



East Village Magazine

November 2021

Photograph By

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Commentary

“Secure MI Vote” petition won’t secure your vote — or democracy

By Paul Rozycki

A few years ago I was asked to give a presentation on the right to vote to a large number of prospective election workers at City Hall. As I looked out over the audience, I realized that almost none of those present could have voted when this nation began. The great majority of those in the council chambers that day, preparing to conduct our elections, were female and/or African-American. None could vote when this nation began.

We like to think that once we got rid of King George in 1776 and wrote a Constitution in 1787, that everyone was part of our democracy. Not quite. In the 1790s, you could vote only if five things were true about you. You had to be an adult, white, male, who owned property, and, in some states, belong to the right religion. Maybe 10 percent of the population even had the right to vote then.

tests, grandfather clauses, poll taxes, white primaries, and violence. It took the Voting Rights Act of 1964 to restore that right.

In 1920 women finally got the right to vote nation-wide after a half-century struggle. In 1924 Native Americans became citizens and got the right to vote. And in 1972, 18 year olds got the voting right.

In every case it took a lot of work and struggle to gain and keep the right to vote. And after last year’s election, it seems that the struggle isn’t quite over.

The 2020 election increased voting turnout in two major ways. The COVID pandemic caused many states to make absentee and mail-in voting easier, and the political divisions over Donald

Trump’s presidency energized voters on both sides of the partisan aisle.

By most estimates, there were



Campaigns signs posted on the lawn in front of a voting station in Ward 7
 (Photo by Paul Rozycki)

Over time that changed. By the 1820s and 1830s the property requirements and religious tests were mostly gone. By 1870, because of the 15th Amendment, at least for a short time, African Americans could vote. That right was taken away, starting in 1877, with the end of Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the wide use of literacy

as many as 17 million new voters last year. Over the last 30 years the average turnout has been about 55 or 60 percent of the potential voters. Last year the turnout nation-wide, was about 67 percent. In Michigan there was almost a 71 percent turnout.

Yet with all the changes due

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Photo of the Month: East Village resident on Avon St. recycling

(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Education Beat

Flint School Board votes unanimously to talk with Mott Foundation CEO Ridgeway White about abandoned Central-Whittier campus

By Harold C. Ford

On Wednesday, Oct. 20, near the end of another long meeting (four hours and 22 minutes), the Flint Board of Education (FBOE) voted 6-0 to invite C. S. Mott Foundation CEO Ridgeway White to visit and talk about the future of the long-abandoned Flint Central High School-Whittier Middle School campus.

Votes supporting the motion, made by board treasurer Laura MacIntyre, came from: Carol McIntosh; MacIntyre, treasurer; Joyce Ellis-McNeal, secretary; Adrian Walker, assistant secretary/treasurer; Chris Del Morone, trustee; and Allen Gilbert, trustee.

Del Morone and Gilbert are the board's two newest members, chosen from a field of 11 candidates by the five seated board members at a special meeting Sept. 29.

Danielle Green, FBOE vice president, was absent from the Oct. 20 meeting.



**Shuttered Whittier School,
Crapo St. Flint, MI.**

(Photo by Tom Travis)

Del Morone initiates discussion

During a free-flowing discussion by board members during the next-to-last agenda item, titled "Remarks

from Individual Board Members", Del Morone initiated the discussion with the following words:

"I don't know where we would bring up a discussion on the Flint Central-Whittier campus of the building(s) and the future use of that land. I think there's an opportunity to partner with others in the community, maybe the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and Kettering University amongst others to just turn that into a state-of-the-art high school ... where they join with us to do some good things for the students."

Additionally, Del Morone reflected on his response to a question during his board interview Sept. 29: "If you build it, they (students) will come. My contention is, if we build it, they will stay and will bring back others who have

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Schools ...

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left, and others who want to come into the district ...”

Del Morone made reference to the Flint Cultural Center Academy (FCCA) that opened in 2019 in the heart of the Flint Cultural Center. The Mott Foundation committed \$35 million toward the costs of designing, constructing, and outfitting the school. (See p. 10 in this issue for an update on the FCCA, now in its third year of operation.)

MacIntyre makes motion

MacIntyre, a frequent critic of



Board member, Laura MacIntyre.

Photo source: FCS Website

foundation support for public schools, introduced the motion to invite White to begin talks: “I’d like to make a motion to invite Mr. Ridgway White to the board to

(discuss) the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding).

MacIntyre said, “He (White) was put off for a while because we had business to take care of.” She urged “an open conversation out in public ... partnership, not overseeing.”

Support for MacIntyre’s motion came from Del Morone. Ellis-McNeal said, “He [White] is welcome to come here with an open dialogue.”

McIntosh said, “The [earlier MOU] deal was not beneficial for the district.” She noted that Thomas Parker, a Mott Foundation program officer, was present at the Oct. 20 board meeting. Interim Superintendent Kevelin Jones said, “He’s here every week.”

“He [Parker] works closely with Mr. Ridgway White,” McIntosh said. “He is involved in all of our conversations (regarding) our partnership with

Mott ... We are working diligently ...”

MOU unleashes chain reaction of events

Public revelation of a Memorandum of Understanding by *EVM* in April and May 2021 from an anonymous source unleashed a chain reaction of events likely unprecedented in the history of Flint Community Schools (FCS).

The MOU revealed details of a Flint Education Continuum (FEC), potentially costing several hundred million dollars, that would endeavor to resuscitate Flint’s public school system. The FEC would have involved three levels of government, several Flint-area nonprofits, and all three of Flint’s major institutions of higher learning.

The purpose of the FEC, according to the MOU, would have been “to develop and expand the framework for an education continuum in Flint which ranges from birth to college and career ... to leverage federal, state and local dollars to create an exponential impact that goes beyond schools to whole neighborhoods.”

At the center of the FEC was a plan to rebuild or renovate all of Flint’s 11 existing school buildings at a cost of \$20 million to \$25 million each.

The FEC also called for the development of a strategic plan in 2021 that would be extended to a 10-year plan “with milestone reviews at the 3-, 5-, and 7-year marks.”

Events unfold in rapid-fire fashion

Events listed below all happened in 2021

- Apr. 21: Details of the FEC, contained within the MOU, are first revealed by *EVM* from an anonymous source in an online posting. The posted article is later included in *EVM*’s May 2021 print edition.
- June 16: The FBOE serves FCS Superintendent Anita Steward a document that warns “continued unacceptable performance, and/or

conduct, could result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.” The board orders Steward to “cease all communication ... with partners and community foundations.” A board evaluation only six months earlier, issued Jan. 7, 2021, concluded “the superintendent’s job performance was “highly effective.”

• June 16: Steward is publicly reprimanded by the FBOE; she responds with a spirited public defense.

• June 28: White appeals for support of the FEC at an FBOE meeting. “My goal at the Mott Foundation



Mott Foundation CEO Ridgway White speaking at a past Board of Education meeting

(Photo by Tom Travis)

is to ensure that every child in Flint has an equal opportunity for success,” says White.

• June 28: McIntosh and board trustee Diana Wright clash over Wright’s suggestion that the proposed FEC be put on the July board

meeting agenda. “It is my expectation,” she declares. McIntosh responds firmly, “It will not be on the July agenda.”

• July 1: In an interview with *EVM*, Steward says that, “Board members have been invited to participate in these (MOU/FEC) conversations. Some of them have participated. Some of them have elected not to attend the meetings.” Steward tells *EVM*, “I’m in a difficult space with at least four board members.”

• July 16: White announces a pause of grant funding for FCS in a memo to board president McIntosh. White writes: “Community partners must be able to communicate with district leaders.”

• July 22: White reverses his position and announces a restoration of FCS grant funding from the Mott Foundation.

• August: Two central admin-

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Schools ...

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istrators – Steward and Ayunna Dompreeh, executive director of finance – charge MacIntyre with creating a “hostile work environment.” McIntosh says “The situation did have the ingredients to become physical or violent.” MacIntyre denies the charges. “I am not a physical threat,” she says.” Steward and Dompreeh take leave from their positions and remain on leave as of the date of this article.

- Aug. 18: FBOE members learn that FCS had, thus far, canceled six days in the 2021-22 school year due to excessive heat in school buildings caused by deficient HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) systems. On three other days, a minimum level of 75 percent student attendance was not achieved. The Michigan Department of Education permits a maximum of six excused days before significant state aid penalties kick in.

- Sept. 7: Two veteran board members, Wright and Vera Perry, vice president, abruptly resign from the board. Perry tells *EVM* she was “not used.”

- Sept. 8: The FBOE approves a \$440,000 plan to remediate black mold problems at the 101-year-old Doyle-Ryder building. Doyle-Ryder students are relocated to the Potter building while repairs are being made.

- Sept.: Steward files a lawsuit against the FBOE charging “Whis-

tleblower Protection Act violations, ELCRA (Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act) violations, Breach of Contract and tortious Interference and Negligence.” Tom Pabst, Steward’s attorney, tells *MLive/The Flint Journal*, he “doesn’t see Steward returning to the district.”

- Sept. 8: Kevelin Jones, FCS assistant superintendent, is named “interim superintendent.” He becomes the eighth person in 16 years to sit in the FCS superintendent’s chair. (As of the posting of this article, Steward remains FCS superintendent, and Jones, interim superintendent.)

- Sept. 8: McIntosh signals a resumption of talks with the Mott Foundation.

- Sept: *EVM* research finds that Flint’s 11 school buildings average 70-years-old. The average age of buildings in the U. S. is 44 years.

- Sept. 15: The presence of bats in the Potter building, now housing both Potter and Doyle-Ryder students, is reported to the FBOE. A \$22,500 plan to remove the bats is approved by the board; a plan to patch the holes in the roof through which bats enter is not presented.

- Oct. 20: The FBOE unanimously approves a motion to start discussions with the Mott Foundation about the vacant Central-Whittier property.

EVM Education Beat Reporter Harold C. Ford can be reached at hcford1185@gmail.com.

Memories ...

(Continued from Page 16.)

mightily tempted.

Last month Washington School burned down. The fire didn’t just take down the bricks, mortar, wood and glass. It took down the remnants of the nerve center of a community. It is an exemplar of many things: economic failure, neglect, and brutal demographics. But for those of us who grew up there, it was a lot more than a collection of building materials. It was the heart of the ‘hood. The Grand Central Station for the rites of passage of our youth.

Despite it being abandoned for years, there is a certain finality in its demise. In a year that has seen scores of iconic East Side structures torched, and decades that have witnessed the inexorable destruction of such a strong community, this one somehow hurts the most.

Washington School’s death might be its last educational gesture. Whether the lights from the flames are a final extinguishing of a unique way of life, or the beacon for a renewed future is uncertain. But the ethereal mists of our memories are certain and lasting, as long as we want them to be.

Buildings can burn, but memories persist. That’s what infuses and informs the future’s thoughts and ideas. Lose those and you lose everything. Fire can’t kill that. Only indifference can.

EVM guest writer Gary Fisher can be reached at ply2win2006@aol.com.



(Photo by Mike Naddeo)

THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

highlights a selection of events available to our readers — beginning after our publication date of November 3. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city, which, because of the restrictions starting to be lifted, are beginning to expand.

To submit events for our December issue, email your event to pisenber@gmail.com by November 20.

Capitol Theatre

Randy Wise 2nd Annual 80's vs 90's Bash,

Nov. 12, 8:00 p.m., Friday

Mega 80's is a nostalgic presentation of the 80s from "Mega 80's" performers. Special guests at this event will be "Class of 98" which jumps to the next decade with nostalgia from those years.

General admission tickets are \$15 (balcony, no dance floor) or \$20 (floor, includes dance floor) Residents' 30% discount applied at checkout.

The Goonies,

Nov. 19, 7:00 p.m., Friday

The Capitol presents a special screening of the classic PG rated film.

Tickets are \$3 - \$10. Residents' 50% discount applied at checkout.

Super Diamond

Nov. 20, 8:00 p.m., Saturday

This is a highly-regarded tribute band that performs hits from Neil Diamond. Tickets are \$53.50 - \$64. Residents' 30% discount applied at checkout.

The Capitol Theatre

140 E. Second St., Flint

For more info (including COVID precautions) visit capitoltheatreflint.com or call 810-237-7333.

Buckham Gallery

Nov. 12 - Dec. 4

Black & White: Buckham Artist Collaborators (BAC) Annual Group Exhibition

Ritual: 2021 Buckham Print Exchange

BFAP Fall Fundraiser- \$10 tickets with a chance to win a \$500 cash prize, available at Buckham Gallery.

Winner drawn at 8:45 PM, November 12

Call for Entry - Now Open!

BIPOC is the Theme for Buckham Gallery's National Juried Exhibition.

Deadline for entry is Nov. 15, 2021.

Juror is Tyanna J. Buie.

Fee is \$25.

Buckham Gallery

121 W. 2nd St., Flint

For more info visit

buckhamgallery.org

or call 810-239-6233

St. Cecilia Society

Nov. 14, 2:00 p.m., Sunday

Performers include Townes Osborn Miller, flutist, Carl Angelo pianist, and Larry Adkins cellist.

MacArthur Recital Hall

1025 Kearsley St., Flint

This event is free and open to the public.

Pinball of the Golden Era

Nov. 19, 5:00 p.m. - midnight, Friday

Nov. 20, 1:00 p.m. - midnight, Saturday

This event offers unlimited pinball play on 15 to 20 pinball machines made between 1947 to 1959.

Tickets are \$25

Stockton House Museum

Spring Grove, 720 Ann Arbor St, Flint

For more info

call 810-882-1681 or visit

stocktonhousemuseum.com.



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

Tendaji Talk: “The Deep Sting of Slavery”

By Harold C. Ford

“It’s really not enough to say, ‘Those were horrible days and let them pass.’ Uncovering this buried history ... could also help ease the kind of intergenerational trauma that silence can mask, trauma that can seep through entire communities.”

– Margaret Burnham, Northeastern University professor, from “Healing Requires Truth” by Samantha Michaels, Nov-Dec 2021 issue of *Mother Jones*

“Slavery has tentacles and they are deeply rooted in society today.”

Theater, executive director; District 2 Genesee County Board of Commissioners, commissioner

- Ella Greene-Moton: Partners Community-Based Organizations Partners – Ethics Review Board, administrator; NAACP ACT-SO (Academics, Cultural, Technological, Scientific Olympics), chair; Center for Public Health and Community Genomics, community liaison; former Flint Board of Education member.

- Sharon Sadler: Bethlehem Temple Church, associate pastor; Freedom School, principal; State of Michigan, certified prevention specialist; Flint Odyssey House, representative

Not-so-distant past

At least two of the panelists at the Oct. 12 Tendaji Talk –Greene-Moton and Lewis — shared vivid memories of slavery’s “deep sting.”

Greene-Moton recounted her early years in the 1950s on a plantation in the Mississippi Delta where she was born.

“There were many plantations,” said Greene-Moton. “Some of the plantation owners were cruel. By the grace of God, we ended up on a plantation where folk had a sense of fairness.”

“I can remember as a little girl,” recalled Greene-Moton, “my first job was going to the cottonfield, working in that



Tendaji Talk panelists (L-R): Ashnee Young; Ladel Lewis; Tarnesa Martin; Charles Winfrey; Ella Greene-Moton; Sharon Sadler; Toy Pridgeon; Alexis Murphy-Morris.

(Photo by Harold Ford)

– Kenyetta Dotson, Tendaji Talk moderator, Oct. 12, 2021

The most recent Tendaji Talk, “The Deep Sting of Slavery,” featured eight panelists at the New McCree Theater, 4801 Clio Road in Flint Oct. 12. Panelists included:

- Ashnee Young: strategy consultant; military veteran; Legal Services of Eastern Michigan, fair housing education coordinator; strategy consultant

- Ladel Lewis: Jane Key Solutions CEO; self-described “community champion”

- Tarnesa Martin: Hurley Medical Center, nurse, patient resource and community service advocate; self-described “mother of two children, grandmother-to-be.”

- Charles Winfrey: New McCree

- Toy Pridgeon: Inside the Haven, founder and director; self-described “author, wife, mother, grandmother, community activist”

- Alexis Murphy-Morris: “health, wellness and fitness professional” (LinkedIn profile); retiree from Genesee County Pre-School program; Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church of Flint, board member

(Note: the biographical descriptions above are based on self-introductions at the Oct. 12 event and various internet sites. The panelists’ comments below are edited and arranged for clarity and brevity.)

The moderator for the talk was Kenyetta Dotson, a military veteran, social worker, and winner of several awards including Zeta Phi Beta Woman of the Year (2014) and the Sybil Award (2011).

cottonfield, chopping cotton.”

Greene-Moton was paid \$2.50 for a day that might begin at 6 a.m. and end 12 hours later at 6 p.m. She said the elders in the family were paid less.

“We didn’t have indoor toilets,” she recollected. “I had to walk up to the ‘big house’ to get water.”

Greene-Moton lived on that plantation with the “big house” until her third grade school year.

Sharecropping

“There’s different levels of slavery,” Lewis said. She explained that sharecropping replaced chattel slavery as an institution of repression. Her grandmother’s grandmother was born a slave. A few generations later, her parents were

(Continued on Page 14.)

Councilperson Monica Galloway leads Michigan Municipal League as its president

By Tom Travis

City Councilperson Monica Galloway (7th Ward) was elected the 2021-2022 president of the Michigan Municipal League (MML) at the non-profit's annual convention held in Grand Rapids last month. The MML's 18-member Board of Trustees met and elected Galloway. Sterling Heights Councilperson Barbara Ziarko was elected vice-president of the MML.



**City Council Monica Galloway
(7th Ward)**

Photo source: City of Flint website

"The League advocates on behalf of its member communities in Lansing, Washington DC and the courts; provides educational opportunities for elected and appointed municipal officials; and assists municipal leaders in administering services to their communities through League programs and services," according to MML's website at www.mml.org.

Galloway is fifth Flint resident to serve as Municipal League president

Galloway is the fifth Flint resident to be the president of MML and the tenth person from Genesee County to hold the position. The previous Flint residents to be President of the MML are Alder-

man, J. Johnson in 1917, City Clerk, E. Newcombe in 1919, City Attorney, John H. Farley in 1924 and Mayor Woodrow Stanley in 1990.

Galloway has been the Seventh Ward Councilperson for eight years. She says she did not grow up wanting to be a politician.

"My experience with the MML has been liberating and to be selected as board president means the world to me," Galloway said in an email to *East Village Magazine (EVM)*.

"I began this journey only with a desire to serve this community while not fully understanding how to do that. The MML, its staff and members have provided a safe learning environment that has been both accepting, challenging and encouraging.

"The MML community is filled with more accomplished leaders than myself and yet the Trustee Board decided to make yet another investment into my leadership growth by selecting me as President. I never set out for a political career and that is not a part of my goal.

"This is an opportunity to serve people by identifying their needs and working with a larger community network (MML) to get it accomplished. I was truly honored to be selected by my peers to serve this statewide non-profit organization that represents communities of all shapes and sizes," Galloway said.

"Leadership is only as successful as those you surround yourself with. The League has been supporting communities for more than 120 years very well. I am looking forward to accelerated leadership growth with the support and guidance of my fellow board members, League Board Vice President Barbara Ziarko of Sterling Heights, League staff, and trusted colleagues throughout Michigan.

"In the next year, I plan to continue to support the League in advancing community wealth building in ways that enhance the human experience for everyone. I also wholeheartedly support

the League's increased and ongoing focus in embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion in our communities," Galloway concluded.

"Cooperation solves any problem"

The MML's motto is "Cooperation solves any problem." Founded in 1899 the MML brings together city and village officials to exchange information, learn from one another, develop policies on municipal concerns. The MML ini-



Michigan Municipal League logo

Photo source: MML website

tially came together to because in 1899 the state legislature chartered directly cities and villages. MML's first director, Harold D. Smith said, "they were at the mercy of a body composed of members who had little or no experience in municipal affairs."

The MML's initial efforts were focused on securing home rule for cities and villages, or as Smith put it, "bringing impressively to the attention of a rural legislature the problems of growing cities in the state," according to the MML website.

More information about the MML is available on their website www.mml.org and their Facebook page and other social media sites.

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

Flint Cultural Center Academy survived COVID, construction and start-up challenges to make it to third year

By Harold C. Ford

In its third year of operation, Flint's newest school, the nonprofit charter Flint Cultural Center Academy (FCCA), has managed to survive and continue adding grades despite adjustments to COVID, construction at the nearby Sloan Museum and Flint Public Library, and challenges faced by some of its economically-disadvantaged students.

"We're not where we thought we'd be after two full years of school," said Eric Lieske, FCCA principal, in a recent wide-ranging interview with *East Village Magazine (EVM)*. "Nobody knew that we were going to be in a global health pandemic."

This year, with a staff of 55, the school has 525 students up to and including grade seven, all from Genesee County; 82 percent are from Flint. Of those, according to the MI School Data website, in 2020-21, 82 percent were "economically disadvantaged (2020-21) and 7.8 percent were "students with disabilities." The website reports a 22 to 1 teacher to student ratio.

The SchoolDigger website reports 66.3 percent of FCCA students are African American, 16 percent white, and 13.6 percent "two or more races."

When it opened to students in August, 2019, according to its website, the school enrolled more than 300 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The second year, grade six was added as the original fifth graders advanced, and this year, seventh grade came in, with grade eight expected to be added next year.

At that point, the school will have fulfilled its initial K-8 design, with a hoped-for yearly enrollment of 650 students.

Lieske said plans are being made to keep FCCA 7th graders at FCCA when they matriculate into the 8th grade. *EVM* asked where the FCCA

8th graders would go thereafter.

"We're working on that," Lieske replied. "We have some plans that we're working on. We certainly want to be able to provide a continuum of learning in a secondary setting."

The 78,000-square-foot campus contains 37 classrooms, a gymnasium, cafeteria, and kitchen. Direct access to the Flint Institute of Music and Sloan Museum is provided via an adjacent exhibit and learning space that features three multipurpose classrooms.

Currently, 23 of FCCA's classrooms are in use, according to Lieske.



And as for how its students are doing so far, though Lieske says it's "a terrible time to talk about standardized testing" during COVID challenges, recent test data indicates that FCCA students performed better than students in Flint Community Schools but not as well as other students in Genesee County (see further detail below).

"The data doesn't always tell the true story," Lieske warned. "We have to dig deeper about how we compare kids."

Lieske said he is about "changing the dynamics of what an inner-city school can look like ... The number one thing we can do with children is build amazing relationships. That's very, very challenging to do in the virtual setting."

Lieske said he wants kids who

come to FCCA to know that "they're loved, there's trust built, that this is a positive place for them ... Then we can look at how we're going to make economic, emotional, and social growth."

Lieske drawn from Davison to FCCA

The opportunity to become FCCA's first principal drew Lieske from Davison where he was born and raised. His parents owned a hardware store on the main street of Davison. He graduated from Davison High School in 1989.

After graduating from the University of Michigan-Flint (B.A.) and Marygrove College (M.A., Curriculum Instruction) he obtained an education specialist degree from the UM-Flint.

A long career with Davison Community Schools included stints as an elementary school teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. "I was very happy at Davison," he said.

Talks with the C.S. Mott Foundation about Davison-based projects such as the balanced calendar "turned into a conversation about who's going to lead this school (FCCA)," recalled Lieske. "Maybe that was a fit for me."

And he asserts he was lured to the FCCA principalship by the opportunity to make something brand new. "Nobody gets to build a school from the ground up," he said. "All new teachers, all new kids, all new curriculum."

Four years from conception to school opening

The idea for the school first emerged in 2015, according to Mark Sinila, chief operating officer of the FCCA

(Continued on Page 11.)

FCCA ...

(Continued from Page 10.)

Corporation which helps to coordinate the school. The Flint-based C. S. Mott Foundation provided \$2.9 million for the school’s planning and development. Flint-based THA Architects Engineers and E & L Construction Group, Inc. became the project’s design and construction partners.

At the groundbreaking for FCCA on June 26, 2018, the Mott Foundation announced its commitment of \$35 million “to cover the costs of designing, constructing, and outfitting the school, as well as making related improvements to the Cultural Center campus.”

“They’ve [Mott Foundation] been very generous with start-up construction, curriculum, furniture, and things like that,” Lieske said.

In a forthright review of the school’s circumstances, Lieske detailed advantages enjoyed by the FCCA and disadvantages it has combatted since its inception.

FCCA Advantages

The most obvious advantage of FCCA is its location in the heart of the Flint Cultural Center that includes the Flint Public Library, Sloan Museum, Whiting Auditorium, Longway Planetarium, the Flint Institute of Music, Flint Repertory Theater, the Flint Institute of Arts, Applewood Estate, and the Flint Institute of Music (FIM).

FCCA students have direct access to the FIM and Sloan without even going outdoors. All other institutions are located within a block of the FCCA campus.

“The location is amazing,” Lieske declared. “There’s not another city in the nation with less than 100,000 population that has the amenities of the Flint Cultural Center campus. Being able to be tied to these institutions is second to none.”

FCCA leadership endeavors to have students spend 90 minutes at FCC institutions every school day.

Also, FCCA is a modern, state-of-the-art campus featuring interesting architectural design, cheerful colors, and plentiful windows that permit daylight

and sunshine to bathe the hallways and common meeting areas.

Classrooms are interconnected by flexible walls that can provide for individual class sessions or larger multi-class meetings. Terraced meeting areas called Learning Stairs are also utilized for larger group sessions.

Every student is provided an electronic learning device. The dress code offers students a choice of five basic colors.

FCCA disadvantages



CEO Lieske with FCCA social worker Gabrielle Holmes-Scott
(Photo by Harold Ford)

Transportation for FCCA students is a challenge. “We don’t have busing,” said Lieske. Parents must provide transportation. The FCCA parking lot is small and traffic congestion is nearly a daily occurrence.

Lieske also named unfinished construction at Sloan Museum and the Flint Public Library (FPL) as additional challenges. Until renovations are completed, Sloan and FPL educators travel to the FCCA campus. “But we want to get our kids on the campuses of those places,” Lieske said.

The entirety of the FCCA student population qualifies for free and reduced lunches. (The free and reduced lunch formula provides that when a certain percentage of a student population qualifies for free and reduced, then all qualify.)

These are important elements for the FCCA. The MI School Data website reported that 82 percent of FCCA students are “economically disadvantaged” (2020-21) and 7.8 percent are “students with disabilities.”

The pandemic

Nothing, however, challenged the newest school in Flint more than the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Lieske.

“It’s been challenging with COVID for a new start-up school,” Lieske said. “School is not the same when it’s virtual. Things started to gel and then we went into that (state) mandated shutdown.”

Test data

Recent test data indicates that FCCA students performed better than students in Flint Community Schools but not as well as other students in Genesee County or the state except for, perhaps, “students with similar characteristics.” The data reported is from the 2020-21 M-STEP, Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress. (Note: the test data reported is not always uniform, reported in the same way.)

FCCA:

- Percent proficient in Math (grades 3, 4, 5, 6): five to fifteen percent
 - Percent proficient in English Language Arts (grades 3, 4, 5, 6): twenty to thirty percent
 - Percent proficient in Science (grade 5): five percent
 - Percent proficient in Social Studies (grade 5): five percent
- FCS**, percent proficient in all subject areas:
- Brownell STEM Academy (grades K-5): no data available

(Continued on Page 13.)

Voting Rights ...

(Continued from Page 3.)

to the pandemic, and the larger turnout, the election took place, and the results were clear. Joe Biden got about 81 million votes and Donald Trump got about 74 million. Biden got the majority of electoral votes. Much credit goes to the election workers who adjusted to last minute changes and made it work in the midst of a pandemic.

Like all of our previous elections that should have been it. One party won. One party lost and let's move on. But it wasn't. Trump's claim that he was cheated led to the Jan. 6 insurrection and storming of the Capitol. Trump still makes the unfounded claims of a stolen election the centerpiece of his rallies, even a year after he lost, and even after many Republicans have moved on.

Trump's claims led Republicans in many states to change their voting laws to make it more difficult to vote. Though the details varied, at least 47 states introduced bills that would limit voting by having extensive ID requirements, limiting Sunday voting, reducing the number of polling places and drop boxes and, in one state, making it illegal to give food or drink to those in voting lines.

Right now, Michigan is one of those states. Even before the pandemic, Michigan approved no excuse absentee voting with Proposal 3, in 2018. But in response to the false claims of election fraud, the Michigan legislature is moving ahead with two proposals to limit the vote. One would be passed by the legislature and go to the governor for her signature (or veto). The other is an initiative that would go to the voters. The two proposals are complex but are very similar. Here's the key points.

1. Voters would need a Photo ID (that's true now) but if they didn't have one they couldn't just sign an affidavit to their identity and cast a provisional ballot, as they do now. To have their ballot count the voter would have to show up at the local clerk's office within six days with a valid ID.

2. For absentee voters there would be new ID requirements. They would need to include a photo ID, or driver's license number, or the last four digits of their social security number.

3. Election officials would be prohibited from sending out unsolicited requests for absentee ballots, as Michigan has done, and many candidates have done.

4. It would modify how local governments choose polling places.

5. Election officials could not accept private funds (including federal funds) to support their efforts. Some feel this might even ban volunteers from working with elections.

Some of the provisions simply restate what is already common practice, like requiring IDs. A few reasonable provisions may be tucked in as well. But the overall partisan purpose is clear—to reduce the Democratic turnout. There are more details, but that's the essentials.

But here's what's different in Michigan. That proposal has passed the legislature and, like all bills, will go to the governor's desk for her signature to approve it, or a veto to reject it. Governor Whitmer has already vetoed some of these proposals, and there is no doubt she will veto the rest.

However, Michigan has a rather unusual initiative process, where a proposal can be put before the voters for approval on the ballot. To put an initiative on the ballot requires about 340,000 signatures from registered voters in Michigan.

Once that is done it goes on the ballot for the next election for voters to approve or disapprove. However, Michigan's initiative has an odd loophole. Instead of sending an initiative to the voters, the legislature can take up the proposal, and pass it before the election. If they do, the governor does not have the power to veto it.

That's what's happening now. The proposal called "Secure MI Vote" is now being circulated, and if it gets the required 340,000 signatures, the Republican legislature will almost

certainly take it up, and pass it on their own, bypassing the governor.

These proposals are a solution in search of a problem. After more than 60 court challenges, many audits and recounts, no significant voter fraud has been found for the 2020 election. It's probably been the most honest election in our history. In states, where small errors were found, they often benefited Biden more often than Trump. Yet, within the last few weeks, conservative groups protested in front of the Capitol Building in Lansing, claiming the Michigan election was stolen, and asking for one more audit of the 2020 election, where Biden won by 154,000 votes.

The "Secure MI Vote" proposal is simply a partisan attempt to make it more difficult to vote, and reduce the turnout, particularly for minorities.

Based on the 2020 election, making it more difficult to vote absentee may hurt Democrats, and aid Republicans, but that may not always be the case. Before the 2020 election, the absentee vote had generally been more Republican, and limiting that vote may come back to haunt the Republican Party.

There is also some evidence that trying to limit the vote may actually encourage marginal voters to get out and cast their ballots. In a few states turnout increased after attempts to limit the vote got the attention of infrequent voters.

But in the end, the real damage of the "Secure MI Vote" proposal, and all the talk about a stolen election, isn't to Democrats or Republicans. The real damage is to the trust we have in our whole political system. The election process is the basis for our democracy. If we lose that, we've lost the core idea of our government. That damage could last long after both Trump and Biden are history.

"Secure MI Vote" won't secure anyone's vote, and makes for a less secure democracy.

Don't sign the petition.

*EVM Political Columnist Paul Rozycki
can be reached at paul.rozycki@mcc.edu.*

FCCA ...

(Continued from Page 11.)

- Doyle/Ryder (grades K-6): less than five percent
 - Durant Tuuri Mott (grades K-6): less than five percent
 - Eisenhower (grades K-6): less than five percent
 - Freeman (grades K-6): seven percent
 - Neithercut (grades K-6): less than five percent
 - Pierce (grades K-6): less than five percent
 - Potter (grades K-6): less than five percent
- Genesee County**
- Students proficient in English Language Arts (grade 3): 36.9 percent
 - Students proficient in Math and English (grades 3-8): 24.4 percent
- Michigan**
- Elementary students testing

proficient in all subjects: 37 percent

- “Similar Schools (to FCCA) by Student Characteristics” testing proficient in all subjects: 12 percent

Authorizing agency is Grand Valley State

As a non-profit public charter school, the FCCA is open to all students in Michigan. Initial enrollment was via a lottery system. Lieske told *EVM* in March 2019: “We’ve had interest from as far north as Mt. Pleasant down to Clarkston.

Nonetheless, as Lieske noted in the September interview, this year all of FCCA’s 525 students are from Genesee County; 82 percent are from Flint.

Flint resident and State Senate Minority Leader Jim Ananich told *EVM* at the June 2018 groundbreaking that Flint Community Schools, under the leadership of then-Superintendent

Bilal Tawwab, turned down the opportunity to charter the school.

“I talked to the superintendent (Tawwab) and they weren’t interested in it,” said Ananich. He (Tawwab) said capacity-wise they couldn’t handle it.”

Grand Valley State University, headquartered in Grand Rapids, subsequently became the authorizing agency for FCCA.

“It’s a mistake on the part of the Flint schools,” Ananich said at the time.

Realism and optimism

Lieske is realistic and optimistic about the future for FCCA and its students. “We have a lot of work yet to do,” he said. “I believe the trajectory of this school is just getting ready to go.”

EVM Education Beat Reporter Harold C. Ford can be reached at hcford1185@gmail.com.

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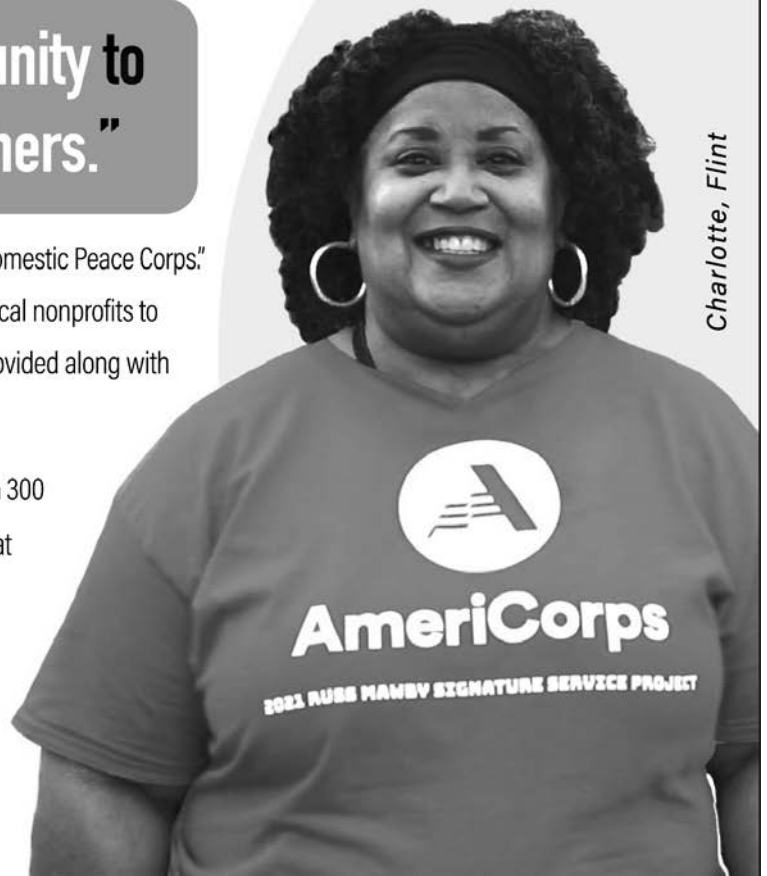
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Charlotte, Flint

Tendaji ...

(Continued from Page 8.)

sharecroppers in Tylertown, MS.

“The laws were not set up in our favor back then,” Lewis recalled. “They [Lewis’s parents] had to escape in the middle of the night.” Lewis said that if they were caught leaving the plantation it might cost them their lives.

“They had to leave everything that they knew, everything that they owned,” she said. “They didn’t have a quality of life (and) wanted better.” Her family moved to Michigan in the 1960s.

Devastating

“It (slavery) has a devastating effect,” Winfrey declared. “It beat us down. It belittled us. It humiliated us. It instilled a lot of the values that divide us today. We still backbite, we’re envious, we’re jealous.”

“So here we are now, still feeling the lingering effects of slavery, the psychological effects of slavery, of post-traumatic slave syndrome,” Winfrey continued. “It’s almost like we’re boxed in and can’t really free ourselves from that bondage.”

Young agreed: “Everything that happened to our ancestors has had a residual impact on how it is that we exist in this day and age, from how we treat each other, to how we’ve been able to build wealth, to how we try to fit in ... There are still things today that enslave us.”

Transition to Jim Crow

“Jim Crow legalized segregation,” Pridgeon asserted. Redlining and other discriminatory practices denied African Americans home ownership, a major source of wealth, she said.

Home ownership, she continued, can provide opportunities for building wealth in other ways by taking out loans and using them for business investments and college tuition.

“This country was founded on slavery,” Pridgeon said. “We were the wealth. Old money was generated upon our backs (but) the wealth didn’t pass

down to us ... Those that are descendants of slave masters (are) still benefitting from the effects of it (slavery and Jim Crow).”

Sadler experienced Jim Crow-style segregation up close and personal when, after graduation from Flint Central High School, she moved to Alabama with her husband where they resided near Birmingham from the mid-1970s to the late-1980s.

They inadvertently walked into a segregated restaurant whereupon the cook came out of the kitchen and excitedly pointed to the “Whites Only” sign and advised them to leave. The cook escorted them out of the restaurant and pointed to a window through which African Americans placed and received their orders for food.

Sadler also recalled the inability to purchase a home in a neighborhood where blacks were not permitted to live.

Sadler admitted, “It wasn’t until I was down South [I discovered] Jim Crow was alive and well.”

Frantz Fanon

Winfrey noted the work of black psychiatrist and author Frantz Fanon (1925-61), a French West Indian pan-Africanist who contrasted the independence struggles in Algeria and the U. S.:

“What he decided was that, because what the Algerians fought for and won their freedom, there was a distinct difference between African Americans who were given their freedom. The difference is that fighting for your freedom has a cataclysmic effect that purges you of all of those things that slavery instilled in you so that you become a free man.”

When someone gives you your freedom,” Winfrey continued, “you carry all those things that slavery instilled in you into the generations.”

Health disparities

“When white America catches a cold, black America catches the flu,” moderator Dotson observed as she introduced the subject of health disparities.

“We are not preventive,” Martin

declared. “A lot of times, African Americans, we don’t take care of ourselves.” Unhealthy eating, lack of exercise, and insufficient water contribute to health disparities, she said.

Martin also noted higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, COPD, and other ailments in the African American community may be due to a lack of health literacy and the expense of staying healthy.

As a health care professional, Martin observed “a lot of mistrust in the health care systems ... When we go to the doctor, when we go to the hospital, our pain isn’t taken seriously.”

Sadler raised the spectre of epigenetics. “They are finding now the link between slavery and health care today,” she said. “Through extreme trauma and stress like the Middle Passage and Reconstruction and slavery, that it actually has the capacity to change the way genes read themselves and work.”

Pridgeon pointed an accusatory finger at food traditions that began during slavery as an unwelcome health inheritance. “The slop and the leftovers that was given to us to eat, and we passed it down generation to generation,” she said.

Generational divide

Several panelists pointed to a generational divide currently existing in the African American community as both a challenge and a potential stimulant for progress.

“There’s so much history, so much tradition, so much richness that oftentimes our (younger) generation misses out,” Young mused. “It hasn’t necessarily been presented to us in a way that is palatable.”

Lewis conjectured about a generational wealth divide within the black community. “The majority of our money is held in the pockets and the bank accounts of our Baby Boomers,” she said. “It’s not within our Millennial generation.”

Lewis identified the Baby Boomer generation (1946-1964) as the generation that acquired jobs, pensions, homes,

(Continued on Page 15.)

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Nov. 12
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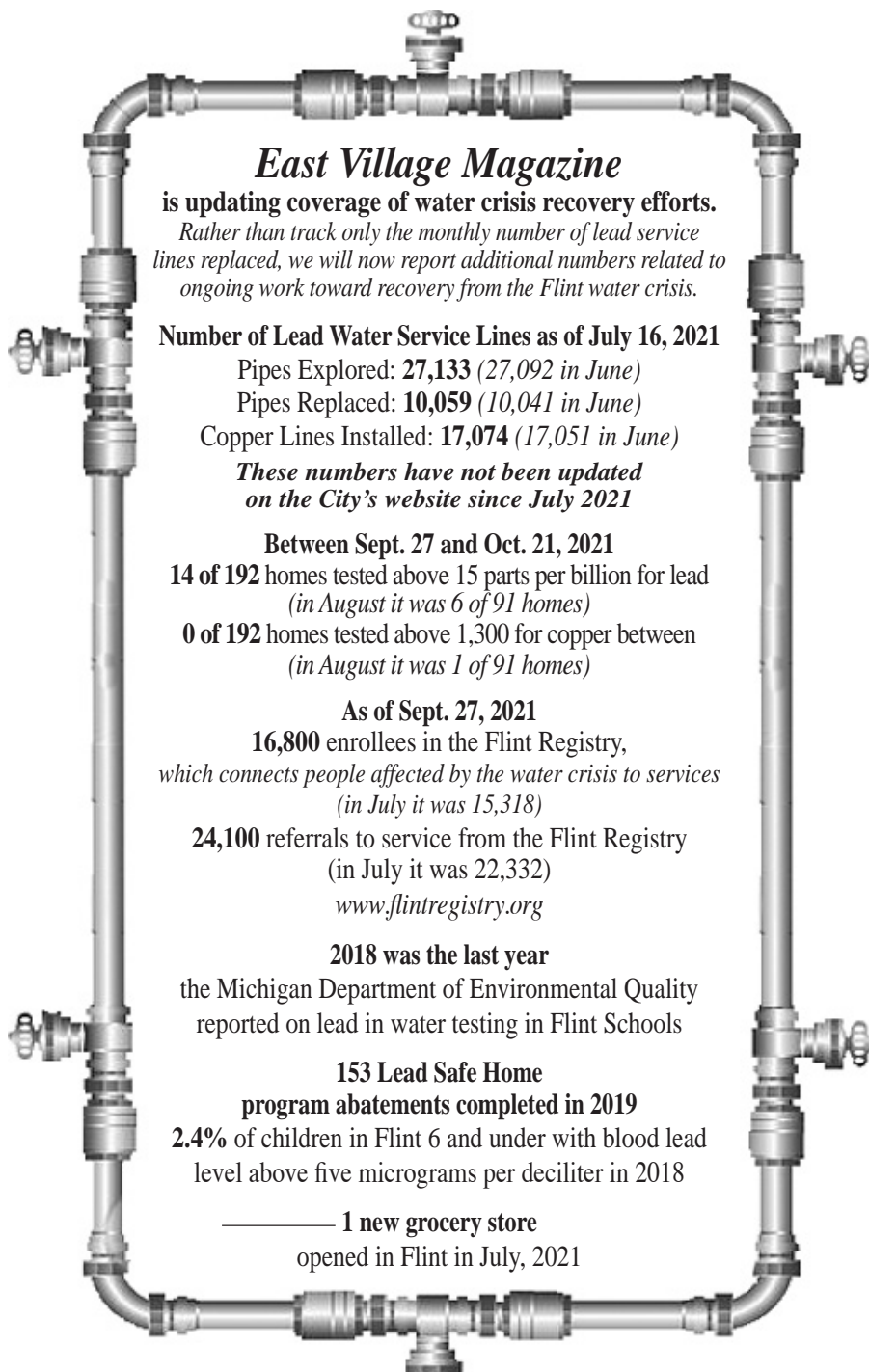
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Stay home, stay safe!

Watch for meeting updates at
www.eastvillagemagazine.org



East Village Magazine

is updating coverage of water crisis recovery efforts. Rather than track only the monthly number of lead service lines replaced, we will now report additional numbers related to ongoing work toward recovery from the Flint water crisis.

Number of Lead Water Service Lines as of July 16, 2021

Pipes Explored: **27,133** (27,092 in June)

Pipes Replaced: **10,059** (10,041 in June)

Copper Lines Installed: **17,074** (17,051 in June)

These numbers have not been updated on the City's website since July 2021

Between Sept. 27 and Oct. 21, 2021

14 of 192 homes tested above 15 parts per billion for lead
(in August it was 6 of 91 homes)

0 of 192 homes tested above 1,300 for copper between
(in August it was 1 of 91 homes)

As of Sept. 27, 2021

16,800 enrollees in the Flint Registry,
which connects people affected by the water crisis to services
(in July it was 15,318)

24,100 referrals to service from the Flint Registry
(in July it was 22,332)
www.flintregistry.org

2018 was the last year

the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality reported on lead in water testing in Flint Schools

153 Lead Safe Home

program abatements completed in 2019

2.4% of children in Flint 6 and under with blood lead level above five micrograms per deciliter in 2018

———— **1 new grocery store**
 opened in Flint in July, 2021

Tendaji ...

(Continued from Page 14.)

automobiles and lifestyles during the civil rights era that were not possible before that and were less accessible in following generations.

“Our generation,” Lewis lamented, “the struggle has been lost.”

Sadler noted “adopt a senior” and “adopt a younger person” programs in her church to reduce the generational divide.

Young agreed that “dynamic

learning opportunities” could be a way for tradition and history to be passed along from one generation to the next.

“I think that the way we position young people to learn is the way that we’re going to be able to progress,” Young concluded.

Monthly, Flint-based Tendaji Talks are sponsored by Neighborhoods Without Borders. Information might be found at the following websites: Neighborhoods Without Borders; Neighborhoods Without Borders Facebook page; Flint Neighborhoods United; or

the Flint Public Library. The public is invited to join planning sessions for Tendaji Talks at 5:30 p.m. meetings, monthly, on second Tuesdays.

The Talks were created to honor the memory of Tendaji Ganges, a Flint social justice activist and educator at the University of Michigan-Flint, who died in 2014.

The topic of the next Tendaji Talk is “Education, Racism, and Health.”

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

Village Life

Memories burned into Washington School's demise: "This one hurts the most"

By Gary Fisher

She was nearly half a century old by the time I showed up. Creaky wooden windows, stifling forced heat, so thick you could taste it, zero air conditioning, lead paint everywhere, and asbestos-covered pipes. The ancient bathrooms with the old radiators (an especially egregious artifice when some miscreant relieved himself on it), with wooden stall doors, long ago removed, meant zero privacy.

Really tough kids, and playground brawls. Giant concrete drainage tubes as our clubhouse, and dangerously engineered monkey bars so perilous they kept orthopedic surgeons in business at nearby St. Joe's Hospital. Playground bark chips with razor sharp edges that shredded skin when tackled in to them. A gravel-filled baseball infield where a short hop could turn a bassist into a soprano, or remove a couple of teeth with more efficiency than the best dentist.

God I loved the place.

Washington Elementary School sat nestled between two of America's greatest economic engines, the sprawling Buick complex and the huge AC Spark Plug factory. It was built in 1922 to handle the rapid growth fueled by those two industrial powerhouses.

By the 1970's when I was attending the school, it was bursting at the seams with kids. It was the epicenter of culture and community in the heart of the neighborhood. Washington was the home of Tot Lot, Flint's version of pre-school. A picture of our class shows several kids who I would go all the way through school with, and remain friends with to this day.

I joined the the Cub Scouts and Police Cadets at Washington School, participated in the Pinewood Derby, and even won the Washington School

Science Fair in the 6th grade. Our band played concerts in the gym, filled with parents and friends. On Saturday mornings we had roller skating, which gave me an opportunity to work as a DJ spinning tunes for the skaters.

I worked for the custodians, Mr. Turner and Mr. Clark, helping to set up the lunch room in the gym for the huge groups of kids who dined there, "compensated" in free lunches, and the



**Burned remains of the majestic
Washington Elementary School on Flint's East Side**

(Photo by Paul Rozycki)

opportunity to sit around shooting the breeze in the janitors' area in the boiler room. That's where I saw the big boiler with the words "Arlington School" on it, and felt like I had discovered secret knowledge of hidden history. My mom even worked there as a Lunch Lady and playground monitor, and she was a Homeroom Mom too.

But that wasn't the only opportunity for work at Washington. I was also a Flag Boy raising the flag every morning in front of the school, a Hall Monitor (that didn't last long), a Crossing Guard (with a florescent orange strap across my chest), and an official "Test Grader" for Mrs. Lindhurst's math class. I learned a lot about human nature with that job!

Sports was a huge part of the culture at Washington. Everyone played.

Kickball, basketball, floor hockey, speedball, soccer, football, boxing and wrestling, (okay, technically it was really just fist fighting), and of course baseball. My love of baseball was greatly enhanced when my second grade teacher Miss Cheek let us listen to the Detroit Tigers vs. Oakland A's playoffs in its entirety during class. When I became a big A's fan after that, she even let me wear my Oakland A's hat in class.

Community School Director Dave Babiericki brought soccer to us, and Washington School kids were prominent and dominant in Flint soccer for years as a result. Gym teacher Mr. Lloyd taught us how to properly shoot a basketball, World Champion Pam Brady ran our badminton club. We learned a lot about winning and losing at Washington and how to do both with grace.

When I was hit by a car walking home from school and missed three months of class, my first grade teacher Mrs. Olbey came to my house to tutor me. She sat with me on our couch, recording me reading books to my classmates, and then played the recordings in class.

Mr. Wagner, our 6th grade teacher, organized an annual trip to Toronto. We visited the Toronto Science Center, Casa Loma, learned how to sing O' Canada, and generally had a blast. We were even featured on the front page of the Toronto Star that year.

Being on the East Side there was no shortage of characters. One kid drove his dad's Gran Torino to school during lunch in the 6th grade and with a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth, encouraged us to "joy ride" with him. We weren't sure what that meant, but the car looked just like the Starsky and Hutch rig so we were

(Continued on Page 6.)