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Magazine

November 2017

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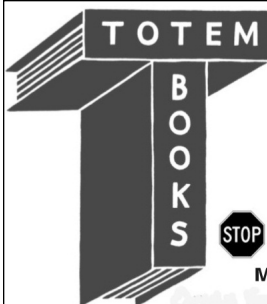


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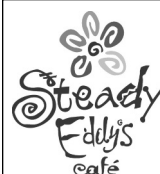
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Commentary How to win an election without the votes? Gerrymander!

By Paul Rozycki

“The people who cast the votes decide nothing. The people who count the votes decide everything.”

– Joseph Stalin

In a democracy the winners in elections are supposed to be decided by whoever gets the most votes. And that is usually true. However, the Soviet dictator’s words may be an ominous warning today. That basic, simple democratic rule can be manipulated to give victory to those who don’t get the most votes. For example in 2016, when Michigan voted for the state House of Representatives, the Democrats won 18,000 more votes than the Republicans, statewide. (If two partial-term candidates are excluded, the Republicans had a slight edge.) In 2014, the margin was even larger, when voters gave and extra 30,000 votes to the Democrats. Yet in the House, 63 Republicans and 47 Democrats have been elected. When the votes for the U.S. Congress were tallied up in 2014 the Democrats had about 50,000 more votes than the Republicans in Michigan. Yet we elected 9 Republicans and 5 Democrats. Even when the Republicans earned a slight majority, their advantage in the legislature was magnified many times. In other years, and in others states, similar patterns were common.

On the national level, even stranger patterns develop. While we’ve all heard about how unpopular Congress is — only a little more than ten or fifteen percent of the public approve of what they are doing — barely ahead of cockroaches and telemarketers. So members of Congress should be in big trouble on election-day — right?

Not quite. Most members of Congress win reelection, and they win by a landslide. Here are a few numbers. In 2016, of the 435 members of the U.S. House, only eight incumbents lost their election. The average margin for winning was 37 percent — a huge landslide. Only 17 of the 435 Congressional elections were decided by five percent of the vote or less. Only 33 seats were decided by 10 percent or less. And in 42 of the 50 states, there were no truly competitive elections for the U.S. House.

How could that happen? There are several causes, but one of the most significant is the ability of one party to draw odd shaped election districts or “gerrymander” the election

process. By many measures, Michigan is considered to be one of the most gerrymandered states, but hardly the only one.

The origins of gerrymandering

The process of drawing oddly shaped election districts is as old as the nation itself. The term “gerrymander” comes from Elbridge Gerry, one of the Founding Fathers who served in the Continental Congress, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and served as vice president under James Madison. He created an oddly shaped district in his home state of Massachusetts to help his party. The election district wrapped around parts of the state and, based on a political cartoon of the day, some of his opponents said it resembled a salamander — thus the name gerrymander, which stuck for the last two hundred years.



1812 Salamander cartoon

As a result of several Supreme Court decisions in the early 1960s, states are required to redraw all of their election districts at least every ten years. After the census is taken at the start of each decade, states are required to draw election districts with equal number of people in each. In this redistricting process, the Supreme Court required election districts to include approximately the same number of people, but it didn’t say much about what shape they could be. That opened the door to shaping districts to favor your own party, or gerrymandering. The state legislatures are in charge of the process, and that’s where the politics comes in. In the first year of a decade, the majority party in the state legislature has the power to create election districts and shape them as they see fit, for the next ten years.

(Continued on Page 11.)

Cover: Buckham Alley Marilyn, mural by Charles Boike



Photograph by Edwin D. Custer

Photo of the Month: Fountains at Applewood Estate

Mott Park revived with neighborhood energy, disc golf

By Teddy Robertson

On this wet, gray evening in mid-October, the 55-degree air feels colder after several days of balmy October sunshine. Beneath the dripping trees at the former Mott Park Municipal Golf Course, closed since 2009, the parking lot — surprisingly — is two-thirds full.

Inside the old golf clubhouse, its windows protected by blue-painted plywood, board members of the Mott Park Recreation Area Association (MPRAA) gather for their monthly meeting.

The room is chilly, but the board members are elated.

The reason for their elation is disc golf, a sport unknown when the Mott Park golf course was built in 1934. The cars in the parking lot belong to disc golfers, eager to check out the Mott Park course, the newest addition to disc golf courses within 20 miles of Flint. The location is already listed on the players' website, "The Disc Golf Scene" and reviewers are excited. According to Wikipedia, disc golf, also called frisbee golf, is a sport in which players throw a disc at a target using rules similar to golf.

According to Tom Saxton, Mott Park Recreation Area Association board president, the disc course is the first project in a three-

phase master plan to transform the old golf course into a multi-use recreation areas. Developed through two community "vision sessions" in 2015 and 2016, and conceptualized by students in landscape architecture from Michigan State and in graphic arts at UM-Flint, the Mott Park Recreation Area master plan aligns with the guiding principles of the city's "Imagine Flint" master plan. Saxton says the Mott Park plan allows for flexibility, the potential to take advantage of new opportunities—like Flint area interest in disc golf that emerged in the community vision sessions.

As a first project, disc golf proved viable. With financial support from "Flint Town



Photo by Dennis Brown

Discs for different disatances

Flyerz" Disc Golf Club, Kettering University, and a grant from the Community Foundation, the course was designed by disc golfers Paul Grasso, Myles Nakamura, and

Mark Stevens. Volunteer students from Kettering dug the 18 tee holes and with neighborhood volunteers over two weekends poured the concrete tee pads — the forms built by the Kettering grounds crew — from which the golfers launch their discs toward targets — chain baskets on poles.

Layout of the disc golf course was finished the first week in October when volunteers from the Flint Town Flyerz, the Mott Park neighborhood, and students from Kettering University readied the course for play by Oct.7. That warm, sunny Saturday, Flyerz members and other players tried out the course; clusters of golfers walked the tees, a sight last seen eight years ago.

No wonder the Mott Park Recreation Area board members are happy this evening; they have come a long way since Flint's four municipal golf courses closed. A small group of residents formed the Mott Park Public Golf Course Association in 2010, registered as a non-profit, and began to seek ways to revive the golf course.

But several years' work and research and consultation reached a dead end — costs for re-seeding and sprinkler system repair were astronomical and the golf industry in Michigan had leveled off. Unlike Swartz Creek or Kearsley Lake, Mott Park, a nine-hole course, and Pierce

(Continued on Page 5.)

... Golf

(Continued from Page 4.)

Park, an executive course, had no commercial suitors, recalls Tom Saxton, board president.

Saxton, a women's soccer coach at Michigan State, said he learned to play golf on the Mott Park course and taught his sons here too. To him, it was "a sacred space." Many at the meeting could tell a story of dis-



Tom Saxton

couragement and frustration as the greens went to seed and wild grass sprouted, or three-wheelers and motorcycles ground up the turf on warm summer nights.



Disc Golf Baskets

So the golf course board decided to change its mission and direction, a move formalized in 2014 with a new name, the Mott Park Recreation Area Association (MPRAA), and a new mission: "To develop, operate, and maintain as a diverse recre-

ational space." (<https://mpraa.net>)

During the transition, Kettering University provided stability and links to more stakeholders and projects like University Avenue Corridor Coalition. The Recreation Area Board expanded in expertise when Adam Marshall Moore, a professional planner raised in Mott Park and now recently returned to Flint, became a member.

To generate ideas for the old golf course and lay community groundwork for a new plan, the Recreation Area Board held a public visioning session in January 2015 at Kettering University. Led by Moore, some 80 attendees proposed and prioritized ideas for a combined recreational and natural space. An unexpected proposal that garnered lively support was disc golf, suggested by some members of a local club, Flint Town Flyerz, who attended. https://www.discgolfscene.com/clubs/Flint_Town_Flyerz

Vision session ideas were fleshed out in concept plans drafted with faculty and professional guidance by students from Michigan State University and UM/Flint. Student creativity and enthusiasm infused new energy into the process.

At the March follow-up session in 2016, the student plans were displayed showing the possible layout for the 72-acre park. Some natural areas were a butterfly sanctuary, trail development, and designated fishing and picnic areas. Other areas would require investment and construction, such as a disc golf course, a canoe and kayak launch, an amphitheater, and a "healing garden" available to McLaren Hospital and Kith Haven Nursing Home.

Board president Saxton leads tonight's meeting with the passion of a long-time resident and the persistence of a coach. Agenda items reflect the success of the disc golf course — parking regulations, signage, hours of operation, security cameras, setting up an app so that disc golf players can contribute online to pay for maintenance. Saxton reminds members that they are in a learning phase, balancing disc golf play with other recreation area users: walkers, bicyclers, paddlers, fishermen, and wildlife. Michigan's oldest continual foot race, the Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot, fits into this picture too.

After the inaugural tournament in late October hosted by the Flint Town Flyerz club and a Sunday kids' clinic, Mott Park is

now the home course for the club but open to everyone when not reserved for tournament play. Members say they plan to run classes to teach the fundamentals of disc golf to community youngsters and anyone



Photo by Dennis Brown

Disc Cart

else who is interested.

The next project in the Mott Park Recreation Area involves a partnership with Flint River Corridor Alliance: a Paddler's Landing, near the former golf hole #4 at the west edge of the Recreation Area, off Sunset Drive and Ballenger Highway. The Alliance has taken the lead and major sponsors have committed support. Plans have been drawn up; some work will begin this fall with the goal of the landing ready for the 2018 Flint River Flotilla.

With the advent of disc golf and the restoration of the Flint riverfront, as Saxton and the association member see it, Mott Park's flood plain acreage, once deemed usable for a single sport, now offers broader recreational possibilities. The Mott Park Recreation Area seems poised for new life. The last bulletin board from pre-2009 days still hangs in the old golf club house — what would those golfers think now?

EVM columnist *Teddy Robertson* can be reached at teddyrob@umflint.edu.

“Where are the journalists?”

Part Two: Capturing the hearts of the community

By Harold C. Ford

This three-part series aims to explore, analyze and lament how numerous forces are playing out to dilute and diminish journalism – specifically in our own community, with a close look at changes in the *Flint Journal*, now dwindled to a local staff of fewer than 10 people, and subsumed by M-Live Media Group and Advance Publications, its corporate owner. We contend that as the whole of journalism struggles, its troubles triggered by the rise of the Internet, the parallel collapse of the “print” business model has hit local journalism hardest, and that could be said to have a devastating and even insidious effect on participatory democracy. This is why we think it matters.

In a June 23, 2013, full-page “Report to Readers,” MLive Media Group president Danny Gaydou proclaimed: “We have launched a comprehensive effort to improve the quality of our printed editions — more local news, better editorial curation to add context and depth to the content and design.”

Gaydou’s Report was an update on a multi-year reorganization effort by Advance Publications, owner of Booth Newspapers and MLive Media Group/The Flint Journal since 1976. In 2009, beginning with its Michigan properties, Advance reorganized its newspapers and their affiliate websites with a digital-first approach to publication.

Gaydou responded to questions and critics when he wrote: “Most (questions) centered on our commitment to journalism. Our critics concluded that we couldn’t possibly be committed to journalism because digital reporting wasn’t capable of providing the depth, accuracy and context that print journalism commands.”

Gaydou countered the critics: “The assertion couldn’t be further from the truth. We’re keeping our commitment to quality journalism ... Most importantly, our growth is centered in solid, timely news coverage and excellent enterprise journalism ... we’re better at delivering significant and meaty journalism.”

Evidence hard to find

It’s now been eight years since the commitment to a digital platform by MLive Media Group/The Flint Journal. It’s been four years since Gaydou’s “Report to Readers.” The commitment to “excellent journalism” is objectively hard to find.

- The print edition of The Flint Journal is

diminished in content but significantly more expensive. A source with close knowledge of the situation who requested anonymity told East Village Magazine (EVM), “The print part of it is like nonexistent ... You don’t even think about print. It’s like it don’t even exist.”

- As for MLive’s digital platform, more and more stories are imported from other Michigan cities and non-journalistic “sponsor content” sources. EVM’s anonymous source reported, “It’s (the MLive website) even more multimedia shows than it is stories. They (MLive) just kind of package it so it looks like a story but it’s really a multimedia slide show.”

Many components of yesteryear’s Flint Journal have withered or disappeared entirely. Ed Bradley, a 20-year veteran of The Flint Journal including many years as its entertainment editor, decried “the real lack of arts and entertainment coverage” as “heartbreaking.”

“It’s really a shame,” he told EVM. “Kind of what passes for (arts and entertainment) coverage at MLive these days is ... vapid, mind-numbing types of stories about “pick the best sub sandwich in Michigan,” or “where you can get the best craft beer.”

Raising glasses “to a new direction for the next 40 years.”

The scandalous Flint water crisis is the major local news story of this decade. It is likely the largest news story since, say, the classroom murder of Beecher first-grader Kayla Roland in 2000, or the abandonment of Flint by General Motors in the final decades of the last century, or the adoption of Flint’s open housing ordinance in 1968, or Flint’s 1966 election of the nation’s first black mayor in a city with a population over 200,000, or the Beecher tornado that took more than a hundred lives in 1953. Subscribers to The Flint Journal during those events were provided with blanket coverage by teams of journalists sent from a local newsroom bustling with energy and reportorial talent.

But the local journalistic landscape has changed dramatically for Flint’s hometown newspaper. The Journal’s newsroom has shrunk to fewer than ten writers who cover a metropolitan area of some 600,000 persons served by local units of government numbering in the dozens. And critics argue that, with the erosion of its newsroom, MLive/The Flint Journal fumbled the journalistic ball in both investigative journalism and editorial integrity in terms of the water crisis, the major local news story of this unfolding new century.

Some evidence:

- “Flint Still Needs An Emergency Manager”; Flint Journal Editorial, Sunday, Dec. 2, 2012: “The reality is we need the emergency manager’s sweeping powers and political immunity to make the drastic changes and tough decisions to secure the future of the community. There is a lot at stake here, and the emergency financial manager remains our best option.”

- “New Water Gives City New Power”; Flint Journal Editorial, Sunday, April 13, 2014: “Wisely, Flint ended the relationship with Detroit and accelerated a plan to treat Flint river water until the Karegnondi Water Authority pipeline is finished ... Let’s raise our glasses to a new direction for the next 40 years.”

What happened to MLive/The Flint Journal’s Fourth Estate responsibilities during its transition to “digital reporting” and the nearly simultaneous poisoning of Flint’s population engineered by emergency managers imposed by the state? The serious work of exposing the crisis was done by others: Hurley Hospital’s Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha; Virginia Tech Professor Marc Edwards; the Environmental Protection Agency’s Miguel Del Toral; Flint citizen-activist LeeAnne



Storefront on Saginaw Street

Walters; and the Michigan ACLU’s Investigative Reporter Curt Guyette.

Flint’s major newspaper for the past 141 years is sadly missing from this honor roll of citizen soldiers. When budgets are gutted and journalistic staff is reduced to bare bones, when reporters are rewarded for electronic “views” or clicks rather than quality journal-

(Continued on Page 8.)

A graphic analysis of the print editions of *The Flint Journal* in 2012 and 2017 and the May 9, 2017 MLive website reveals the following:

Item	Tuesday, Aug. 27, 2012 The Flint Journal	Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2016 The Flint Journal	MLive.com website May 9, 2017; 9-9:30 a.m.
Sections, pages	Four sections, 34 pages	Three sections, 24 pages	Three main stories: Flint mayor & EPA; Queen Latifah & water crisis; motorcycle rally
Front page	Three major stories + teaser	One major story + teasers	
Flint, Genesee Co news stories	15 stories	11 stories	"Featured on MLive"; Three stories: Michigan's most expensive county; :Vote for Best Dressed Proms"; MI governor's mansion
Social-political columnists	Six: Heller; Bierek; Emery; Skubick; Cepeda; Zakaria	Two: Gerson; Petri	
Marriage licenses	Listed	Not listed	Six sports stories: 1 local story on golden gloves
Business page	Full page: Mutual Funds; DJI; Nasdaq; Stocks	Nothing	Eight features stories: no Flint stories included
Letters to Editor	Four	None	14 Flint news stories: including "vote for tennis girls..." & "vote for best dressed proms"
Advice columns	Three	Three	
Amusement pieces	Eight, including crossword	Nine	Nine Michigan news stories
TV listings	Listed	Absent	Three stories from other Michigan cities: prom story from Jackson News; Vegas murder story from Bay City Times; CREEM founder's home from Saginaw News
Flint & Gen Co sports stories	Two	None	
Sports columns	One: Bill Simonson	None	
Environment	Full page including Earthweek	Nothing	"Jump to" prompts/links for News, Sports, Business, HS Sports, Entertainment, Living: only area stories at "Sports link" were: 25th story about New Lothrop baseball; 45th story urging "Vote for Flint area girl tennis player"; 100th story about a basketball game in May
Health	Full page	Nothing	
Days of delivery	Four: Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday	Four: Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday	
Price/cost	\$3.23/week	\$4.99/week, a 55% price increase since 2012	

... Journalists

(Continued from Page 5.)

ism, the Fourth Estate results can be disappointing. Good investigative journalism informs good editorial journalism.

Editorial integrity

"You're right," Jiquanda Johnson told EVM when asked if good reporting leads to good editorials. Johnson is a Flint area native with more than 16 years of multifaceted experience in journalism, including print, television, and digital media. She spent eight years at the Journal.

"Like hooking into the Flint River, what would the health impact be?" she mused. "As a journalist, that's a question that should've been asked. That's something where you get a third party and we (Flint Journal writers) used to get third parties, get other opinions. But now we go where what the city has to say, what the state has to say, and that's the story. Where's the health person that's not working for the city, that's not working for the state? What do they have to say about this? Where's the research to see if this has ever been done in any other community and what happened to those communities?"

For 35-year Flint Journal veteran Ron Krueger, editorial integrity simply means "not looking the other way when stuff is happening."

In a November 2013 column titled "We Should Have Done Better," Marjory Raymer, formerly the Community News Director at The Flint Journal, candidly admitted to readers that the Journal "didn't do good enough."

"We did not inform the voters," she wrote, about a winning Flint City Council candidate that served 19 years in prison after pleading guilty to second-degree murder. "We owed you more," she concluded.

"You worried more about editorial integrity," Krueger observed of his earlier years at the Journal.

Shifting landscape, changing dynamics

The tsunami-like effect of the internet is profoundly shifting the landscape and changing the dynamics of the Fourth Estate. Journalism will never be the same as we remember it from the 20th century. Craig's List, Google, Amazon, and other online giants have sucked billions of dollars in advertising revenue from America's newsrooms. Newspaper budgets have been slashed, journalists have been sent into retirement or other professions, and papers have shrunk in terms of size and frequency of publication. Print publications scurry to transition to digital platforms in a frenetic search for "views" or clicks. And the integrity of the news industry suffers.

Nowhere are these changes felt more dramatically than at the local level. Investigative journalist Julie Reynolds sketches a grim picture in the Oct. 16, 2017 issue of *The Nation*:

"The shrinking and disappearing of hometown newspapers has done incalculable damage to Americans' knowledge of the world around them. Democratic self-governance presumes an informed public, but the hollowing out of America's newspapers, in both their online and print versions, leaves citizens increasingly ignorant of vital public matters. It also undermines the press's ability to hold elected officials and powerful interests to account."

Plow horse in the Kentucky Derby

"The art of community journalism has been lost because (MLive/The Flint Journal) don't have enough people to be out there in the community," according to EVM's anonymous source with close knowledge of the situation. "It's not ten," the source answered when asked about the number of reporters currently at MLive/The Flint Journal.

"We almost had more people than we needed for 25 years of the time I was there (at the Journal)," Krueger recollected.

"You can't take a plow horse and run it in the Kentucky Derby," judged 25-year Journal veteran Gene Mierzejewski of the depleted and less-experienced staff.

Capturing the heart of the community

"I'm a person ... like journalists used to be; you really get to know your community," Johnson told EVM. "These days reporters have a tendency to stay in the newsroom ... So I could get those types of stories because I'm from here; I have a history here; my parents are from here; my grandparents are from here."

Guyette, who helped break the Flint water crisis story, told EVM: "It used to be that newspapers were largely family-owned operations and that the people who owned papers lived in the communities that the newspapers were published in."

Jan Worth-Nelson, editor of this publication, wrote in 2015 about the link between journalists and the community: "It matters to me that reporters who cover Flint locally live among us — or at least, like "Teardown" author Gordon Young, have a sense of the place. I want to know that they worry about their water, try to decide where to send their kids to school, try to find a grocery store, negotiate down bumpy brick Saginaw Street, wait in line for the pho at MaMang."

"Capturing the heart of the community,

that's what ... is kind of lost," asserted EVM's anonymous source.

Lack of diversity

Capturing the heartbeat of a diverse community such as that found in the greater Flint area might be empowered by a diverse stable of reporters. "It's not diverse," EVM's anonymous source bluntly said of the staff at MLive/The Flint Journal. "How can you cover a city when you have to go into the north end? You've gotta have somebody who people can relate to, and know how to talk ... So diversity is definitely an issue ... I think that the people aren't committed to being in the community and that reflects in their stories."

The MLive Media Group website page titled "Our Team," headed up by President Dan Gaydou, displays the photographic images of 18 of 19 persons on the "team." Nine are men; nine are women; all appear to be European-American. The caption immediately beneath "Our Team" reads: "Our people is what sets us apart."

Advance Publications is the 11th largest news organization in the nation according to a 2016 report by the School of Media and Journalism at the University of North Carolina titled "The Rise of a New Media Baron and the Emerging Threat of News Deserts." According to the report:

"The largest newspaper companies are larger than ever, and still growing. Big chains can achieve significant cost savings by merging production, sales and editorial functions of several newspapers, while also amassing an audience large enough to remain attractive to advertisers. At the end of 2004, the three largest companies owned 487 newspapers with a combined circulation of 9.8 million. Today, the three largest companies own about 900 papers that have a combined circulation of 12.7 million."

Advance is a sprawling media empire owned by the descendants of S.I. Newhouse Sr., Donald Newhouse, and S.I. Newhouse Jr. It presides over 22 daily newspapers in eight states. In addition to The Flint Journal, Advance owns six other newspapers in Michigan including The Bay City Times, Jackson Citizen Patriot, Kalamazoo Gazette, Muskegon Chronicle, The Ann Arbor News, and The Saginaw News.

Advance also owns 53 weekly newspapers in seven states including 14 weeklies in the state of Michigan. Other properties include: 11 business journals and periodicals; 21 magazines; dozens of websites including those for Condé Nast's nearly two dozen publications; six other related websites and companies including reddit.com, a 31 percent stake in

(Continued on Page 9.)

... Journalists

(Continued from Page 8.)

Discovery Communications, and a 13 percent stake in Charter Communications.

Advance Publications is headquartered in Staten Island, New York City. Thus, the most important decisions affecting Flint's hometown newspaper — such as slashing budgets, cutting staff, and committing to a digital platform — are likely made by anonymous corporate heads who live and work nearly 700 miles removed from the Vehicle City.

When asked what his biggest worry was about the changes in journalism, career newsman Krueger was brief and to the point: "Concentration of media. Overly concentrated ownership."

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

Editor's Note: Multiple overtures were made by EVM to solicit the views of current staff and management at MLive/The Flint Journal. Gary Ridley, news leader of MLive/The Flint Journal at the Flint office, forwarded our requests to Clark Hughes, interim regional manager of The Flint Journal, The Saginaw News and The Bay City Times; he forwarded our requests to John Hiner, MLive vice president of content. On Sept. 26, we received this response from Hiner: "Thanks for your interest in the changes at The Flint Journal over the years. After reviewing the questions, I think it's best to let our journalism speak for itself."

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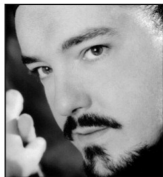
Neighborhood Watch meets Thurs.,
Dec. 21, 7-9 pm, in MCC's RTC 1301

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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

“This Month” highlights a selection of interesting events available to our readers — beginning after our publication date of Nov. 2. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our December issue, email your event to Managing Editor Meghan Christian at meghan.christian22@gmail.com by Nov. 21.

Eclipse: The Sun Revealed

Nov. 1 - Nov. 22
4 p.m.
Longway Planetarium,
1310 E. Kearsley St.,
810-237-3400
Admission: \$4 - \$6

Explore the historical, scientific, and cultural aspects of solar eclipses. Recommended for ages 10 and up.

Skies over Michigan

Every day in November
3 p.m.
Longway Planetarium,
1310 E. Kearsley St.,
810-237-3400
Admission: \$4 - \$6

Learn about Michigan's night sky, including topics like the North Star, Earth's rotation, and more.

Adventures with Clifford the Big Red Dog

Every day in November
Mon-Sat: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.,
Sun: Noon - 5 p.m.
Sloan Museum,
1221 E. Kearsley St.,
810-237-3450
Admission: \$6 - \$9

Have fun doing a multitude of activities and see 40 years of artwork and stories from the author and creator of “Clifford, the Big Red Dog.”

Queen Light Show: “From Mercury with Love”

Nov. 2-4, 9-11, 16-18, 24, 25, and 30.
8 p.m.
Longway Planetarium,
1310 Kearsley St.,
810-237-3400
Admission: \$4 - \$6

A dazzling light show featuring 10 of Queen's greatest hits.

Jazz Night with John Hill, Pat Cronley, and Guests

Nov. 7, 14, 21, and 28.
7 p.m.
Soggy Bottom Bar,
613 Martin Luther King Ave.,
810-239-8058
Admission: Free

Enjoy an evening of food, drinks, and jazz.

Flint Symphony Orchestra Classical Concert

Nov. 11
7:30 p.m.
Flint Institute of Music,
1025 E. Kearsley St.,
810-237-7333

Enjoy music from a variety of classical composers.

Townes Osborn Miller, Nancy Dahle, and Rachel Andrews in Concert

Nov. 12
2 p.m.
MacArthur Recital Hall,
Flint Institute of Music
Admission: Free

Enjoy music from Miller (Flute), Dahle (Soprano), and Andrews (Soprano).

Tendaji Talks: Inclusion/Exclusion

Nov. 14
6 p.m.
Flint Public Library,
1026 E. Kearsley
Admission: Free

Hosted by Neighborhoods without Borders, a monthly discussion about diversity, community issues, and racism

The Wizard of Oz

Nov. 24
2 p.m.
The Whiting,
1241 E. Kearsley St.,
810-237-7333
Admission: \$38 - 65

See the classic tale of Dorothy and Toto with special effects, great choreography, and more.

... Applewood

(Continued from Page 12.)

Applewood Lecture Series he said, “Well they approached me and after thinking about it for about 15 minutes, it just made sense.” Now approaching 75, Wensel is looking to pass the torch and let someone else take over his responsibilities. “It’s time,” he said. “I’m just wanting to come myself and take in what I can.”

Upcoming lectures are as follows. All events begin with continental breakfast at 9 a.m. and the lecture at 10 a.m.

Nov. 11: Dr. Mike Heberling — Michigan’s Role in the Cold War

Dec. 15: Barbara Kincaid — Victorian Holiday Traditions

Jan. 19: Foris Ethier — Genesys Hurley Cancer Institute Clinical Trials

Feb. 16: Gregory Miller — The 1937 Flint Sit-Down Strike

March 16: Len Thomas — Durand Train Wrecks — the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus Train Disaster (1903) and the Knights Templar Disaster (1923)

April 20: Barbara Kincaid — Jacqueline Bouvier-Kennedy: Her Life, Her Legend

May 18: Steve Prince — Voices from the Past — Native American Culture, Music and Storytelling.

For more information on the Applewood Lecture Series, on individual lectures, or to register, please visit https://www.mcc.edu/continuing_ed/ce_fri_at_applewood.shtml.

EVM staff writer Jeffery Carey can be reached at jlcareyr@hotmail.com.

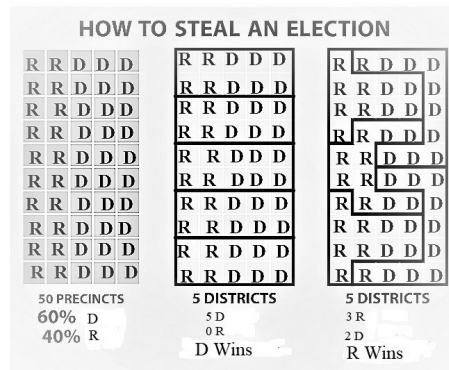


... Gerrymander

(Continued from Page 3.)

How it's done

The process of creating gerrymandered districts is both fairly simple and has grown to be a very complex computer-generated process. In its most basic form, you want to give your own party a good working majority in as many districts as possible, and to leave the opposition with huge majorities in just a few districts. The common terms for this are "packing" and



"cracking" where all your opponents are "packed" into a few districts and where their supporters are "cracked" or broken up so they are not a majority in any other district.

As you can see, though the overall number of voters for each party does not change, drawing different districts does change the outcome.

Based upon past voting records it has been fairly easy to draw election districts to favor one party or the other. Modern computer technology makes the process even easier and more precise. And while Republicans are the current beneficiary of gerrymandering, Democrats have taken advantage of the same process when given the chance.

While the most common form of gerrymandering is to favor one party over the other, it can be used anytime people are separated by geography. Racial gerrymandering has a long history in both the north and the south and it has been used to both prevent the election of minorities, or (in some cases) to assure minorities have a better chance of winning. There are also more than a few examples of what can be called "personal gerrymandering" where a particular candidate's home is placed in one district and a prospective opponent's is placed in another. Though the drawing of district lines usually favors incumbents, sometimes two incumbents of the opposing party will be thrown together in a new district forcing them to spar with each other for the next election.

All of this juggling of district lines can produce some very oddly shaped election districts. One example is Michigan's 14th



Michigan's 14th District

Congressional district in the Detroit area that winds from Detroit through several suburban cities and townships and up to Pontiac.

The effect on our politics

All this gerrymandering distorts our politics in a number of ways.

First, when most elections are decided by landslides, why bother voting? If you are a Republican in a district where Democrats always win with 70 percent of the vote, what motive do you have to turn out if you know you are going to lose? Ironically, the same is true for Democrats. If your party is all but certain to win, why bother? There are many reasons that Americans have one of the lowest voting rates among democratic nations, but gerrymandering is a major one.

Second, since the general election offers little real competition, the real election is usually party primary, where the voters get to nominate their candidates. But here's the problem. Our primary elections in Michigan are normally held in August and the turnout is typically very low. On average, about 20 percent of the voters will bother to turn out for a primary. Last August, the contest for the Flint City Council drew just a little over seven percent of the voters.

Third, the low turnout in the primary is only part of the problem. Those who turn out are not typical voters. Primaries draw party activists and those with strong ideological views — conservative Republican and liberal Democrats. The candidates nominated often don't represent the mainstream of either party or independent voters.

Fourth, because the real election is the primary, most candidates aren't afraid of losing in the November general election. They fear facing a primary challenge within their own party. And if you have been elected by activist liberal Democratic voters or activist conservative Republican voters, the last thing you want to do is to compromise or work with the opposing party. You'll be seen as a traitor, and will face a challenge from a more liberal or conservative opponent within your own party. If you want to win, you need to appeal to the more extreme wing of

your party. There are many causes for our gridlock in Washington, and the division within our nation, but gerrymandering is a major one.

What's being done about it?

Right now there are at least two major attempts to change the gerrymandered map of Michigan and of the nation. One group is taking the issue to the U.S. Supreme Court, in an attempt to rule on what is or isn't a fair way to draw election districts. In Michigan, there is a petition drive to create a non-partisan board that would oversee the redistricting in the state. Both of those will be discussed in next month's *East Village Magazine*.

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

Pipes replaced so far in Flint:

5,148

Source: Oct. 24 press release from Kristin Moore, public relations director, City of Flint

Lead-tainted service lines at 4,249 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 5,148 with numbers changing every day.

The city aims to have all of Flint's lead-tainted service lines — nearly 20,000 — replaced by 2020.



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Village Life

Saxophone, Starlite, and a quiet street calm that sliver of panic

By Meghan Christian

It is a cool, grey morning. It is set to be one of the first actual chilly days of fall, the kind that makes you want to stay in bed with a good book. Even if the leaves haven't started to change here yet, the chill in the air is welcome. I just came back in from opening our driveway gate so that my boyfriend can leave for work; a cute tradition that we have adopted over the past month that we have lived in Flint.

Our street is exactly what I have always wanted. It is quiet, unless the weather is nice and then there is a cacophony of kids' voices — once I even heard a beautiful rendition of "Hot Cross Buns" on the saxophone. And everyone looks out for each other. Our first day here, our neighbors brought us dinner after I drew a carousel in pink chalk on my driveway with their kids.

When I first thought about moving into Flint, I will admit that I did have my worries. I grew up in Grand Blanc, so I have heard the same horror stories that everyone else did and with the water crisis on top of everything else, I did not know what to expect.

The first night we unpacked, I opened a drawer and saw three replacement filters for

the water filter on our kitchen sink. I turned on the water and the filter, watched the light flash red, and then I realized that I was now going to be faced with daily living in Flint and that includes the water. I only had to wait another week for recycling to go out to the curb to be faced with it again as the street was lined with huge bags full of plastic bottles. Every time I take a shower, there is always that small sliver of doubt and panic.

But Flint has always been more than its hardships, its problems.

Looking for a late-night meal, my boyfriend and I were thankful to be so close to Starlite Diner. Of course we had been to Starlite before that night, but there was something special about it being the first time since becoming Flint residents ourselves. Even though it was late, it was still pretty busy and that's a testament to how well-loved it is. Knowing that there is a piece of Flint history so close by is incredible and it helps to make Flint feel like home.

It took until my last few years at UM-Flint to truly see all that Flint really is. Flint is a city with culture, with a vibrant art scene. Flint is still growing, despite its hardships, as more

and more companies begin to invest in downtown and as more and more young people move into the city, for school and cheap housing. Flint's tenacity alone is enough to make anyone fall in love with it. Most importantly, Flint is strong. Despite the distrust, despite the crime, despite the water, Flint is strong.

Any worries I had about living here were gone after that first day. Yes, Flint is a city with many problems. But it is also a city full of amazing, hard-working people that still manage to be generous and kind. Flint is a city full of neighbors looking out for each other and bringing dinner to the couple that just moved in, so they don't have to worry about cooking. Flint is a city with people that are working to pull each other up and to just do the best they can with the hand that they've been dealt.

It's only been a month in our Flint home, but I am already looking forward to many more. Flint already feels like home and I cannot wait to give back to the city to the best of my ability.

EVM Managing Editor Meghan Christian can be reached at meghan.christian22@gmail.com

DOOMSDAY By Grayce Scholt

**My right foot, left foot
stepping on the planet's floor
destroys ten thousand
living things.
I'm war machine
to worms and wings.**

**I stomp in death's travail,
unlock the eremitic crane
who curls one leg
beneath its tail.**

**If I could only learn
some bright external law
on how to stop the final drop
of every claw
of war.**

Grayce Scholt is a retired English professor from Mott Community College who wrote art reviews for the Flint Journal and has authored several poetry collections and memoirs. Her newest collection is East of Everywhere, drawn in part from work published in East Village Magazine. The book is available from Friesen Press, www.friesenpress.com and Amazon.

Applewood Lecture Series aims to stimulate, entertain

By Jeffery Carey

Bearing in mind that "a number of studies indicate that maintaining strong social connections and keeping mentally active as we age might lower the risk of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's," Ken Wensel, coordinator of the Applewood Lecture Series, says he is trying to do his part for the collective brain health of Flint.

Wensel, a veteran of community service and planning, has been involved with Mott's Applewood Lecture Series for the past 13 years. The series, formerly known as Lifelong Learning, has been providing socialization and cognitive stimulation geared toward senior citizens for more than 21 years.

The series has offered lectures such as David Littman's "Graphology," about the art of analyzing handwriting and Ric Mixer's "Famous Shipwrecks of the Great Lakes." With an average attendance of 50-65, Wenzel and his fellow organizers say they work diligently to provide a needed service to the community.

Held at Mott's Regional Technology Center in Flint, the series runs on the third

Friday of the month from September through May. Wensel said he hopes more people learn about this series and are able to take advantage of it, at \$10 for registering in advance or \$20 at the door. The cost includes breakfast and two hours of "thought-provoking edutainment," he said.

"I love doing these things for the seniors," stated Wensel after explaining the cost covers catering and that he had paid for some of the lectures out of his own pocket. "I'm not doing it for the money." At age 26, Wenzel started his career as a community school director where he launched a senior citizens' program at Sobey Elementary School. Later he became an assistant principal in the Fenton schools, and athletic director for 11 years. He also served as chairman of the stewardship committee of his church in Fenton and chair of the Loose Center, an organization providing services to seniors.

Asked how he got involved with the

(Continued on Page 10.)

LV: 11 (654 issues, 6,571 pages)