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STOP EVERYTHING FOR POEMS

By Eric C. Hammerstrom, Teacher, Marquette Senior High School

Once, there was a girl named Michelle who stood up in the middle of my fifth hour class and headed for the door without a word. "Where are you going," I asked.

"I have a basketball game," she answered and walked out. I followed her into the hallway.

"Someday, I'm going to walk onto the court in the middle of your game, sit down and open a book."

She laughed.

"I mean it," I yelled. "I'll tell the ref to stop the game because I have a poem."

Literature seems to take a back seat these days, behind science, technology, engineering, mathematics and sports.

But for one day each year at Marquette Senior High School, everything else stops for poetry. The theatre fills to capacity as competitors warm up, then step into the spotlights before cheering crowds.

And the crowd goes wild. For poems.

At this year's MSHS Poetry Out Loud Championship, the top two competitors were tied after two rounds of recitation and faced off in a sudden death showdown.

Reilly Chabie bettered the efforts of Marguerite Guter in round three to claim the MSHS crown and advance to Lansing for the State Championship.

It was exciting. It was poetry.

Through Poetry Out Loud, students are introduced to classic and contemporary works. They analyzed poems to understand tone and meaning. They commit poems to memory and practice

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STOP EVERYTHING FOR POEMS *(CONT.)*

recitation in peer groups. Those interested in taking things to the next level compete within the classroom, with some advancing to the school championship.

A young man named David Bashaw is the perfect example of what the program accomplishes. David, a varsity football and basketball star, sings with the Jazz Band and dances in our talent shows. You name it, David does it, and now (after three years of participating in Poetry Out Loud) he writes and recites his own poetry.

Two years ago a boy with severe emotional handicaps entered the competition. On most days, he had difficulty making it through the regular class day. He stood in the spotlight for a few moments and recited "Alone" by Edgar Allan Poe.

My heart broke for him out of fear before he recited the poem, and it broke again in pride when he brought Poe's words to life as though they were his own. How many other times in his life had he received a standing ovation? How many other times had a poem brought a theatre full of high school kids to their feet?

This year's crowded theatre included ninth grade students of teacher Matt Hoffman, who created a spinoff poetry competition he dubbed "March Madness," in which every student was placed into a bracket and each class opened with head-to-head poem recitations leading to a Final Four. Some wrote their own poems for the tournament, and those poems are currently on display in Peter White Public Library's teen room.

Poetry Out Loud showcases the beauty of the spoken word. For at least one day each year, everything stops for language, even basketball. To learn more about Poetry Out Loud, visit www.michiganhumanities.org.

Top: Matthew Webb, of Cass Technical High School in Detroit, was named the 2014 Michigan Poetry Out Loud State Champion. © Dave Trumpie

Left: Reilly Chabie, of Marquette Senior High School, accepts her participation certificates from John Bracey, executive director of Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, at the 2014 State Competition in East Lansing. © Dave Trumpie

ON THE COVER: Nearly 40 students from 21 counties in Michigan traveled to East Lansing to compete for the title of Michigan Poetry Out Loud State Champion. This is a free, high school recitation program hosted in Michigan by the Michigan Humanities Council and Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. © Dave Trumpie

MHC RECEIVES W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION SUPPORT TO EXPLORE RACIAL, CULTURAL HISTORY IN MICHIGAN

The Michigan Humanities Council has been awarded a three-year, $1.7 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to launch a new statewide program to share local stories about race and cultural history. MHC will award competitive grants to nonprofit agencies to support exhibits, digital projects, oral history programs, documentaries, community conversations and other activities which explore and share the experiences of local cultural identity groups.

"Michigan has an incredibly rich cultural history but not all of it has been positive," said Erik Nordberg, MHC executive director. "Many groups have suffered intolerance and violence – some continue to struggle with issues of identity and acceptance. This project hopes to provide voice to cultural groups about their own history, to share their experience with other Michigan residents, and increase conversation and understanding of the state's ever-changing cultural landscape."

The new initiative, with the first grant deadline set for spring 2015, will build the capacity of grassroots groups and community organizations across Michigan. By engaging organizations and individuals at the local level and providing funding through grants, this project will become an avenue of support for community dialogues across racial and cultural lines that lead to understanding and healing.

The grants will be available to all Michigan 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, and there are no requirements for matching money or cost share. Grantees will produce a local history product to be shared in MHC's web environment and organizations will participate in conferences to facilitate discussion and collaboration.

Program information, which is still being developed at this time, will be posted on www.michiganhumanities.org as it becomes available. Please check back for continual updates.

TIMELINE CHANGE FOR MAJOR GRANTS

As a result of this new initiative, the timeline for MHC's Major Grant program has changed. The new deadlines are as follows:

Drafts: Accepted July-Aug. 2015

Application Opens: Aug. 2015

Deadline to Apply: Sept. 2015

Award Notification: Nov. 2015

*All grant activities funded in this cycle should occur between November 2015 and November 2016. For more information on this program, visit www.michiganhumanities.org.

Top: Students gather for a discussion forum for Mosaic Youth Theatre's 2011 play, Northern Lights 1966, which re-enacts the story of the 1966 Detroit Northern High School students who walked out of class over issues of disrespect, lack of educational resources and race. Photo courtesy of Mosaic Youth Theatre.

Above: Students explore Native American history as it relates to the War of 1812 at this exhibit from the Harbor Springs Area Historical Society. "Turning Point: The War of 1812 from the Native American Perspective," captured a culture's history and stories. Photo courtesy of Mary Cummings, Harbor Springs Area Historical Society.

COLLABORATION, NOT EVALUATION

By Sharman Spieser, Grant Outside Evaluator for Michigan Humanities Council

This past summer I received a gratifying email from a project director. It summed up my goals as a Michigan Humanities Council outside evaluator:

"It was my pleasure having you here. I didn't feel like you were an evaluator as much as you were a resource. I really appreciated hearing about your own work experiences as well as your great suggestions for extending the reach of our exhibit."

When I did my first evaluation more than two years ago, the directions I received were to go to the event and use the Outside Evaluator Report to rate and report on the effectiveness and success of the project. Since then I've done about eight assessments – in Ann Arbor (where I live) and in Harbor Springs, Traverse City, Muskegon, Grand Rapids, and in the heart of my hometown, Detroit. The projects I've reported on have included art and museum exhibits, speakers, and oral histories turned into plays. Their time spans have ranged from a short series of one-night speakers, to weeks of exhibits and related programming.

For every evaluation I've done, I've received rewards that money can't buy. In addition to all of the knowledge gained, my understanding of our state and country's histories, and how people are impacted, has increased exponentially. My faith in our future has grown as I've watched elementary teachers use a museum as a classroom where every single student is fully engaged. I've been squeezed, shoulder-to-shoulder, into a storefront where residents of a Detroit neighborhood react with pride and enthusiasm as they see their stories dramatically re-enacted on stage. They remark, "That's my shoe repair man!" and "He's the landlord they're talking about!" as all of us treasure the history and recognize the vibrancy of their community.

At every project site I meet exceptional professionals with outstanding expertise in humanities disciplines. They are providing their communities with amazing opportunities, and it is my privilege to help them by offering an outside perspective. I ask what challenges the program is anticipating, and share what I've learned from other projects that could help.

After this working collaboration with the project organizers, I get to have the most fun: learning myself as I listen to the speaker, view the exhibit or watch the play, and then capture audience reactions. From the many quotes I've included in evaluation reports, this one from a Detroit high school student stands out. He was hesitant, at first, to participate in a poetry writing and reading activity, but after taking the risk he says, "I didn't know my head and my heart connected."

This does not feel like work to me. It is meaningful and satisfying to become, for a moment, part of a team striving for an important goal – to make the most of Michigan Humanities Council funding!

Members of the public gather at the Ann Arbor District Library in 2013 to hear scholars discuss the Hill Auditorium's legacy at University of Michigan. The University Musical Society was awarded a major grant to explore the auditorium's 100-year-history. Sharman Spieser visited these events as part of her role as an Outside Evaluator. Photo courtesy University Musical Society.

SMITHSONIAN PUTS RURAL COMMUNITIES BACK ON THE MAP

By Kate Bartig, Communications Manager for the Michigan Humanities Council

Michigan is known for its lakes, miles of shoreline and abundance of recreational activities – but did you know that the small city of Colon is the magic capital of the world? Or that Sault Ste. Marie, founded in 1668, is the third oldest remaining settlement in the U.S.?

Our rural areas hold valuable stories and it's through the Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street program that we hope to put these communities on the tourist map. In 2013, Alpena's Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary saw the tourist benefits first-hand when it hosted Journey Stories, an exhibit exploring travel and movement across countries, states and cities. Between the 15 events and exhibit, more than 40,000 individuals further explored their history and that of northern Michigan.

"The more avenues you have to draw people to communities, the economic impacts can really snowball," said Stephanie Gandulla, media and outreach coordinator of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. "If you have a community that is offering cool things to do, whether it's kayaking over a shipwreck or learning how people traveled on a ship to get to Alpena or northeast Michigan, you're making a more diverse and better community, and that betters the quality of people living there."

Now in its 20th year, Museum on Main Street is an initiative that directly engages small-town audiences and brings revitalized attention to underserved, rural communities through their own cultural venues. The Michigan Humanities Council began supporting this initiative in 1997 with Produce for Victory, a WWII production poster exhibit.

Cultural tourism is a part of Michigan – it's what connects us to our communities and our state. According to the 2014 Creative State Report from ArtsServe Michigan, arts and cultural activities accounted for more tourism dollars than all of the combined: golf, boating and sailing, hunting and fishing, and hiking and biking.

To further support Michigan's cultural tourism, MHC will again kick off The Way We Worked, an exhibit exploring the history of our national workforce. Each of the five sites will host a local exhibit and programming.

One of the sites to host The Way We Worked is Oxford Public Library, a rural area in Oakland County. With a history richly influenced by industry, strong labor unions and working-class America, it's a perfect venue to capture the history that defined the town we see today.

"Albeit not always the case, it appears that we live in a society today that doesn't seem to place as much significance on where we have come from, but rather more on where we are going and how we intend to get there," said Bryan Cloutier, library director and CEO for Oxford Public Library. "History teaches us that over time people tend to come and go. Organizations change in contrast, but what remains constant is our culture," Cloutier said.

Don't miss your opportunity to see this Smithsonian exhibit in our rural communities. It kicks off this October in Big Rapids and continues through July 2015. See the schedule at left for exact dates, or visit www.michiganhumanities.org.

THE WAY WE WORKED 2014-15

Artworks: Big Rapids
Oct. 4 – Nov. 30, 2014

Oxford Public Library
Dec. 6, 2014 through
Feb. 1, 2015

William G. Thompson House Museum (Hudson)
Feb. 7 – March 29, 2015

Downtown Art Place: Ironwood
April 4 – May 31, 2015

Plainwell Downtown Development Authority
June 6 – July 19, 2015

Top: A patron visits the Journey Stories exhibit at the Historical Preservation Society of Dundee/Old Mill Museum during the exhibit's 2013 Michigan tour.

Right: The Way We Worked, on display here at Bay College in Escanaba, toured Michigan previously in 2012-13. Photo courtesy of Bay College.

WHY I GIVE: A DONOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Compiled by Amanda West, Director of Development and Advocacy for the Michigan Humanities Council

Dr. Melba Joyce Boyd is currently a Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Africana Studies at Wayne State University in Detroit. She is the author of nine books of poetry, two critically acclaimed biographies, and the editor of two poetry anthologies. She is a Fulbright Scholar, and has lectured at universities throughout the United States, Europe and in the Republic of China. Her essays and poetry have appeared in international journals and books, and her poetry has been translated into German, Italian and Spanish. A Detroit native, Boyd received a Doctor of Arts in English from the University of Michigan; a M.A. and a B.A. in English from Western Michigan University.

WHY ARE THE HUMANITIES IMPORTANT IN YOUR LIFE?

As a poet and a scholar, I create and contribute to our understanding of culture. Therefore the humanities are very important because this is where culture is promoted and celebrated.

I regard poetry as the center of my creative and scholar expressions, providing the imaginative geniuses for all of my productions. I began writing poetry when I was an undergraduate student at Western Michigan University.

WHAT DOES THE MHC DO THAT ENCOURAGES YOU TO SUPPORT IT FINANCIALLY AND WITH YOUR TIME?

The Michigan Humanities Council provides programming and promotes projects that enhance and affirm the importance of culture in Michigan communities. It is essential to building a rich and valued sense of who we are as a people.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MICHIGAN PLACE?

My favorite Michigan place is Detroit. It is the place of my birth, and where I have spent most of my life. This city contains a unique vortex, a historical intersection that advances an intellectual and creative consciousness that embodies an American experience that defies traditional racial and class stratifications.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING TO DO IN MICHIGAN?

My favorite thing to do in Michigan is to attend cultural activities, such as poetry readings, musical performances, art exhibits and visit the Great Lakes. Most recently, I was overjoyed at a reading at Wayne State University, listening to a collection of great poets—Naomi Long Madgett, Al Young, Larry Goldstein, Bill Harris, M.L. Liebler and Fred Glayser—reading their poetry in concert with the poetry of legendary Detroit poets, Robert Hayden and Dudley Randall. Jazz bassist Marion Hayden played inspirational compositions that complemented recitations by some of the poets.

BECOME A HUMANITIES SUPPORTER

Are you interested in supporting the humanities and making a difference in your community? Donations to the Michigan Humanities Council are tax-deductible and can be made online at michiganhumanities.org, or by simply cutting out this donor card and mailing it with your contribution to Michigan Humanities Council, 119 Pere Marquette Drive Suite 3B, Lansing MI 48912.

Donor Name (please print): _____

Address (Street, City, State, Zip): _____

_____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Amount you would like to donate: _____

If this donation is reserved for a specific program, please include the program name here: _____

Please make checks payable to: Michigan Humanities Council

To donate with Visa/MasterCard/Discover:

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

Credit Card #: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Name on Card: _____

REMEMBERING OUR FRIEND: MICHAEL MARGOLIN

With the passing of former Michigan Humanities Council board member Michael Margolin, we have lost a dear friend and our state has lost a significant arts and cultural leader.

Michael's "day job" was worthy enough of accolade. His counseling, social work and nonprofit leadership affected literally thousands of people in Southeast Michigan. Michael held degrees from Wayne State University and the University of Michigan, and worked with numerous social services agencies including Family and Children's Services of Oakland, the Travelers Aid Society of Detroit, Sinai Hospital and Ronald McDonald House.

Outside his office, however, Michael was fully engaged with the arts and cultural scene in Southeast Michigan. Michael wrote regular columns for The Detroit News and The Oakland Press, and published features and reviews about opera, classical music, dance and the arts. He and his wife, Linda, shared a passion for indigenous Mexican folk art and made frequent trips to meet and support artists. Their personal collection grew in size and significance – attracting the interest of art museums across the state. Curated exhibitions of their collection increased public knowledge and understanding about the intersections between Mexican and American art and identity.

Michael joined the Michigan Humanities Council's governing board in 2000 and served our organization in a variety of capacities for more than a decade, including chairing our Grant Review Committee. He understood the difference between the arts and the humanities – and enriched our exploration of the gray crossover areas between the two. At a personal level, Michael brought an infectious enthusiasm to our work. You were never quite sure what might come next from Michael, but you knew it would be thought-provoking, constructive and often just plain fun.

We are honored that Michael's family suggested memorial contributions to both the Michigan Humanities Council and the Detroit Institute of Arts. It is a befitting combination reflecting his ability to see the critical intersection of the humanities and the creative arts.

Michael Margolin, left, speaks with then-MHC Executive Director Jan Fedewa at an opening in Novi for the Smithsonian Institution's Barn Again exhibit in 2004. Margolin was a longtime member of the MHC Board of Directors and passed away in early 2014.

"As folksinger Joan Baez said, 'You don't get to choose how you're going to die, or when. You can only decide how you're going to live.' Michael lived his life to the fullest. He was an inspiration to all of us who knew him. He was the heart and soul of the Council's grant program because he understood the need to achieve a richer culture. It was indeed an honor to have him serve on the Board of Directors. He will long be remembered for his generosity, uniqueness, and thoughtfulness"
—Jan Fedewa, former executive director of the Michigan Humanities Council.

Michigan Humanities Council
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MISSION: The Michigan Humanities Council's mission is to connect people and communities by fostering and supporting quality cultural programs.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Kerrytown BookFest
Venue: Farmer's Market in Kerrytown District
City: Ann Arbor
Date: Sept. 7, 2014
Region: Southeast

Michigan Folksong Legacy: Grand Discoveries from the Great Depression
Venue: Presque Isle Co. Historical Museum
City: Rogers City
Date: Through Sept. 26
Region: Northeast

Exhibit: Lincoln: The Constitution and Civil War
Venue: Delta College
City: University Center
Date: Sept. 17 – Oct. 31
Region: East Central

The Way We Worked
Venue: Artworks: Big Rapids
City: Big Rapids
Date: Oct. 4 – Nov. 30, 2014
Region: West Central

Exhibit: From Forest to Fruit Belt
Venue: North Berrien Historical Museum
City: Coloma
Date: Ongoing
Region: Southwest

For more details on these events and many more, visit www.michiganhumanities.org.

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MICHIGAN HUMANITIES COUNCIL

The Michigan Humanities Council, founded in 1974 as an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, encourages and supports a variety of activities that bring communities, students and scholars together to reflect and learn from our rich cultural heritage; cultivate a shared understanding and appreciation of each other, as well as current issues and events; and build stronger, more thoughtful communities for the future.

Contact us at (517) 372-7770 or visit michiganhumanities.org.