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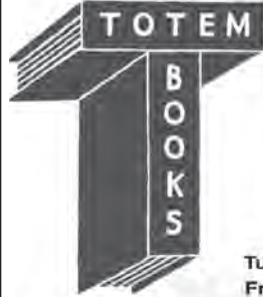
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Commentary

A visionary plan to revive Flint Community Schools—“Let’s make this work”

By Paul Rozycki

Are you ready for some good news for Flint and its students?

We all know this has been a year of bad news that included a national pandemic, statewide infection spikes, racial division, daily mass shootings, a rash of fires in Flint, bears in our backyards, and chaos at city council meetings.

But on top of all those problems, we’ve seen a dramatic decline in the number of students in Flint Community Schools and a decline in the public confidence in the schools. Certainly the COVID pandemic didn’t help, but the Flint schools, which were once an example of the best of public education, have been losing students at a record pace for years.

The rise and fall of Flint Community Schools

At its peak, in 1968, the Flint Community School system was by far the largest in the county, with over 47,000 students enrolled. Over the years that number fell. By 1990 there were just over 30,000 students. By 2000 there were 13,000 students. Today there are about 3200 students.

By contrast, in 1920, there were more than 19,000 students in the Flint schools. Flint is now only the seventh largest district in the county, behind Grand Blanc, Davison, Flushing, Carman-Ainsworth, Swartz-Creek, and Fenton. Nearly two-thirds of the school-age children in the city attend either private or charter schools.

With or without the pandemic, that pattern seemed likely to continue. As the district faced serious financial challenges, some worried that there might be a state takeover on the horizon, for what was once one of the premier public school systems in the nation.

The Memo of Understanding

An ambitious and impressive Memo of Understanding (MOU) between a number of leading Flint institutions aims to change that. The memo creates the Flint Education Continuum (FEC) that hopes to restore Flint schools to what they once were.

Harold Ford’s extensive *East Village Magazine* reporting covers the agreement in much more detail, but, in brief, here are some key points.

- With hundreds of millions of dollars of funding from the C.S. Mott Foundation, the State of Michigan and Flint Community Schools, major construction projects would be undertaken to build new schools in Flint. With the construction of a new high school on the grounds of the old Central High School and Whittier Junior High, would be a major part of the plan. In addition, four new elementary schools would also be built.

- Additionally, the plan would create a series of incentives to keep students in school, improve academic performance, and prepare them for meaningful careers, in cooperation with a number of area organizations and colleges.

- The plan would also eliminate the \$18 million debt that the Flint Community Schools face.

- Finally, the plan would aim to turn around the rapid loss of students in the Flint schools, improve their academic performance, and deal with the many vacant buildings currently owned by the Flint schools.

So far, the plan is simply a “Memo of Understanding” (MOU). It doesn’t obligate any of the 17 partners to do anything. At this point, not all of the proposed partners have signed on to support the MOU.

(Continued on Page 12.)

Cover: Muralists Lattimore Balicki and Kevin Burdick painting a new mural.



Photo of the Month: Fungi on a Tree Stump

(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Seven years into water crisis, Flint’s “reputation for social justice” continues, as activists convene, declaring, “We don’t tolerate injustice and inhumanity.”

By Tom Travis

“We have a reputation in Flint for social justice. The home of the Sit Down Strike, the first major city to institute open housing: We don’t tolerate injustice and inhumanity.”

So declared water warrior and local activist Claire McClinton to a fully masked crowd of about 50 on Sunday, April 26—some standing, some sitting in their cars—at the old Flint Farmers’ Market on E. Boulevard Drive.

They were gathered for a commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the Flint Water Crisis, a public health debacle triggered when the city’s water source changed from Detroit water to the Flint River.

Before and after the Sunday event, local jazz teacher and musician Pat Cronley set the stage with his four-member band playing jazz. Eric Mays, 1st Ward councilperson, sang with the band, in his strong deep

voice, the African American spiritual “Wade in the Water.”



Flint water warrior and local activist, Claire McClinton speaks at the seventh anniversary of the Flint Water Crisis Commemoration.

(Photo by Tom Travis)

The Flint Water Crisis began with a “flip of the switch” — April 25, 2014

April 25, 2014, was the date then-Mayor Dayne Walling flipped a

switch at the Flint water plant, changing the city’s water source from Detroit water to the Flint River. For the next 18 months, improperly treated water from the river flowed into the pipes of of residents, schools, restaurants and businesses in Flint. And thus the Flint Water Crisis began, eventually leading to lead exposure in the bodies of thousands of Flint children, a chain of disastrous health, psychological, sociological, economic and political effects.

“We are not celebrating ...” Bishop Jefferson

“We are not celebrating ... seven years we’ve been in this crisis, seven years we’ve been fighting, seven years we’ve had to stand up and speak up,” Bishop Bernadel Jefferson pleaded into a microphone at the opening of the event.

(Continued on Page 5.)

... Water Crisis

(Continued from Page 4.)



Bishop Bernadel Jefferson opens the event in prayer.
(Photo by Tom Travis)

In our city, we are mindful that we are still in this struggle, we are still mindful that we got a long ways to go, and if we don't work on it we'll never make it to the finish line."

FAST Start pipe replacement began in March 2016

Former Mayor Karen Weaver's administration launched the FAST Start pipe replacement project in March 2016, funded by \$100 million from the federal Water Infrastructure Improvement for the Nation (WIIN) Act. The project continued with Mayor Sheldon Neeley's administration in the fall of 2019. Then the project was way-laid by the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. The FAST Start project resumed in June 2020.

In an April 23, 2021 press release Mayor Sheldon Neeley announced that "as of April 9, 2021, there have been excavations of pipes at 26,819 homes and 9,941 lead and/or galvanized steel pipes have been replaced. The remaining used safe water pipe material and did not need to be replaced.



Some of the handmade signs decorating the backdrop of the seventh anniversary of the Flint Water Crisis event.
(Photo by Tom Travis)

There are an estimated 500 more homes awaiting excavation. Residents still can choose to opt-in to the service line replacement program. For more information, go to www.cityofflint.com/gettheleadout."

Prosecutions announced: "No velvet ropes in the criminal justice system." Solicitor General Fadwa Hammoud

Prosecutions against eight, from high-ranking government officials down to local officials were announced in early 2021.

"Let me be clear, there are no velvet ropes in our criminal justice system. Nobody, no matter how powerful and how well connected, is above accountability when they commit a crime," Solicitor General Fadwa Hammoud stated in a press conference held in the Flint office of the state's Attorney General.

Former Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder and eight other former state and local officials, including Nick Lyon, former director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Service; Snyder's "transformation manager" Rich Baird; and Dr. Eden Wells, the state's former chief medical executive, faced charges connected to their alleged role in the Flint water crisis.

Two of those charged are former emergency managers for the



Solicitor General Fadwa Hammoud (seated center) and Kym Worthy, Wayne County Prosecutor assigned as lead prosecution on Flint Water Crisis Settlement (seated left speaking in mic) and other lawyers and state officials speak to beleaguered Flint residents in 2019.
(Photo by Tom Travis)

city appointed by Snyder — Gerald Ambrose and Darnell Earley, as was Howard Croft, former director of public works for the City of Flint.

Coalition for a Fair Water Settlement calls on elected officials to make changes to \$641 million Water Crisis Settlement

At Sunday's anniversary event, local Harvard-trained epidemiologist and public health leader Jasmine Hall read a letter from the



Flint water tower on north Dort Hwy.
(Photo by Tom Travis)

Coalition for a Fair Water Settlement. She said the letter has been sent to local, state and federal election officials who represent Flint.

The letter outlines two main concerns of the coalition, and calls on elected officials "to do even more." The letter complains about inadequate access to neuropsychological assessments from "the Neurodevelopmental Center of Excellence (NCE) The coalition asserts that the

(Continued on Page 6.)

... Water Crisis

(Continued from Page 5.)

NCE has the potential to be “an outstanding resource for Flint kids,” but that the settlement is being “unfairly used as a way to discriminate against kids who were harmed by the crisis but never assessed, or given proof.”

The group asserts that more than 2800 children have been referred for further testing at the NCE. But as of December 2020 only 28 children, fewer than one percent, were actually evaluated. The other 99 percent are left without assessment.

“Parents were repeatedly as-

ministration).”

The three-page letter further raises concerns about adults in the settlement, stating, “Adults have not been properly informed about the settlement process or the registration deadline of March 29.”

The letter names three additional barriers:

Medical proof: Adults are required to provide proof that the water crisis caused or exacerbated their medical concerns--proof that the medical community was and is still reluctant to give. Without proof of lead levels or medical documentation of physical injury, residents are com-

mune cancer can be attributed to the water crisis. Every individual, not only households who were exposed to the water, should receive health care and thousands of dollars in compensation because officials exposed Flint to poison and manufactured another layer of trauma.

Medical coverage: After being exposed for 18 months to racialized trauma and contaminated Flint water, every adult and child resident who was exposed should receive medical coverage without income restrictions – Medicare for All for life. Whether this comes through this settlement or through ACA (Affordable Care Act) legislation this



Flint Water Crisis activists wearing shirts with them at a June 2019 meeting at UAW local 659.

(Photo by Tom Travis)

sured that the water was safe to drink, and specifically that claims of lead in water were unfounded. Some parents did not know they needed to get their children’s blood lead tested during



Flint Resident, Vicki Marx, had her car decorated with signs.

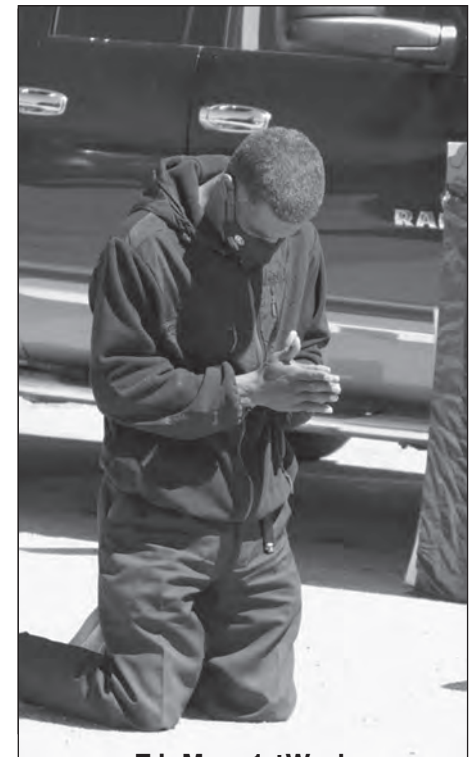
(Photo by Tom Travis)

the time when their child’s body had peak lead levels.”

And finally the letter states that “bone lead scans are tests that have not been made widely available to Flint residents, despite the Judge’s [U.S. Federal Judge Judith Levy] order to expand access beyond one class law firm. More importantly, these bone lead scan tests have not been approved for use in humans by the FDA [U.S. Food and Drug Ad-

pensated under “Category 28: Property Damage” splitting no more than \$1000 per household, less than what was paid in initial water bills for water that the defendants poisoned Flint with.

Too narrow in scope: There was more than lead in Flint’s water. It is public knowledge that there were other bacteria, and chemicals such as PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) have been manufactured and used in a variety of industries around the globe, including in the United States since the 1940s. Also TTHM (total trihalomethanes), a group of chemical compounds first identified in drinking water in the 1970s that form during drinking water treatment. The compounds are produced when organic matter in natural water reacts chemically with chlorine disinfectants, and are just one type of a larger family of chemicals known as Disinfection Byproducts.] in Flint water. It is believed that the increase in kidney disease and certain types of auto-im-



Eric Mays, 1st Ward councilperson, at Flint Water Crisis Commemoration

(Photo by Tom Travis)

healthcare package should be of utmost priority to those representing this community.

The letter ends by calling on elected officials to issue a public statement, in their official capacity, amplifying the settlement concerns raised in the letter, demanding a second “registration, objection, and opt-out period” for the settlement and pushing for legislation that provides Flint Medicare for

(Continued on Page 11.)

THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

"This Month" highlights a selection of events available to our readers — beginning after our publication date of May 6. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city, which, due to the pandemic, is still very limited. To submit events for our June issue, email your event to pisenber@gmail.com by May 20.

Flint Institute of Arts

Open Mon. through Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sun. 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Safety measures have been put in place. The films normally shown in the theater are available for virtual viewing. The galleries are open to the public. "Blue Plate Special" features glass sculptures of food commonly found in drive-ins and roadside diners by glass sculptor John Miller and runs through Sept. 19 in the Harris-Burger Gallery. "Political and Personal: Images of Gay Identity" is a collection of prints by many artists representing sexual identity and runs through July 11 in the Graphics Gallery. "3D: Focus on the Figure" is a collection of sculptures of figures and runs through Aug. 29 in the Hodge Gallery. "3D: Focus on the Abstract" is also a collection of sculptures but all the works are abstract. It's in the Henry Gallery and also runs through Aug. 29.

Flint Institute of Arts

1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For more info visit flintarts.org.

Kids Yoga

May 24

Monday, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

The session is for kids 6 years old and above. Ms. Rayna Bauer will teach the kids Yoga to relax and rejuvenate. It will be held at Riverbank Park Amphitheatre. Park in the Flat Lot and walk across the street to the event. If inclement weather happens, the class will move to nearby Rutherford Ramp at 499 Beach St. Bring a yoga mat and mask. Social distancing and mask-wearing are mandatory.

This is a free event.

For more info contact

Rayna Bauer

at 810-610-0359

Longway Planetarium

Currently at the planetarium are four shows. For kids is "Moles: What Is Out There?" This one is an introduction to astronomy for children who are 6-years-old and shows a mole's fascination with the light peeking into its home underground. Queen is a light show set to the music of queen and is for adults. "Turtle Odyssey" is the story of a green sea turtle's life cycle and journey through the ocean. "Skies Over Michigan" is an astronomical live planetarium lecture explaining where various constellations and planets are in the Michigan sky. Check the Longway website for dates and times.

Longway Planetarium

1330 Kearsley St., Flint 48503

Call 810-237-3400, email longway@sloanlongway.org, or visit sloanlongway.org.

Buckham Gallery

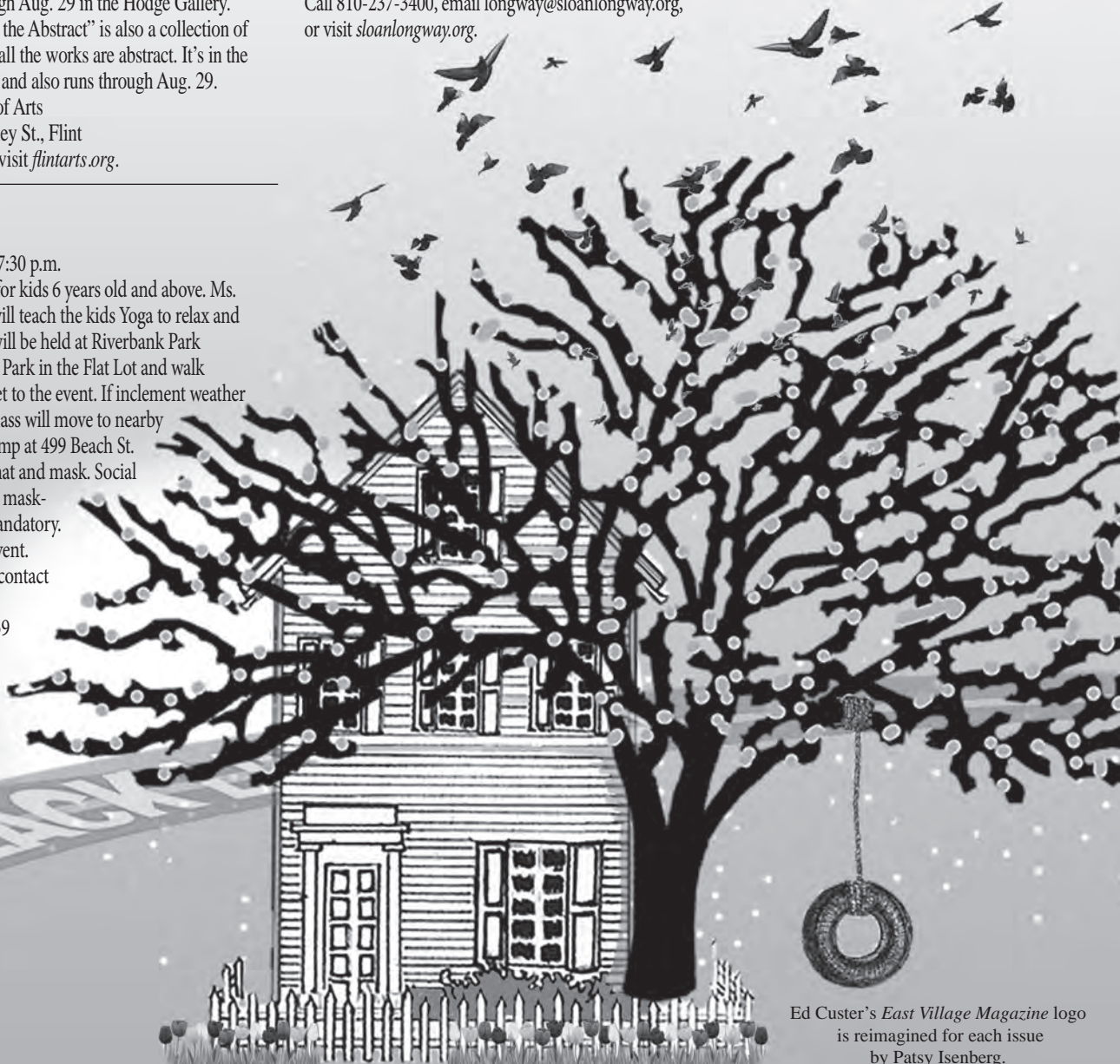
Open Wed. through Fri. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sat. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sun. 1 to 5 p.m.

Wearing masks is required by visitors and staff. Visitors are limited to eight at a time. Currently through May 15 in the gallery is "Disrupted Realism: Paintings for a Distracted World" a juried exhibition that represent a "realism" that embraces subjectivity rather than actual seeing. The works can also be seen at the online viewing room by going to the Buckham Gallery site.

Buckham Gallery

121 W. Second St., Flint

For more info visit buckhamgallery.org.



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

Education Beat

Massive plan to rescue Flint Community Schools unveiled—calls for new high school, many partnerships

By Harold C. Ford

The details of a massive, several hundred-million-dollar plan to rescue Flint Community Schools (FCS) from its decades-long descent are contained within a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) just made available to *East Village Magazine* from an unidentified source. The plan, titled Flint Education Continuum (FEC), includes three levels of government, several Flint-area nonprofits, and all three of Flint's major institutions of higher learning.

All of the 17 parties named in the MOU have yet to sign the document.

Funding for the project comes from three major sources—the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Flint Community Schools, and the State of Michigan. With a grant, the Mott Foundation would “conditionally” match the State of Michigan’s \$45 million capital appropriation for the construction of a new high school. Also, with a grant of up to \$55 million to \$75 million, C. S. Mott would “conditionally” match FCS’s contribution of \$75 million derived from a combination of bonding authority and federal funds.

In the MOU, C. S. Mott additionally commits to another \$100 million (\$10 million per year) over 10 years for the new schools in support of community education, afterschool programs, and college/career technical education pipeline from Mott Community College starting in the third grade.

Thus, potential funding from the aforementioned sources alone totals \$320 million to \$340 million. Contributions from other partners in the project would likely push the price tag for the initiative into the \$400 to \$500 million range.

The purpose of the project, according to the MOU, “is to develop and expand the framework for an education continuum in Flint which ranges from birth to college and career...” It aims to “leverage federal, state and local dollars to create an exponential impact that goes beyond schools to whole neighborhood revitalization.”

A centerpiece of the FEC is construction of new schools—four new elementary schools and a new high school—and the renovation of two buildings, one for elementary students and the other for middle school students. All buildings would be operated by FCS and located within the city of Flint.

The cost of four new elementary schools, with a capacity of 500 students each, is projected at \$25 million each or \$100 million total. Durant-Tuuri-Mott would be renovated at a cost of \$20 million.

The site of a 1200-student middle school is expected to be a



renovated Doyle-Ryder building or one of the existing high school buildings, also to be renovated. The new high school would serve up to 1800 students where juniors and seniors would be dual enrolled at MCC (Mott Community College).”

All buildings, new or renovated, would be owned by FCS.

A 2021 FCS Strategic Plan would be extended to a 10-year plan “with milestone reviews at the 3-, 5-, and 7-year marks.” The strategic plan

would “include a strategy to address its facilities and infrastructure needs ...”.

Plentiful partners

Other partners in the project would include: the State of Michigan; the City of Flint (City); Mott Community College (MCC); the Genesee Intermediate School District (GISD); Flint & Genesee Group/Genesee Area Focus Fund (FGG; formerly Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce); Concerned Pastors for Social Action; Community Foundation of Greater Flint; United Way of Genesee County; Ruth Mott Foundation; University of Michigan-Flint; and Kettering University.

The project anticipates the support of Dan Kildee, U. S. Congressman for Michigan’s (MI-5), and Jim Ananich, State Senator (MI-27).

Response from Ridgway White:

“It’s not my MOU, it’s the community’s MOU,” Ridgway White, C. S. Mott Foundation’s CEO, declared in a phone conversation Wednesday with *East Village Magazine* (EVM).

White said he pounded out the first draft of the MOU on his own computer, despite a small army of employees at his beck and call. However, he noted the eighth and current iteration of the MOU includes input by many members of the community.

“I got to know Ridgway during the (Flint Farmers’) market move, and I know that he cares deeply about his hometown and wants to work with, not just for, the members of our community,” observed Richard Ramsdell, a retired career FCS educator and former manager of Flint Farmers’ Market.

White told *EVM* the FEC, inspired by Flint’s tragic water cri-

(Continued on Page 9.)

... Schools

(Continued from Page 8.)

sis, has been in the works for at least five years but got waylaid by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and changes in the FCS superintendent's office. He said his confidence in FCS leadership has been buoyed by the ascension of Anita Steward, a product of FCS, to the district's top position as superintendent.

White said the primary foci of the plan are education and employ-



Ridgway White, President and CEO of the C.S. Mott Foundation
Photo source: Mott Foundation website

ment. Thus, he explained, it is critical to focus on K-12 education.

He said he is hoping to rally the support of all parties listed in the MOU toward the goal of getting their signatures on the document. White said the Mott Foundation will soon launch public engagement sessions to elicit community input about the plan.

Former Central-Whittier campus targeted for new high school

The site of the now-abandoned Central High School/Whittier Junior High School campus, on Crapo Street near the Flint Cultural Center (FCC), is clearly designated as the location for construction of the new high school.

Deemed an ideal location by many because of its proximity to MCC and the FCC, it nonetheless raises oft-expressed concerns by neighboring residents about matters such as pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Allaying such concerns of area residents about the construction of a

new 1800-student high school (and other schools) would be the responsibility of the city. According to the MOU, the city would be charged with:

- Adopting strategies to improve neighborhoods;
- Implementing homeowner rehab and blight elimination programs;
- Provision of strict code enforcement;
- Accessing CDBG (Community Development Block Grants) and other funding to support these projects;
- Provision of community policing;

Plan is student-centered

The MOU is rife with funding and programs that make clear FCS students are at the center of the FEC. Examples include:

- State and federal funds are to be strategically used “to address learning loss (and) support social-emotional learning.”
- Practices and policies are to be adopted “reflective of a student pop-



Shuttered Central High School
(Photo by Tom Travis)

ulation that is experiencing intergenerational poverty and a host of adverse childhood experiences.”

- The plan aims to “increase the culture of coming to school all day, every day ...”
- Federal funding is to be used “to reduce class sizes.”
- MCC will be charged with developing the aforementioned “early college/career technical education pipeline starting in the third grade.”
- Crim is to provide “intensive mentoring ...”
- Support is found in the FEC document for new or already-existing programs such as career technical ed-

ucation (CTE), Early Middle College, the Genesee Career Institute, Genesee Opportunity, Flint Promise, College Savings Accounts, Michigan Model for Health, Teen Quest, Youth Quest, attendance intervention training as needed, and high-quality early childhood programs.

- The State of Michigan would be tasked to “find ways to provide free internet access to all students.”

Elimination of debt

FCS has been plagued with debt, approximately \$18 million at present according to the MOU, that is largely the result of an approximate \$20 million loan taken out by the district in 2014. The MOU indicates that the State of Michigan “will work (to) restructure and/or pay off the existing FCS private debt.”

FCS is currently working to eliminate its debt under a revised Emergency Deficit Elimination Program (EDEP) supervised by the Michigan Department of Treasury.

Rescue plan

The plan, yet to be voted upon by the FCS Board of Education, could help rescue its school system from a decades-long descent that, in addition to its massive debt, is measurable:

- Latest student count reported to the FCS board on April 14 was 3,260 students, down from nearly 45,000 in the mid-1960s; about two-thirds of Flint students actually attend other area schools.
- From Jan. 2019 to Jan. 2020, 84 FCS educators departed the district taking with them over a thousand years of experience in Flint schools; the FCS Board of Education stopped reporting on departures in 2020 at its public meetings.
- The district has yet to adopt a strategy to rid itself of at least 22 closed buildings and 16 vacant properties.
- Every one of the district's dozen campuses that remain open have serious infrastructure needs.

(Continued on Page 12.)

“Transformational” federal funds to city, funeral home demo, funds for home repair, highway project topics at FNU

By Coner Segren

Federal relief dollars coming to Flint will be “transformational,” Mayor Sheldon Neeley predicted at the April monthly meeting of Flint Neighborhoods United (FNU).

Participants in the Zoom meeting also heard updates about expected funds for several highway projects, prospective demolition of Brown Funeral Home, and access to funds for home repair.

Neeley says millions in federal relief dollars will be a “game changer”

Flint and Genesee County will receive millions in federal relief from President Joe Biden’s American Rescue Plan, Neeley said. Flint will receive a direct relief payment of approximately \$99 million. Neeley also said that a further \$114 million is to be allotted for Flint Community Schools, as well as \$77 million for Genesee County. “This is a game-changer for us all,” Neeley said of the money.

With summer approaching, Neeley listed crime prevention as a top priority. He specifically cited residential speeding, reckless driving, and illegal dumping as things that would not be tolerated in the city, and that will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For tips that lead to arrests, the city will pay rewards of up \$1,000.

Although the state moratorium on water shutoffs ended March 31, Neeley said he would not shut off any residential water users in the city. “We believe that water is a human right, we understand that, and we will fight our way through,” he said. Neeley said, however, that he would shut off water to habitual commercial non-payers. These are businesses who have continually avoided paying taxes and water bills to the city over prolonged periods of time.

Flint and the EPA begin demolition on site of former Brown Funeral Home

The site of the former Brown Funeral Home on Davison Road has been slated for demolition and clean-

up by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) after the building was destroyed by a fire last November. In addition to the fire damage, the property, which is owned by the Genesee County Land Bank, was found to be contaminated with friable asbestos throughout the ruins and debris after an EPA survey.

The EPA has also done periodic air sampling in the months after the fire, and has found no evidence of airborne asbestos or any other hazardous materials. According to Jackie Cole, the on-scene coordinator for the EPA, the demolition and cleanup is being done as a proactive measure. “With weather, and with the elements, and the fact that this is just essentially debris and ruins at this point, it will get worse ... but to date we haven’t found any asbestos fibers in our samples,” she said.

The EPA is approaching the demolition with caution. For the safety of residents, fencing will be placed around the work zone. In order to protect residential areas surrounding the site, the EPA will also be conducting daily air sampling procedures to make sure asbestos and dust are not airborne. “A big part of this and the safety aspect is keeping dust minimized,” Cole said. “our air monitoring is real-time; we get real time alerts on our phones ... so if there is any exceedance it’s immediately addressed.”

In addition to the precautions around hazardous materials, the EPA will also be operating under strict COVID safety rules.

Cleanup will occur between Monday and Friday between 7 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. No heavy machinery will be in operation before 8 a.m. in compliance with local noise ordinances. According to Cole, the cleanup should be completed by the summer of 2021.

Any residents with questions or concerns can contact Jackie Cole at cole.jacquelyn@epa.gov or by phone at (312) 597-4421 or you can visit the project website at www.response.epa.gov/formerBFH.

Metro Community Development funding home repair

Metro Community Development (MCD) has been given grant money that will allow homeowners to make needed repairs to their homes, according to Brian Glowbiak, Metro Community Development CEO. The Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP) provides homeowners with up to \$10,000 dollars per household for things like new roofing, new windows, new doors, new furnaces or air conditioning, with no repayment or liens placed upon your home.

To qualify, the home must be your primary residence, you cannot have received money through the program in the last five years, must be current on homeowner’s insurance and your household income cannot exceed 80% Area Median Income (AMI). You must also provide proof of residence and income.

MCD is also funding another program called the Accessibility and Mobility Program. This program provides up to \$7,500 dollars per household to make your home more accessible. The funding can be used for things like ramps, replacing carpeted floors with hardwood, moving laundry machines to the first floor, walk-in showers and tubs etc. The program is geared toward seniors aged 62 and older or if a person in your house has a permanent disability. The requirements for the program are largely the same as NIP. In the past, MDC has not been able to draw down the full amount of funding for the Accessibility and Mobility Program due to lack of applications.

“My goal is to raise awareness of both and hopefully promote awareness of that accessibility program,” Glowbiak said. “My goal is to be able to draw down the full amount of funding for this program, which is about \$700,000 under this program.”

Applications must be submitted to the Federal Home Loan Bank

(Continued on Page 11.)

... FNU

(Continued from Page 10.)

starting on May 4. Funds are first-come, first-serve.

Residents interested in the program can visit Metro Community Development in person on 1174 Robert T. Longway. They can also call (810) 767-4622 ext. 360

Bond funding to pay for highway redevelopment

The State of Michigan is providing \$400 million to repair I-475 and I-69 in Genesee County. The money is part of a larger bond issue the state has floated for major highway redevelopments all across the state.

According to Trevor Block, project manager for I-475 at the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the influx of money has allowed MDOTC flexibility for deciding

whether to simply repair I-475 as is or turn it into a boulevard.

MDOT is seeking community input on the plan, and will be conducting what is known as a Planning and Environmental Languages Study. The plan will bring together community groups, the City of Flint, MDOT, and other major stakeholders to be part of a collaborative process to figure out how to best allocate the money.

In addition to the state bond, Block also said the Biden administration has pledged \$20 billion dollars of federal money to help reconnect communities that had been unfairly separated during the initial construction of the interstate system. According to Block, MDOT has been in contact with the federal government and Flint is near the top of their priority list for federal funds.

EVM reporter Coner Segren can be reached at csegren@umich.edu.

COLLEGE CULTURAL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
To get notice of CCNA Zoom meetings, send an email with your name to:
www.ccnafint@gmail.com

Lead/galvanized tainted pipes replaced so far in Flint: 9,941

According to city sources as of April 9, 2021 there have been excavations of pipes at 26,819 homes and 9,941 lead and/or galvanized steel pipes have been replaced.

... Water Crisis

(Continued from Page 6.)

All for life, covering all children and adults exposed to contaminated Flint water. Health care is a critical piece that the proposed settlement fails to address.

The letter is signed: Jasmine Hall, public health leader and epidemiologist; Judy Alexander, Flint resident; Councilman Eric Mays; Clair McClinton, Democracy Defense League; Imari Smith, Flint resident; Pastor McClane, Greater Destiny Ministries; Former Mayor Dr. Karen Weaver; E. Yvonne Lewis, National Center for African American Health Consciousness and Nayyirah Shariff, Flint Rising and additional support from Black Millennials 4 Flint (BM4F), Michigan Poor People's Campaign and Neighborhoods without Borders.

“There’s something missing here” –Pastor and water warrior activist Monica Villarreal

Noting the greater need for policy changes for improved water health and water laws. Flint pastor and



Water warrior and activist Pastor Monica Villarreal bows her head in prayer with the crowd at Sunday’s seventh Flint Water Crisis anniversary event.
(Photo by Tom Travis)

water warrior Monica Villarreal said, “There’s something missing here.”

She said she fears that with the change in federal level administrations (from Trump to Biden) that the various federal (Trump to Biden)

and state (Snyder to Whitmer) departments are not being encouraged to continue to communicate with Flint leaders and activists. Neither Mayor Neeley nor state or federal legislators were seen at the seventh anniversary event on Sunday. Two Flint City Councilpersons were present, Eric Mays (1st Ward) and Jerri Winfrey-Carter (5th Ward).

Villarreal said what she has learned through the last seven years is the strength of the community by coming together, forging new relationships beyond racial barriers. She noted the water crisis has been a

“people crisis” and “we have all had to come together across racial divides.”

EVM Managing Editor Tom Travis can be reached at tomtravis@gmail.com.

...Visionary Plan

(Continued from Page 3.)

As indicated by a recent Board of Education meeting, it may not be easy to get everyone on board, and there are a thousand things that need to happen before it's all done. Almost certainly, if this goes ahead, there will be problems, conflicts and reversals. That's to be expected with any plan as extensive and wide-ranging as this.

But the key point is that someone is willing to step forward with a visionary plan to turn Flint Schools around. In order to revive the Flint schools, it will take a bold and visionary plan outlined in the Memo of Understanding to make it happen.

As the plan is put forward, the community certainly owes a debt of gratitude to the C.S. Mott Foundation and CEO Ridgway White, as well as all the other organizations that step forward to develop and support the plan.

The importance of public support

But the rest of us also have an opportunity and an obligation get involved. There will be public meetings in the future to hear from the Flint community and their visions for the future. Take the time to read the document, and take the time to attend these meet-

ings, lend your support, and offer your suggestions.

If you are part of any of the 17 groups included in the MOU, (see Harold Ford's EVM story for a complete list.) let them know how important this is to Flint schools and the whole Flint community.

While individual citizens need to become involved in this process, it's also critical for elected school board members to work responsibly and thoughtfully as the process plays out. The conflicts that we've seen in the Flint City Council don't need to become standard operating procedure for the Flint Board of Education.

At a time when the nation is deeply divided in so many ways, if all the groups can work together, this MOU can be an example of how differing groups, with diverse constituencies and commitments, can come together for a common cause.

The Flint Community Schools' role in rebuilding Flint

It won't be easy, and there are certain to be obstacles, objections and problems over the next decade. Almost certainly there will be changes and delays, but we need to keep our eyes on the long-term goal. The rebuilding of Flint's schools is critical not only for the

schools and the students, but for everyone in Flint and Genesee County.

There was a time when Flint Community Schools were a major reason why people came to the city. Today it's often a reason why people move out of Flint. This plan won't turn things around overnight, but it's a great start, and it deserves all of our support.

There's the old saying that "we shouldn't let a crisis go to waste." The Flint schools are in a crisis and this proposal, whatever flaws it may have, is a strong vision for the future, and may give us the chance to make sure this crisis does not go to waste. Certainly there will be objections and criticism, but "the perfect shouldn't be the enemy of the good."

Let's make this work.

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

...Schools

(Continued from Page 9.)

• Standardized test scores of FCS students are among the lowest in the county.

• FCS is in the final year of a three-year partnership plan imposed by the State of Michigan to improve test scores by 10 percent, reduce suspensions by 10 percent, and increase student attendance to 90 percent.

Additional challenges include the residual impact of the Flint water crisis (2014-present) and the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on delivering quality instruction.

No more excuses

"It is an understatement to say that the magnanimous level of support described within the memorandum of understanding is unprecedented," said Paul Jordan, former member of the FCS Board of Education. "The plan would provide the children of Flint with facilities that are the equal of any in the county, and a support system that is tailored to the needs of students growing up in a challenging city like Flint."

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



Turtle Odyssey explores the unique lifecycle of an Australian green sea turtle named Bunji. Follow her incredible journey across the open ocean as she swims thousands of miles, meets incredible creatures, and has some wild encounters.

View available showtimes and reserve tickets at SloanLongway.org/TurtleOdyssey

Advance ticket purchase is strongly recommended. Shows frequently sell out.

Masks are required. Capacity is limited to ensure social distancing.

Turtle Odyssey is funded in part by the Genesee County Arts Education and Cultural Enrichment Millage. Your tax dollars are at work.

1310 E. Kearsley St. Flint, MI 48503 | 810-237-3400

Two local forums tackle tough topics: Racial justice and public safety; Racism and public health

By Harold C. Ford



Dr. Debra Furr-Holden
Photo source: Michigan State University website



Terence Green
Photo source: City of Flint website



DeWawn Robinson
Photo source: FAPAF Zoom video session



Scott Wolfe:
Photo source: FAPAF Zoom video session

“We can’t arrest our way out of this problem ... but ... every day I come to work, a citizen of this community is on my phone complaining about crime in their area where they live ... What’s the answer for that citizen?” ... Terence Green, chief of police, Flint Police Department

“We will continue to see environmental injustices ... in the Flints of this world.” ... Pamela Pugh, vice president, Michigan Board of Education, commenting on Flint water crisis settlement

Two area forums — Flint Area Public Affairs Forum (FAPAF) and Tendaji Talk(s) — offer Flint-area citizens and other interested persons a regular schedule of panel discussions that feature relevant topics and knowledgeable panelists. In recent months, panels have tackled tough topics permeated by race.

In 1903, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote in *The Souls of Black Folk* that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of color line.” The 20th century “problem” referenced by Du Bois yet bedevils us in this 21st century. Locally, FAPAF forums and Tendaji Talks have unflinchingly tackled “color line” issues head on in addition to other public matters of significant import.

The Oct 27, 2020 FAPAF forum tackled policing and race relations. The April 13, 2021 Tendaji Talk examined race in the context of public health and the Flint water crisis settlement:

“Racial Justice & Public Safe-

ty: Defunding, Defending, and the Future of Policing.”

The Oct. 27, 2020 FAPAF forum featured:

- Debra Furr-Holden, associate dean for public health integration, Michigan State University (MSU); director, Flint Center for Healthy Equity Solutions, MSU
- DeWawn Robinson: community activist; president, Black Lives Matter-Flint
- Terence Greene: chief of police, Flint Police Department
- Scott Wolfe: associate professor of criminal justice, MSU

“I think my dad would be disheartened to see the state of affairs and how the police interact with the communities they’re charged to protect and serve,” said Furr-Holden about her late father, a career police officer, at the beginning of a lively forum. “He’d also be disappointed to see the supports, resources that are available for police officers in this day and time.”

“What we know when we look at the national data, often times police officers,” continued Furr-Holden, “the lion’s share of the things they’re called for are social services ... your average police officer is not trained in those areas.”

“We’re trained to recognize mental illness and deal with mental illness,” countered Greene, chief of the Mt. Morris Township Police Department before coming to Flint. “We have policies and procedures to deal with people’s suffering ... It’s not all about putting hand-

cuffs on people, arresting people.”

Robinson envisioned many crisis situations benefitting more from a dispatch of social workers to the scene rather than police officers. “I am in full support of defunding police departments and in favor of allocating those dollars toward social services,” he said. “I’m very big on preventive measures.”

“When people talk about defunding, the funding is already gone,” Greene said, “there is no funding.”

“We’re not talking about a whole amount,” Robinson cautioned, “but a certain percentage of it that can go toward social services.”

Guided by research, Wolfe cautioned against defunding that overreaches: “Hasty, ill-conceived, poorly planned defunding decisions will lead to very bad, long-term consequences for communities that need the most help ... crime and victimization will increase immediately.”

“We shouldn’t be necessarily looking to take money away from police agencies,” continued Wolfe, “during a time when one of the main problems that we see in a lot of these controversial use-of-force incidents stems from a lack of training.”

Wolfe divided the topic of police training into four categories: implicit bias training; crisis intervention training; de-escalation training; and procedural justice training. Of the four, he said procedural justice training “probably shows the most promise.”

(Continued on Page 14.)

...Near-Death

(Continued from Page 16.)

landed. He is a superb collaborator who brings critical thinking, leadership, writing skills, and a “can-do” attitude to every task he takes on. He is a loyal friend and supportive work mate.

When I heard the news of Harold’s recent near-death experience, I was shocked but not surprised. His unflappable reaction to the stroke, along with his calm determination to finish what he was doing, is who Harold is. It defines his character. Harold is the man who gets the job done. He is an icon of *East Village Magazine* and we love him.

Did I mention that he also climbs mountains?

EVM consulting editor Ted Nelson can be reached at mainegame@aol.com.

... Tough Topics

(Continued from Page 13.)

Though divided on some of the issues, panelists’ comments found heart-felt areas of commonality.

Furr-Holden said of her father: “He didn’t have a police car, he walked the beat ... He knew everybody in the district, in the community he served.”

“The reason I got into law enforcement is because I wanted to make a difference in the community that I live in,” added Greene. “The goal isn’t to come to work, arrest people, put them in jail, take away their freedom.”

“That (defunding) doesn’t mean abolish police because there are some good police officers in the neighborhoods,” admitted Robinson.

“This is the type of conversations people all over the country need to be having,” concluded Wolfe.

“This is a good conversation,” agreed Robinson. “Everyone is bringing some gold to the table.”

“Racism is a Public Health Issue, Part 2”

The April 13 Tendaji Talk focused on the \$640 million+ Flint water crisis settlement announced in January 2021. The deadline to register to opt-in to the settlement was March 29.

The Tendaji Talk panelists included:

- Pamela Pugh: vice president, Michigan Board of Education

- Debra Furr-Holden: epidemiologist, associate dean for public health integration, C. S. Mott endowed professor of public health, MSU

The deadline to register to opt-in to the settlement was March 29. *East Village Magazine*’s Tom Travis described the terms of participating in the water crisis settlement in a Jan. 30 post:

“Adults, property owners, business owners or a minor child exposed to Flint water between April 25, 2014 through Nov. 16, 2020. If you wish to file a claim you must register to be eligible. Minors may opt-in up until their nineteenth birthday but adults have only until March 29, 2021 to register.”

Travis added additional detail about the requirements for filing a claim in an April 26 online post:

“Adults are required to provide proof that the water crisis caused or exacerbated their medical concerns – proof that the medical community was and is still reluctant to give. Without proof of lead levels or medical documentation of physical injury, residents are compensated under ‘Category 28: Property Damage’ splitting no more than \$1000 per household, less than what was paid in initial water bills for water that the defendants poisoned Flint with.”

“We haven’t addressed the issue of (prosecutorial) justice,” Furr-Holden implored at the start of the forum. “How do you put a price on the experiences of stress and trauma, of being lied to, of being misled?”

“It just feels like being retraumatized,” Furr-Holden added. “It is justice delayed ... and it is justice denied.”

Earlier this year, prosecutions against eight local and state officials including former Michigan Governor Rick Snyder were announced by the Michigan attorney general’s office.

“When we look at the corrective injustice (in terms of yet-to-be-resolved civil and criminal cases) we do

know that we fall short,” Pugh observed.

Furr-Holden did not sound optimistic about Flint victims achieving a full measure of justice: “The people who hold power and privilege in our society are majority white and majority male ... Somehow we have an acceptance and a tolerance for racial injustice.”

“We deserve equitable and swift justice,” Pugh said.

Attendee and Flint resident Lee Bell issued a warning to the nation about Flint’s experience: “Flint is just the face of a tragedy coming to another community real soon.”

March 2, 2021 FAPAF: “Vaccines, What to Know, Whom to Trust”

Panelists included:

- Mona Hanna Attisha: Flint pediatrician; chair, Protect Michigan Commission

- Bobby Mukkumala: physician and chair of Asian Working Group, Protect Michigan Commission

- Lawrence Reynolds: pediatrician, public health officer, City of Flint

- Dondre Young: Americorps program officer, Michigan Community Service Commission, Department of Health & Human Services

A recording of this discussion can be accessed on Zoom.

Next Tendaji Talk: “Woman to Woman Community Dialogue”; 4-6 p.m. April 29, 2021.

The panel will include women dedicated to youth, families and the Greater Flint community. The Zoom conversation is sponsored by Michigan State University, Flint Registry, and Hurley Children’s Hospital, Pediatric Health Initiative. Phone 517-4332 6200 or visit the following site: <https://bit.ly/WomanToWoman0429>. Contact Kenyetta Dotson at 810-600-9182. You can register for the Zoom session at this link.

Note: Previous Tendaji talks can be accessed at the following MSU website: <https://msu.zoom.us/j/95817209600>; passcode is 138079. Or you can contact Donna Ulrich at the following email address for an electronic link; dullrich@umich.edu.

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

Flint Repertory Theatre and Flint Mural Project partner to bring mural plays and roof-top musical to Flint this summer

By Patsy Isenberg

Flint theatre and art lovers can enjoy two new venues this summer. Flint Repertory Theatre (The Rep) in partnership with The Flint Public Art Project has commissioned 27 playwrights to write 25 micro audio plays, each inspired by the playwrights' impressions from a different mural.

The plays can be heard via the app PixelStix (available for download on phones and listening devices) while standing in front of the corresponding murals.

Blend of theater and the visual arts

The murals were already here and the number of them is growing. The Flint Public Art Project's Facebook page at facebook.com/flint-project/ includes photos and information on the huge array of murals already painted here by artists from all over the world. Many of the muralists keep returning to Flint and say they love this city.

Local playwrights include Taylor Boes, David Guster, Olivia Maxwell-Cook, Andrea Orpinel, and Enrique Vargas -- all students at the University of Michigan-Flint. The other playwrights for the project come from other parts of the country. One of them, Alex Moggridge, of New York City, an actor and a playwright commissioned for the Mural

first of four special events in downtown Flint, in Brush Alley, behind Blackstones and the Mott Foundation Building.

The remaining three events take place on the next three consecutive Saturdays, June 12, 19 and 26 all starting at 12 noon.

- Saturday, June 12 - Carriage Town Neighborhood at Flint Hard Cider Company on MLK and University Ave.

- Saturday, June 19 - North Side neighborhood at the MLK Mural on Martin Luther King Ave. just south of Pasadena Ave.

- Saturday, June 26 - East Side neighborhood at Latinx Center 2101 Lewis St, Flint.

The mural plays are available from June 5 through Aug. 31 through the app PixelStix. The mural plays will also be available during that time and after Aug. 31 online at The Rep's website. Guided tours are offered by contacting The Rep at (810) 237-1530.

Productions by The Rep continue during the pandemic

Michael Lluberes, artistic director for The Rep, didn't let the pandemic stop the shows from coming to Flint. Lluberes said, "This exciting and ambitious new programming is all outside of the box and our building. During the pandemic, we're looking for ways to translate our work into new mediums and bring theatre directly to the community."

Roof-top musical presentation "Songs For A New World"

Another out-of-the-box idea coming from The Rep is "Songs For A New World." This musical will be performed on the roof of The Rep's



Photo source: The Rep website

theater July 23-25. The audience will watch from the courtyard below.

"Songs For A New World" is set on the deck of a 1492 Spanish sailing ship and transports the audience gradually through history ending on the ledge of a Fifth Avenue highrise. The music styles in the play include pop, gospel and jazz. The varied musical styles convey themes of life, love and the choices people make during extraordinary challenges.

Lluberes adds, "We hope to get people out into Flint's different neighborhoods this summer to experience theatre and the city in exciting new ways."

Tickets for the musical will go on sale May 1. For more information about the new outdoor productions, visit flintrep.org. To purchase tickets contact The Ticket Center at 810-237-7333 or go the website.

EVM reporter Patsy Isenberg can be reached at pisenber@gmail.com.



Photo source: The Rep website

Plays, wrote "The Boatman," a play The Rep did in their 2019 season.

The Mural Plays kick off at 12 noon on Saturday, June 5 with the

Village Life

East Village Magazine reporter survives seven near-death experiences in past two years — brings new meaning to “deadline”

By Ted Nelson

“On January 26 this year, close to midnight, I was at my desk finishing up an article about a book by Ed McClelland titled ‘Midnight in Vehicle City’” (a book about the original Sit Down Strike in Flint in 1937) “It was a subject near and dear to my heart — the Sit Down Strike was one of the most consequential events in American history and the most important event in Flint history. So I was very much looking forward to reviewing the book and getting it published in *East Village Magazine* (*EVM*). I had three or four paragraphs to go when, suddenly, my head slowly and uncontrollably dropped to my hands.

This is Harold Ford talking, *EVM*'s Education Beat reporter, describing his recent near-death experience. “I collapsed at my desk. I never lost consciousness,” he said. “I never lost the feeling in my arms, toes or fingers. I was able to speak, but I knew I had had a stroke.” This would be confirmed the next morning in a hospital, where he stayed for seven days.

“I sat there for about an hour,” Harold continued. “I was hesitant about getting up, fearful that any movement on my part would make the stroke worse. But after an hour, I gingerly and slowly moved to a recliner. I managed to take my computer with me and, with one finger, type the remaining paragraphs and submit it.” It was published the next day. Harold said he was happy about that.

Harold has been no stranger to near-death experiences, particularly over the past two years. In January of 2019, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Forty-four radiation treatments later, the cancer went into remission. Unfortunately, in the middle of his cancer treatments, Harold had a heart attack. An emergency operation was performed and a stent placed in one of his heart arteries. The third and fourth near-death events occurred in November of 2019, when two hospital stays of ten and six days each were required to deal with a severe case of intestinal parasites. Shortly after that, his fifth near death experience came when he nearly drowned in a canoe accident. In January of 2020,

he received a serious dose of carbon monoxide poisoning from a defective kerosene heater in his garage. By the time of his stroke in January of this year, Harold was an old hand at near-death episodes.

So there he sat, head throbbing with pain, memories of his recent near-death experiences reminding him darkly of his mortality, yet intent on his mission to finish the article he'd been working on. To do this, he used all of the faculties he still had control over: his brain — and one finger. One finger typing out one letter at a time. Tap, tap, tap. One word at a time. Tap, tap, tap. One sentence at a time.



Harold Ford

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

He did this while not knowing if this seventh brush with death would be the one that got him. Calmly, with resolution, he pecked on. Hundreds of taps later his sentences completed a paragraph.

And then another.

Finally he struck a period to finish the piece. Done. He pressed “send.”

But Harold was not done. After the submission, Harold contacted one of his sons who immediately came over to be with him. Then his son helped him to bed and he slept. The next morning, experiencing a severe headache and regurgitating everything he tried to eat, he was brought to the hospital.

Harold Clayton Ford, father to five children and grandfather to seven more, husband for 26+ years, has been on this earth for 74 years. He is the eldest of five siblings. He was a public school teacher at Beecher High for 31 years. After graduating from Kearsley High School in 1964, Harold went on to Mott Community College in 1968. He received a BA from UM-Flint in 1970, and a Masters Degree from UM/Ann Arbor in 1978. He has received numerous education awards, has served on a variety of boards, and has been a life-long activist (1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights march led by MLK, anti-Vietnam war protestor in 60s and 70s, member of the American Civil Liberties Union, and more).

One of Harold's most noteworthy accomplishments was as the principal founder and supervisor of the 2001-2011 Beecher Scholarship Incentive Program funded by the Ruth Mott Foundation. Among the program's major achievements were a 100 percent high school graduation rate and an 86 percent college enrollment rate. In addition, 69 grads were sent off to college with \$1.5 million-\$2 million in scholarship support. Also, 141 students had cross-cultural experiences in 21 foreign destinations. This was just the start of the many benefits accrued by the program.

Harold has an unparalleled passion for the education of the children of Flint, and an equal passion for the power and need of community journalism. He is a First Amendment warrior of the highest caliber, and his outstanding writing as the Education Beat reporter for *EVM* is a mainstay of the magazine. He is also my friend.

When Jan Worth-Nelson and I took over the helm at *EVM* in 2015 following the passing of Gary Custer, *EVM*'s founder and long-time editor, one of the early tasks we took on was the recruitment of new writers. Because of his well-known experience and history, Harold was one of our early targets. Once he agreed to write for *EVM*, it didn't take long for us to realize what a prize we had

(Continued on Page 14.)

LIX: 5 (697 issues, 7,232 pages)