earth
whose gaping beaks have
nothing left to seek.

Little bird,
eat.



Photo by David Michael

Grayce Scholt is a retired English professor from Mott College who wrote art reviews for the *Flint Journal*. Her book of poetry, *Bang! Go All the Porch Swings*, is available online from Amazon. A personal narrative of the poet's life in Europe in the early 1950s, *Vienna, Only You*, is available at gscholt09@comcast.net. The author's new book of poems, *Night Song*, is available from Friesen Press (www.friesenpress.com) and Amazon.

The walk up the relatively short path to the front doors made me feel like I was in one of those carnival fun house tunnels, the ones with all the psychedelic colors and strobe lights. I had never been so unsure, so unsteady of anything in my life. I quit a public charter school where I had stability and ten years of service to start over at a private school.

It was an Islamic parochial school. As a Christian woman, I was the proverbial fish out of water.

My nerves shot, I buzzed to be allowed entry, suddenly grateful for my college acting career. I smiled a big smile and prayed no one could hear the hardcore rock band drum beat pounding in my chest.

My lack of self-confidence stemmed not from concern about my teaching abilities, but about wondering if I would be accepted by other staff members, my new students, and the new families I would be serving.

I was not a Muslim. I knew very little of Islam. I was a white, conservative, Christian woman, a Baptist preacher's daughter who was now a practicing Catholic preparing for catechism. How in the world would I ever fit into a Muslim community?

My fears quickly waned. Within the first hour of being at my new school, I positively knew that this had been the best career decision I'd ever made. I instantly formed bonds with my new teammates, and my new students were bright, funny young people with whom I knew I would connect.

An even greater alleviation came the afternoon of my first parent-teacher conferences when I met grateful parent after grateful parent thanking me for coming to their school and teaching their children. I, a Christian, was met with love, compassion, and appreciation.

I am one of the lucky ones. My father and mother raised me to see the beauty in all people. It didn't matter if they looked different or practiced a different religious belief. People were people, and that's all there was to it.

I've tried to hold true to that belief in my life. Even after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, as people speculated and became suspicious of their neighbors and as a divisive political tumult heated up, my resolve remains the same: to love all people. I have witnessed this same love from the phenome-

nal people of this Muslim community.

One of the most jarring realizations I've experienced came from a little sixth grade girl. She came up to my desk as I took attendance, hands on her hips, hijab on her head, and sighed a little huff.

“Mrs. McClain?” she questioned. “Why can't Jews, Christians, and Muslims get along? I mean, we all serve the same God. We just do it in different ways.” As I looked up at her sweet face, I knew I had to give the correct “teacher” response and explained that sometimes people simply choose to be ignorant.

Thankfully, she accepted my teacher response, took her seat and readied herself for the day's English instruction. Wise words from one so young made my eyes well, and a single tear slid down my right cheek. I once again realized I had made a great career move.

To be able to connect with students of another faith and have them confident enough to ask me such a question proved that I was there for a reason. I was there to help bridge a gap in understanding. I was there to show love. Appreciative once again for my college acting career, a smile spread across my face as I began to teach.

There was an insurmountable truth in the words she spoke that day. People are people. The religious teachings of the Torah, the Bible, and the Qu'ran speak to loving people, even those who may differ from us. Unfortunately there are those who do not demonstrate love, and their actions cause mistrust and suspicion. Their actions cannot be explained by those of us — Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike — and we are left to pick up the pieces these loveless people leave behind.

In the five months I have been in my new teaching position, I have learned more about love than I ever knew. I may have grown up the daughter of a Baptist minister, always encouraged to love people for who they are, but I've never had the opportunity to be a part of a community different from my own. Being a part of this Muslim community where I have learned about Islam and its teachings from my students and colleagues has strengthened my resolve to love even more.

If my students and colleagues ever feel unsafe, I will stand with them. I want my classroom to be a safe place where my

(Continued on Page 11.)

LV: 6 (649 issues, 6,507 pages)