

# Roots

Tuesday, March 31, 2026

Volume 1, Issue 7

## Artist of the Month: Chloé Gray business owner, role model and dancer



Chloé Gray is *Roots'* artist of the month. Gray is a business owner, role model and dancer. Photo Courtesy of Chloé Gray

**Carol Detary**  
*Arts & Entertainment Reporter*

Chloé Gray began dancing at the age of six. Now, she works to bring supportive, empowering dance instruction to others.

Gray graduated from Eastern Michigan University in 2016 with a Bachelor of Arts in dance production and women and gender studies.

After graduating, Gray pursued a professional career in the dance industry. After a year of commitment in a demanding position, she decided it wasn't the right path for her.

"I was miserable; I had to drag myself out of bed in order to get to rehearsals," Gray said. "It was really hard for me because of the way I was treated as a dancer."

After 17 consecutive years of dancing, Gray decided to take a yearlong break from

professional dancing. At 23, during this break, she continued her part-time work in dance education. Through education, Gray learned what education and leadership can do for dancers.

"The break of dancing made me realize I do love dancing, I just do not enjoy being abused," said Gray.

Gray opened Fun Girl Dance Company & School in 2018 as a way to continue her passion of dance, creating an environment built on compassion and empowerment.

For the first two years, the studio operated inside Riverside Arts Center, but was able to move into its own studio down the street in 2020.

Fun Girl Dance School originally launched as a dance company with a different name. Gray collaborated with a dance

studio owner in Toledo to open a new branch of dance studio in Michigan. The partnership ended on good terms and Gray continued with the studio.

"After the studio owner stepped down, she encouraged me to blend the two and that's why we have Fun Girl Dance Company & School today," Gray said.

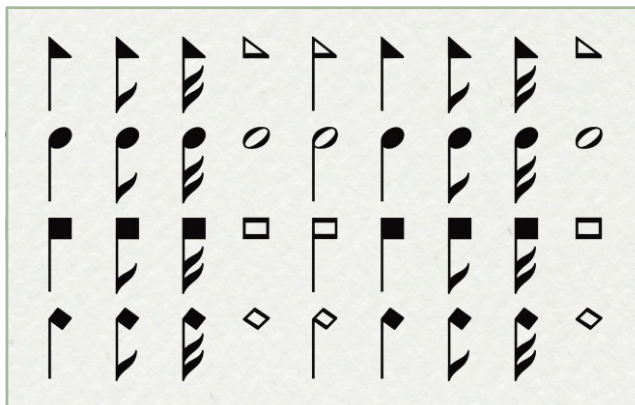
Gray wanted to create a dance studio that is accessible, educational and creative. In 2020, Fun Girl Dance School achieved 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, which allowed for Gray to continue instructing classes while making it affordable for all.

"For me and many other educators, teaching is a way to heal your inner child," Gray said.

**SEE CHLOÉ GRAY,  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 7**



Cellar Roots Spotlight — Page 3



Shape note singing — Page 6



Events Calendar — Pages 4 & 5

## Roots:

Roots is the monthly arts and entertainment magazine of *The Eastern Echo* and *Cellar Roots*, highlighting the vibrant creative communities present at Eastern Michigan University and in Ypsilanti. Contents are subject to copyright and may not be reproduced without prior written consent of *The Eastern Echo*.

COPYRIGHT © 2026 (*The Eastern Echo*)

All rights reserved.

www.easternecho.com

## Corrections

Roots corrects mistakes. If we got it wrong, we want to make it right. Errors should be brought to the attention of the editor-in-chief by email: [cellarroots@easternecho.com](mailto:cellarroots@easternecho.com).

## Roots Staff

### Winter 2026

#### Cellar Roots Editor-in-Chief, Arts Editor:

Jada Hauser  
[cellarroots@easternecho.com](mailto:cellarroots@easternecho.com)

#### Arts and Entertainment Reporters:

Carol Detary  
Katherine Tatomir  
Hannah Borders

#### Student Media Advisor:

Christine Uthoff  
[advisor@easternecho.com](mailto:advisor@easternecho.com)

## Join the Roots team!

Email resume & portfolio to  
[cellarroots@easternecho.com](mailto:cellarroots@easternecho.com)

## The Eastern Echo Photo of the Month



To spread awareness for their "Pokémon Go to the Polls" Voter Registration event, Pi Sigma Alpha invited Pikachu to The Commons on Wednesday, March 18. *Lee Hammock / The Eastern Echo*

## Local Calls For Art

### Brighton Street Art Fair | The Guild of Artists & Artisans

[theguild.org/get-involved/apply-for-a-show/](http://theguild.org/get-involved/apply-for-a-show/)

### A2AC Shop Application | Ann Arbor Art Center

[annarborartcenter.org/galleries/a2ac-artist-opportunities/](http://annarborartcenter.org/galleries/a2ac-artist-opportunities/)

### The Human Connection to Nature | The Voyeur Bordello

[thevoyeurbordello.com/open-calls](http://thevoyeurbordello.com/open-calls)

### 2026 Exhibitions | 22 North Gallery

[22north.org](http://22north.org)

### Southern Rapture | PTD Productions

Auditions in May, official dates TBD.  
[ptdproductions.com/auditions](http://ptdproductions.com/auditions)

### Call for Performers | The Guild of Artists & Artisans

[abby@theguild.org](mailto:abby@theguild.org)

### Script Submissions | Theatre Nova

[theatrenovaplaysubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:theatrenovaplaysubmissions@gmail.com)

## Cellar Roots Vol. 12, No.1 Spotlight

Hello Eagles,

My name is Jada Hauser. I am the editor-in-chief of Roots and Cellar Roots. Cellar Roots is Eastern Michigan University's fine arts magazine.

March is quickly wrapping up, and with it, the team at Cellar Roots is finalizing production on Volume 52 of our magazine. We are excited to share with you the wonderful creative work sent to us by artists in the EMU community.

While you wait for Volume 52 to be published, I hope you enjoy looking back on this volume from the past. Cellar Roots Volume 12, No. 1 was published in fall 1984. It featured creative writing, photography and illustrative pieces. Check out some of those pieces here on this page.

Cellar Roots publishes once yearly. We are publishing soon and we invite you to check out an exhibition of selected works from volume 52 at the Intermedia Gallery Group Student Center Gallery that runs from April 13 - May 1. An opening reception is to be held April 17 from 6-9 p.m.

Thank you for reading!

Best,  
Jada Hauser

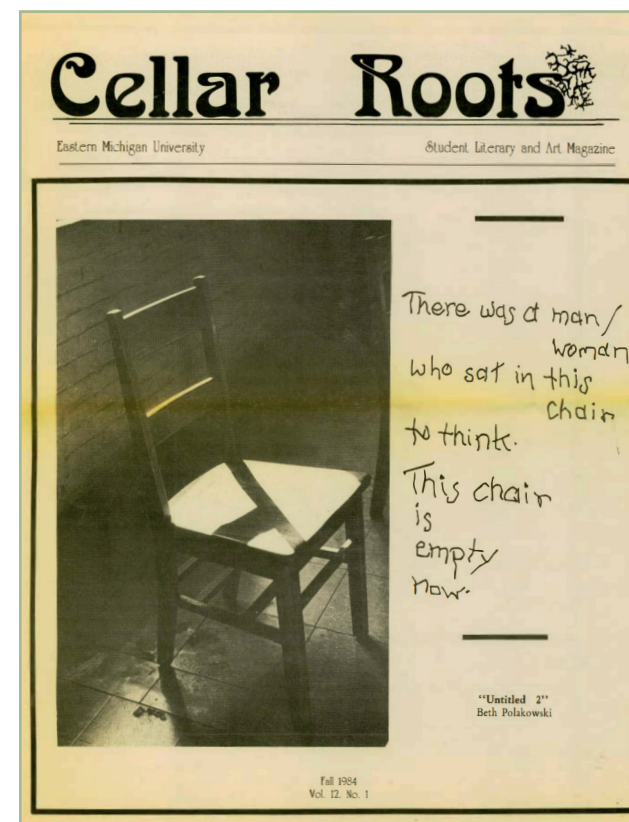
Digital scans courtesy of Digital Commons @ EMU. To view more Cellar Roots of the past, visit the University Archives' digital collection at [commons.emich.edu](http://commons.emich.edu).

### Don't Let Those Eyes Fool You

Clifford Scholz

The sandman is weeping as the seed wakes inside her  
As the lovers are sleeping, the sad stars above her  
Wish on themselves for the morning to hide them.  
But deep in the nights, in her office of dreams,  
She's shredding her heart up for secrecy's sake,  
And she paperclips pages of cheap magazines  
To the end of a story that won't be continued;  
She edits the poetry we made together  
With paste and black paper and her new pink eraser  
To rub out the memories I left inside her.  
If she makes some bad copies, or files them wrong,  
Or the ledger won't balance, she'll sleep past the dawn,  
When the sandman is snoozing—  
And the lucky stars are gone.

# Cellar Roots



CELLAR ROOTS STAFF: Editor in Chief: Douglas Riddle  
Associate Editor: Larry Crowley

Judges:  
Literature: David Geherin, Robert Kraft, All Hellus  
Art: Igor Beginin, Douglas Kisor, Jim Markley



### "Bad Dreams II"

Bob Brock



### To the poet, Richard Wilbur

Kay Redman-Cunningham

O Richard Wilbur!  
I would laugh at you if I weren't so busy  
thinking how to keep young myself.  
Every time I try to find a decent book of poems  
there you are, spouting off to the editors  
about how you've managed to keep up with the kids  
and still  
stay innocent.

We all know you are green grass, Mr. Wilbur,  
and a thousand memories you have  
of when snow flakes were clean and icicles  
were edible. I remember too.  
But I am tired of those memories. I am tired  
of those lies.  
Give me a poem about garbage anyday.



On Feb. 14, customers found unique artisan crafts at the Art Makers and Heartbreakers Holy Bones event. This event was Holy Bones' initial launch at its new location, the Michigan Firehouse Museum located at 110 W. Cross St. The next Holy Bones event will take place on May 2. *Courtesy of Holly Bones*

## Art Fairs

### Pushing Up Daisies

Holy Bones presents its fourth annual Pushing Up Daisies event. Hosted at the Firehouse Museum, attendees can expect two floors of spring-themed horror art for sale.

May 2 from 12-6 p.m. | Firehouse Museum, 110 W. Cross St. | Admission: Free

### Ypsi Artisans Market

Hosting a collection of over 40 small businesses, crafters, nonprofit organizations and food vendors based in Ypsilanti, the Ypsi Artisans Market offers attendees a chance to explore unique art and support local creators.

May 9 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. | Ypsilanti Freighthouse, 100 Market Place | Admission: Free



The Riverside Arts Center is located at 76 N. Huron St. The Independent Film Festival Ypsilanti (IFFY) is being hosted there from April 16 - 18.

*Maddy Makin / The Eastern Echo*

## Theater

### “Boss Babe” A new musical by Jen Whaley

The Neighborhood Theater Group presents a stage reading of “Boss Babe.” Creekville is a small Midwest town where many people have struggled to make a living, so when stay-at-home mom Amy is offered an “incredible employment opportunity,” she takes it. Will it work out?

April 3-4 at 8 p.m. | The Back Office Studio, 13 N. Washington St. | Admission: \$10 suggested donation

### “Our Town” performed by EMU Theatre

Written by Thornton Wilder, “Our Town” takes audiences through three distinct acts: Daily Life, Love and Marriage, and Death and Eternity. Reflecting the human condition, the play explores the trials and tribulations of everyday life.

April 16-18 at 7 p.m., and April 18-19 2 p.m. | Legacy Theatre | Admission: \$20 for general admission, \$15 for seniors, \$12 for students and \$7 for youth ages 6-12.

## Film

### Independent Film Festival Ypsilanti

Founded in 2019, IFFY showcases the experimental and mind bending work of local independent filmmakers in the Ypsilanti area.

April 16-18 | Times vary by date | 76 N. Huron St. | Ticket prices vary

### The VEMMYs

Hosted by the Eagles Filmmakers Association, Videographers at EMU and ETV at EMU, The VEMMYs is set to premiere the films created by each organization throughout the 2025-2026 academic year at Eastern Michigan University.

April 15 at 7 p.m. | McKenny Tower, Room 348 | Admission: Free

## Live Music

### Retro House Vibes: Washtenaw Funk & Disco

Presented by Rhizome Roots Studio, Detroit-based DJ Evan Oswald and heat wave researcher DJ Jerry Downey Jr. take attendees through a night of retro funk and disco.

April 3 at 9:30 p.m. | 108 Pearl St. | \$10 entry fee, volunteer options are available

### Thornetta Davis live at the Ypsilanti Freighthouse

With a career spanning more than 30 years and three solo albums, singer, songwriter and recording artist Thornetta Davis, known as Detroit’s Queen of the Blues, will be performing live for attendees at the Ypsilanti Freighthouse.

April 12 at 6:30 p.m. | Ypsilanti Freighthouse, 100 Market Place | Pay what you can, starting at \$5

### Joe Reilly and Friends Celebrate Earth Day

At a concert for families with musician Joe Reilly, joined by Mark Stone and Lesley Anne-Stone, a series of songs is set to be performed from Reilly’s children’s albums. Based on community and environmental impact, families are encouraged to stay after the performance to participate in a hands-on activity led by Ypsilanti non-profit Growing Hope.

April 18-19 at 7:30 p.m. | Ypsilanti Freighthouse, 100 Market Place | Admission: Free

### The Silos: 40 Years of American Rock

Blending American rock and experimental music, join The Silos for a night of fusing grit and avant-garde artistry live on Ziggy’s stage.

April 14 at 8 p.m. | Ziggy’s, 206 W. Michigan Ave. | Admission: \$10 cover

## Fashion

### Celebrity Wanna Be

Presented by Kings of Color, “Celebrity Wanna Be” encourages EMU students to embrace their inner main character. Attendees can come dressed in the clothes that make them most confident, and perform lip syncs or sing live, dance or showcase a mashup performance.

April 15 from 7-9 p.m. | Student Center Auditorium | Admission: Free

### Faith and Fashion Show

Aiding Ypsilanti residents with rent support through its ticket sales, Ruth Mella’s Ministry presents its “Faith and Fashion Show,” a night of elegant faith-based fashion and worship.

May 2 from 7-9 p.m. | Riverside Arts Center, 76 N. Huron St. | Admission: RSVP required, donations encouraged



The Ypsilanti Freighthouse is located at 100 Market Place in Ypsilanti. *Ky’anna Coats / The Eastern Echo*

## Dance

### The Red Carpet: Passing the Torch

In collaboration with Diversion Dance Troupe and EMU Eaglettes, EMU Dance Elites presents “The Red Carpet,” featuring performances from each group, including a special performance by MSU’s Urban Dreams.

April 9 at 6:30 p.m. | Student Center Auditorium | Admission: Free

### Threads of Rhythm: Arab Music and Dance

Led by Chloé Gray of Ypsilanti’s Fun Girl Dance Company, Threads of Rhythm encourages families of all ages to learn Dabke, a traditional line-and-circle folk dance, most often performed at weddings, festivals and other cultural events.

April 11-12 at 11 a.m. | Ypsilanti Freighthouse, 100 Market Place | Admission: Free with registration

## Poetry

### Dzanc Community Poetry Series featuring Robert Fanning

Author of five different poetry collections, including his most recent release “All We Are Given We Cannot Hold,” Robert Fanning joins Dzanc House for a night of poetry readings.

April 10 from 7-8:30 p.m. | Dzanc House, 402 South Huron St.

### Exploring the Poetry of Muriel Rukeyser: Gaining Courage Through Poetry (Virtual)

Presented by YpsiWrites, join former EMU professor Elisabeth Däumer and clinical social worker David Boeving for an exploration of American poet, essayist and activist Muriel Rukeyser.

April 9 from 6:30-8 p.m. | Virtual | Registration available on ypsiwrites.com

# Crystal Skull Studio creates an inclusive environment for self-expression through hair

**AnnaBelle Favre**  
News Reporter

**Editor's note: Crystal Skull Studio stylist Cassandra is known in the community by their first name only. Cassandra's last name was omitted from this article for personal privacy reasons.**

Crystal Skull Studio, founded by Cherish Baser 10 years ago, is an inclusive hair salon that specializes in curly hair, alternative styles and vivid colors.

Baser, who owns the studio, and Cassandra are

the only two stylists in this intimate studio.

"You can build a stronger level of trust," Baser said. "It's a more comfortable space to know someone, and it's less overwhelming."

Baser and Cassandra work together most of the time, but clients can request a private session at no extra cost, no matter the need.

"We want everyone to feel comfortable here, and if you have an autoimmune disease, wear a hijab, or just want a more private experience, we can do that," Baser said.

Crystal Skull Studio is home to more than 300 regulars and many clients that pop in and out, Baser said. Some clients come in once a year, some every three months and some every four weeks.

"It really depends on the hair and what the client wants. If they want to go get a touch-up somewhere else, that's okay, too. I'm not going to get offended if you don't stick with me," Baser said.

Baser has more than 20 years of hair experience under her belt. She worked

in several different studios, big and small, for 10 years before she and a friend decided to cultivate their own salon environment.

"The need for growth and the vibrant diverse Ypsilanti community pushed her to open a storefront in Historic Depot Town," Baser's biography on the Crystal Skull website states. "Cherish is always looking for collaboration with local artists and community collaboration to help maintain the vibrant ecosystem within the city."

**SEE CRYSTAL SKULL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 7**



Crystal Skull Studio owner, Cherish Baser (left) and hairstylist Cassandra. AnnaBelle Favre / The Eastern Echo

# Shape Note Singing: An ancestral tradition open to all in Ypsilanti

**Gray Connor**

Managing Editor - Operations

One of America's oldest singing traditions, shape note singing, challenges participants to reapproach the way they read and perform music. Originating in New England in the early 19th century, shape note singing first began as a simpler form of reading sheet music, primarily used in religious choirs performing hymns and psalms.

Shape note singing is represented by its unique use of shapes on sheet music, allowing those less familiar with music notation to read the sheet music easily. As opposed to typical music notation, each shape represents a different note for the singer to follow.

Grey Grant, who works as the communications

manager at the Riverside Arts Center in Ypsilanti, has been participating in the Ypsi Shape Note Group for three years. Grant said that the tradition of shape note singing is carried on by the people, along with written history.

"The shape note tradition is full of nerds who like documenting things," Grant said. "It's a notated system, so we call it shape note singing because the note heads of the notated music are different shapes."

While shape note singing has two distinct systems, the four-shape system is more common, consisting of only four shapes that performers must memorize, Grant said. The shapes also correlate with non-music objects, which makes them easier to remember.

"Fa is a triangle because

it looks like a flag, and sol is a circle because it looks like the sun," Grant said. "La is a square because if you look at the left and bottom side of the square, it makes an L, and then there's the diamond. The diamond is mi because people say that diamonds are for me."

While the majority of the text that shape note singers interact with is related to Christianity and the Christian Bible, Grant explains that people can come to shape note singing for their own reasons, even if they are non-religious.

"When you're in the room singing, it's about the music ... There is a secularization and a secular understanding about how the practice is held ... When you show up to practice, you're supposed to leave politics and religion at the door," Grant said.

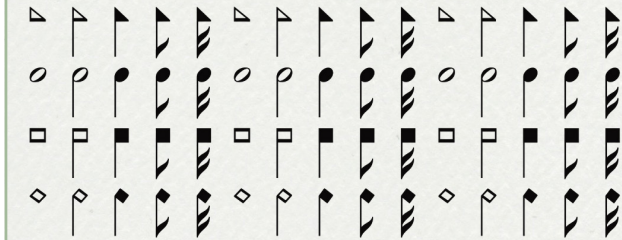
"Everybody is welcome; even though the text may be Christian, a lot of the themes end up being about love, life and death."

Much of the music performed through shape note singing is about grief and the practice of preparing for death, Grant said.

The Ypsi Shape Note Group meets every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, with newcomers encouraged to drop in for any meetings that work for them. Participation is free, and while attendees can bring their own shape note singing books, copies will be provided during the meeting.

While the Ypsi Shape Note Group does not perform in front of an audience, those wishing to get more involved can visit the Ann Arbor Sacred Harp Group, which meets at The Ark in

## SHAPE NOTE SINGING | YPSILANTI



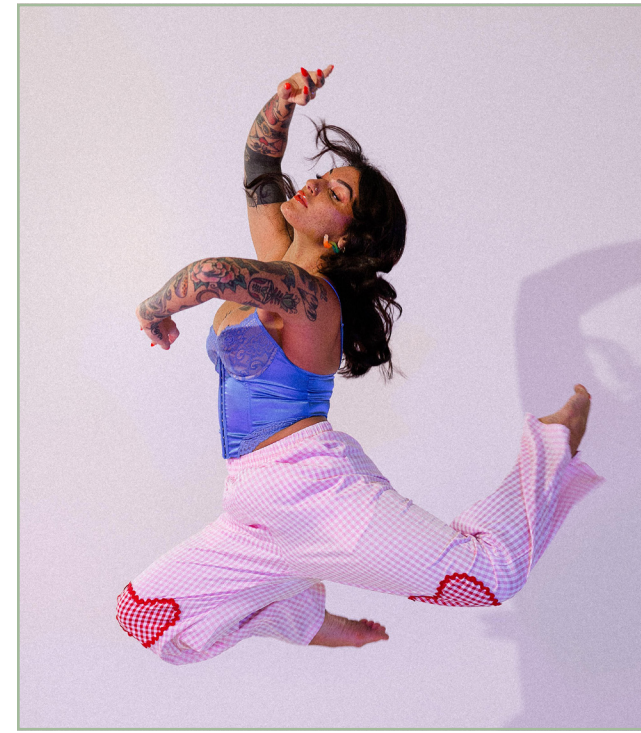
**EVERY 2<sup>ND</sup> AND 4<sup>TH</sup> TUESDAY, 7-9PM  
OFF CENTER AT RIVERSIDE ARTS CENTER**

**The Ypsilanti Shape Note Singing group meets every second and fourth Tuesday of the month. The group is open to anyone who would like to join.**

*Image courtesy of Grey Grant*

Ann Arbor from 1-4 p.m. Group, interested attendees can visit its page on the Riverside Arts Center's website.

To find more information on the Ypsi Shape Note



Chloé Gray commissioned photographer Erin McConnell to capture a personal branding photoshoot for Fun Girl Dance Company & School. Photo Courtesy of Chloé Gray

# Chloé Gray

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Currently, Fun Girl Dance School is going through a rebranding process, during which Gray will decide how this side of the company will continue and look in the future.

For Gray, educating children is about safe and empowering dance practices. Teaching the difference between discomfort and pain, Gray focuses on being an instructor who shows care and respect to her students.

"I was never taught the difference between the two, and it was expected to grin and bear it no matter what," Gray said.

The values Gray incorporates into her instruction are in contrast to the experience she had herself as a dancer in her youth. She described the dehumanization and lack of bodily autonomy she experienced as a younger

dancer.

"You were a body, not a person. You were a dancer, not a human being," she said.

Fun Girl Dance Company emerged from the desire to produce a dance environment that could be centered around inclusivity, community and passion.

"I wanted to create a place for people who were seeking a safe, healthy and uplifting professional environment," Gray said.

In 2020, Fun Girl Dance Company & School had a planned season full of performances before the world shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gray decided not to let the dance season's worth of work be disregarded because there could not be a live performance, and decided to do a virtual performance in what would come to be known as Dance Films.

"We did not go into the first film knowing it would be filmed, so it was choreographed for stage and whipped together, all the moving parts of location, set and design and the film was filmed in two weeks," Gray said.

During the 2021 dance season, Gray decided to continue creating the Dance Films to produce an end product for the company to be proud of. The film release occurred while heavy COVID-19 restrictions were still in place, and was an accessible way to have all the people involved enjoy the work they put into dancing.

"I used to disregard dance films because I wanted to be there and feel and hear the dancers' breath, but I fell in love with the choreography, being a director and the accessibility," Gray said.

Since the first, Fun Girl Dance Company has produced five dance films from 2020-24, following each season of dance.

Fun Girl Dance Company is set to release its sixth film in the spring of 2026. The film was shot in Spot Lite Detroit and is currently in the post-production stage. Venues are being finalized for a screening of the final product.

After filming six dance films, Gray has worked with many different production and post-production teams in the past. For the seventh film, Gray connected with Frodet Elia, filmmaker and editor, and found that she and Elia clicked on the vision for the film.

"She did what it has taken six men to do, she has read my notes and understands the vision we are trying to produce," Gray said.

After eight consecutive years of being a business owner, teacher and fellow

dancer, Gray found that she needed to reevaluate her time and commitment to Fun Girl Dance Company & School.

"I think dancing for yourself and your own company stops you from taking risks, and I feel like I have gotten to that place and had to take a long, hard look at myself," Gray said.

Gray realized she missed trying new things and pushing herself to her limit. At the beginning of 2026, Gray committed to learning a new discipline within dance: heels dance.

"I have just missed being a dancer. I have missed having someone else yell at me, and learning from others," Gray said.

Gray said she thrives in trying new techniques, methods of learning and ways of teaching. She said teachers can't give from an empty cup and must continue their own education too.

"I do not care what kind of educator you are, if you are educating you always have to remain a student," Gray said.

Through Fun Girl Dance Company & School, Gray has created a queer-centric dance studio focused on bold, innovative and creative choreography and multimedia dance productions. Gray has goals of working with unique and authentic artists to bring their art to life through dance.

"Dance builds reliance, loyalty and stamina in all aspects of life, not just in the studio," Gray said.

To follow along Gray's dancing journey and see new productions, follow @chloegraysproduction or @\_garlicgirl on Instagram. For more updates on Fun Girl Dance Company & School, visit chloegraysproduction.com or Instagram @fungirl.school and @fungirlanceco.

# Crystal Skull

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Other local businesses can be found in every aspect of the salon. Most prominently, the salon features rotating art from local artists. The studio has hosted over 100 local artists to display their work. While the walls are prime display space, Crystal Skull also offers tables for displays.

"We've had lots of jewelry, plant curators, candle makers, ceramics, sculptures, clothing, buttons, pins, prints and magnets out on the tables," Baser said.

Baser and Cassandra said that the studio is looking for more local artists and encouraged students and community members to fill out their artist application or reach out to them over phone, email or social media.

The studio displays art for two to three months and doesn't require fees. If any art sells, they ask for a 15% commission on each piece sold.

"We have a very diverse clientele, so we want a lot of variety in our art," Cassandra said. The walls are often lined with paintings, digital art, photography, fabric art, embroidery and mosaics.

"It's pretty low commitment, and it's a lot of people's first place to display. You can be anonymous, and people are in here intimately with your art for an hour or two," Cassandra said. "One thing that I really appreciate about this space is that it's ever-changing and stays fresh — the music we play, our art and our layout always look different."

Displaying art is not where the studio's local love stops.

"We're Ypsi community

simps. You can find pretty much every local business somewhere in our studio," Baser said. A magazine rack is filled with local zines, Cassandra and Baser often wear local merch, the salon offers Hyperion Coffee, and the primary product they use is Original Moxie, a local, organic brand owned by another local salon.

"It's healthy, has good ingredients and works great. I wouldn't use it if I didn't love it," Baser said about Original Moxie.

Finding hair products can be exhausting and expensive, especially for those with curly hair. That is why Cassandra had the idea to create a take a product, leave a product exchange box.

"Many people in the curly hair community will just go through a lot of products until they find what works for them, and there's a lot of waste. It's a nice way to reduce a little bit of waste and find something that works for you," Cassandra said.

Cassandra explained that people will come in bringing one, a handful, or a bagful of products that didn't work for them. This creates a guilt-free open space for people to try out new products without spending money on things that don't work for them.

Cassandra and Baser both take pride in their work and the inclusivity of the salon.

"We work with all walks of life, and it's really fun ... If someone has a strong idea, I don't think we've ever turned anyone down. Hair is a form of self-expression," Baser said.

**CONTINUED ON  
EASTERNECHO.COM**

# The Eastern Echo

Invites you to our annual

## *Student Media Gala*

Hall of Fame Banquet

The Eastern Echo



**6:30 p.m. April 2**

McKenny Ballroom  
878 W. Cross St., Ypsilanti, MI 48197