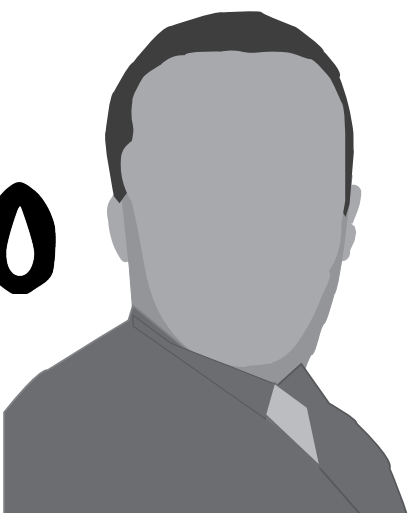




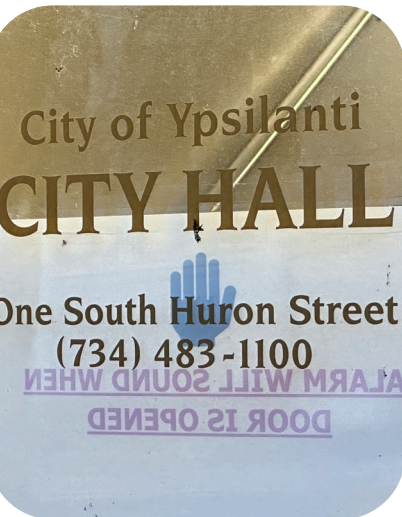
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The Eastern Echo

Celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Legacy



MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2024 | VOLUME 140, ISSUE 02 ● SERVING EMU AND YPSILANTI SINCE 1881



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MLK Jr. week of celebration returns to EMU

AMEERA SALMAN
CELLAR ROOTS EIC
NAOMI BARBOUR
REPORTER

Every year since 1986, Eastern Michigan University has put on a series of events to honor and celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

This year's theme for the week of programs is "Driven By The Dream" in commemoration of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, which he gave on Aug. 28, 1963.

The week will include lectures, panel discussions, performances, art displays, and more. Planned by a committee of almost 50 individuals and co-chaired by newly appointed Chief Diversity Officer Dwight Hamilton, the events encompass a variety of ways for students and community members to get involved.

"It's one of a few opportunities that we have during the year to really bring the community together under a common theme, and that's why we have programming," Hamilton said.

On Jan. 15, a LEGO mosaic entitled Walk to Freedom plans to be revealed. Also that day, the MLK President's

Luncheon will be held, featuring a keynote address given by Victoria Pratt.

Another member of the planning committee, Terrill Johnson-Oatman, hopes these MLK celebrations amplify the diversity of EMU's campus, and continue to make it a more inclusive place.

"We want everybody to feel as if they are heard and have a voice, even as the underdog," Johnson-Oatman said. "This is one of the most diverse campuses in Michigan, and I feel like having this helps us continue that tradition and legacy."

With 45% of students at EMU self-identifying as a race other than white, according to EMU-collected data, campus diversity and inclusion is certainly a key conversation. As EMU's Chief Diversity Officer, creating a diverse and equitable campus is part of Hamilton's job. This year's MLK celebrations were his first time as being a part of the planning committee, and he looks forward to ways he can innovate the programming in years to come.

"I really do want to talk about the fullness of Dr. King in future programming," Hamilton said. "The 'I Have a Dream' speech is certainly significant and his best known address, but he wrote a lot, he spoke a lot, he had a lot of important things to say. I would like to focus on the fullness of his teachings

in the future."

The celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. is a tradition that has been celebrated yearly on EMU's campus. After the holiday was federally recognized in 1983, late president of Eastern Michigan University, John W. Porter, was requested to be a member of the State Commission responsible for the implementation of a state observation of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. From the front page of The Eastern Echo in 1986, a weekend of fundraising efforts and speeches two days after the first annual celebration of the holiday became what is now known as EMU's MLK Jr. Celebration tradition.



Previous Martin Luther King Jr. celebrations at EMU

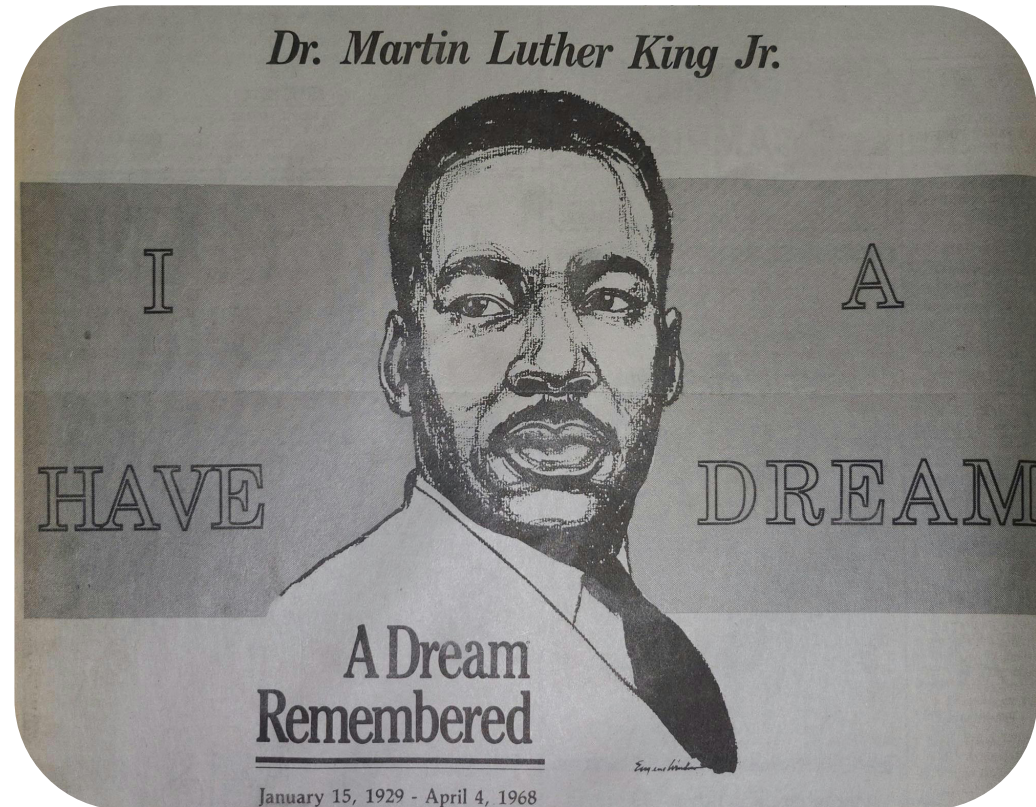


PHOTO CREDIT: ECHO ARCHIVES
DRAWING CELEBRATING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. FROM THE JAN. 15, 1990 EDITION OF THE EASTERN ECHO.



PHOTO CREDIT: BIANCA RAMSEY
MLK OPENING CELEBRATION RECEPTION AND ESSAY SCHOLARSHIP SHOWCASE IN JAN. 2020.



PHOTO CREDIT: SAMMIE CLAY
EASTERN MICHIGAN STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN MLK DAY OF SERVICE VISION VOLUNTEER MEETING IN THE STUDENT CENTER BALLROOM ON JAN. 16, 2015.



PHOTO CREDIT: CARMEN CHENG
PICTURE OF THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BUST ON EMU'S CAMPUS TAKEN IN OCT. 2019



PHOTO CREDIT: CHEYENNE THOMAS
THE EMU MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. COMMEMORATIVE MARCH WAS THE FIRST IN AN ARRAY OF EVENTS DURING EASTERN'S 32ND ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CELEBRATION WEEK.

'A Night of Dreams' celebrates MLK Jr. through a musical lens

NAOMI BARBOUR
REPORTER

On Thursday, Jan. 18, a collection of performances entitled "A Night of Dreams" will take place in Pease Auditorium from 7-9 p.m. celebrating MLK Jr.'s legacy.

This event is the inaugural celebration and is being organized by J. Nick Smith, associate director of bands, and director of athletic bands for the School of Music & Dance. The event will feature performances by students, staff, alumni, and community members. Smith plans to use music to convey MLK Jr.'s message and is honored to be leading this event.

"The MLK Celebration Planning Committee reached out to me for help with a concert, eventually leading to me being asked to chair," Smith said. "One of the first visions we created was 'A Night of Dreams,' utilizing musical performance to understand a kaleidoscope of historical context. To me, this event truly celebrates what MLK Jr. was getting at in terms of bringing the community together. This concert is formatted in such a way to balance talent from all walks of life, students and professional musicians."

Featured performances will include Mama Söl, a hip-hop artist, motivational speaker, and mother from Flint, Mich. Söl uses her passion for words to encourage others towards self-love, uplifting perspectives, and greater purpose.

Another performer is the Detroit Academy of Arts and

Sciences Choir, a high-spirited group of third through eighth-grade students offering a dynamic presentation that will be both positive and uplifting.

This event is a part of Eastern Michigan University's program of activities celebrating MLK Jr.'s life. Activities include a wide range of inspiring and informative events, such as panel discussions, performances, and a keynote address, among others. These events will provide participants with a unique opportunity to engage with members of the university and local community to commemorate the contributions of one of history's most influential figures. The celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. has been a yearly tradition on EMU's campus since 1986.

What's the move? Jan. 15 - 20

SHANNON PARKER
REPORTER

Eastern hosts several Martin Luther King Jr. Day Activities - Jan. 15

The Student Center Ballroom doors open at 11 a.m. for the President's Luncheon, featuring emcee Roop Raj and keynote speaker Honorable Victoria Pratt. This event is sold out.

Following the luncheon is a book signing event with Honorable Victoria Pratt from 3-4:30 p.m. at the Student Center, room 310A.

Join a tai chi class - Jan. 16

Learn to release negative energy, handle stressful situations, and harmonize body and mind at Washtenaw County's weekly tai chi classes. Sessions run Tuesdays from 9:30-10:30 a.m. at the Merri Lou Murray Recreation Center, 2960 Washtenaw Ave. Register online through the Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Events webpage. The cost of attendance is \$38.

"MLK Speaks Series: Conversations & Stories Driven by the Dream" - Jan. 16

Continue EMU's celebration of MLK Jr. by engaging with others in a discussion of King's impact and lasting mission. The discussion takes place at the Student Center Auditorium from noon to 1:30 p.m.

Check out student organizations at WinterFest - Jan. 16

Discover EMU's student organizations and get to know fellow students at this semester's WinterFest. While there, decorate your own snow globe and enter it into the snow globe decorating contest. The event takes place from 5-7 p.m. at the Student Center.

Honors College Crochet and Knitting Club Meeting - Jan. 16

Feeling crafty? Join students who share a passion for yarn work at the Honors College Lower Level Lounge from 5:30-7 p.m. Any level of experience is welcome and materials will be provided.

MLK Jr. Men's Basketball Game - Jan. 16

It's game time. Support EMU men's basketball in their game against Ball State from 7-9:30 p.m. at the George Gervin GameAbove Center.

Syllabus Scavenger Hunt Workshop - Jan. 17

Start the semester on the right foot at the Holman Success Center's Syllabus Scavenger Hunt Workshop. Learn organizational and time management skills based on your own syllabus for the semester. The workshop takes place from 6-7:30 p.m. at Halle Library G09.

"Cyrano de Bergerac" Auditions - Jan. 18 and 19

Love acting and performing? The EMU Theatre Department is holding auditions Jan. 18-19 from 1-2 p.m. for its April performance of "Cyrano de Bergerac." Auditions take place at Judy Sturgis Hill, room 107, from 5-8 p.m. Sign up for an audition time slot across from room 103 in Judy Sturgis Hill.

Women's R.A.D. Self-Defense Class - Jan. 18

Learn awareness, prevention, and risk avoidance at the EMU Police R.A.D. self-defense class for women. This class takes place every Thursday for six weeks from 5:30-8 p.m. at McKenney Hall. The cost of attendance is \$10. Please contact Cathy Wilman at cgeyer@emich.edu for more information.

MLK Jr. "Night of Dreams" - Jan. 18

Enjoy a collection of performances by EMU students, staff, alumni, and Ypsi community members at Pease Hall from 7-9:30 p.m.

MLK Jr. Week of Service - Jan. 19

Everybody is invited to wrap up MLK Jr. week by joining other students, faculty, and staff in volunteering around campus and the community. This event takes place all day and initially meets at the Student Center. Please contact Doris Fields at dfields1@emich.edu for more information.

Ypsi Friday Movies at the Museum - Jan. 19

Calling all movie buffs! Come see this week's showing of the 1961 action war film "The Guns of Navarone" at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum (220 N. Huron St.) from 7-10 p.m. Attendance is free and popcorn is included.

NBA 2K Tournament - Jan. 20

Show off your NBA 2K skills and play in the upcoming tournament at the Rec/IM Esports Lounge from 1-4 p.m. The winner will receive an Intramural Champions t-shirt. Register online on the Rec/IM Programs webpage. Please contact Brett Carlisle at bcarlis2@emich.edu for more information.

"The American Mirror Project: A Reflection of Ypsilanti" by The Formosa Quartet - Jan. 20

Experience the sounds of Ypsilanti and its rich history by attending the Formosa Quartet's musical performance at the Honors College Auditorium from 7:30-9:30 p.m. The Formosa Quartet has been named the 2023-24 McAndless Distinguished Professors in the Humanities at EMU. The performance includes pieces by the EMU Symphony Orchestra and Choir.

Washtenaw County COVID-19 community level now at medium-risk after recent reports

AARON HUGHES
MANAGING EDITOR

On Dec. 29, 2023, the Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD) announced that the Washtenaw County COVID-19 community level has reached medium. The WCHD measures the COVID-19 levels through wastewater levels and hospital crowd levels.

When at medium, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends individuals at higher risk of severe illness to wear masking in indoor public settings.

Susan Ringler-Cerniglia, administrator of communications and community health promotion at WCHD, said that despite reaching medium levels, there is no reason to sound the alarm.

"We're in that time of year when people get together a lot or indoors more. So holidays being indoors are really good for germ sharing. So all those things combined have given us more activity. It's a little early to tell, but we are seeing some slight decreases this week," Ringler-Cerniglia said.

Patricia Wells, a medical director for The Corner Health Center in Ypsilanti, had similar feelings to Ringler-Cerniglia's statement.

"There has definitely been an increase in cases, especially since the holidays. Our peaks seem to correspond to big holidays. This peak started a bit after Thanksgiving, and has continued to rise as folks return to their areas of residence, bring virus with them, and the process repeats at the next holiday," Wells said.

According to WCHD data, cases within the area started to decrease Jan. 6. However, Ringler-Cerniglia and Wells also said that despite the past decrease in outbreaks, residents should watch and see how the opening of K-12 schools and colleges will affect the numbers.

When asked if there were any concerns in regards to the increase in COVID-19 admission levels, any plans to update the EMU COVID-19 tracker, and if there were any plans to bring back mask mandates like other locations across the country, the University responded with this statement:

"The University monitors all ongoing matters related to the health and safety of our campus community and this will continue. At this time, we are not seeing conditions that would warrant any change in University policy. The most important message we can provide to students, employees and guests is to stay home if they are not feeling well. Campus members who are not feeling well should review this website to learn about options available to them," Walter Kraft, vice president of communications at EMU, said in a statement.

According to the CDC website, the only counties in Michigan at high COVID-19 community levels as of Jan. 6 are Saginaw, Sanilac, St. Clair, Tuscola, and Huron.

The WCHD has also recently reported that from Mar. 1, 2020, to Feb. 25, 2023, 642 Washtenaw community members lost their lives to COVID-19. The report says despite the loss across Michigan, death reports were much higher.

"We continue to mourn the hundreds of lives lost in our community due to COVID,"

Jimena Loveluck, WCHD health officer, said. "But we are also incredibly grateful. Our work to respond together saved lives."

As of now, there is no data on which cities within the Washtenaw area are impacted the most.

"It's difficult for us [WCHD] to do the data analysis that's required to really dig deep. As you probably know, early in the pandemic, we saw a lot of disproportionate impact by race and also by geography. So in our local area, we've seen more severe impact in our African-American and Latinx populations. And we've seen that more in our Ypsilanti areas," Ringler-Cerniglia said. "Over time, that has leveled out a little bit. We and others, particularly partners and leaders in our areas, have done a lot of work to make sure that people have access to information they can trust."

"Ypsilanti remains at more risk than neighboring communities. COVID magnifies disparities. First, people tend to live in homes with more individuals per space, so may not have anywhere to isolate. We are social, and tend to gather with extended family and not think of them as exposures. Fewer people have jobs that allow them to work from home when they or their family are sick. This also means kids have to go to school even when they are sick, since parents need to go to work. It becomes an endless cycle," Wells said. "We know from the data that people who are Black are more likely to have serious illness and even die, regardless of socioeconomic status."

For those looking for more information, visit the WCHD website, sign up for email notifications, or visit their social media.

WCHD recommends residents wear a mask if they are sick, have good ventilation, and wash their hands to not spread the virus.

"Many people remain contagious with COVID for longer than the CDC recommends isolating. At a very minimum, if you do decide to stop isolating then please wear a well fitting mask for at least 10 days after symptoms began. Please find a primary care provider so that when you do get sick you have someone to call. For those who are ages 12-25 (and the children of our patients) we have appointments available in person and by Telehealth Monday through Friday," Wells said in a statement.

Wells also encourages residents and students to get vaccinated and to avoid the myths and misinformation regarding COVID-19.

Resources:

Individuals who have not already ordered the free at home test since Nov. 20, 2023, can visit covid.gov. For those who did not order a test during fall of 2023, there is an offer to receive two orders of a total of eight tests.

WCHD offers small packs of individual masks when individuals email them beforehand. Individuals can pickup a mask from either their Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti location.

The Corner Health Center offers the Moderna vaccine by appointment, but can only vaccinate those with insurance at this time.

For those looking for a COVID-19 test, you can visit the statewide testing locator online.

Detroit Red Wings host TRUEMU Night fundraiser

JACK MONK
REPORTER

At Little Caesars Arena during Detroit Red Wings' game against the Las Vegas Golden Knights on Jan. 27 at 8:00 p.m., the Red Wings will host TRUEMU night in collaboration with Eastern Michigan University.



PHOTO CREDIT: MARIE WHITE

FLYER HANGING ON A BULLETIN BOARD IN PRAY-HAROLD BUILDING ADVERTISING TRUEMU NIGHT.

As part of the collaboration, those who buy a ticket will receive a co-branded Eagles and Red Wings jersey, which will lead to a donation to the EMU Student Emergency Fund.

Created and managed by the Provost's Office, the Student Emergency Fund supports currently enrolled EMU students by providing financial support when students face emergency expenses.

Matt Mortier, director of donor and volunteer engagement at EMU, sees this event as essential as financial struggles can affect students' academic experience.

"It's become more of our fundraising experience; the student government has supported it over the years, and GameAbove supports it. Also, we are trying to host a pre-

game event for the Red Wings, possibly at Hockeytown," Mortier said.

"I spent a lot of time with admissions and, within our major sports teams, it's a major element to be a member of the community to teach others to show what the college has to offer," Mortier said. "I learned about hockey when I came here from Detroit from Northeast Ohio, where we didn't have a major hockey team, so it encourages everyone to be there and for a fun night."

According to Mortier, last year's TRUEMU event had close to 400 attendees who had bought the package, which raised \$2,000. This year, they expect close to 500 attendees.

"This has become an annual event, and we know there are quite a few alumni students throughout Metro-Detroit to celebrate the school we love and an attached sports team that helps families and students," Mortier said.

For students interested in receiving the funding, it is a one-time nonrenewable award and does not need to be repaid. EMU students may request up to a maximum of \$750. However, applying does not guarantee the committee will approve.

Another TRUEMU event will take place on March 7, when the Detroit Pistons host the Brooklyn Nets. As of now, a grant member, who is also a member of the Pistons Board, and an alumnus are working on planning more events such as TRUEMU night.



PHOTO CREDIT: MATT MORTIER

Ypsilanti City Council passes resolution to deprioritize entheogenic plants

VICTORIA SMITH
CONTENT EDITOR

The Ypsilanti City Council voted unanimously to pass a resolution surrounding entheogenic plants during their latest meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 9.

Resolution No. 2024-001 states that arresting and investigating those who use, grow, and are in possession of entheogenic plants will have the lowest priority of the City's law enforcement.

It is also stated that City funds and resources shall not be used to make these arrests or conduct these investigations.

The resolution pertains to plants that may be scheduled at both the state and federal levels, although the plants encompassed in the resolution are limited by the compounds they contain.

"There's lots of studies that show these are very beneficial in terms of alleviating addiction... specifically opiates," Mayor Pro-Tem Steve Wilcoxon said.

The resolution does not allow for the

sale and manufacturing of the plants, the possession and distribution of the plants in schools, and driving under the influence or causing a public disturbance as a result of plant use.



PHOTO CREDIT: VICTORIA SMITH

THE WINDOW OF THE CITY HALL BUILDING.

Prior to the City Clerk initiating the vote, the public had the opportunity to address the Council either in-person or virtually. No individuals spoke against the resolution.

After Resolution No. 2024-001 was passed by all six Council members, five additional resolutions were discussed and voted on.

Before voting on resolutions, however, the meeting began with City Council members discussing values. Facilitated by Sharonda Simmons, members dissected what values are, including the City's three main values of heritage, pride, and diversity.

Council Member Evan Sweet chose to speak on the value of pride and its meaning within the City.

"Seeing that we have a vast amount of residents that are very invested in the community and have a lot of passion and are willing to stick up and do things that maybe folks in other cities and communities might not do," Sweet said, "there's a lot of people that are really rooted and have a lot of care and concern, and it shows through their actions, and I think that we see that day to day."

For future Ypsilanti City Council coverage, follow the [easternecho.com](#).

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The Great Vannzee; the story of EMU Sports' superfan and celebrity

BLAKE MCQUEARY
SPORTS EDITOR

Dedication towards that one something in your life can really pay off if you do it right. Whether you put a lot of your time and effort into work, school, your family, whatever it may be, the results will show. We've all been taught that lesson at some point.

Born in southeastern Michigan, Ann Arbor, Zack



ZACK VANNIEUWENZ (PICTURED RIGHT), KNOWN AS "VANNZEE," TAKING A PICTURE WITH EMU BASKETBALL LEGEND GEORGE GERVIN (PICTURED LEFT) INSIDE THE GEORGE GERVIN GAMEABOVE CENTER.

Vannieuwenh grew up in Blissfield and attended Blissfield High School where he played and enjoyed lots of sports.

"I was always that kid that was the bat boy or the waterboy for the varsity teams," Vannieuwenh said.

After high school, while Vannieuwenh was in community college, he discovered that school may not be the right route for him. So, he decided to explore a different avenue and began working in a factory in Dexter.

Quickly, Vannieuwenh realized he had made a mistake and wanted something bigger for himself. He decided that he would return to school and enroll at Eastern Michigan University to earn his college degree.

"I decided that if I was going to go to a four-year university, I was going to do it right by choosing a division one school," Vannieuwenh said. "With EMU being close to Dexter, I would work and then attend night classes."

Once Vannieuwenh finally settled into campus, his love for the school and the athletics grew strong. Arriving in 2016, it was perfect timing as the EMU football team was headed to its first bowl game since 1987.

As the Eagles were winning on the field, Vannieuwenh wanted to make his college experience one that was filled with dedication to the school that he represented.

"I wanted to go to every sporting event I could go to. Being a commuter student, I wanted to make sure I still got the experience," Vannieuwenh said. "I didn't want to say no to anything."

Since then, the Eagles have achieved six bowl game berths, while capping off its best season since 1987 as they captured a Famous Idaho Potato Bowl game win in 2022.

Through those years, Vannieuwenh would use the social media platform Twitter to send out trivia and factoids, and share the stories of the athletes and entities a part of the EMU athletics world. That's when the steam started to pick up, donning the nickname 'Vannzee.'

"I knew it was a big deal once I reached 500 followers," Vannieuwenh said. "Next thing I knew, I was at 1,000, and it just kept growing."

One year while Vannieuwenh was enjoying an EMU basketball game, former Eagle Tim Bond threw down a thunderous dunk that would catch some attention. Vannieuwenh quickly navigated to Twitter and tweeted, "Tim Bond out here making posters."

He would add in the hashtag "#SCTOP10." The tweet would gain national attention as ESPN's Sportscenter featured the tweet on live television while showing the highlight.

@EMUathletics Tim Bond out here making posters #SCTop10

"I woke up the next morning and had all of these voicemails and Snapchats," Vannieuwenh said. "That was cool seeing Tim and EMU get their moment, while it was also surreal seeing my name on there."

The name Vannzee was finally known around Ypsilanti. So much so that when Vannieuwenh appears at tailgates and athletic events, fans, parents, and even players will stop him for pictures and conversations, and even provide him with food.

"It kind of shocks me because I feel like thanking them. They do so much more for the University than me



PHOTO CREDIT: ZACK VANNIEUWENZ

VANNIEUWENZ'S COLLECTION OF EMU SPORTS GEAR COLLECTED THROUGHOUT HIS TIME WITH EMU SPORTS.

hitting a few buttons on a keyboard," Vannieuwenh said. "I quit bringing food to tailgates because I never ate my own food."

Through it all, it hasn't just been a one-man show for Vannieuwenh.

Jack Vannieuwenh, Vannzee's father, has been by his side since the beginning. What once was joining Vannzee while he was a student and sitting next to the student section for games turned into a tradition of him and his son going to every home football game together to this day.



"When I was a student there, we would get a season ticket for him, and he would sit right next to the student section," Vannieuwenh said. "Now, sometimes it's too cold or wet for him, but he'll still join me. It's hard to keep him away."

Being a single father and raising Vannzee on his own, the bond between the two has been unbreakable.

"It's always been me and him. When I was a commuter student, I didn't know anybody, so I would usually be myself," Vannieuwenh said. "It makes it more enjoyable as it's almost a shared experience. There's nobody else I would rather share it with."

The dedication to the athletics at EMU isn't a front for Vannieuwenh. As he sits at 2.3K followers on X, formerly known as Twitter, whether people paid attention to his social media presence or not, he'd still be repping the Eagles in the same way.

"Even if I didn't have the followers that I have right now, I'd still be in the stands and at all the games, cheering the same way," Vannieuwenh said. "It's become a second job and passion of mine."

Eagle Sports Tips and Tales

BLAKE MCQUEARY
SPORTS EDITOR

EMU hoops' Tyson Acuff recognized on Lou Henson Award Watch List

Can't cuff Acuff!

Eastern Michigan University basketball junior guard Tyson Acuff has been on a tear all season, and the proof is in the pudding as Acuff was named to the Lou Henson Award midseason watch list.

The award honors the legendary Lou Henson who is a former Illinois and New Mexico State head coach who won 775 games in 41 seasons.

Including Acuff, three players from the Mid-American Conference (MAC) were named to the list as the University of Akron's Enrique Freeman and Bowling Green State University's Marcus Hill.

Players eligible for the award must play in the following conferences: America East, ASUN, Big Sky, Big South, Big West, Colonial, CUSA, Horizon, Independents, Ivy, Metro Atlantic, Mid-American, MEAC, Missouri Valley, Northeast, Ohio Valley, Patriot, Southern, Southland, SWAC, Summit, Sun Belt, WAC, West Coast.

The 2024 award will be announced in Phoenix, AZ, the site of the men's Division I Basketball Championship.

EMU Diving finishes four inside top 10 at Buffalo Diving Invite

The Eastern Michigan University dive team participated in the University at Buffalo Diving Invite as four Eagles finished inside the top 10.

Three divers from the three-meter dive would see the top 10 as junior Rebekah Knapp (Mesa, Ariz.) finished in fifth place with a score of 280.15 points.

Senior Camyrn Hughes (London, Ontario) placed seventh with a score of 271.56, while grad student Keira Veltigian (Oxford, Mich.) finished in eighth place with a score of 271.05.

In the one-meter, junior Ciara Wheeler was the lone Eagle inside the top 10 as she placed fourth with a score of 256.25.

EMU gymnastics finish with season-high team score at Minnesota

The Eastern Michigan University gymnastics team took on the University of Minnesota as the Eagles finished with a season-high team score of 194.900.

Senior Raisa Boris (Brooklyn Park, Minn.) and Trinity Macy (Rowlett, Texas) would lead the Eagles on bars as they each scored a 9.800, tying for fourth overall on uneven bars.

In the second rotation on vault, the Eagles scored a 48.650 as Boris recorded a 9.825 on the apparatus, tying with one other Gopher for the overall top spot in the event.

EMU would go to the floor for the third rotation as the Eagles finished with 48.800 score as Boris' 9.825 was good for sixth place.

The Eagles would finish on the beam with a season-high 48.975 score as freshman Jacquelyn Patterson (Mason, Ohio) led EMU with a career-high 9.875 for a second place finish.

Central Michigan women's team claims intrastate rival victory over Eagles

ELENA DAVIS
SPORTS WRITER

The 94th encounter between in-state rivals Eastern Michigan University and Central Michigan took place on Saturday, Jan. 13. CMU maintains dominance in the all-time series with 55 victories to EMU's 39.

Despite limiting the Chippewas to a mere 20% accuracy in a 2-for-10 shooting display from beyond the arc, the Eagles' women's basketball team faced a 64-60 defeat at the George Gervin GameAbove Center.

The Eagles (4-10, 1-3) witnessed three players achieving double-digit scores. Junior guard Lachelle Austin (Redford, Mich.) led the charge with 14 points, followed by junior center Tayra Eke (Madrid, Spain) who contributed 13 points, eight rebounds, and two blocks. Freshman guard Cali Denson (Milwaukie, Ore.) also made her presence felt with 11 points.

Trailing 11-3 initially, EMU initiated a comeback, embarking on a 6-0 run with 5:17 remaining in the first quarter. Sophomore guard Olivia Smith (Fort Wayne, Ind.) sealed the surge with a three-pointer, reducing the deficit to 11-9. However, CMU responded, extending their lead, and the Eagles found themselves behind 21-18 as they entered the second quarter.

The second quarter proved challenging for the Eagles as they further slipped, heading into halftime with a 35-25 deficit.

Senior center Kennedi Myles (Cincinnati, Ohio) spearheaded EMU's strong effort on the offensive glass,

securing three crucial offensive rebounds. The team collectively grabbed a total of 12 offensive boards, translating to an impressive 15 points from second-chance opportunities.

Following halftime, EMU reduced its deficit to 41-35 and embarked on a 7-0 run. Denson's three-pointer capped the surge, propelling them to a 42-41 lead with 3:34 remaining in the third quarter. Maintaining this lead throughout the frame, the Eagles entered the fourth quarter with a slim 46-45 advantage. Notably, they netted nine of their 21 total points in the third quarter from three-pointers.

However, CMU staged a comeback in the final quarter, erasing EMU's lead and securing a 64-60 victory. The Eagles capitalized on opportunities in the post, with eight of their 14 fourth-quarter points coming from inside the paint.

In Saturday's matchup, the Eagles created pressure, causing 20 Chippewa turnovers, although committing 16 turnovers themselves. Capitalizing on these takeaways, the Eagles converted them into 15 points on the offensive end. Junior forward ZaNiya Nelson (Oklahoma City, Okla.) played a pivotal role, leading the team individually with four steals.

EMU emerged victorious in the blocking duel against the Chippewas, securing a 4-2 advantage. This marks the fifth instance this season where the Eagles have outperformed their opponents in blocking. In the previous season, the team achieved more blocks than their adversaries in 19 different contests.

Next up, the Eagles are set to continue conference play on home turf, preparing to host Miami University inside the George Gervin GameAbove Center on Wednesday, Jan. 17, with the game scheduled to tip off at 7 p.m.



PHOTO CREDIT: JAYLA FORD

LACHELLE AUSTIN, GUARD, AGAINST TOLEDO.

Former Eastern Michigan football coach to become next head coach at Alabama

BLAKE MCQUEARY
SPORTS EDITOR



PHOTO CREDIT: UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON ATHLETICS

Former Eastern Michigan offensive coordinator Kalen DeBoer will officially become the next head coach at the University of Alabama after notifying Washington officials of his decision, per ESPN's Pete Thamel.

DeBoer has spent the last two seasons as the head coach at the University of Washington. He held a 25-3 overall record in his two seasons, leading the Huskies to the College Football Playoff National Championship this past season while being named AP Coach of the Year.

"I have always had an incredible respect for Alabama football and its commitment to excellence. The tradition-rich history of this program is unmatched across the landscape of college athletics, and I look forward to continuing moving that forward," DeBoer said in a statement after making the switch official.

"Following Coach Saban is an honor. He has been the standard for college football, and his success is unprecedented. I would not have left Washington for just any school. The chance to lead the football program at the University of Alabama is the opportunity of a lifetime. My family and I feel truly blessed and look forward to becoming a part of the Tuscaloosa community," DeBoer added in his statement.

The news comes just days after legendary head coach

Nick Saban announced his retirement on Wednesday, Jan. 10, who held a 206-29 record at Alabama and brought nine SEC titles and six National Championships to Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

As a head coach, DeBoer's teams have gone 104-12 in his time. Before becoming an assistant at Southern Illinois University in 2010, DeBoer was the head coach at the University of Sioux Falls from 2005-2009, where he held a 67-3 record through five years in charge, had three undefeated seasons, and won three National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics national championships.

DeBoer spent three seasons at EMU as the team's offensive coordinator from 2014-2016 under Chris Creighton. He's also held offensive coordinator positions at Southern Illinois, Fresno State University, and the University of Indiana.

In 2020, DeBoer replaced Jeff Tedford as Fresno State's head coach as he led the Bulldogs to a 3-3 record during the shortened COVID-19 season. In 2021, he would lead Fresno State to a 9-3 record with ranked victories over UCLA and San Diego State.

The South Dakota native signed a two-year contract extension with the Huskies through the 2028 season in November and now owes a \$12 million buyout as he heads to Tuscaloosa.

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Review: 'Mean Girls' is a modern musical adaptation that makes a mark

MARIE WHITE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

"Mean Girls" (2024) is a musical adaptation that sets itself into modern-day life while bringing forward the charm of its source material, and even more. This film is a musical, and you should set your expectations before watching it. This adaptation is very different from the original Broadway musical and original material, so go into the film with those thoughts, and it's super enjoyable.

Synopsis
In this movie musical, a new student Cady Heron gets welcomed into the world of plastics at the top of the social pyramid of North Shore High. The leader of the plastics Regina George shows how cruel people

can be when Cady falls for Regina's ex-boyfriend and soon tumbles down the social pyramid taking everyone with her.

Starring Angourie Rice as Cady Heron, Ren   Rapp as Regina George, Christopher Briney as Aaron Samuels, Auli'i Cravalho as Janis Sarkisian, Jaquel Spivey as Damian Hubbard, Avantika Vandanapu as Karen Shetty, and Bebe Wood as Gretchen Wieners.

Highs
Auli'i Cravalho as Janis truly steals the show. Every time Janis came onto the screen, I knew it was going to be good. From "Apex Predator" to "Revenge Party," the vocals sold the story. Just as well as her acting, as a package she truly made the whole performance top tier. Cravalho made the character of Janis her own, and it makes the film so successful. Other characters are amazing throughout, but I would see the movie again simply for her performance.

The transitions throughout the film are impeccable. There is a nice balance between musical tracks and speaking parts throughout the movie, and they transition perfectly

between the two. Starting from the beginning of the film in the intro, we have our narrators (Janis and Damian) on a phone recording themselves, and it opens the shot into Cady's viewpoint seamlessly. They used modern proponents like video calling, and recording first person shots to move the story along, and fit into the plot without breaking that wall. Throughout the film, they used technology and scenery to transition scenes and make a movie with simply amazing cinematography.

Honorable mention: Ren   Rapp. She sells Regina George, and if I wasn't in awe of her just simply coming on screen, my jaw would drop from the sheer power in not only her voice, but her entire energy she brought to the role.

Lows
The musical numbers don't all carry the same weight. Even though the transitions are good, the musical numbers themselves feel extremely unbalanced. The beginning of the film with the intro song "A Cautionary Tale" from our narrators sets the bar super high, then moving straight into the song

"What Ifs" sung by Cady Heron, it leaves a lot to be desired. While Angourie Rice would be perfect in a non-musical adaptation of "Mean Girls," it felt like all her songs sounded lackluster in her vocal tone, and the composition of her songs also fell flat. It felt like throughout the film, songs went from super amazing to bleh, and I wish as a musical they would all be on the same level.

Verdict
I enjoyed the film; it just isn't entirely what I expected it to be. This definitely isn't a remake and it is a musical, but it's updated for the big screen, so it loses Broadway and becomes more Hollywood. It somehow falls into being too different from the original and too different from the Broadway musical, so it sits in this weird middle ground. With that being said, if you don't go into it expecting the original or the musical, it is a really fun movie.

I give "Mean Girls" (2024) an 8.5 out of 10.

Review: Netflix's art heist film 'Lift' is a worthy watch for viewers

MARIAM FAKHREDDINE
COLUMNIST

In F. Gary Gray's heist film "Lift," Kevin Hart portrays expert thief Cyrus. The film, which was written by Daniel Kunka, contains extravagant set pieces, such as a speedboat pursuit in the opening scene, and beautiful settings like Tuscany and Venice that make this film worth a watch.

Synopsis
This film focuses on con artist Cyrus, who is being followed throughout his art heists by Agent Abby Gladwell (Gugu Mbatha-Raw). Previously, he had a flirtatious relationship with Agent Gladwell, who is part of an agency called Interpol. When she needs his assistance to carry off the ultimate heist—stealing \$100 million in gold bullion being loaded on a 777 passenger flight. That is when she tracks down Cyrus (Hart). In an attempt to have the best chance of finishing the dangerous task, Cyrus gathers his team from a variety of professions. This specific heist mission gives Cyrus and his team complete immunity for their past heists that broke multiple laws. The heist revolves around a comical villain named eco-terrorist Lars Jorgensen (played by Jean Reno),



who plans to manipulate the stock market by buying half a billion dollars worth of gold bars from some mysterious hackers to interfere with the world's water supply.

Highs
In contrast to his previous roles, Kevin Hart demonstrates a more serious side of his acting, but the entire film also features some of his witty, sarcastic remarks. Several of the scenes had incredible action that was both intense and entertaining. Even though Cyrus feared this heist could be too risky, he gave his crew a chance for an escape, demonstrating his selflessness and compassion for his fellow team members. His persona truly made the movie come together; it added a touch of grace and demonstrated that he wasn't your average, egotistical boss.

The artwork that was up for auction represented the Mona Lisa in one of the comparisons, which made it an interesting piece of art. At the start of the film, there was an exciting speedboat chase. The team's hacker, Mi-Sun, was incredibly clever and resourceful. The presence of two female characters on the squad reinforced the idea that women are capable of intelligence. The squad in most heist films is typically made up entirely of men.

The pilot, Camila, added a sarcastic element to the film when speaking with Magnus the safecracker. Camila's ability to maneuver the speedboat and make her escape was impressive. Mangus brought the true humorous element of the film; his character brought joyfulness because he is one of the less serious of the characters.

Gugu Mbatha-Raw's (Abby Gladwell) performance in this film was outstanding. By participating in the theft and putting her life in danger, she displayed courage and stubbornness. One of the better parts was her in a combat scene with Kevin Hart; she was amazing. When speaking with Cyrus, her persona brought morality to life. She conveyed to him both her toughness and her compassion. This movie's action sequences were amazing, and the plot of planning the

heist was captivating. This film's outstanding computer graphics made the airplane scenes come together.

Lows
This movie had a few negative points, one of them being that there wasn't much of a sense of fear in the beginning when fleeing the agents. The backstory of Cyrus and Agent Gladwell was briefly and ineffectively conveyed at the outset. At the beginning, their close relationship gave the impression that Agent Gladwell was seeking revenge. A scenario highlighting their past together and the reasons Agent Gladwell was so eager to capture Cyrus should have been included. If there had been this particular scene, it may have provided viewers with more context for their past as well as an understanding of what Abby saw in Cyrus.

Another low point was the villain Lars Jorgensen, who in a few sequences was the one making all the decisions, which is why he was so deadly. However, it didn't reveal much about how scary he was to the other art heist professionals. His men's control over the jet did not present as much of a threat because they could be quickly eliminated. Scenes like "Don't overmind the master thief Lars Jorgensen" ought to have been included more.

Verdict
This was an enjoyable and action-packed movie, particularly the combat scenes with Kevin Hart. Once more, his performance was unexpected because people tend to view him more as a comedic actor than a serious one. He had the opportunity to alter how his fans perceived him due to this role. This movie was a worthy watch, and it was number one in the Top 10 Movies in the U.S. Today section of Netflix.

Rating: 7 out of 10

Mariam Fakhreddine is a film and theater reviewer for The Eastern Echo. She has worked as a news and features reporter for The Echo for two years.



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