



The Eastern Echo

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Ypsilanti reacts to SNAP delays

Residents report frustration, hunger

Lilly Kujawski & Gray Connor
Managing Editor & Podcast Editor

As more than 40 million eligible recipients across the country wait for answers about funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, Ypsilanti residents are feeling the strain of the delay in benefits.

"I can't laugh or cry; I'm kind of numb," said Ypsilanti city resident Susan, a SNAP recipient who declined to share her full name out of fear that information she shared about the benefits she receives could be used against her.

Susan identified herself as an EMU alumna. With uncertainty of when SNAP benefits will be paid due to the government shutdown, Susan has been relying on local food pantries for groceries.

Susan said the federal government's handling of what is now the longest shutdown in U.S. history and its impact on community members who rely on SNAP has been frustrating.

"All these games the government is playing — it's maddening," Susan said. "You shouldn't be holding food hostage; it's a human right."

Last week, after Rhode Island federal judge John McConnell ruled that the Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service must fully fund SNAP benefits for the month of November, the Trump administration countered the ruling with an emergency appeal.

The Supreme Court granted the emergency appeal to temporarily halt McConnell's order, reporting from the Associated Press stated on Nov. 7.

Supreme Court Justice Ketanji



Ypsilanti's SOS Community Center is one of the local food pantries filling in the gaps left by delays in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefit payments during the federal government shutdown. Lilly Kujawski / The Eastern Echo

Brown Jackson paused the order for benefits to be paid in full after a Boston appeals court declined to immediately intervene, allowing the appeals court more time to consider the legal arguments of the case, AP reported.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services was required to instruct its SNAP EBT vendor to pause SNAP benefit payments to comply with the court ruling, said a press release from MDHHS.

The MDHHS release said the department had already begun sending full November benefits to some recipients following the previous court order.

"We are disappointed by the federal government's continued efforts to prevent SNAP benefits from reaching the Michigan residents who rely on them," MDHHS Director Elizabeth Hertel said in a statement. "Taking this matter all the way to the Supreme Court creates uncertainty, confusion, and frustration. Worse than that, it punishes the more than one million Michigan residents who qualify for and rely on their benefits to put food on the table."

13% of Michigan households receive SNAP benefits, MDHHS reported.

While food pantries across the state offer some relief for the 1.4 million Michiganders who rely on SNAP, as well as anyone else in need of aid, the impact of the food assistance program reaches beyond the individuals who qualify for it.

"SNAP has a broad reach. It doesn't just affect those who receive aid, but it also stimulates the economy," said Colton Ray, a second-year graduate student and graduate assistant for Swoop's Pantry at Eastern Michigan University. "When SNAP benefits are cut, it makes the job of food pantries a lot harder."

The county is responding by increasing other funds and modes of support, said Washtenaw County Commissioner Annie Somerville (D).

Washtenaw County has partnered with Food Gatherers, an area food bank, to help with additional food pickup this month, Somerville said. Somerville said the county has also increased support for Meals on Wheels and Food Gatherers with money collected from the Older Persons Millage, which passed countywide last November and supports services for those 60 and older.

Susan said she is concerned about parents, who may opt to skip meals to feed their children. She said she has cats at home and has resorted to feeding them canned chicken and tuna from food pantries, but resources are limited.

"Things are really lean right now, all around," she said.

Growing Hope urban farm creates SNAP Gap program to fight hunger

Israel Shriki
Staff Writer

When the U.S. Department of Agriculture notified the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services that November's appropriations for food assistance benefits would not be sent to the states due to the shortfalls in the ongoing debate over the federal government budget, Julius Buzzard, the executive director of Growing Hope, and Claire Austin, the manager of the Ypsilanti Farmer's MarketPlace, created a new program to help.

Buzzard and Austin are calling it the SNAP Gap program, and it provides tokens for food assistance beneficiaries to use when purchasing fresh produce at the Ypsilanti Farmers Marketplace.

"When the systems built to care for people fail, our community steps forward to weave that net ourselves," Buzzard said in a written statement following the announcement on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, more commonly known as SNAP, funding.

About 42 million U.S. residents receive assistance from the program, including 1.4 million Michiganders, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services said in an announcement.

Even as the federal government considers partial payments amid countering court rulings, local assistance groups can see it would not be enough.

SEE GROWING HOPE, PAGE 3

Ypsilanti, Rx Kids to provide cash support to parents

AnnaBelle Favre
News Reporter

Starting Dec. 1, 2025, Rx Kids will partner with the City of Ypsilanti to provide unconditional, direct cash assistance to parents and families in the city. Families will receive \$1,500 during pregnancy and \$500 per month during the first six months of the infant's life.

Rx Kids is a program that offers support in 11 communities across the state of Michigan. Rx Kids was initially founded in Flint, Michigan, and by the end of the year, 20 different communities will receive these benefits.

On Nov. 3, a press conference was held in the Ypsilanti City Hall to announce this new program. All the chairs in the room were filled and people lined up along the walls to hear the news.

Dr. Mona Hanna is the director of Rx Kids and the associate dean for public health at Michigan State University. Her research played a role in exposing the Flint water crisis.

"An effort like this does not happen without a village of people coming together to say we can do better for moms and babies," Hanna said, opening the conference.

She then explained the partnership



All the speakers and contributors to the Rx Kids press conference gather at Ypsilanti City Hall on Nov. 3. AnnaBelle Favre / The Eastern Echo

between the City of Ypsilanti and Michigan State University, as well as the University of Michigan, with funding from a compilation of legislature, philanthropy and private donors.

"The poorest time ever in a family's life is when they're having a baby," Hanna said. "Across the state, we are already seeing the tremendous impact of Rx Kids; we're seeing more moms going to prenatal care, healthier babies, more food security, increased mental health, less premature births, deceased post-partum depression ... This success is exactly why we're so excited to bring the program to the City of Ypsilanti and many more communities across the state. Every baby deserves a strong start, and every family deserves the support to make that possible."

Mayor Nicole Brown started her remarks by expressing her joy for the program.

"I am so excited this is finally happening," Brown said. "In my mind, there was no possibility of not making this happen for my community. Thank you to the families of Ypsilanti; you are why we're doing this."

She explained that this program helps the whole community, not just

those in need.

"Families, neighbors, people here today, you will all see how urgently this work is needed and the benefits of it," Brown said. "Together we are rewriting the story of infant health in Ypsilanti and Michigan."

Since launching in 2024, Rx Kids has supported nearly 4,000 families with a total of \$16 million. This program was recently expanded by the state of Michigan with \$270 million to use over the next several years.

"[There are] mountains and mountains of research to tell us that these early years are so critical to families and babies," said State Senator Jeff Irwin (D). "It's a tremendous honor for me to be able to contribute to this project. My Senate Democratic colleagues and I were proud to secure funds in past budget cycles for its expansion ... The state has managed to allocate \$270 million to this program, and I want to thank the people of Michigan for standing behind it."

Irwin said he was able to see firsthand how impactful this money can be to families.

"We heard from participants and saw some of these beautiful children; we got to see in person the fruits of the research that we knew was true," Irwin said.

Michigan House Rep. Jimmie Wilson Jr. (D) also attended the event and said he believes the whole community is going to benefit from this program.

"This isn't just policy; it's a commitment to equity, dignity and opportunity for every child and every parent in our community," Wilson said. "I am so thankful that we got this through and were able to vote on it."

Tavanna Page, an Ypsilanti mom of two with another on the way, had a chance to give her perspective.

"Being a parent also comes with a lot of financial pressures; balancing business and babies is an overtime adventure," Page said. "For families like mine, this is a game changer. That money can mean happier and healthier babies, more breathing room, and a lot less stress, which means I have more time to spend with my kids."

The conference ended with a check presentation to Rx Kids Ypsilanti from Old National Bank Foundation for \$15,000.

Citizens and speakers at the conference then mingled and chatted about their own stories and gratitude for the program.

To learn more, interested pregnant people and new parents can visit <https://rxkids.org/>.

The Eastern Echo

The Eastern Echo serves the Eastern Michigan University and Ypsilanti communities as an independent student-operated newspaper. Founded in 1881 as *The Normal News*, *The Eastern Echo* distributes weekly print editions on campus and throughout the surrounding Ypsilanti community during the fall and winter academic semesters. *The Eastern Echo* also publishes online year-round. Published content is subject to copyright and may not be reproduced without prior written consent of the newspaper.

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THE ECHO MISSION

The Eastern Echo informs the Eastern Michigan University and Ypsilanti communities by highlighting newsworthy content in a fair, accurate and timely manner.

HOW TO REACH US

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CORRECTIONS

- The Nov. 4 print edition included a page 6 arts feature about local artist Rocco Pisto. The author of the article was arts and entertainment reporter Hannah Borders.
- The Nov. 4 print edition misstated the name of a contributor of The WellNest Watch column. The contributor's name is Nathaniel King.
- The Nov. 4 print edition misattributed two photos on the page 8 gallery. The photos from the Childhood Halloween event were taken by photographer Owen Cardenas.
- The Nov. 4 print edition misstated the location of the page 2 calendar event for Nov. 6. The correct location was Room 330 in McKenny Hall.

Find the newest volume of *Cellar Roots*:



CALENDAR

NOV 11 Same Page: Loading Player 2

6-8 p.m.
Student Center — Room 310

NOV 12 Explore Study Abroad to Japan Opportunities

5-7 p.m.
Alexander Music Building — Room 218A

NOV 13 Registration Blitz

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Rec/IM Building — Gymnasium

NOV 14 Detroit History Bus Tour

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Pray-Harrold — Lobby

NOV 15 Bandorama

7-8:30 p.m.
Pease Auditorium — 494 College Place

NOV 16 High School Honor Band Weekend Concert

3 p.m.
Pease Auditorium — 494 College Place

NOV 17 Walk-in Flu Shot Clinic

3:30-5:30 p.m.
Student Center — Ballroom

WEATHER FORECAST

Tuesday, Nov. 11

High: 38 | Low: 29
Mostly Cloudy / Mostly Cloudy



Wednesday, Nov. 12

High: 45 | Low: 31
Mostly Cloudy / Partly Cloudy



Thursday, Nov. 13

High: 49 | Low: 30
Sunny / Partly Cloudy



Friday, Nov. 14

High: 50 | Low: 33
Mostly Sunny / Partly Cloudy



Saturday, Nov. 15

High: 54 | Low: N/A
Partly Sunny



Source:
The National Weather Service

Where to find The Eastern Echo:

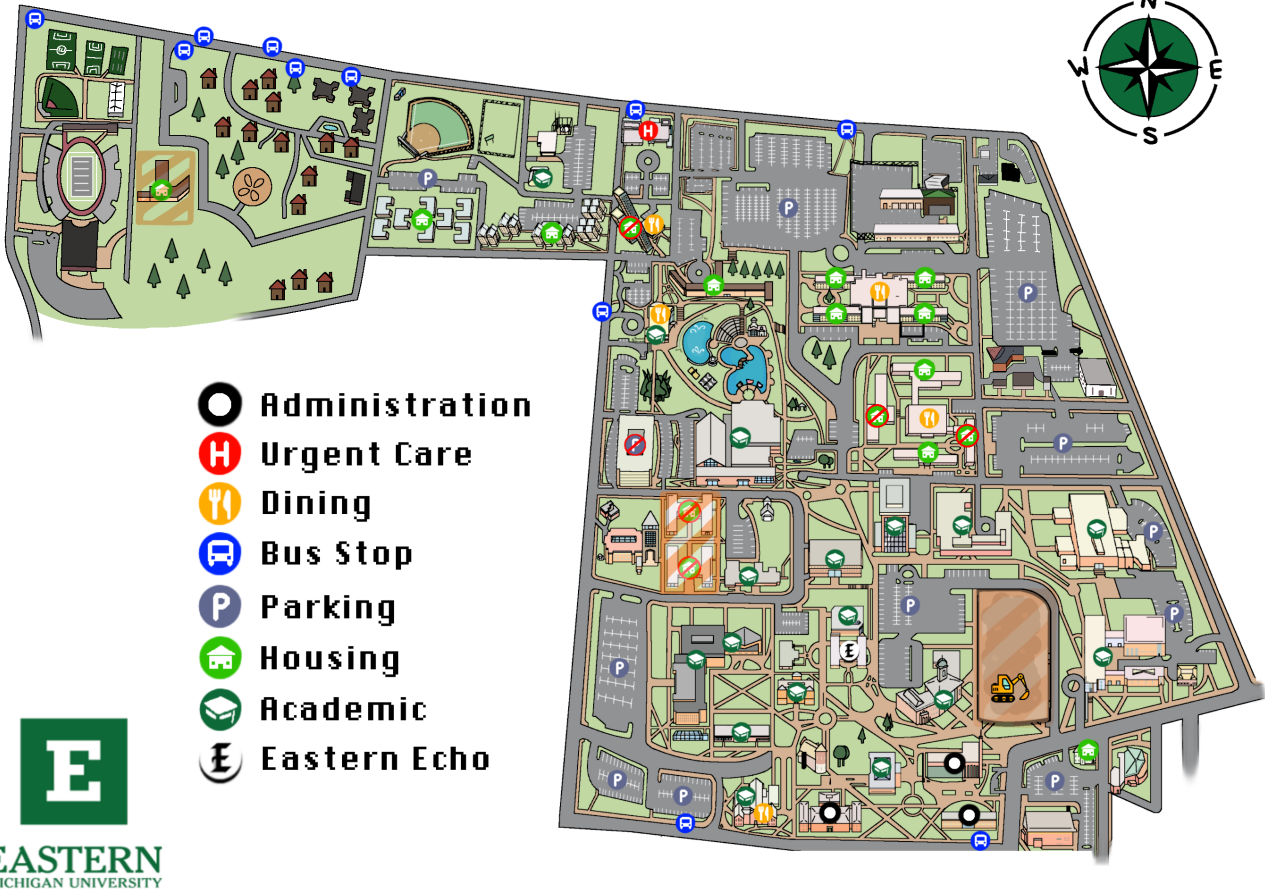
Off Campus:

- Speedy's Big Burgers, 10 N. Adams St.
- St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, 5301 McAuley Drive
- Cafe Liv, 202 N. Washtington St.

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EMU College in Prison program pushes to fix the system, offers new beginnings

Gray Connor
Podcast Editor

While those with felony charges may struggle in their job search due to the stigma surrounding incarceration, Eastern Michigan University’s College in Prison program offers a ray of hope.

Launched in 2023, the program supports individuals serving time at the Women’s Huron Valley Correctional Facility, located in Ypsilanti, Michigan. As of 2025, 70 incarcerated individuals were enrolled in classes taught by EMU faculty and working toward a bachelor’s degree in general studies. Within this degree, students can choose a concentration such as business management, social work or entrepreneurship.

Funding for the program comes primarily from the federal Pell Grant. While incarcerated students are not allowed to take on debt, an initiative from the Obama administration reversed prior laws that restricted those individuals from receiving federal aid. In addition to government support, the program also receives scholarships and grants.

While incarcerated students cannot attend classes on the main

EMU campus, faculty teach the same courses with the same syllabi that non-incarcerated students receive outside of the facility, said Meghan Lechner, director of the College in Prison program and Returning Citizens Fellowship.

Those in the program are offered the same bachelor’s degrees that non-incarcerated EMU students pursue, but the materials they have access to are limited.

“Our biggest issues are technology,” Lechner said. “December will be the first time our students have access to technology at all.”

Up until this upcoming change, all work done by the College in Prison program students has been completed by hand. Now, students will have access to computers tailored specifically to those serving time.

The goal of the program is for students to earn a bachelor’s degree, but not every student who earns a degree will use it for life outside of incarceration. For some, they will be released from prison with bachelor’s degrees already completed, ready to enter the workforce. But others are serving life sentences without the

chance of release.

“When you have more educated people in a space who want to do better for themselves, and want to see others do better, it just makes the whole atmosphere safer,” Lechner said. “Education isn’t just about getting a job; it’s also about transforming yourself into a different human being.”

Recidivism, when an individual is reincarcerated after finishing their initial sentence, affects 41.9% of all those serving time in the United States. However, for those with a bachelor’s degree, that rate dropped to 5.6% as of 2024.

“Our belief is that someone’s access to education is a necessity,” Lechner said. “From the get-go, ensuring that this was an opportunity available to everybody there was important to us. When they graduate, they can help their peers and support younger women who are newly entering prison to see their own potential. From a facility perspective, prisons that offer higher education programs see significantly reduced problems with violence.”

Andrea Bracy, a 2025 graduate of the College in Prison program, spent nine years incarcerated before finishing

her sentence with a bachelor’s degree from EMU.

“Being in prison alone made it hard,” Bracy said. “When you’re in prison, you’re just a number. They called me Bracy so much, they started thinking that was my first name. When EMU came, and we finally had the opportunity to be called our full names, it was a reminder that we’re still human. We still had some type of normalcy within ourselves, and we could get our identity back.”

Now released from prison with a bachelor’s degree, Bracy is working towards finishing her truck-driving license, intending to become a full-time semi-truck driver.

In the future, the College in Prison program hopes to expand on the areas of study available to incarcerated students and is even looking to offer educational opportunities beyond a bachelor’s degree.

For those interested in supporting the program, both monetary donations and supplies, such as up-to-date textbooks, are encouraged. For more information, the donation link and breakdown page can be found on the College in Prison program website.

EMU scholarships, grants will see 2.4% increase next year

Lilly Kujawski
Managing Editor

In the next fiscal year, budgetary funds supporting scholarships, awards and grants will see an increase of 2.4% for Eastern Michigan University students.

At its last board meeting, the EMU Board of Regents approved the 2026-27 General Fund Scholarships, Awards, and Grants proposal of \$55,100,000. This is an increase of \$1,300,000 from the current fiscal year.

The approved proposal includes an assumption of 3.5% tuition and fee increase for undergraduate students and 5% tuition and fee increase for graduate and doctoral students, the approved board recommendation stated.

The scholarship, awards and

grant increase comes as the One Big Beautiful Bill, signed into law earlier this year, is set to bring some changes to financial aid at higher education institutions beginning July 1, 2026. One change includes borrowing limits for graduate student loans. The bill also introduces the Workforce Pell Grant to include job-training programs and certificates. EMU does not have any eligible programs for this, stated a report from Katie Condon, vice president of enrollment management.

Pell Grants at EMU

Tuition at EMU has increased by 88.1% since the 2011-12 fiscal year, stated the report, while the Pell Grant has only increased by 34.5%.

New eligibility criteria for Pell

Grants could impact students who receive non-federal scholarships or grants that cover the full cost of attendance, the report stated. This could impact 35 full-ride athletes who receive Pell Grants and Presidential Scholars who receive Pell Grants.

Student loan changes

The Graduate PLUS loan program, which helps students pay for education expenses not covered by other forms of aid, is set to end July 1, 2026. This is expected to impact 494 student borrowers at EMU, the report stated.

The Big Beautiful Bill also sets an annual limit for Parent PLUS loans, a Direct PLUS loan program that allows eligible parents to borrow funds for their child’s

education. The annual limit will be \$20,000 beginning July 1, 2026. At EMU, there are 1,157 parent borrowers and 276 borrowed an amount greater than \$20,000, the report stated.

Accountability measures

Additionally, the Big Beautiful Bill integrates some accountability measures on higher education institutions. College and university programs must show that the median earnings of graduates exceeds the median earnings of high school graduates in the same state in at least two out of three consecutive years, the report said.

If a program does not demonstrate this requirement, it will be barred from taking federal student loans, the report said.

Growing Hope

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“Food should never be something that we use as a tool to get what we want, because we’re talking about people’s lives here,” Austin said.

Since 2003, Growing Hope, from a plot of land just west of downtown Ypsilanti, has encouraged the community to unify through the production of local foods. The nonprofit urban farm is a place where people can access farming tools, gardening directions and home-grown produce. Growing Hope harvests fruits and vegetables at its farm. The produce is marketed in the Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace.

“I hate that people are gonna go hungry,” Austin said.

Growing Hope is concerned for seniors, children and people who struggle with work.

A temporary solution

Austin said about 25% of the people who shop at the Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace use SNAP. The nonprofit organization used recyclable paper to create tokens, SNAP Gap tokens, that users can apply to food purchases. Each token is valued at \$40 per user each week.

Growing Hope announced that the SNAP Gap program is now open to anyone who is considered low-income or food-insecure, not just SNAP users.

Individuals who recognize themselves in the pool of low-income or are food-insecure will be able to ask for a SNAP Gap token when coming to the Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace by answering a screening questionnaire.

Additional resources

Austin mentioned that the Ypsilanti Farmers Marketplace is listed within the Double Up Food Bucks program. When visitors come to the market, they double their funds and receive an extra \$40. So, if people shop for fruits, vegetables or other SNAP-eligible items, they might be eligible for up to \$80.

Growing Hope SNAP Gap holders can only use the token at Growing Hope Marketplace in Ypsilanti. But the Double Up Food Bucks, managed by the Fair Food Network based in Detroit, can be used at different vendors, which are updated on the Double Up Food Bucks website.

Shoppers interested in claiming Growing Hope SNAP Gap program tokens do not have to hold a Michigan SNAP card, but those who are interested in claiming the Double Up Food Bucks program must present their Michigan SNAP card.

Hope for the future

“Do I think that the community can fund all of our SNAP benefits? Probably not,” Austin said.

At this time, she isn’t sure how long the federal shutdown will last.

Austin encouraged people to get active in the community, donate to food banks or volunteer at Food Gatherers, especially during this challenging time.

“Get extra food and give it out in your neighborhood. Sometimes it’s really just coming together and sharing a meal,” she said.



Growing Hope's SNAP Gap tokens are designed to help those who will not be receiving full benefits in November due to the U.S. government shutdown. Claire Austin, manager of the Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace, a community space that Growing Hope operates, says the tokens will help people purchase fresh produce. *Courtesy of Claire Austin*

What's the Move?

Nov. 11 - 17

Israel Shriki
Staff Writer

Michigan Water Color Society Traveling Exhibition, Friday, Nov. 14

Art lovers who want to see award-winning works of art can visit the Michigan Water Color Society’s traveling exhibit at the Riverside Arts Center from 4-6 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 14.

The exhibit includes 30 recent works that received awards during the society’s 2025 exhibition. The MWCS 78th Annual Exhibition featured 60 works selected from more than 200 entries.

See additional dates for the traveling exhibition open hours on the Riverside Arts Center website.

Admission to the art gallery is free. Visitors are encouraged to donate \$5 to support Riverside Arts Center programs.

“Othello” by Brevity Shakespeare Thursday to Sunday, Nov. 13-16

Petie the Dog Productions and Brevity Shakespeare present “Othello” by William Shakespeare with performances at Riverside Arts Center over two weekends.

Shakespeare’s classic plot focuses on Othello, a Moorish general serving in the Venetian army who secretly gets married to Desdemona, a rich Venetian lady. But tragedy follows the newlyweds as Desdemona’s spurned suitor Roderigo teams up with Othello’s assistant Iago to destroy the marriage.

Brevity’s production sets the story in 1881 in San Francisco and Santa Catalina, California. Directed by Karl Sikkenga, Brevity Shakespeare refreshes Othello’s story to a contemporary tale, designed to provide greater audience inclusion.

Main cast actors include ShaRod Collins (Othello), LeVale Walker (Iago), Indigo Devito (Desdemona), Andrew Saint John (Cassio), Cameron Graham (Roderigo) and Karrie Waarala (Emilia).

Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, Nov. 13-15, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 16. The following week, the showtimes are 2 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 19, and 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Tickets are available online. Prices are \$20 for general admission and \$15 for seniors, students and active-duty military. Additional group discounts are on the PTD Productions website under Additional Information.

Accessible parking and wheelchair seating are offered, with merchandise on the PTD Productions website.

Zach Williams concert, Saturday, Nov. 15

Zach Williams comes from Jonesboro, Arkansas, to perform at the George Gervin GameAbove Center.

Doors open at 6 p.m., and the show begins at 7 p.m.

Ticket prices range from \$52 to \$94 and are available for purchase through the StubHub website.

Williams is a contemporary rock artist. In 2007, Williams performed with the band The Reformation. In 2016, he was signed to Provident Label Group, and that December, he released his No. 1 hit single “Chain Breaker.”

Queer Dance & Fitness, Sunday, Nov. 16

Rhizome Roots Studio offers dance and fitness classes for the Queer community and those interested in getting into the rhythm.

Queer Dance & Fitness is offered every third Sunday of each month, including this upcoming Sunday, Nov. 16. The class is open to everyone.

The program includes three features. Yoga for Self-Love opens at 2:30 p.m., Burlesque for Beginners starts at 3:30 p.m., and the Friendsgiving & Games class begins at 5 p.m.

Registration is encouraged. Attendance fees are a sliding scale from \$5 to \$15 per class depending on participants’ affordability.

See more dates on the Rhizome Roots Studio’s Facebook page.

SHINE group forms to clean Ypsilanti, build community

Quanzelle Wyatt
Business Manager

If you see individuals in purple vests picking up litter and maintaining different areas of Ypsilanti, they are part of a program in partnership between Life After Incarceration: Transition & Reentry and the Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority. The group is called Supportive Hands in Neighborhood Enhancement, or SHINE.

The program partnership empowers formerly incarcerated individuals to learn skills, get involved with their community and access vital resources. SHINE is a pilot program that started in November 2020.

Leroy Harris, a supervisor for the SHINE team, has been a part of the program since its inception.

“In the beginning, nobody knew where this was going,” Harris said. “All we knew was there was a lot of trash. So when we went out to the zones, we had four zones ... and the zones were so full of trash. It was like it had never been done before.”

The SHINE team upkeepes different zones across Ypsilanti, such as downtown and Frog Island Park. Most of the cleanup has been for small items like cigarette butts and plastics on the ground. The team consists of five men who rotate out every 90 days. Workers receive \$18 an hour and have access to resources for emergencies, skill development and more.

Even with a rotating roster of workers, Harris sees the impact that the SHINE program has on the working participants.

“With the guys on the crew, they always express to me how they are appreciative ... because these are guys that come out of prison and wouldn’t ordinarily get employment because they come from prison,” Harris said.

The Ypsilanti City Code Ordinance Section 58-61 protects a person from discrimination based on a felony and misdemeanor convictions.

Harris said that strangers have come up and shown appreciation to the team



From left, the SHINE crew, including Mark Stewart, Dr. Dyson X Slater, Matt Turner, Leroy Harris, Darrell Williams and Willie Percy, near Ypsi Alehouse, prepare to clean their zones. *Quanzelle Wyatt / The Eastern Echo*

for their hard work.

“Do you know what it feels like to to have a stranger walk up to you and say that I appreciate what you’re doing?” Harris said. “Those words are astronomical when you think about it.”

Elize Jekabson, the executive director of the YDDA, said that they’ve gotten compliments on how clean Ypsi has been.

“The feedback has been really good. From the business owners ... I’ve been told they’ve been seeing the guys out there,” Jekabson said.

When participants in the program are rotated out, Harris said he and other supervisors write letters to support the crew members’ job searches.

“It’s not like we’re just dropping them off and letting them just go,” Harris said. “We got them.”

Darrell Williams, a SHINE crew member who has been in the program for a year, said that SHINE really helped him.

“I was hanging with bad influences,” Williams said. “But then I went to county jail and I met Ariana and Elyse.”

Williams took a life skills class with LAITR in the county jail and said it

changed him.

“[Ariana] puts a lot of effort into helping people,” Williams said.

Dyson Slater, another member of the SHINE crew, joined this year.

“I just came home on April 9 of this year, and I got hired by the SHINE crew in July,” Slater said.

He said that the SHINE crew has been a blessing because they help him with being able to meet his basic needs.

“I find that once you return to society, what ends up taking place is you’re reincarcerated all over again,” Slater said.

He also said that having a criminal record kept him from getting employment.

But SHINE has made an impact on Slater’s life, and he said that it’s been an honor and privilege to not only be a part of the crew but help clean the community as well.

The SHINE program has been impactful for not only the crew of formerly incarcerated individuals but also for the community.

“We’re not just here working in the community, but we are part of the community itself,” Harris said.

Washtenaw County announces winter warming and emergency shelter locations

Natalie Heckert
Copy Editor

Washtenaw County will have a number of shelters available for those experiencing homelessness to get warm or have somewhere to stay for the night starting Nov. 10. Emergency services will provide guests with meals, medical care and help finding permanent housing.

This project is put on by many organizations around the county.

“These collaborative community services are made possible through a strong coalition of housing partners known as the Washtenaw County Continuum of Care (CoC), which includes the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, Alpha House, SafeHouse Center, Ozone House, Housing Access for Washtenaw County, and nearly 30 local organizations dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness,” said Director the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development Toni Kayumi in a statement.

Through this collaboration, Washtenaw County is able to maintain winter shelter services through March 2026.

Those in need of daytime assistance can go to the Ypsilanti Freighthouse at 100 Market Place or rotating locations in Ann Arbor. The Freighthouse will be open Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Ann Arbor locations will be open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. No pre-registration is required for these locations.

The Delonis Center, located at 312 W. Huron St. in Ann Arbor, will be offering overnight shelter and weekend daytime shelter every day through April 14, 2026. There will also be overnight shelter available in Ypsilanti.



The Ypsilanti Freighthouse will serve as a warming shelter for the upcoming winter season. *Ky’anna Coats / The Eastern Echo*

It is encouraged that individuals in need of a place to stay for the night first contact Housing Access of Washtenaw County at 734-961-1999 to get a referral for a shelter. If it is after 5 p.m. or a weekend, individuals are invited to visit or contact the Delonis Center at 734-662-2829 to receive further assistance. Families in need should visit or contact the Alpha House at 734-822-0220 for assistance. Alpha House is located at 4290 Jackson Road, Ann Arbor.

Finally, youth and young adults under 25 can also call the Ozone House at 734-662-2222 or visit its main office located at 1600 N. Huron River Drive in Ypsilanti, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Homelessness can pose more serious risks in the winter due to threats of hypothermia, frostbite and other illnesses that are more common in the colder months. Shelters provide people with a play to stay, food and medical assistance, said the Washtenaw County statement.

Winter weather can also limit hours of operation for resources like libraries, food pantries and college campuses. The designated warming shelters are intended to provide people experiencing homelessness access to a warm place to seek shelter. Those in need of support this winter can reach out to HAWC at 734-961-1999 or visit their website at housingaccess.net.

The WellNest Watch

When we ignore public health prevention, we pay the price



Shafaat Ali Choyon
Contributor

Editor’s note: In The WellNest Watch, master’s degree candidates in EMU’s College of Health of Human Services explore news, research and standard practices in the field of health and wellness.

A school shooting dominates the headlines. An Ypsilanti apartment is closed after mold makes families sick. An Eastern Michigan University student collapses from an asthma attack that could have been prevented.

These moments look like sudden emergencies, but in reality, they are failures from years in the making.

Public health was designed to stop problems before they explode into crises. Yet in America, prevention often rides in the backseat, while the sirens of emergency care take the wheel. That comes with a price, in lives lost, neighborhoods disrupted and ballooning medical bills.

In Ypsilanti, where campus and community overlap, the challenges of aging housing, chronic stress and preventable disease affect students and long-time residents alike. What we call a public health crisis in one part of town often begins with the same overlooked causes in another.

This is where program evaluation matters. The quiet work of tracking outcomes and measuring return on investment proves what prevention can deliver. Without it, prevention looks like a cost instead of an investment. With tracking, we see that every dollar spent upstream saves many more downstream.

In Ypsilanti and across Michigan, aging housing stock is more than an eyesore; it’s a health hazard. Damp walls and mold are linked to respiratory infections and asthma exacerbation, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which document associations of indoor dampness with new or worsening asthma and respiratory symptoms. Through my work in EMU Housing and Residence Life I’ve learned that housing is public health in practice. Living spaces shape behavior, influencing sleep, stress, nutrition and the sense of connection that defines well-being.

Residence halls are more than places to live; they’re health environments where supportive, inclusive design can strengthen both individual and community resilience.

Evaluations of housing programs show the economics clearly: every \$1 invested in lead hazard control produces \$17 to \$221 in benefits, from lower healthcare costs to improved lifetime earnings. Prevention here is not just public good; it’s fiscal sense.

Firearms are now the leading cause of death for U.S. children and teens, according to the CDC. That fact alone reframes gun violence as not only a criminal justice issue but a public health emergency. Community violence intervention programs, which use credible messengers and trauma-informed care, have shown double-digit drops in shootings when evaluated rigorously. The U.S. Surgeon General declared firearm violence a public health crisis in 2024. Each shooting prevented saves hundreds of thousands in hospital bills, emergency response and lost productivity. Cutting violence upstream means cutting those costs.

Beyond the headlines, chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension and obesity quietly drain families and strain budgets. The CDC estimates that 90% of U.S. health-care dollars go to people with chronic or mental health conditions. Most of these conditions are preventable with early behavior change: healthier diets, stress management, more movement and timely screenings. Through my consulting with EMU’s Office of Health Promotion, I’ve seen how simple programs, from peer fitness groups to stress-reduction workshops, can shift behaviors and set the stage for lifelong health. Evaluations show that even the modest prevention investments can save billions in national healthcare costs.

Every skipped screening or unmanaged case is not just a personal tragedy; it’s a collective bill we all pay through higher premiums and lost productivity.

The national picture tells the same story. The United States spends more per person on health care than any other wealthy nation, yet Americans live shorter lives and experience more preventable diseases, according to the Commonwealth Fund and Health System Tracker. When prevention is sidelined, the bill doesn’t disappear; it just resurfaces later, multiplied, in hospital costs, insurance premiums and national debt.

At Eastern Michigan University, most students notice public health only when it fails — a lockdown during a threat, an outbreak that cancels class or housing complaints that become emergencies. But the invisible shield of prevention is all around us: clean water, safe housing, vaccination campaigns and mental health outreach. If we want that shield to be strong, we need more than belief; we need proof. That means valuing evaluation, defending prevention budgets and asking our leaders to measure what matters.

We can keep waiting for the next crisis to dominate the news. Or we can put prevention in the driver’s seat, using evaluation to show that every dollar spent upstream saves lives and money downstream. Public health is not a luxury; it is the smartest investment we can make in our future.

Contributors to the WellNest Watch health column are: Kegan Tulloch and Ebrima Jobarteh, graduate assistants in the Office of Health Promotions; and Shafaat Ali Choyon and Nathaniel King, graduate hall directors in the Department of Residential Life. All four are master’s degree candidates in the School of Public Health at Eastern Michigan University.

About the author: Shafaat Ali Choyon is a public health professional and former business strategist with more than 16 years of cross-sector experience spanning healthcare, technology, advertising, mobile financial services, FMCG, e-commerce and education. He currently serves as a graduate hall director in Housing and Residence Life at Eastern Michigan University and as a consultant for EMU’s Office of Health Promotion.



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Devereaux, McMillan power Eastern Michigan football to win over Bowling Green, 27-21

Jack Monk & Caleb Henderson
Sports Reporter & Sports Editor

A late touchdown from Dontae McMillan, two critical catches from Nick Devereaux, a 44-yard field goal by Rudy Kessinger, and a sack on the final play of the game from Ronn Hardin proved to be enough for the Eastern Michigan University football team to thwart Bowling Green State University’s comeback efforts and win with a score of 27-21.

“It was just a group project, right?” said Eagles Head Coach Chris Creighton on his team’s ability to close out the game down the stretch.

“It’s everyone — it’s guys who didn’t put pads on, it’s coaches and support staff — when you win, everybody gets credit for all the work,” he added.

Eastern Michigan’s path to victory did not come easily. After trailing Bowling Green 14-10 at the half, the home team rallied over the final 30 minutes, out-scoring the Falcons 17-7 during that span thanks to critical plays at crucial times from key offensive contributors.

Devereaux only registered one catch for 24 yards during the opening two quarters but came alive in the second half. A 12-yard go-ahead touchdown reception in the third quarter was followed by two clutch catches on the Eagles’ final offensive series of the game, a drive that would ultimately secure a win for the home team.

“Really proud of [Devereaux]; he had some monster plays,” Creighton said of the former walk-on from Troy, Michigan.

After registering only 81 yards rushing in the last two games combined, McMillan returned to his early season form, posting 100 yards



EMU Football player Dontae McMillan finds a hole in the defense to run through in the team's matchup against Bowling Green on Nov. 8 at Rynearson Stadium. *Bradán Copeland / The Eastern Echo*

on the ground and Eastern Michigan’s final touchdown of the game.

The Eagles as a team put up 175 yards rushing, with Tavierre Dunlap contributing an additional 47 yards and a touchdown while quarterback Noah Kim added 28 yards with his legs.

Kim also tossed for 210 yards and a touchdown through the air, completing 10 of his 12 passes in the second half after starting the day with a 44% completion rate during the opening two stanzas.

Defensively, Zack Mowchan led the way for Eastern Michigan with 10

tackles, nine of them being assisted.

“Coaches don’t give up on you, your teammates don’t give up on you, so it’s really easy to keep going — it was the most fun I’ve had all year,” Mowchan said on his performance.

Mowchan’s defensive efforts were backed up by a re-emergence of the pass rush. Sterling Miles and Ronn Hardin both recorded sacks, with Hardin’s being the game-clinching play for the Eagles.

“[Hardin] is just a perfect fit for our program, and it couldn’t have come at a better time for him to get that sack,”

Creighton said.

With the win, Eastern Michigan moves to 3-7 on the season and 2-4 in Mid-American Conference play, while Bowling Green falls to 3-7, now holding a 1-5 mark in conference action.

Next week, the Eagles embark on their final road trip of the season, traveling to Muncie, Indiana, to take on the Ball State University Cardinals at 12 p.m., Nov. 15. Viewers can catch all the action live on ESPN+ or listen on WEMU (89.1 FM), The Varsity Network app and SiriusXM.

Habhab’s double-double leads EMU men’s basketball to season opening win



Eastern Michigan players Jalin Billingsley, Christian Henry and Dillon Tingler regroup during a break in action against Cleveland State. *Courtesy of EMU Athletics*

Jack Monk & Caleb Henderson
Sports Reporter & Sports Editor

Welcome to Ypsilanti, Mohammad Habhab.

The redshirt freshman transfer product from Dearborn shined in his debut for the Eastern Michigan University men’s basketball team at the George Gervin GameAbove Center, collecting 15 points, 16 rebounds and a 71-49 victory for the home team against Georgia State to open the 2025-26 season.

“Even though he’s a young player, I think he’s going to be a very impactful guy,” said Stan Heath, Eagles head coach, when asked about the former Central Michigan big man during the preseason.

Heath’s words immediately rang true on Nov. 3; with Habhab becoming the first Eagle to post 15+ points and 15+ rebounds since James Thompson IV did so against Ball State in March of 2019.

“I think our guys know, like, hey, if we go to him, something good is going to happen,” Heath said in a post game interview with ESPN+ on Habhab’s standout performance.

Carlos Hart, the Valdosta State transfer also making his Eagles debut, nearly put a double-double of his own on the stat sheet — 14 points and eight rebounds headlining the new No. 2’s first action in green and white.

In just 13 minutes of action off the bench, Mak Mancel provided a valuable

spark to EMU’s offense when he did see the floor. Shooting over 50% from the field and 66.7% from downtown, Mancel added 12 points and five rebounds to the home team’s tally, while Addison Patterson tacked on an additional 10 points and six rebounds of his own.

While Georgia State provided a fight to the Eagles in the early going, leading 14-11 with 12 minutes remaining in the first half, a subsequent 19-4 run from Eastern Michigan was enough for the Mid-American Conference school to take firm control of the contest for the remainder of the action.

The Eagles’ 14-0 run deep into the second half was enough for the green and white to firmly put the game out of reach,

posting a 22 point margin of victory to open the MAC-Sun Belt Challenge.

With the win, Eastern Michigan opens the new campaign at 1-0, while Georgia State falls to 0-1.

“Protecting our home is a big deal for us,” Heath said.

“If [we] want to have success in the season — win the home games, beat the teams you’re supposed to beat — we’re probably going to be in a good position,” he added.

Next time out, Eastern Michigan will return to action on Monday, Nov. 10 at 7 p.m. for a litmus test against “Power 4” opponent University of Pittsburgh. Viewers can stream the game live on ACC Network Extra.

Eagle Sports Tips & Tales: Nov. 11 - 17

Jeffrey Ellingsworth
Sports Reporter

A busy weekend for the Eastern Michigan University Eagles looms large as they take on seven events between Friday and Saturday this week. Here’s everything fans need to know.

Football | Eastern Michigan travels to Ball State for penultimate game of 2025

Eastern Michigan’s football team will travel to Indiana for a matchup against a 4-5 Ball State University team on Nov. 15, at 12 p.m.

Eastern will be looking to get its first win on the road this season and finish strong before returning home to Rynearson Stadium and facing its in-state rivals, the Western Michigan University Broncos, on Tuesday, Nov. 25.

The Eagle defense aims to find success against a shaky Ball State offense to support the high-flying Eastern offense led by senior quarterback Noah Kim.

Fans can watch the game on ESPN+ or listen to it on the WEMU radio network.

Men’s Basketball | Eastern Michigan returns home for contest against IU Indy

Eastern Michigan’s men’s basketball team returns home to the George Gervin GameAbove Center for a matchup with the Indiana University Indianapolis Jaguars on Friday, Nov. 14, at 6:30 p.m.

The Eagles will likely need to step up because of IU Indy’s offense. The Jaguars scored 102 points against Ohio State University in a 118-102 loss in the first game of the season.

The 6-foot-9 redshirt EMU freshman Mohammad Habhab will likely anchor the Eagles on the court while attempting to earn another double-double after a 15-point, 16 rebound performance against Georgia State University, one of the best performances from an Eastern Michigan player this decade.

Fans can watch the game on ESPN+ or follow along on the Eastern Michigan Athletics website.

Women’s Basketball | Eastern Michigan travels to Minnesota for matchup with St. Thomas

Also on Friday, Nov. 14, the Eastern Michigan women’s basketball team will travel to St. Paul, Minnesota, for a game with the University of St. Thomas at 7 p.m.

With this being the Eagles’ fourth straight road contest to open the year, Eastern will be looking to gain a victory and build momentum during this early season stretch.

Senior Sisi Eleko will aim to lead the Eagles after scoring 24 points in the season opener. Freshman Peyton Hill added another 15 points in the 80-71 loss to the University of Louisiana Monroe.

Live stats are available on the Eastern Michigan Athletics website.

Volleyball | Eastern Michigan embarks on road trip to face Miami University

The Eastern Michigan women’s volleyball team will be in Oxford, Ohio, this week for two games against the Miami University RedHawks.

The Eagles are looking to go on a run to end the regular season as they attempt to climb in the Mid-American Conference standings and find a way into the tournament at the end of the month.

Anna Guard and Hatteras Welker aim to come up big for the Eagles as they close out the regular season. The Eagles won 13 games a season ago, and are aiming to surpass their win total from the previous campaign for a second straight year.

Eastern and Miami will face off Friday, Nov. 14, at 6:30 p.m. and at 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15.

Viewers can catch all the action on ESPN+ or follow the games on the Eastern Athletics website.



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4 EMU students’ artwork chosen for display in Michigan’s state legislature



Michigan’s “Art in the Legislature” display features art from four EMU students. Courtesy of Paris Stinson

Carol Detary & Madison Cantrell
Arts Reporter & Arts Editor

This year, four Eastern Michigan University student artists were selected to have their work shown year-round in Michigan’s Legislature. EMU School of Art and Design professors Maria Ruggiero and Amy Sacksteder submitted the students’ work to Michigan’s Art in the Legislature

program. The annual program, presented by the Michigan Legislature and the Michigan Association of State Universities, showcases art from Michigan’s 15 public universities throughout Michigan’s House of Representatives and Senate buildings. The program aims to promote art in everyday life. The 2025 display was installed and the student artist reception was held on

Wednesday, Oct. 8 in Heritage Hall at the State Capitol in Lansing. A total of six pieces from four EMU students are currently on display. **Paris Stinson** Based in Canton, Stinson is in the last year of their bachelor of fine arts with a concentration in 2D media. For Stinson, the experience of pushing boundaries and what a medium allows is an inspiration for creating.

“Puzzle Me” is a self-portrait Stinson completed in watercolor inspired by collage artist Ed Woods. “I really enjoy letting the medium speak for itself, but also being in constant dialogue with what I am painting with,” Stinson said. The work “Amara” features Stinson’s own mythical creature. Amara was formed with inspiration from the Greek goddess Aphrodite. Stinson wanted to represent Black women as “romantic, lustful but having a little bit of mischief to us.” The name Amara comes from Swahili, meaning love and grace. See Stinson’s work on Instagram @paris.make.art or on their website at www.parisstinson.com.

Meagan Wohltjen Based in DeWitt, Wohltjen finished their bachelor of arts in 2025, minoring in graphic communication. Photography has been a passion of Wohltjen’s since childhood. “My dad is an artist, so all my siblings and I grew up painting and drawing,” Wohltjen said. During Wohltjen’s third year at EMU, they fell in love with watercolor. “Threads of Home” is a still life watercolor portrait of a collection of memories from Wohltjen’s life. “Watercolor has a soft and

unpredictable way it works, and it resonates with me,” Wohltjen said. Wohltjen’s major inspirations are music and family; together, both are featured in the artwork. See Wohltjen’s work on Instagram @MeaganWohltjen. **Sharelle Krisel** Based in Ypsilanti, Krisel finished their bachelor of fine arts in 2025, focusing on illustration. Post-graduation, Krisel aims to become a children’s book illustrator. Inspirations for Krisel are found in everyday life and the whimsical nature of imagination. “Hidden Journey” is a watercolor portrait representing a young girl who is similar to Red Riding Hood. Krisel created a spotlight at the end of the road where something good lies ahead. “My interest in art started in preschool through reading children’s books in the school library,” Krisel said. See Krisel’s work on Instagram @skarellesart or on their website at skarellesart.wixsite.com/portfolio. **Olivia Blissick** Based in Chelsea, Blissick graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a bachelor’s degree in 2025. Blissick did not respond to a request for comment.

Cellar Roots

Volume 52

Deadline Dec. 13

An annual fine arts / literary magazine that highlights student artists and provides a platform to publish creative works. Features 2D & 3D artwork, written works, and more.

Students and EMU alumni can submit their own work to be featured in the upcoming edition of Cellar Roots, Volume 52.

Submit Works Here:

cellar.roots

cellarroots

Please email cellarroots@easternecho.com for any questions or inquiries.

Next on Deck

There’s a non-zero chance that your dorm neighbor is a musician, and there’s a non-zero chance that they have music coming out soon! Next on Deck features interviews with EMU students creating music across a variety of genres, airing bi-weekly on Thursday.

Follow now on Spotify

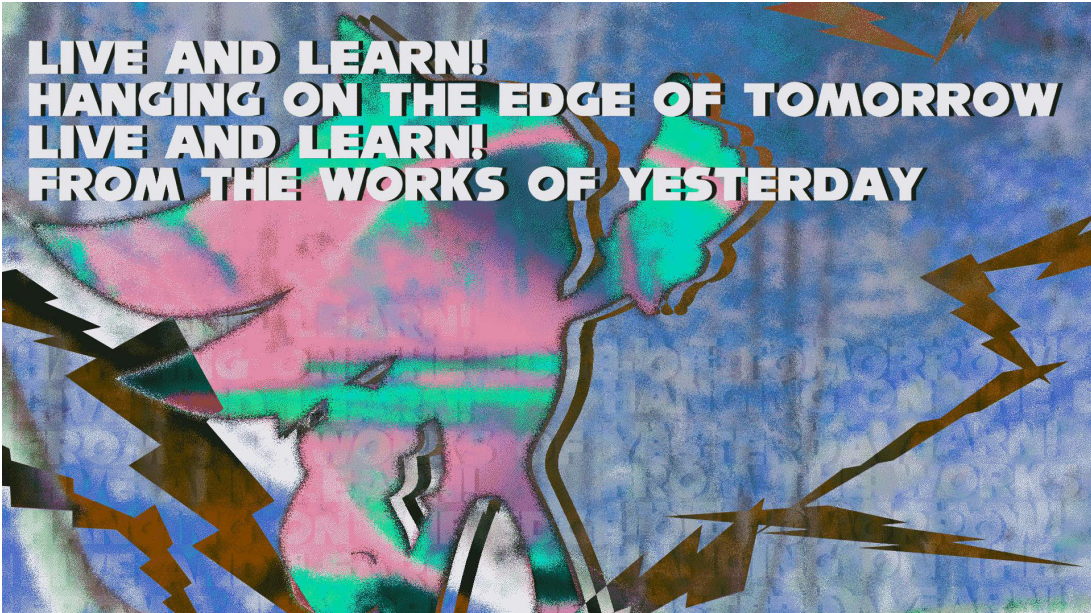
Brevity Shakespeare to open 'Othello' with hopes of representing Ypsilanti community

Katherine Tatomir
Arts Reporter

Ypsilanti community members can expect to witness a tale of heartbreak, jealousy and tragedy this month with Brevity Shakespeare’s production of “Othello,” opening Nov. 13. Brevity Shakespeare is an Ypsilanti-based community theater company whose mission statement is “Shakespeare for all,” which is apparent in its unique productions of Shakespeare plays such as “Hamlet,” “The Taming of the Shrew” and now, “Othello.” Though the title alone is enough to excite Shakespeare fanatics, that is not the only goal of Brevity Shakespeare’s productions. Karl Sikkenga founded Brevity Shakespeare in 2019 after working with middle and high school students on Shakespeare productions. The scripts were shortened and edited in a way that made them more understandable for a general audience while still telling a meaningful story, and Sikkenga wanted to see how these productions would market to the adult community. Brevity Shakespeare doesn’t just want to appeal to Shakespeare lovers; those who roll their eyes when they hear “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” also have a place in the audience. “That’s why we’re called Brevity Shakespeare; these scripts are all distilled from their original length, trying to cut out the language that is super unfamiliar,” Sikkenga said. The productions are akin to a feature film, both in price and in length, as a way to make the stories more accessible and attract a diverse audience. “I want the people who can’t stand Shakespeare,” Sikkenga said with a laugh. Brevity Shakespeare opened its first show, “Hamlet,” in 2019, setting its sights on being a diverse community

group that is welcoming of all voices and backgrounds. “A community theater company, in my view, is a civic organization,” Sikkenga said. For Brevity Shakespeare, that means partnering with other organizations, like Petie the Dog Productions, a performing arts theater in Ypsilanti that will host “Othello” on the coming weekends. “Another piece of it, for us, is to make sure that the audience sees a cast on stage that reflects what the community looks like,” Sikkenga said. “Ypsilanti is an ethnically and economically diverse town. ... It’s very dynamic.” A unique part about this production of “Othello” is its setting. The story is originally set in Europe in the late 16th century, but this rendition takes place in California in 1881. This change in setting was an intentional choice made by Sikkenga and other members of the creative process, and it is meant to highlight the story’s themes as they relate to the Ypsilanti community. “Visually, it opened up all kinds of doors,” Sikkenga said about the amended setting. “And thematically, ‘Othello’ grapples with race,” he added. “It’s important in our company that we have more than the usual number of black and brown actors on stage.” After selling out five of the six shows of “The Taming of the Shrew” from this past summer, those involved at Brevity Shakespeare are hoping for another successful turnout in the coming weekends and are looking forward to future productions in the Ypsilanti community. “Othello” opens Nov. 13, at 7:30 p.m. at the Riverside Arts Center, located at 76 N. Huron St. in Ypsilanti. Tickets are available online at brevityshakes.org.

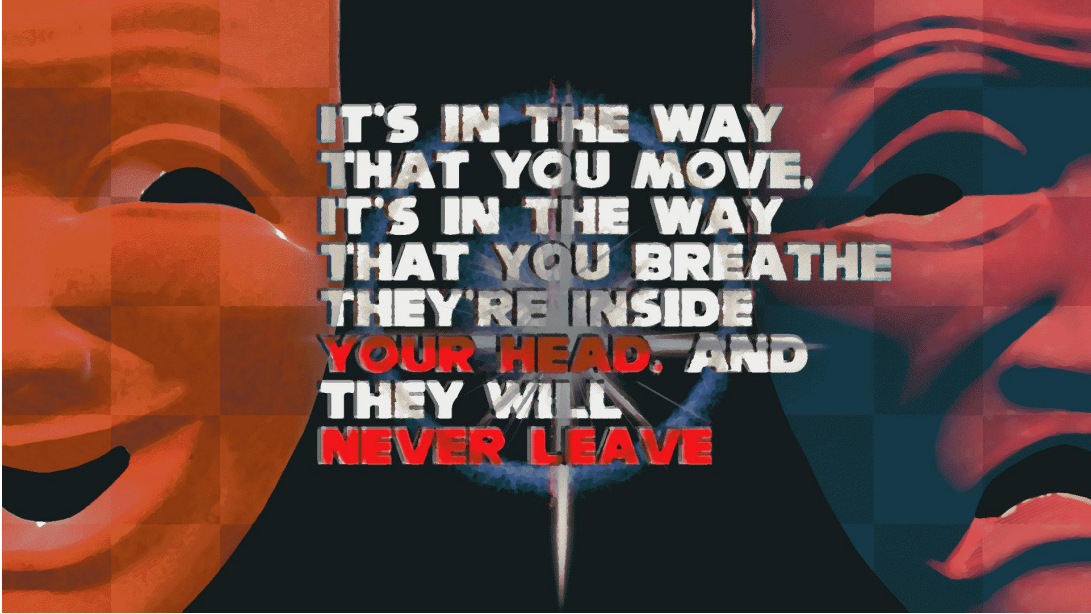
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Artist | FunkyLOaf



A cartoon penguin character wearing a green hat and a green scarf, pointing upwards.

SCOOP
Bundle up and stay warm!

Eastern Michigan students participate in WonderFest, theater, sports and more



Rylee Curley, *The Eastern Echo's* graphics editor and founder of Pokito Productions, explains WONDERCORD at WonderFest on Tuesday, Nov. 4, in the Student Center Ballroom. Max Taylor / *The Eastern Echo*



AMP! Vice President Ava Cichowski (left) and President Kaylynn Haapala tell students about the organization at WonderFest on Tuesday, Nov. 4. Max Taylor / *The Eastern Echo*



Jahnvi Rambus played Cephus Miles in EMU Theatre's production of "Home," directed by Wallace Bridges in Judy Sturgis Hill's Sponberg Theatre on Nov. 7 and 8. Max Taylor / *The Eastern Echo*



Ella Grasson of the EMU Women's Volleyball team bumps the ball to a teammate in their match against Ball State on Nov. 7 at the George Gervin GameAbove Center. Bradan Copeland / *The Eastern Echo*



One of many tabling artists at WonderFest, Jada Sundria made homemade jewelry to sell Tuesday, Nov. 4 in the Student Center Ballroom. Max Taylor / *The Eastern Echo*



From left, Jahnvi Rambus and Miranda Wiggins depict Cephus Miles and Pattie Mae in EMU Theatre's production of "Home," directed by Wallace Bridges in Judy Sturgis Hill's Sponberg Theatre, Nov. 7 and 8. Max Taylor / *The Eastern Echo*



Oliver Bishop plays tenor saxophone to the instrumental piece, "Serpent," created by VIRID at the VIRID Percussion concert held Thursday, Nov. 6. Kaleb Stanely / *The Eastern Echo*



Eagle Nation cheers for EMU's football team after they scored against BGSU on Nov. 8 at Rynearson Stadium. Bradan Copeland / *The Eastern Echo*