

WHITE PINE PRESS

We hew to the line; let the chips fall where they may.

TRAVERSE CITY'S VETERANS AND THE COMMUNITY THAT HONORS THEM - PG. 5

Photos Courtesy of Justina Hlavka and Mark Dragovich



News-in-Brief

NMC’s **Fall Pottery Sale** will be held on Nov. 21 from 1-7 pm. Works by students and faculty will be featured in the ceramics studio in the Okerstrom Fine Arts Building.

The Fall 2025 semester **Long Night Against Procrastination** will be held on Dec. 3 in the NMC library from 5-11pm. Librarians, student success coaches, and tutors will be available for students. There will also be free food, therapy dogs, activities, and prizes.

The 10th annual **Walk for Health and Housing** will take place on Nov. 19. Those interested in joining the walk should meet at Central United Methodist Church at 6 pm.

Students can nominate instructors that they feel have excelled for the **Faculty Excellence Award**. Nominations must be submitted by Dec. 15.

On Nov. 20 in the Innovation Center, you can join **Grand Valley State University** (GVSU) for cider and donuts from 10-1 pm. You can connect with GVSU admissions and advisors to learn about the transfer process and GVSU’s academic programs.

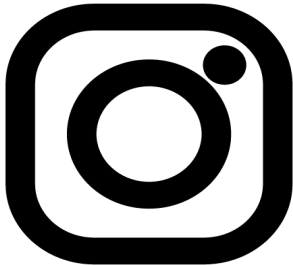
There will be cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillator (AED) training on Dec. 5. Attendees will get non-certification training and hands-on experience on how to use **CPR and AED** to respond to sudden cardiac arrest.

The Dennon Museum Concert Series will continue on Nov. 25 with a performance by **Luke Winslow-King** with **Graham Parsons**. On Dec. 14, Mr. Sun will be playing Duke Ellington’s Nutcracker suite.

NMC’s Professional Communications class is organizing the **12th annual Thanks-for-Giving fundraiser**. You can find more information on this fundraiser on Pg. 3 and Pg. 4.

White Pine Press

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If you would like to learn more, contact faculty adviser Jacob Wheeler at jwheeler@nmc.edu or editor-in-chief Minnie Bardenhagen at barden34@mail.nmc.edu

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Who Fills the SNAP Gap?

When SNAP Benefits Face Uncertainty, NMC Programs Step Up

Minnie Bardenhagen The Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), traditionally known as food stamps, provides more than 41 million Americans with financial assistance to obtain food. In Michigan, approximately 1.4 million people rely on SNAP. According to data from the 2023 US Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 8% of Grand Traverse County households are on SNAP. However, the widely used food assistance program has faced an uncertain state since the federal government shutdown began in October.

On Oct. 1, the government closed its doors after a proposed spending bill by Republicans did not receive enough votes from Senate Democrats to pass. Spending bills require at least a 60-40 majority vote to pass the Senate, and Republicans only hold a 53-47 majority. Democrats, who narrowly agreed to block a government shutdown months earlier, cited the expiration of healthcare benefits as their concern, framing the spending bill as inadequate in helping the US's 'healthcare crisis.'

Although a court order has required the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to continue partial SNAP benefits, as of Nov. 1, SNAP-dependent households in Michigan have navigated daily life without their full benefits. For NMC students and faculty members who rely on the program, several NMC-centered initiatives have stepped up to help fill in the gap.

In the month of November, the holiday season brings a special demand for food in the United States. NMC's annual Thanks-for-Giving program, hosted by Professor Kristy McDonald's Professional Communications class in partnership with the NMC Food Pantry and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan, passes out Thanksgiving meal boxes to families in need.

NMC students Alex Smith and Daniel Sanders, both culinary students and part of the program's team, said that after November SNAP benefits were placed in jeopardy, they received a donation that allowed them to increase the number of families from 175 to 200.

"When that all happened, we got a surge of people signing up for the meals," Sanders explained, "And then when we realized that [SNAP] wasn't going to be around for Thanksgiving, we kind of were hoping for more boxes, and we started striving [to earn] more funds to make more boxes for those families so we could help out in the best way we can."

The program hosted a glow-skating fundraiser in late October, and they plan to host a euchre tournament fundraiser on Nov. 19. They are also hosting a prize giveaway, in which every person who donates \$10 gets a chance to win a two-night stay at the Great Wolf Lodge, a six-course wine dinner at Chateau Chantal, brunch at the Aerie Restaurant at Grand Traverse Resort, or lunch at Lobdell's.

"We're able to reach more, and we want to use all of the money that we get. It shouldn't go to waste," Smith said, "We have more people on the wait list... We're still trying to figure that

out, and we would love to help them, but we need to figure out our numbers more."

The program is also asking for donations of peanut butter and granola bars. There are red bins placed in the Innovation Center, the Parsons-Stulen building, and on the Great Lakes Campus.

"We really would love [peanut butter and granola bars] because we want to put them in all of the boxes, especially because our box is also trying to think about the week after Thanksgiving and feeding them [at that time] also," Smith explained. She said that both leftovers and non-perishable foods can help with that.

NMC's food pantries, both the stationary and mobile ones, have been combating food insecurities in the community for years, with the stationary pantry starting in 2017 and the mobile pantry starting in 2023.

In an email reporting the statistics of the Nov. 3 mobile food pantry, organizer Cathy Warner said that they had served 144 families, which was up 30% from the 110 families they served on Oct. 20. Of the 144 families, 40% of the people served were NMC households. There were 186 children, 59 seniors, and 10 veterans. She explained that the number of children served increased by seven percent from two weeks prior, and that the number of seniors and veterans had doubled.

"I think these numbers reflect the cuts of SNAP benefits as families scramble to find alternatives for food for their households," Warner wrote in the email, "We are the community's college. I know that this is the time when we can step up to take care of our students, neighbors, and community members."

In the Fall 2025 semester, both pantries have seen an increased number of visitors, even before SNAP benefits were cut off. In late October, Warner described an uptick in visitors to the food pantry, "We are up in participants this fall by around 15-20 families... and that was prior to the SNAP program being cut."

Paul Kolak, an organizer of the stationary pantry, echoed a similar trend. He said that the number of orders was up 28% from Sep. 2024 to Sep. 2025, and attributed this to rising food prices and increased enrollment.

Warner acknowledged that since the prospect of SNAP benefits ending on Nov. 1 came into play, they have anticipated a larger community turnout.

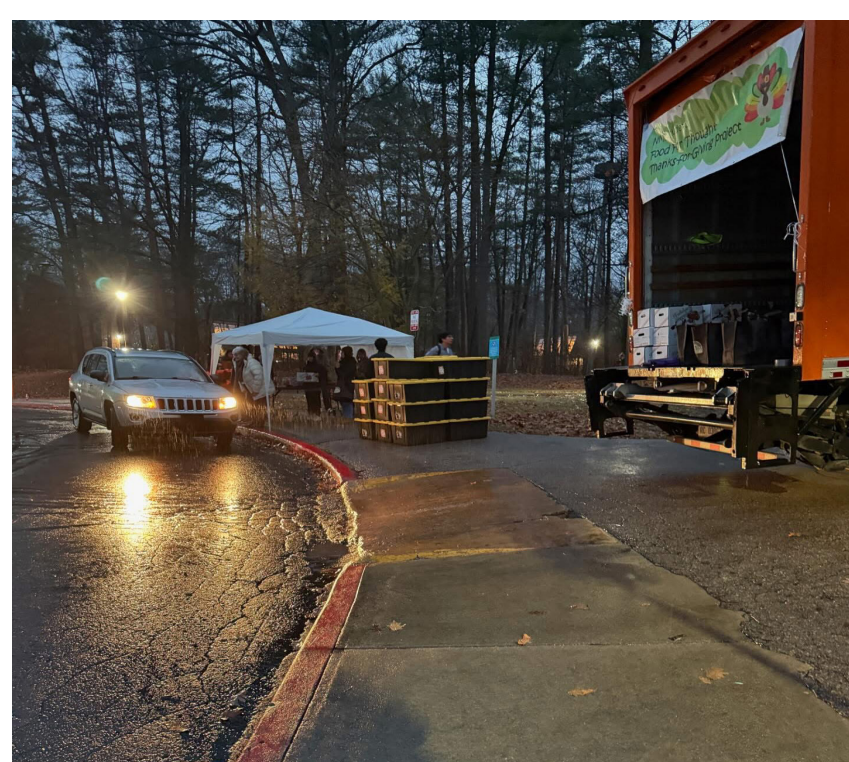
"I have already received many additional requests for information on our program—both from people wanting food-help and those wanting to volunteer to help others," Warner explained. She expressed gratitude for the amount of fresh food they would be receiving.

"I was shopping at our local Tom's and was shocked to see a three-pack of romaine lettuce was up to \$9," Warner said, "Those prices aren't doable for families."

As of press time, the government was still shut down, and benefits were still in question.



Volunteers at Sep. 8 mobile food pantry.
Photo credit Jacob Dodson



2024 Thanks-for-Giving distribution.
Photo Provided by Thanks-for-Giving Project

Making Room for Gratitude: Thanksgiving the Day After

Isabelle Plamondon
Staff Writer

Gratitude doesn't
always arrive on schedule;
sometimes it's a day

late. Somewhere between the boiling pots on the stove, embarrassing memories being dished out, and laughter echoing off the living room walls, my family and I find our own rhythm of Thanksgiving.

My mom is a dispatcher who often has to work holidays since she is a single parent. She has worked on Thanksgiving almost every year, helping people whose holidays may not be going as planned. She, and other first-responders like her, see the dark side to every holiday before celebrating their own.

While most families gather around a table on Thursday, for my brother and me, it's just a normal day. Our traditions have developed around my mom's line of work. As such, we usually celebrate Thanksgiving on Friday.

We don't make a huge amount of food, only enough to feed the three of us and fill the fridge with leftovers for the week, but we all lend a helping hand in making it. My mom and I take on most of the cooking, while my brother helps with what he can, learns for the coming year, and taste tests everything.

Our kitchen isn't very big, and there isn't much counter space, so it can get rather cramped. Sometimes we take

turns cooking one or two dishes at a time in the kitchen, all while shuffling around our three dogs, who are just begging for a scrap to fall.

We then fill up our plates, sit down on the couch in the living room, and watch *Charlie Brown Thanksgiving*. However, it usually ends up just being background noise, as we start talking about all sorts of things.

Eventually, these conversations all lead to the same nagging and embarrassing questions about my love life, or if my brother has any crushes, which usually leads to embarrassing memories being dished out for dessert.

The short movie is over by the time we're done eating, and then the real fun starts—setting up and decorating the Christmas tree.

I have a rule in our house. No matter how much my mom wants to set up the tree early, until Thanksgiving is over, she can't even touch an ornament. I think it should be given its time as a holiday, instead of being outshone by string lights and the earworm of Christmas carols and songs—though those have their time too.

As a result of this rule, my mom named the day after Thanksgiving as fair game. So we switch from one holiday to the other on the same day.

We bring down the ornaments from the attic, each one holding a memory or a part of our lives we may have

forgotten, and start hanging them up. We then play a new movie on the TV, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. It is a tradition that has always stayed constant in my family, and by the end of December, we will have watched it at least eight times over.

I'm not entirely certain when this tradition started, but it's gotten to the point that we stop whatever part of the decorating process we're on just to quote our favorite scenes, word-for-word, as they're happening. Then we laugh about it afterward.

That movie has never gotten old, and as we watch it over and over again, I remember all the holidays that came before: the old traditions, the new, and the ones we never outgrew.

Those memories, the moments when I feel that connection and nostalgia pulling at my heartstrings, are what I'm most thankful for every year. Not the food, the tree, or even the movie, but the connection of the three within my family.

What I've come to learn is that you can be thankful no matter the day, and that what really matters in the equation of Thanksgiving is people you feel connected to, the laughter and memories you'll hold onto for next year's dishing session, and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.



THANKS-FOR-GIVING
MMC 2025

EUCLRE TOURNAMENT

Wednesday 11/19

5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

\$15 Community Member \$10 NMC Students

NMC's Main Campus in the Timothy J. Nelson Innovation Center Room 106/107

OVER \$1,000 Dollars in PRIZE VALUE!

Proceeds from this event support Northwestern Michigan College students in feeding our community with 200 Thanksgiving meals.



THANKS-FOR-GIVING
MMC 2025

NMC
Thanks-for-Giving

**PRIZE
GIVEAWAY**

Proceeds from this event support Northwestern Michigan College students in feeding our community with 175 Thanksgiving meals.

HOW TO ENTER

- Go to nmc.edu/give or use the QR code below
- Select the amount you wish to Donate (\$10+ to enter)
- Designate gift to "other" and enter "Thanks-for-Giving"
- You will receive an invoice once payment is confirmed

PRIZES!

- Two-night stay at the Great Wolf Lodge (along with a \$250 gift card)
- Six-course wine dinner for two at Chateau Chantal
- Brunch for two in the Aerie Restaurant at the Grand Traverse Resort
- Lunch for two at Lobdell's



Support Beyond the Thank You

Traverse City's Veterans and the Community that Honors Them

Isabelle Plamondon For most, Veterans Day means flags, ceremonies, and the words
Staff writer “thank you for your service.” But for those who have worn the uniform, it is also a time to reflect—not just on sacrifice, but on what it means to keep serving long after coming home.

Mark Dragovich, a Navy Veteran and the only student veteran currently enrolled at NMC, explained that after leaving the service due to an injury, he struggled to adjust to civilian life. “When you’re used to being told what to do all day, it’s hard to suddenly make your own decisions,” he said, “But veterans are a disciplined group—we just need support and community.”

He found both through NMC, where he now leads the Student Veterans of America chapter. On Nov. 11, NMC hosted a Veterans Day ceremony on Front Street Campus to honor staff, student, and community veterans.

Justina Hlavka—an Air Force veteran, and the director and photographer with Mid-Michigan Honor Flight—echoes that same belief in connection.

“Veterans Day isn’t just a day for thanks,” she said, “It’s a day of recognition.” Hlavka described how difficult the transition to civilian life can be. “When you leave the military, you realize how much of your identity and purpose are still tied to service.” She stated that it was hard for a lot of veterans to “lose that camaraderie.”

Her work with Honor Flight—an organization that flies veterans, many of them serving in Vietnam and a few serving in World War II, to Washington, D.C., to visit the memorials built in their honor—helps fill the void. “You see grown men cry when they touch the wall,” she said, referring to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. “For a lot of them, it’s closure. They finally get the welcome home they never received.”

Both Hlavka and Dragovich said Traverse City’s compassion for veterans is visible and sincere. From student support programs to volunteer groups and local ceremonies, they see a community trying to honor its veterans not just in words, but in action.

Dragovich reflected on what Veterans Day means to him. “It’s important because veterans get recognized for their service,” he said. “Without them, we wouldn’t be the free and open society we are today.” He shared one small phrase that stuck with him: “Whenever someone says, ‘Thank you for your service,’ I respond with, ‘You’re worth it.’” He added, “That’s why we serve—so people can live free.”

He clarified that this freedom means more than comfort: “It means caring enough to understand.”

The common ways a town shows gratitude toward these veterans are through a parade, a flag, or a discount at a restaurant. While that’s a great gesture, Dragovich and Hlavka both emphasized that veterans’ needs go far beyond public displays.

“When resources get tight, it affects veterans—especially those dealing with mental health issues, food insecurity, or housing problems,” Dragovich said.

Hlavka shared a personal example of how easily veterans can miss out on benefits simply because they’re not told about them. “When I was pregnant, I didn’t know [Veteran’s Affairs] would cover my whole pregnancy,” she said. “My nurse was the one who told me, and I was shocked. There’s so much veterans don’t know they’re eligible for.”

She also spoke about the emotional toll that often lingers long after service. “One Vietnam vet pulled me aside during an Honor Flight dinner and said, ‘I have to live with it for the rest of my life.’” Her voice softened as she said, “That kind of pain doesn’t just disappear because someone says thank you.”

Local organizations like Michigan Works and Charlie Golf One help connect veterans to jobs and housing resources, while NMC’s programs provide academic and community support. Both emphasize the importance of these resources and support systems and encourage others to participate.

“Start small,” Hlavka added, “Volunteer with Honor Flight, attend a ceremony, or just ask a veteran about their story. We always need people to hold flags or write letters, and those little things matter.”

Both Hlavka and Dragovich said that they hope recognition becomes something continuous—embedded in daily life, not just observed on one day in November. Because for veterans, their service didn’t end when they took off their uniforms. It simply evolved.

As a photographer and director, Hlavka witnesses how the trips transform veterans. “It brings back everything positive about their service and as little negative as possible,” she said. She recalled one letter from a participant’s wife that still moves her: “Thank you for giving me my husband back. He’s the man now that he was before he left for Vietnam. I haven’t seen that man in 50 years.”

For both veterans, gratitude is best expressed through community action. Dragovich

thanked NMC and the broader Traverse City community for making veterans feel included. “Thank you for the support you’ve given me and other veterans who’ve come back to school,” he said. “It means a lot to feel like we matter here.”

Hlavka’s message was broader and deeply human. “We need to drop the red and blue labels and remember we’re all American,” she said. “Compassion goes a long way.”

As Traverse City wraps up its Veterans Day ceremonies and classroom discussions, both Hlavka and Dragovich offer the same advice in different words: listen, ask questions, show up, and turn gratitude into something real.

Dragovich’s quiet phrase—“you’re worth it”—carries that spirit. It’s a small reminder that honoring veterans means more than a thank-you; it means answering their service with action.

Photos Courtesy of Justina Hlavka



Ditching Dominance and Calling for Diplomacy

Christopher Preble Talks Navigating Global Relationships in the Trump Era

Eily Knight
Staff Writer

On Oct. 23, NMC's International Affairs Forum (IAF) hosted foreign affairs expert, educator, and four-time author Christopher Preble at Milliken Auditorium to discuss reorganizing the global order. The morning after the event, he participated in a conversation about foreign affairs with IAF's Student Leadership Team, who asked him questions about how the United States can reform its foreign policies, America's role as a dominant power, and the significance of American citizens practicing diplomacy in foreign affairs.

"The entire project reimagines diplomacy," Preble told the classroom of 17 students at the IAF Student Leadership meeting, referring to Stimson Center's U.S. Reimagining Grand Strategy program, where he serves as Senior Fellow and Director. "Everything has to change. We need people who want to involve America with the world."

Amanda Allen, NMC Student Leadership chair and founder, echoed the sentiment.

"I think the uniqueness that each of the experts brings starts a new conversation between the students," said Allen, who spoke to the privilege typically only prestigious universities receive: to ask critical questions and discuss with "the world's most up-and-coming experts."

Preble emphasized the importance of cultural diplomacy, which is the practice of exchanging aspects like art, food, and entertainment to foster mutual understanding and relationships between nations.

Foreign affairs can seem daunting to engage in, especially on top of the troubles that citizens face every day, but simply writing to elected officials is still effective.

"It's important to write, and to write well," Preble explained. He also urged students looking to get involved to read historical books or reasonably accurate historical documentaries.

"I think knowledge of history is really important in understanding the present," Preble said.

These are basic and key ways American citizens can participate in foreign affairs and engage with diplomacy, because leaving it up to the government is not enough. But citizen diplomacy is only part of the equation. To truly reform U.S. foreign policy, Preble claimed, the U.S. must confront its longstanding belief that dominance is the safest and superior way to exist—a mindset he believes is no longer sustainable or desirable.

The United States' strength has never solely depended on wielding military or economic power, Preble elaborated, but earning respect internationally by collaborating with other countries has allowed it to become extremely influential—"a role model for the world."

That respect has crumbled under the Trump administration's recent tariffs, he warned. NPR reports Trump is facing a Supreme Court case revolving around excessive tariffs, most notably on Mexico (+25%), Canada (+35%), and China (+145%). Although these rates have since decreased, the damage has already been done not only to the United States' relationship with its allies, but also to American citizen small business owners.

According to the Council on Foreign Relations, these actions by Trump have already caused a trade war between the U.S. and China, which Preble predicts may evolve into a broader conflict—potentially a world war.

Consider the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930. The act originally intended to protect American farmers and industries during the Great Depression by substantially increasing tariffs on imported goods, according to the United States Senate website and records. Despite

the act's intentions, it resulted in a worldwide trade war and consequent collapse in global trade. And although the act cannot be considered a direct cause of World War II, it is widely considered to be a contributing factor, according to the U.S. Senate records.

Along with this, he claimed that being the world's dominant power comes with domestic consequences. He cited that both President Trump and former President Obama have expressed that being the world's "greatest fighting force" causes more involvement with other countries' affairs, which results in neglect at home.

"Can we engage with the world without being responsible for other countries?" Preble asked.

His answer is yes—we should—but with walking a fine line of military restraint. Drawing on his four years of service in the U.S. Navy, Preble experienced firsthand the US military's undeniable strength—capable, efficient, and readily adaptable—but also its limits. That is, pure force is expensive and often unnecessary. But the 1991 Gulf War victory, he claimed, left many Americans under the impression that military ferocity was "simple and easy."

Preble pushes back against that mindset, emphasizing that the military cannot and should not be expected to solve every problem. Yet, he explained that the service is conditioned to believe offense is stronger than defense, and so the US government pours trillions of dollars into the Department of Defense (DOD) each year, which spent just under \$2 trillion in 2024, and has since surpassed \$2.32 trillion in 2025, according to the DOD fiscal year estimates. The department receives the highest amount of discretionary spending. Too much, Preble claims, "it needs to change."

"We're broke," he stated, citing that the US is \$38 trillion deep in debt, and the Department of Government Efficiency's [DOGE] savings are too insignificant to make any real impact. In an interview with *Bloomberg*, University of Michigan professor of economics and public policy, Betsey Stephenson, affirmed that DOGE has saved around \$7 billion at the most, which only resolves less than one percent of the national debt.

Additionally, this excessive military dominance can endanger the nation rather than protect it: "When you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail," Preble explained, meaning the United States' unrivaled military dominance motivates the use of force in foreign affairs without deliberating or fully considering the repercussions.

This, along with creating new enemies that could have remained friends had the U.S. not gotten involved in certain conflicts—all of which, results in overall weaker national security, said Preble.

A balance needs to be struck with military power, he claimed. Too much leads to temptation, resulting in overuse and ruin, but abandoning it entirely isn't an option.

"Defining that balance is a little tricky, I'll admit that," he stated.

But with non-profit organizations like the Stimson Center working with experts like Preble, programs like Reimagining U.S. Grand Strategy are moving towards potential solutions and settlements.

If dominance has defined the past of U.S. foreign policy, maybe diplomacy can define its future through collaboration, compromise, and communication.

Photo by Keiara Pettengill



The Complicated Politics of FOIA

A Reporter's Experience Exploring Michigan's Transparency Laws in Lansing

Minnie Bardenhagen
Editor-In-Chief

On Nov. 4-5, I had the opportunity to participate in the Michigan Press Association's (MPA) 2025 Michigan Trott Foundation News Fellowship. This opportunity took me to the state capital, Lansing, where I got to meet fellow student journalists, and talk to state politicians about the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which was the subject we were assigned to investigate for the fellowship.

About 180 miles south of Traverse City, I found myself in another world. In my time as a reporter and editor for the *White Pine Press*, I have not yet had to use FOIA, nor dive deeply into the world of Lansing politics. I knew as soon as I arrived in the Capitol that I was about to be pushed way beyond my comfort zone.

Michigan's FOIA law has been the subject of expansive debate for over a decade. Michigan is one of only two states where the legislature, governor, and lieutenant governor are not subject to FOIA. This point of contention exploded after 2015, when Michigan ranked near the bottom out of all 50 states in a public integrity investigation. This dubious distinction happened in the midst of the Flint water crisis, which sparked conversation over the lack of disclosure on how officials dealt with the crisis.

The most recent efforts to expand the FOIA law were Senate bills 1 and 2 of the 2025 legislative term. The bills, co-sponsored by Democratic Senator Jeremy Moss and Republican Senator Ed McBroom, garnered bipartisan support in the Senate, as they were passed 33-2. In the House, however, the measures have not been taken up for a vote, as House Speaker Matt Hall has not waived in his refusal to prioritize them.

"We're trying to shine a light on those dark corners [where] bad actors would operate," Moss described. Both Moss and McBroom share a goal of allowing the public to get a better grasp on who is communicating with state legislators and executives. "By exposing those calendars to people—who we meet with and how often—there is a certain level of accountability that gets to be established, and certainly the press would play a huge role in bringing [that] forward and being able to point that out," said McBroom.

While Moss and McBroom both said they try to voluntarily operate with transparency, the bills they are trying to pass would give them the resources they need to do so on a larger scale.

"It's difficult for us to implement everything that these bills would do just individually, because we don't have the infrastructure," McBroom explained, "I don't have the staff who have the time to go through documents... and right now there isn't a mechanism for us to really retain them."

A challenge the two senators face in getting the bills passed is getting House legislators to prioritize them. This starts with getting constituents to prioritize FOIA expansion,

which is a difficult task.

"I think Senator McBroom and I can definitely acknowledge rising costs, employment, food assistance, housing... we know that those are real urgent crises that people grapple with at their dinner table every night as they sit down as a family. They do not grapple with FOIA," Moss said. However, he also pointed out that getting information on these issues may be easier with wider access to legislative and executive information: "You could see the discussions that go on in the legislature. And how do you see that? FOIA."

Brian Calley, former lieutenant governor under Rick Snyder who is currently the CEO and president of the Small Business Association of Michigan and serves on the Board of

for expanding FOIA laws, Calley said that it's not at the top of constituents' minds.

"It's just that as long as political people are responding to things that are higher on their list, those political people are [not going to] support FOIA and maintain support of the voter," Calley elaborated.

Those already subject to FOIA, such as Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, echo a similar sentiment.

"It's just amazing how every session of the legislature, they find some way to not apply FOIA to themselves," she said.

"There's something cultural here... if all you've ever known is 'these conversations are not made public,' 'these conversations are not exposed'... You get used to it, right?"

We had the opportunity to meet with Attorney General Nessel and State Operations Division Chief Jessica McGiveny to talk about the process agencies have to go through to respond to requests. Notably, Nessel described the effect of high numbers of FOIA requests pouring into her office. While long waiting times and high fees have been a point of contention with Michigan's FOIA process, Nessel explained that they prioritize making sure necessary redactions—personal phone numbers, addresses, social security numbers, etc.—are made.

While these kinds of redactions are required by law, Nessel also has personal experience being doxxed by a FOIA request that has made her extra cautious. In her time as a Wayne County prosecutor, Nessel claimed that a FOIA request ended in her personal information being exposed to the public.

"I was really upset about that, and that's why I take it so seriously," she said.

Four other student journalists were chosen for this opportunity: Blace Carpenter, managing editor

for Central Michigan University's (CMU) *CMLife*; Lee Marenette, news editor for Grand Valley State University's (GVSU) *Lanthorn*; Ameera Salman, news editor for Eastern Michigan University's (EMU) *Eastern Echo*; and Lilly Kujawski, managing editor for the *Eastern Echo*. I was able to learn about the challenges that come with managing larger university newspapers, while also finding common ground on some challenges. My biggest takeaways from my trip to Lansing came from watching the confidence and expertise of the other student journalists. Watching how they adapted to every situation was inspiring and gave me motivation to improve my own work.

I want to thank the MPA: specifically Lisa McGraw, MPA's public policy manager; and James Tarrant; MPA's executive director, for supporting student journalism and accompanying us during our time in Lansing. I also would like to thank David Clark from the *Midland Daily News* for being our mentor.



Photo Courtesy of David Clark

Trustees of Oakland University, has always favored increased transparency.

"You know, we have a democratic republic, and that means we elect people to represent the people, and how do we ensure that representation is happening? Transparency is really the main way," Calley said, "Outcomes tend to be more transparent than the process to get to those outcomes. The process matters because the means don't always justify the ends."

Throughout his political career, Calley aspired to be voluntarily transparent. Notably, towards the end of Snyder's and Calley's time in the governor's office (2011-2018), they voluntarily released more than 270 pages of emails relating to the governor's correspondence during the Flint water crisis. This precedent, however, existed even at the beginning of Calley's time as a state representative, where he voluntarily chose the seat closest to the press booth.

"From my first day on the floor of the House of Representatives, I started a trusting relationship where I saw the benefit of communication with the media," Calley explained, "As an elected official, it was a way to amplify the work that I had. If I expected my work to be amplified by the media, it required a trusting reciprocal relationship."

Although there is evidence of high support among citizens

Sean Dobbins Shows Us The World We Know

Sydney Boettcher
Staff Writer

On Nov. 1, jazz
drummer Sean Dobbins

graced The Alluvion with the performance of the year. He played alongside his band, The Sean Dobbins Ensemble. This show was part of their "The World We Know!" series, where they perform the titular project front to back.

The Ensemble featured Dobbins on drums, Athena Johnson on vocals, Dwight Adams on trumpet, Andrew Bishop on saxophone, Rick Roe on piano, and Christian Dillingham on stand-up bass.

The first song, 'Freedom Day', was an energetic start to the evening. Johnson's soaring vocals, Adam's erratic trumpet playing, and let us not forget the rhythm section; Dillingham provided a rock-solid foundation for the rest of the band's flashier parts.

Before every song, Johnson would give a small speech about the purpose and inspiration behind each piece. 'Freedom Day' was written to "depict the excitement, skepticism, and uncertainty that the slave felt as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation."

It absolutely captured that frantic energy. Excitement and fear are already very similar emotions, and 'Freedom Day' toes that line masterfully, wholly encompassing the emotional rollercoaster.

The second song was the title track, 'The World We Know', and it ushered us into a calmer listening experience. It was much more soothing than the first song, and it had a warm sound to it. It had a really nice swing to it, as well.

The third song was called 'Dare to Dream', and was about the importance of the inner child: "It takes dreams, visions, and bravery for a person to embrace their true meaning of self and understand how they can impact and change the world."

'Dare to Dream' was joyous and full of energy, like an excited bouncing child. It was so hopeful, I was invigorated just hearing it. It also doesn't hurt that it had a sensational walking bassline. It walked me up and down the block like a dog, and I couldn't be happier about it.

After the emotional highs of 'Dare to Dream', the band brought us back down to Earth with 'A Mother's Cry... A Father's Tear' (which I will just be calling 'A Mother's Cry' for brevity's sake). 'A Mother's Cry' was inspired by

John Coltrane's 'Alabama', which was itself inspired by the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing on Sep. 15, 1963, that killed four young African-American girls: Addie Mae Collins (14), Cynthia Wesley (14), and Carol Denise McNair (11).

"Today, senseless violence continues to be a major problem in our world," Johnson said as Dobbins started up the intro to 'A Mother's Cry'. "We are all caught in this web of destruction, and it is time that we come together."

'A Mother's Cry' was slow, contemplative, and deeply pained. The composition left plenty of space for the audience to stew in their own thoughts on the acts of violence that inspired it. It was a powerful performance that sent chills down my spine.

The fifth song, 'The Village Speaks', was much lighter than 'A Mother's Cry'. Inspired by the African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child," 'The Village Speaks' advocates for stronger communal bonds and a warm, friendly environment for children to grow up in. "Today, more than ever, we must find a way to get past our differences and remember that each of us has a responsibility to all of our children. If the Village could speak, what would it say?"

That is the message and the question at the core of this song. Have we reached this platitude? If we do, what will it feel like? 'The Village Speaks' was a nice pick-me-up after the sorrow of 'A Mother's Cry.' Its intro was a bombastic and booming drum solo from Dobbins that slowly lowered in intensity to a performance so subtle, you could hear Dobbins whispering the drum beats to himself under his breath. It was hypnotic. Once the rest of the band joined in, that warm, friendly environment I mentioned earlier blossomed from the music. It was beautiful.

The next song continued this theme of connectivity. 'Generations' asked the audience to break through the time that divides us, to step over the generational gap and come together. It was friendly and upbeat; it felt like walking through a neighborhood where everybody knows and likes everybody else.

The seventh song, 'In Memory Of,' was one of my favorites. A tribute to all the friends, family, and loved ones we've lost. It was a song of grieving, but also of celebration.

There was genuine happiness in the performance. My favorite part was that the lyrics of the song recognize that one day, we too will be nothing but memories, and that we'd also like to be celebrated by the people we leave behind. I wonder who the performers think of when they play this one.

After a short speech from Dobbins, the band played the eighth and final song, 'The Wind.' Another standout composition, in my opinion. It was so lively and positive, it made me want to get up and dance. I feel that it was the simplest song they performed that evening, and that is by no means a bad thing. It did everything it needed to, and I got everything I wanted out of it.

It was an incredible show. Everyone involved gave 110% that night, but I'd like to bring special attention to Dillingham. His bass was always on point, and while I might be a little biased (as a bassist myself), I strongly feel that it is one of the most important positions in any band.

This concert was cinematic; it felt like listening to a movie. It was thematically dense, with themes of community, love, and healing. I can safely count it amongst my favorite concerts I've seen this year. If the Sean Dobbins Ensemble is ever back in town, I implore you to buy tickets; musical experiences like this are few and far between.



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