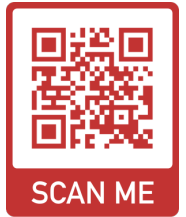




## Solar eclipse

Crowds gather at park, on campus  
to witness natural occurrence

Pages 6-7



## Author hosts book signing, presentation on campus

**Ashley Atkins**  
Assistant Editor

Indigenous Nancy Drew meets “21 Jump Street” is how award-winning author Angeline Boulley described her main character Daunis Fontaine in “Firekeeper’s Daughter” on March 19 during a small program in the afternoon before taking the stage later that evening.

Boulley came to MCCC as the main event for the One Book, One Community program, and during her afternoon presentation she spoke about her writing process and how she created the plots for her books.

She was introduced by faculty specialist and tutor Barbara Mauter who spoke a few words in Anishinaabe, Boulley’s Native language.

The smaller afternoon group included a few MCCC faculty, writing fellows, and Agora staff giving them the opportunity to sit down with Boulley and listen to the journey she went through publishing her first novel.

“When the manuscript went out for submission we had a list of 22 editors from different publishing companies,” Boulley said. “Twelve were interested, so I had phone calls with each one.”

Boulley said she was 18 when she first thought of the premise of her book and started writing down ideas for it.

It wasn’t until she was 44 when she decided to write a draft of the book and see if anyone thought it was good enough to be published.

“It took 10 years to finish a draft I felt comfortable enough to get published,” Boulley said.

Boulley explained how she used her own experience of growing up with a Native American father and a non-native mother to draw out her character’s feelings of conflict about where she belonged.

She said she had an earlier draft that detailed tribal rituals, but over time she started questioning whether she should be adding such details.

“I thought to myself, ‘Should I be sharing all this about ceremony?’” she said. “Then I realized just because I know it, doesn’t mean



Photo by Reese Bowling

From left, Angeline Boulley, author of “Firekeeper’s Daughter,” signs books for writing fellows Brooklyn Kayson and Autumn West at a book signing and presentation held March 19 in the Z Building.

I have to prove it.”

Out of respect for her tribe, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Boulley created a fictitious tribe, Bear Clan, for her character Daunis. It allowed her to insert rituals and beliefs that she had been taught, but also allowed her the freedom to add in elements that were not part of her tribe’s belief system.

During the presentation, Boulley pointed out that her master’s degree was in public administration. She said she had always wanted to write this story because she had a passion for writing, but it wasn’t until later in life she really focused on it.

“In hindsight, I’m glad that I didn’t because the career I did have ended up shaping the sto-

ry and served me better than a creative writing degree would have,” Boulley said.

Boulley encouraged writers to continue to pursue their craft and never give up on their passions. She left time for audience questions and to speak with her individually after the presentation.

See **Boulley** on page 12

# Newsroom rights violated in careless act of ‘concern’

Our editor sits, crying alone, hidden in the privacy of the newsroom on an almost empty Friday morning.

It was Friday, March 22. Maggie Sandefur had a particularly harsh morning and was hoping for some peace and quiet away from the world.

The door to the newsroom opens and she’s suddenly in the view of two uninvited guests: Gerald McCarty, dean of student services, and Richard Morin, security.

“Sorry to interrupt,” McCarty said as he made a beeline toward one of two whiteboards, and Maggie wiped her tears away, now more shocked and confused than sad.

She waited a few minutes, silence eating away at her as they stared at crude, almost elementary drawings on the whiteboard.

Finally, she spoke up, asking if there was an issue, and McCarty answered nonchalantly by saying they were just checking things out. After a few more minutes, both McCarty and Morin wheeled the whiteboard away with no other explanation.

She immediately called our adviser, Matthew Bird-Meyer, and explained the situation. He had no knowledge of why McCarty and Morin decided to show up unannounced and take a whiteboard without warning.

Bird-Meyer then chased the two



**Mick Valentino**  
Agora Staff

down, and after a while, the board was brought back into the newsroom by McCarty.

Only then did he explain to Maggie why he took the whiteboard: Morin, who was lurking in the newsroom at some point after hours, saw drawings on the board including phrases such as “slay,” “I’m dead inside” that was signed by who wrote it and “I’m going to perish.” Morin then went to McCarty with his “worries.”

He was concerned about student safety, he explained to the student he walked in on, crying alone.

Concerned enough to barge in and ignore the tears of frustration and exhaustion coming from a student who had purposely hid themselves away?

The concern, if there was true concern at all, was mishandled and sloppy.

If there was a true concern, a simple question to the crying student would’ve gone a long way.

If there was a true concern, a conversation with Bird-Meyer, the man who works with these students with the supposed safety issues, would’ve been a reasonable action to take. To bypass the man who knows these students best is both unprofessional and offensive.

But that’s if there was a true concern.

There should have been a concern surrounding the way this was all handled. A concern about the invasion of privacy. A concern about the violation of the first amendment.

I contacted two student press organizations, Student Press Law Center and Student Press Freedom Initiative, about this situation.

“Newsrooms are constitutionally protected spaces and they need to respect that,” said Mike Hiestand, a media law attorney.

Another attorney, Lindsie Rank, said that this act was violative of the First Amendment.

Chief of Security Troy Cox, who I emailed to try and talk to about the whole situation, disagrees.

“You can go ahead and put “no response” from me. Just so we are clear, there was no violation of anything. Thank you and have a great day,” he responded.

A sassy and classy reply to an email looking for a professional answer.

The invasion left the newsroom on edge. Journalists are worried about writing on the board in fear that it would be taken again.

Paranoia crept in almost immediately after and I don’t think it’s entirely gone yet. I know this situation could’ve been handled a million different ways and all with a better

outcome than this. A bit of respect, communication and rationality could’ve changed everything.

The lack of true concern for everyone involved was apparent, as

well as offensive and disgusting.

If you’re so concerned for the safety of the students, maybe show a little compassion and act like it.

## Ballad of a teenage editor

**Maggie Sandefur**  
Agora Editor

Becoming a newspaper editor had been a dream of mine since age 15.

I had no understanding of journalism, but I had my sights set on writing for a paper and eventually becoming the boss.

Now, as a 17-year-old senior in high school, I’m nearing the end of my first semester as Agora editor.

Stepping into such a big position as a teenager has been so rewarding. I’ve gotten chances I never would’ve imagined if I hadn’t joined the paper.

At the same time, it’s also incredibly intimidating and to be truthful, difficult.

While I get to meet other student journalists at conferences and share experiences with them, I worry about how they’ll perceive my age.

I get great experience in journalism and being a boss since I’m running the newsroom, but there’s also a strong awareness that I am younger than everyone, with a staff of ages 20-52.

It’s also a lot of work. Between the four college classes I’m in, the two high school classes I go to and my outside job, there’s a lot to manage. I’ve had many nights where I complete assignments minutes before they’re due. I even completed a high school assignment at 11:30 p.m. in Chinatown with my phone at 2%.

I’ve also gone out with friends and simultaneously edited papers or helped my staff with their assignments, whether from a restaurant, a store or even a car. I try to create a good balance between my teenage and work life, but they don’t always go together well.

I knew what I was getting myself into when I applied to the Middle College. I had already been told how much work it would be, how hard I’d have to study and the lev-



el of maturity I’d need. However, I had no clue this is where I’d end up.

More often than not, I find myself forgetting I’m still in high school. I’ll always be mentally aware of my age and I’m part of a few clubs, but I neglect the thought of doing “normal” high school things since mine is so unconventional. When we do have events like spirit week, it feels almost unreal to remember that at the end of the day, I’m just a high school student who got lucky enough to fit into a space with a ragtag group of adults who love to write about the news.

It can be hard to remember where I came from when I’m always holed up in the newsroom. Even during high school, I have to think about which story needs to be published next.

Despite all the stress, caffeine and anxiety, being a teenage editor has been the greatest chance of my life so far. I’ve known this group less than a year, but wholeheartedly consider everyone family. Growing up I always wanted a conventional friend group like the ones you see in coming of age films, but I think I’m perfectly content with the one I ended up in.

## The Agora

### Editors

Maggie Sandefur  
Ashley Atkins

### Staff

Mick Valentino  
Destiny Gallina  
David Topolewski

Reese Bowling  
Sidney Robison  
Jamie Hunt

### Adviser

Matthew Bird-Meyer

### Editorial Policy

The Agora is published by the students of Monroe County Community College, 1555 S. Raisinville Rd., Monroe, MI, 48161. The editorial office is located in Room 213 of the Campbell Building.

**Submissions:** The Agora encourages submissions by anyone in the college community, including freelance articles, opinion columns or letters to the editor. All submissions must include a name, address and phone number for verification purposes. The Agora reserves the right to edit for clarity, accuracy, length and libel.

The Agora is a student-managed newspaper that supports a free student press. It is a member of the Michigan Community College Press Association, the Michigan Press Association, College Media Association, Associated Collegiate Press and the Student Press Law Center.

Story suggestions are welcome. Let us know what you would like to see in the Agora - it’s your newspaper. Email submissions to [agora@monroeccc.edu](mailto:agora@monroeccc.edu).

# Bathroom discussion between students, administrators continues

**Jamie Hunt**  
Agora Staff

The discussion about bathroom safety at MCCC between administrators, students and the Gender & Sexuality Alliance continued on March 25, marking it the third Board of Trustees meeting in a row.

The GSA continued to advocate for the safety and comfort of students when using public restrooms on campus, and several students spoke out about concerns they had with MCCC administration addressing the ongoing issue.

MCCC student Elizabeth Bradley spoke on behalf of the GSA regarding the club meeting they had with MCCC President Kojo Quartey.

“Communication and understanding are the only way that we are gonna get through this,” Bradley said.

One community member, Tom Heck, said the MCCC administration lacks transparency when it comes to the inclusive restroom policy.

“My perception and that of most of the parents that I’ve spoken to is that these decisions have been made in backroom deals involving a very small group of students, two or three activist instructors,” Heck said. “And for some unknown reason the administration of the MCCC foundation.”

MCCC is legally obligated to allow students to use the restroom that correlates with their gender identity. Following Heck’s statement, student Sam Francis spoke out concerning a personal story Quartey shared during the meeting on Feb. 26.

Quartey had recalled his time at Mississippi State University where he had been a part of one of the few Black fraternities on campus, being one of the first to have a house on fraternity row. He described how his fraternity had been greeted with discrimination and harassment repeatedly until they decided to leave.

“Y’know how we resolved that issue? For our safety, for our peace of mind and our sanity, we moved,” Quartey said. “We had every right to be on fraternity row, but we moved.”

Francis expressed that the message of the story was confusing since it was a response to the harassment transgender students were facing on campus. Francis said students interpreted this message as Quartey recommended moving as a solution to the harassment happening at MCCC.

“Dr. Quartey believes us students have misinterpreted his statement, my peers and I are confused as to how to correctly interpret his story of facing injustice in which the ultimate solution was moving,” Francis said. “We will not move.”



MCCC student Elizabeth Bradley speaks at the March 25 Board of Trustees meeting.

Photo by Jamie Hunt.

Other students, Jay Schumacher and Spencer Lyke, pointed out how the college had invited a transgender speaker by the name of Jamie O’Brien to campus.

O’Brien had been scheduled to speak on the transgender experience the same day and time as a scheduled GSA meeting would be taking place only a few doors down.

Schumacher then pointed out that the GSA was not included in scheduling a speaker for this event, and O’Brien had views on transgender conformity that were opposite of the views the GSA holds.

“Just because a person is transgender doesn’t mean they cannot have harmful views on trans and gender non-conforming communities,” Schumacher said. The event ended up being canceled before the speaker could visit.

Lyke shared the perspective of intersex students attending MCCC with the limited number of unisex restrooms on campus.

“I won’t limit myself to a single restroom just because people are uncomfortable with my existence,” Lyke said. “Especially when those restrooms aren’t available in most public spaces.”

Lyke said the unisex bathrooms at MCCC are a Band-Aid to the larger issue of student harassment that has not been taken seriously by the administration.

It was also expressed that due to varying reasons, not all GSA members are willing to attend the meeting with Quartey out of concern for their safety. The GSA believes a third-party mediator would be beneficial to both parties.

Bradley reiterated that with all the opposing views, it would take communication to solve this issue.

“I really would like to see more transparency,” Bradley said.

Chair Aaron Mason said when there is a divide on policy and opinions are far from agreement, following the law is the best course to follow.

“If there’s something out there like that, that you can point to that most people can agree on,” Mason said. “Well, that is the law so let’s at least agree on that and then you solve a problem a little bit more broadly based on that.”

Mason continued to stress that the administration’s support for trans students wasn’t solely due to the Elliot-Larsen Act and that Quartey is navigating these issues along with staff.

“I just wanna say and I wanna be very clear about this and I’ve said this and I know it’s just words but LGBTQ+ rights are human rights, period,” Quartey said.

# Agora staff attends CMA conference in New York City



Photo by Matthew Bird-Meyer

From left, David Topolewski, Ashley Atkins, Sidney Robison, Maggie Sandefur, Mick Valentino and Destiny Gallina pose with the Agora's Apple Awards in New York City.

## Agora staff

The College Media Association held its spring convention in New York City this year and seven out of the eight Agora staff members along with their adviser Professor Matthew Bird-Meyer attended the convention. Here are some experiences of what we took away from the sessions and what we did during our free time.

### Editor Maggie Sandefur

This was my first time in New York and my first flight. I was intimidated going into it, especially since I'd only been to one journalism conference before, but I ended up having an incredible time. I absolutely adored being able to look out my window and see billboards lit up at all hours. When it came to the actual conference, I mostly attended leadership workshops that taught me a lot about being an editor. Getting to hear other experiences in news-

rooms either just like ours or totally different was very eye opening, and I have held that knowledge close to my heart every day since.

### Sidney Robison

The trip to New York was a fun and rewarding experience. Arriving at LaGuardia airport was a breeze. Although this is New York City we are talking about, the amount of cars and people that were outside was overwhelming. I'm very familiar with this airport, so I tried to lead everyone to the right area. We had ordered an Uber and then piled everyone inside. Our first day there was a chill day. We went to a Thai restaurant that night for dinner. After eating, we just wandered around Times Square looking at all the billboards, shops and people. New York City is known as "the city that never sleeps," so staying at a hotel right in the middle definitely proved that.

### Assistant Editor Ashley Atkins

We flew into LaGuardia airport on the evening of Wednesday, March 16. Our room looked directly over Times Square. The lights and sounds had the four girls on the trip jumping up and down with joy. I signed up for the first session of the convention, "Chicken Salad: Radical Redesign and Rewriting," because it sounded interesting ended up being my favorite session.

The speaker and convention director, Michael Koretzky, did an amazing job at not only keeping us awake after a long morning but also taught us some interesting ways to design the front page of our newspaper so we can catch the eye of our readers.

Koretzky showed how to take a boring headline and make it one that draws people in to read the story. I hope to apply his suggestions to the Agora newspaper and draw a larger audience to our platform.

### Destiny Gallina

It was a whirlwind of learning, networking, and exploring the concrete jungle. From staying in Times Square at the stunning Marriott Marquis to visiting the New York Times and witnessing the magic of Good Morning America, every

The Agora staff thanks the following for their help in supporting this trip: Student Government, The Foundation, and vice presidents Grace Yackee and Scott Behrens.

Also, thanks to all who came to the chili cookoff and purchased concessions at The Big Gig.

moment was filled with inspiration. We attended workshops where we learned information that would make us better journalists not only for our future but also in the newsroom. One workshop that stood out to me was "finding your broadcast voice". Finding your news voice is like finding your journalistic identity. Joining the Agora has been a total game changer for me. It opened me up to a whole new world and boosted my confidence. The opportunities that have come my way are mind blowing.

### David Topolewski

There was so much beauty and the scenery was too fascinating to care about the fact I had no idea how to get back to the hotel.

But it didn't matter, I was too locked into the unknown and the thrill of New York City.

In life, I think, we settle into what's comfortable, even if we're left thinking it might not be right out of a fear of getting lost. It's the moments in our life, the experiences we expose ourselves too that make us who we are.

Sometimes, it takes embracing the fear of the unknown to give us that opportunity. The last night of the trip offered a final chance, for now, to take in the unfamiliar city when the crew took a trip to Chinatown for dinner, at 9 p.m. which I originally declined to attend because, you know, who eats that late?

After changing my mind I took a walk through Chinatown, which was lit by the decorations that hung over the streets and then a trot through little Italy added the gorgeous scenery before making the way back to the hotel.



Photo by Ashley Atkins

## Student newspaper wins national, state awards

Matthew Bird-Meyer  
Agora Adviser

The Agora, MCCC's student newspaper, earned 17 awards, including three first-place finishes, across four different nationwide and statewide contests this school year.

The collection of awards also includes three organizational or "best of" honors. Lexi Greenwood took third place as the state's Best Photographer in the Michigan Press Association's College Better Newspaper Contest. This was an "open call" category where students from all two-year and four-year schools competed against one another.

Will Johnson earned an honorable mention as Best Writer in Division 3 for two-year schools or newspapers that publish less than weekly in the MPA contest. And the Agora earned an honorable mention as the Best College Media Group of the Year in the College Media Association's Pinnacle Awards competition.

The Agora took first place for investigative reporting. David Topolewski and Megan Kane shared this award in the MPA contest. Layla Pavlick took first place in the College Media Association's Apple Awards for best crisis coverage. Finally, Chris Morgan took first place for headline writing in the Michigan Community College Press Association contest.

The Pinnacle Awards were announced in October during the CMA/ACP national conference in Atlanta. The MPA awards were announced March 14, followed by the

Apple Awards March 16 during the CMA national conference in New York City. And the MCCPA awards were announced April 6 at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant.

The Agora also collected the following awards in the CMA Pinnacle Awards contest:

- Third place: Best feature photo, Lexi Greenwood
- Third place: Best breaking news story, Will Johnson
- Third place: Best video entertainment program, Agora staff
- HM: Best magazine cover, Tyler Pennington
- HM: Best headline, Chris Morgan

The Agora also collected the following awards in the Michigan Community College Press Association contest:

- Second place: Personality profile, Ashley Atkins
- Second place: Original cartoon – editorial, Ashley Atkins
- Third place: News photo, Will Johnson
- HM: Video production/online audio slideshow production, Agora staff

The Agora also collected the following awards in the Apple Awards contest:

- Second place: Best opinion column, Mick Valentino
- Second place: Best news website, Agora staff.



Photo by Mick Valentino

Workers near parking lot 3 advance on the lightpole installation and replacement project in collaboration with DTE's Community Lighting Program.

## DTE partners with MCCC on new light fixtures

Mick Valentino  
Agora Staff

MCCC has partnered with DTE and their Community Lighting Program on a project to replace and/or install new lighting fixtures on campus with new LED alternatives.

"The majority of the existing light poles were replaced, but there were some that we reused, however with those new heads were installed," Jack Burns, director of campus and planning facilities, said in an email.

The project, which was started in January 2024, will have replaced and or installed 222 new lighting fixtures throughout the parking lot, drive and sidewalk by the end of April 2024.

The total cost of the project is more than \$383,000, but DTE agreed to pay over 60% of that price, meaning DTE will pay more than \$247,000.

"We will pay an annual fee for the program of \$68,798.39 which again includes not only maintenance and upkeep, but also the usage as all the new lighting will be on a separate electrical meter than the rest of campus," Burns said.

DTE will also be paying the taxes.

"Another noteworthy financial aspect of this project is that since all of the site lighting belongs to DTE they will pay the taxes on the equipment in a cash disbursement to Monroe Charter Township, which is the jurisdiction in which Main Campus lies," Burns said.

Burns said a majority of the lighting on campus was from when the college first opened in 1967, so spare parts were nearly impossible to acquire.

"In fact a few years ago when campus was hit by a severe thunderstorm hail from that event completely destroyed nearly 30 of the sidewalk globes, and we were lucky to find some replacements on eBay that were sitting on a shelf at an electrical supply company in Nebraska," Burns said. "This was very fortunate for us as those globes were discontinued by the manufacturer over 20 years ago."

Besides the light poles being outdated, Burns said they were also rusted out and failing at the base, which led to problems whenever routine or emergency maintenance had to be performed. Along with that, adapters had to be installed whenever a lamp bulb went out to make them work with their modern

replacements, Burns said.

This project, along with the campus-wide geothermal HVAC system, is a push to move MCCC toward a more net zero carbon operation.

Currently, the annual amount of electricity used for site lighting totaled 166,301 kilowatt hours (kw/h). Upon completion of the project, the numbers are anticipated to drop to 93,292 kw/h, which is a 43.9% decrease.

"Unless you are an engineer that won't mean much to you, so using the EPA's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator our anticipated annual reduction is the same as avoiding 130,462 miles driven by the average gas-powered vehicle, or powering 10.1 U.S. homes per year, or saving 59.6 acres of forests from being cut down," Burns said.

Additionally, the usage of LED lights will decrease the amount of light pollution, which is better for the local plants and nocturnal animals.

Burns said this project was not a Board of Trustees matter, but a matter for the legal counsel and signed by Curtis Creagh, vice president of finance and administration, and/or President Kojo Quartey.

# Agora

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# Total solar eclipse mesmerizes world

## Crowds flock to Ohio for solar eclipse encounter



Photo by Ashley Atkins

From left, sisters Vanessa and Phyllis Anderson drove from Rochelle, Virginia, to spend the eclipse together as a repeat trip. The two traveled and watched the 2017 eclipse and decided they wanted to watch 2024's in Ohio.



Photo by Anna Muth

From left, MCCC students Brianna Pilz and Joshua Marimpietri wait for the eclipse and admire the sun in the meantime.



Photo by Anna Muth

From left, students Cynthia Plummer, Autumn West and Brooklyn Kayson watch the solar eclipse.



Photo by Mick Valentino

Destiny Gallina, left, Agora reporter, interviews a group of college students who traveled from Illinois, from a town an hour away north of Chicago to watch the solar eclipse.

**Destiny Gallina**  
Agora Staff

Humanity stood together to witness the timeless dance of the sun and moon in a historic solar eclipse. A once in a lifetime moment.

The Agora ventured out to East Harbor State Park just North of Sandusky, Ohio, to witness a solar eclipse. We observed the event firsthand and interviewed people who traveled from all corners of the globe to witness this breathtaking phenomenon.

"I'm excited about the eclipse because it's something that has awed civilization since the beginning of time,"

Eric Witt said.

Witt traveled from Troy, Michigan with his girlfriend Calan Covill and their cat.

"I'm most excited to see the totality," Covill said.

As the moon gradually unveiled the sun, revealing the breathtaking totality, a symphony of gasps erupted from the crowd. Hushed anticipation fell over the crowd gathered on East Harbor Beach.

As the moon cast its shadow, the sky darkened to an eerie black, silencing the daytime chorus of birds and

bringing out the nocturnal insects. In that profound silence, only the sound of nature's nighttime symphony could be heard.

It was a moment that felt like it stood still, we were reminded of our place on this vast expanse of the universe.

The eclipse experience not only mesmerized us but also bound us together as classmates and friends. In the shared silence, surrounded by the awe-inspiring spectacle, we felt a profound sense of unity and closeness, forging memories that will forever bond us as a class.

*"I'm excited about the eclipse because it's something that has awed civilization since the beginning of time."*

**Eric Witt**  
Troy, Michigan



Photo by Mick Valentino

From left, Destiny Gallina, Agora reporter, interviews Calan Covill and Erik Witt.



Photo by Mick Valentino

A couple sits at a picnic table in East Harbor State Park watching the solar eclipse.



Photo by Mick Valentino

Destiny Gallina feeds a kitten who was there to watch its first solar eclipse.

# GSA hosts annual Pride Party in Cellar

## Students, community, alumni join together to celebrate pride

**Destiny Gallina and David Topolewski**  
Agora Staff

Nearly 20 people attended the annual pride event hosted by MCCC's Gender & Sexuality Alliance group, located in the S Building Cellar April 12.

The pride event, which the GSA has held since 2015, was described by co-adviser Melissa Grey as a welcoming place that allows members of the group to be themselves.

"This is a longtime tradition that connects us to many communities across time and different cultures," Grey said.

Grey said the Pride Party offers a safe place for the LGBTQ+ community where they can

play games, eat food and have the opportunity to meet new people.

2016 MCCC graduate Ian Leach, who was a member of GSA during his time at the college, attended the event, traveling from his home in New York City.

Leach said the Pride Party is a chance for the community to gather and celebrate one another in a welcoming manner.

"It's a real opportunity for queer people to feel seen and together," he said.

Leach said he is glad to see progress on campus.

"It's meaningful MCCC has changed to a space where this is possible," Leach said.



Photo by Maggie Sandefur

From left, Ian Leach, alum, talking with his partner Luke Urbain at the Pride Party.

# Title IX coordinators work to improve procedure

## Information, awareness training to be made available for more people on campus

**Maggie Sandefur**  
Agora Editor

Administrators at MCCC want to improve the Title IX process by providing better resources on campus.

Scott Behrens, vice president of enrollment and student success, works alongside Linda Torbet, executive director of human resources, as a Title IX coordinator.

Title IX, under the Department of Education, protects individuals from sex-based discrimination, as well as protection in cases of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking.

He said most institutions only have one coordinator, so although MCCC is ahead in

terms of having multiple coordinators, he would like to see more staff trained in properly handling complaints.

"I don't want to just meet the standard," Behrens said. "We've got to do better."

Behrens said there is a form online for people to fill out, but it is underutilized. He said this process formalizes everything and helps the person filing the complaint gather their information.

He said to his knowledge, nobody has used this form.

"The fact that no one's done that — completed that form — tells me we really need to do a lot more education," Behrens said.

Behrens said simply doing the required

training is not enough.

"I know of two cases right now where someone went to somewhere and it didn't get reported in a timely manner because they didn't realize that the responsibility — in spite of watching the video — that they had to get that information to us," Behrens said.

Behrens said the steps of the Title IX process include reaching out to the complainant, investigation, trial or something equivalent, remediation and documentation. He said the complainant can choose to control the confidentiality of the case, but it may impact the investigation.

He said he hopes to educate more people on Title IX complaints, how to make them and

where to go in the event of filing a report. This includes informational brochures and videos for new students to watch.

Behrens said he wants to build a team of at least five more people qualified to work with Title IX cases so they'll be easier to access through campus.

Behrens has been working as a coordinator for around a year and a half and Torbet said she has been Title IX coordinator for about eight years.

Torbet said the Title IX process is always evolving.

"Regulations continue to change," Torbet said in an email.

# Employee resigns following drug-related charge

**David Topolewski**  
Agora Staff

A former Upward Bound academic coordinator at MCCC has recently resigned after being charged with a drug-related offense.

Jeffrey Rubley II was arrested on March 16 by Canton Township Police and charged with delivery or manufacture of methamphetamine, a Class B felony. The charge carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison, according

to state law. He was also charged with driving or allowing someone to drive with a suspended or revoked license, a misdemeanor, according to the court records.

Joe Verkennes, director of marketing and communications at MCCC, confirmed in an email on April 10 that Rubley resigned from his position at the college.

The resignation comes several weeks after MCCC President Kojo Quartey sent a cam-

pus-wide email on March 20 stating that an unnamed employee had been placed on administrative leave.

Rubley stood mute and the court entered a not guilty plea at his arraignment March 17. A \$10,000 bond was set, according to the court records.

The case was bound over from the 35th District Court in Plymouth on April 5 to the 3rd Circuit Court in Detroit. His arraignment

is scheduled for April 26.

Rubley is being represented by attorney Deborah K. Schlusel.

Anthony Quinn, director of Upward Bound Programs at MCCC, said the college will begin its search for a replacement for Rubley's position soon.

"We plan to have the job (Academic Skills Coordinator) posted within the next couple of weeks," Quinn said in an email.

# Tuition increase approved at board meeting

**Jamie Hunt**

Agora Staff

The Board of Trustees approved a 4% tuition increase March 24.

The board voted to approve the increase with Nicole Goodman and Mary Kay Thayer voting against the measure.

Curtis Creagh's proposal offered different increase rates ranging from 3% to 5%, the board eventually agreeing that resident tuition will increase from \$124.54 to \$129.52 per billable contact hour while non resident stayed at \$221.26 per billable contact hour and out-of-state at \$246.48.

The rates initially offered were determined by the annual cost of attendance for resident and non resident students, as well as those attending from out-of-state, with Creagh recommending a 4.5% increase or \$130.25 per billable contact hour.

Mary Kay Thayer, trustee, followed his recommendation with her own and advocated for only a 3% increase.

"I'm really concerned with our students," she said, "and this is per billable contact hour, so you've got your nursing students and some of those with labs that is gonna make this ridiculous."

Affordability wasn't the only point Thayer referenced, believing the board needed to take location into account as well.

"I would like to see non resident and out-of-state be the same amount of tuition," Thayer said.

Krista Lambrix, vice chair, agreed with Thayer.

"In our clinical groups from the college, there's a lot of students that live north of Mon-

roe County," Lambrix said. "I think it's attractive to keep it the same. I would not continue to bump it, in fact I'd love to see it lower."

President Kojo Quartey thanked Thayer for her recommendation and proceeded to list several ways in which students could alleviate the stress of tuition.

"We had a presidents meeting last week and I think we all know that the governor has a recommendation now for free community college," Quartey said. "We also have the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, we have Reconnect 21+, and a host of other programs."

He said a majority of students don't take the opportunities offered to them, specifically the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, which he said amounts to almost free college, only saw 20 students who applied or received this scholarship for Fall 2023.

"We have scholarship money that goes unclaimed every year, so I think what we need to do here is to encourage students to apply for these scholarships," Quartey said.

Aaron Mason, chair of the board, said many events depend on the board defining the tuition rate for fall, conveying the importance of approving tuition rates during this meeting due to Fall 2024 enrollment being near.

Lynette Dowler, trustee, requested clarification on the governor's plan for free community college. Quartey said this plan had not yet been approved, but it has a high probability.

Dowler then inquired as to where MCCC stood in affordability in comparison to other community colleges within the state.

"We have worked very hard to be one of the most affordable community colleges in



Photo by Jamie Hunt.

The Board of Trustees passed a motion to increase in-county tuition rates by 4% during the March 25 meeting.

the state of Michigan," Dowler said. "I'm not necessarily opposed to a 4.5% increase but I am concerned if it starts to put us above others."

Creagh said this increase would leave MCCC as the 16th most affordable community college out of the 28 in Michigan, then moved on to discuss funding for the technology fees on account that HEERF, Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, had funded most of MCCC's software.

He reiterated his recommendation for a 4.5% increase in tuition, as well as increasing the technology fee by \$5 per billable contact hour and \$2 per non credit clock hour. Dow-

ler modified the motion and proposed a 4% increase in tuition across all residences, and technology fees being increased by \$4 per billable contact hour and \$2 per non credit clock hour which did not pass.

Lambrix then proposed a motion that resident tuition rates would be increased by 4% while both non resident and out-of-state tuition would see no change, adding that technology fees would be increased by \$4 for billable contact hours and \$2 for non credit clock hours.

This motion passed 5-2 with Goodman and Thayer voting against the motion.

## Faculty union president to step down this month, new president in place

**Sidney Robison**

Agora Staff

Mark Bergmooser, associate professor of communication, is stepping down after 17 years of dedicating his time as MCCC Faculty Association Union president.

Matthew Bird-Meyer, professor of humanities, was elected March 15 as the new union president.

Bergmooser has been a part of MCCC since 1996 and started working full time in 1999. He said he has always believed in the value of unions and organized labor.

While working full-time, Bergmooser ran for vice president of the union in 2007. The union president at the time was former faculty member John Holladay.

"He had been like a mentor to me and he

had a great reputation so I thought, 'This would be a great opportunity and I could learn a lot from him,'" Bergmooser said.

Bergmooser was the adviser for the Agora, the student newspaper at MCCC, for 12 years. He teaches four speech classes along with humanities and film and society classes.

"In addition, I do the martial arts courses here and I have a kickboxing and taekwondo credit class," Bergmooser said.

Bergmooser said over the years, at some point, every faculty member will need the union.

"When I started, everyone in the membership could need something as small as working out an office hours issue or a complaint against a student to more major things," Bergmooser said.

All of the union officers have a term of two years, so Bergmooser will be considered the "past president." He will still remain on the executive board for two years.

"The past president is being like an adviser. I'll be showing Matt the ropes and everything that I've learned over 17 years," Bergmooser said.

Bird-Meyer has been at MCCC since 2019 and is the adviser to the Agora.

When asked to take on this role, Bird-Meyer was hesitant and said there was a lot of convincing involved.

"I took on the role of vice president of member support for CMA and I just got off of being secretary for Faculty Council and I am busy teaching classes, attending conferences and running the Agora workshop, so there

was already a lot on my plate," Bird-Meyer said.

Bird-Meyer has no history with the union, so this is a new experience for him. He plans to bring a new perspective to the role of president as someone who is still relatively new to the area.

"This is my fifth year here but I came from Missouri, so I'm still kind of getting the lay of the land," Bird-Meyer said.

Advice wise, Bird-Meyer said Bergmooser should just take it easy and try not to work so hard now that he is no longer president.

Bergmooser advised Bird-Meyer to have patience in his new position.

"I'd say get all your facts because there's always more to the story and try to be patient and don't jump right on," Bergmooser said.



# Jump into a good book this summer

## Four fun-loving books to read on vacation this summer

**Sidney Robison**  
Agora Staff

As an avid reader, I enjoy reading in the summertime when I don't have school or have any work to worry about. I listen to music while I read, usually pop or country which helps me relax. I have a lot of free time in the summer, so that's when I can just sit on the porch outside and enjoy the sun shining down.

### Every Summer After by Carley Fortune

Persephone Fraser made the biggest mistake of her life a decade ago at Barry's Bay, the place where everything went wrong. She now lives in the city instead of on the lakeshore of her childhood house. Percy suddenly receives a phone call that sends her back to Barry's Bay and back to Sam Florek, who she fell in love with. Over the years, Sam and Percy have been inseparable until their friendship fell apart. Percy has to confront the decisions she made six summers ago.

I really enjoyed this book. It was fast paced and an easy read. The book switches between past and present which was interesting and you get to see what's happening from the character's perspectives. I liked the romance in this book, it wasn't overpowering the story line too much. Since the story took place on a lake, it gave me summer vibes and it felt like I was right there with Sam and Percy.

### Borrow My Heart by Kasie West

Wren likes to stick to her plan and has a list of rules when it comes to dating. While she's in a cafe, a cute boy named Asher walks in. Wren overhears a conversation with Asher and his friend, and she realizes that he's getting catfished by his online crush. Making an impulsive decision, Wren pretends to be Asher's "crush." As the two begin hanging out with each other, Wren keeps trying to find the right time to tell Asher she isn't who he thinks she is.

This book was an amazing read, so much so that I read it in one day. There was a smart twist in the middle which I didn't see coming. I related to Wren a lot because of her love for animals and the fact that she works at an animal shelter. Although there were some rocky times with Asher and Wren, they both talked it out and resolved their situation together. I felt like Asher and Wren really complimented

each other and they got along pretty well.

### The Summer Girl by Elle Kennedy

Cassie Soul hasn't spent summer in Avalon Bay in years. Suddenly, her grandma is going to sell the boardwalk that's been in the family for five decades. Cassie returns to the small beach town to spend time with family and maybe even have a summer fling. On her first night, she meets Tate Bartlett, who is a sailing instructor and the town's "favorite boy." He doesn't want to hurt Cassie, so he puts her in the friend-zone. Soon, he realizes that that isn't a good idea. As Cassie and Tate navigate between friends and lovers, some secrets come up and their relationship is put to the test.

I really enjoyed this book. During the first half, the story was kind of slow but after that, it started to pick up. Both Cassie and Tate have lots of chemistry and are honest with each other was something I liked reading. This really gave me summer vibes and I enjoyed all the summer games that they were participating in in the story and it felt like I was with the characters playing along.

### The Lost Bookshop by Evie Wood

Opaline, Martha and Henry have been side characters to their own lives. Opaline narrates this story in the past, where she works in a bookstore. In the present, Martha has escaped an abusive marriage and is trying to stand on her own feet by working as a housekeeper. Henry is a Ph.D. student who is obsessed with an old manuscript, and he's ready to do anything to find it. Connecting the two strangers is a missing bookshop. As Henry and Martha learn more about it, the bookshop seems to want to be found by them.

This was a very magical book. It had some heartbreak, romance, mystery and magic. There were lots of library references and different odes to literary figures. Each of the characters were very interesting to learn about. I really liked Martha and how she looks at life with a new perspective. She goes along with life and tries to find the best in every situation. Overall, this was a really great book and I loved all the magical and fantasy elements that Wood had to offer.



Photo by Sidney Robison

## Paranormal investigators haunt Monroe museum

**Reese Bowling**  
Agora staff

The Michigan Museum of Horror is haunted, and I have proof.

In October 2023, I started working with Andrew McGowan, a paranormal investigator who explores and films haunted locations, which he posts on his YouTube channel "Andrew's Paranormal Experience."

At 9 p.m. on Saturday, January 27, Andrew and I prepared to do a paranormal investigation at 44 S. Monroe St. The owner, Nate Thompson, gave us permission to stay in the building after hours.

It was almost immediately paranormal activity began. As soon as the lights and music from the jukebox were turned off, we heard tapping, knocking on the first floor and footsteps from upstairs. Andrew began using the Spirit Talker app on his phone.

The app allows users to detect EVPs (electronic voice phenomenon) and EMF (electric and magnetic fields) using digital voice recorders. We got responses such as "Bill," "Mike," "I was shot," "ridicule" and "am I really dead?"

On the main floor, Andrew conducted an Estes Method session in the Red Room, a space in the museum restricted to patrons 18 and older.

The primary objective of the Estes Method is to establish a two-way communication with spirits. Using the Necrophonic app, an app used to talk to spirits, a blind fold and noise-canceling headphones, I filmed Andrew sitting on the couch in the Red Room.

Andrew was unable to hear or see me as I sat directly across from him with a video camera. I asked questions and Andrew would repeat what he heard from the spirits.

When I asked, "What is your name?" Andrew instantly replied, "dead." I then asked, "Is that your name?" and Andrew quickly responded, "yeah."

After we finished Andrew's session, we took the Spirit Talker and walked to the second floor. When we reached the top of the stairs, we turned right and walked to the middle of the room. All of a sudden, a voice came through and said, "go



Photo courtesy of Reese Bowling

Paranormal investigators Reese Bowling, left, poses with Andrew McGowan.

left." When we turned left, we came face to face with three old Ouija boards. A few more voices came through before the Spirit Talker went silent.

After that, it was my turn to conduct the Estes Method. I sat in the middle of the museum's tarot room and put on the blind fold and headphones. Within a matter of seconds, I heard several disembodied voices coming through, all talking at once. Some of the voices said my name, my mom's name, "demon," "dead," "pray," "consume" and "leave him."

I was caught off guard when the names I heard were of people I have a personal connection with. After I finished my session, Andrew told me he kept hearing a disembodied voice talking to him that was not coming through the Necrophonic app.

We spent two hours investigating the museum and returned two weeks later for a second investigation. This time, there was more activity, including a battery-operated bear toy which was turned on and reciting a prayer and a bottle cap was thrown at me. We are currently planning on investigating the museum for a third time.

I'm not surprised we experienced so much activity at the museum. Before our investigation, Nate told me about some of his experiences and the woman in white that has been spotted in the attic.

If you're interested in checking out our investigation, you can subscribe to "Andrew's Paranormal Experience" on YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-suhNyKi9sE\\_AVHS\\_xX8Efg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-suhNyKi9sE_AVHS_xX8Efg).

## Agora Showcase Corner

**Ashley Atkins**  
Assistant Editor

I joined the Agora in the Fall semester of 2023 and began to share my passion with fellow students in the Agora by reading some of my poetry to them.

We began to publish a new poem in each zine issue we made last semester and paper issues we have put out this semester.

As we get closer to the end of the winter semester, we want to open up to our fellow MCCC Huskies and ask you to send us what you find passion in there are so much creative outlets to choose from.

We want to share with others that passion. Send us a picture, or document of what you would

like to showcase.

We will pick one person's passion to showcase for each issue we put out.

We will contact the individual and depending on what they are showcasing we may send a photographer to meet up with you to take pictures.

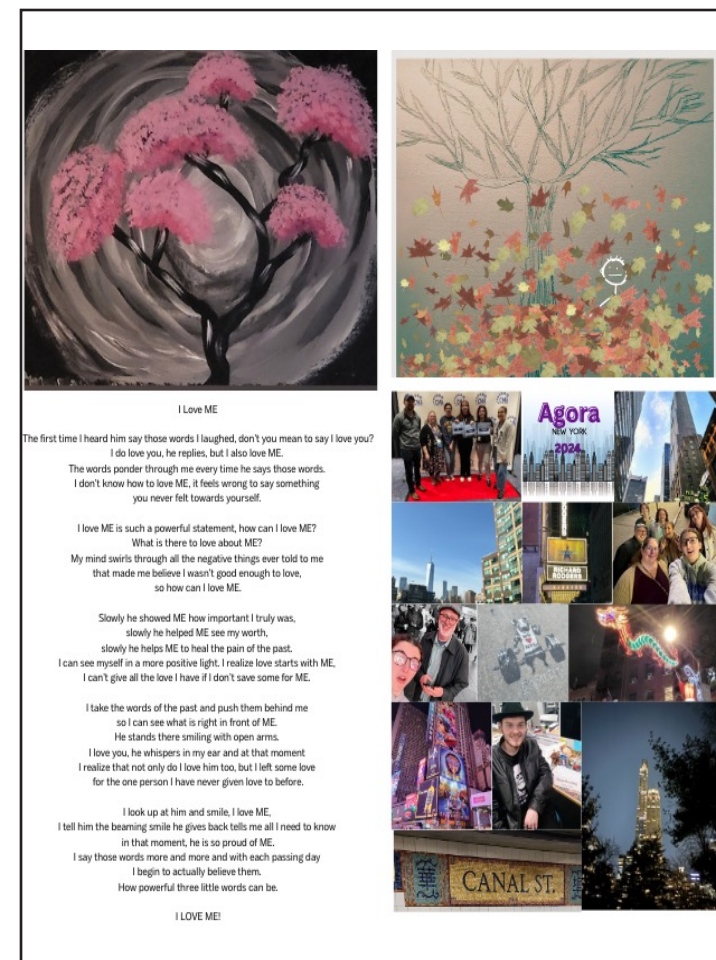
Please describe what you are sending us as well as the meaning behind it.

For instance, a poem, tell us the inspiration or what the poem represents. For artwork give us what inspired the piece.

Send entries to [agora@monroecccc.edu](mailto:agora@monroecccc.edu)

Subject: Creative Corner

Please add best email, phone number to reach you at.



I Love ME

The first time I heard him say those words I laughed, don't you mean to say I love you?  
I do love you, he replies, but I also love ME.

The words ponder through me every time he says those words.  
I don't know how to love ME, it feels wrong to say something  
you never felt towards yourself.

I love ME is such a powerful statement, how can I love ME?  
What is there to love about ME?  
My mind swirls through all the negative things ever told to me  
that made me believe I wasn't good enough to love,  
so how can I love ME.

Slowly he showed ME how important I truly was,  
slowly he helped ME see my worth,  
slowly he helps ME to heal the pain of the past.  
I can see myself in a more positive light, I realize love starts with ME,  
I can't give all the love I have if I don't save some for ME.

I take the words of the past and push them behind me  
so I can see what is right in front of ME.  
He stands there smiling with open arms.

I love you, he whispers in my ear and at that moment  
I realize that not only do I love him too, but I left some love  
for the one person I have never given love to before.

I look up at him and smile, I love ME,  
I tell him the beaming smile he gives back tells me all I need to know  
in that moment, he is so proud of ME.  
I say those words more and more and with each passing day  
I begin to actually believe them.  
How powerful three little words can be.

I LOVE ME!

By Ashley Atkins

Acrylic painting, top left, original poem, "I Love ME," bottom left, right top, hand-drawn illustration with graphic art, right bottom, picture graph.

## Author visits campus through One Book, One Community program

### BOULLEY: From page 1

She signed the books of all those in attendance who brought them. And some attendees had the opportunity to express what they loved about her book or her writing style, including writing fellows Brooklyn Kayson, Autumn West, Mia Sotelo and Gabby Forrester.

“Themes about Michigan added to the culture and history, making it a better than your average book,” Kayson said.

Though she was required to be there for her advanced writing class, Sotelo said she was glad she came to the presentation and she particularly enjoyed the book’s focus on Native American culture.

“She is doing an amazing job of showcasing native culture,” Sotelo said.

West said she enjoyed Daunis’ close relationship with her aunt in the book and how she gave her advice about love.

Forrester said Boulley’s book had messages that helped her cope with grief.

Boulley has a second book out that is not a continuation of Daunis Fontaine’s story, but takes the reader into the world of another character introduced in her first book.

This book is titled “Warrior Girl,” which Boulley describes as an Indigenous Girl meets Laura Croft.



Photo by Reese Bowling

From left, Angeline Boulley hands Gabby Forrester, writing fellow, a signed copy of her book “Firekeeper’s Daughter” during a book signing and presentation March 19.

## MCCC President Emeritus Ronald Campbell turns 99

### First president celebrates birthday with campus

Reese Bowling  
Agora Staff

Ronald Campbell, MCCC’s first president, celebrated his 99th birthday on campus.

Family, friends and former colleagues of Campbell’s were invited to a special reception at the La-Z-Boy Center atrium on March 12, his birthday.

Campbell attended the celebration with his son, Kevin, and daughter-in-law, Alice, who traveled from Illinois.

President Kojo Quartey welcomed guests before inviting everyone to sing “Happy Birthday.”

Looking at the candles on his cake, Campbell informed the crowd he was “66, not 99.”

After two attempts to blow out the flames, he looked at his guests and smiled.

“Thank you all for coming,” he said.

Quartey said Campbell was 39 when he assumed the role of president. At the time, the area was a cornfield and plans were being made to build the 210-acre campus.

MCCC opened on June 29, 1964, with Campbell at the helm. He retired in 1985 and is the college’s longest serving president to date.

“Seeing the college and all of the changes is very gratifying,” he said. “When we started, we weren’t thinking in the menu of growth. We were hoping we’d get a good start with good buildings, a good staff and hopefully, we’d be successful.”

The nonagenarian (a term for someone aged 90-99) shared the secret to his longevity.

“I didn’t drink or smoke,” Campbell said. “Even while I was in the service. It’s something I wasn’t interested in. I think that may have helped.”

Following the reception, Campbell and his family attended the Foundation at MCCC’s scholarship dinner at the H Building.



Photo by Reese Bowling

President Emeritus Ronald Campbell celebrates his 99th birthday at MCCC on March 12 in the La-Z-Boy atrium.