



## Board approves tuition increase for fall 2025

Tuition to raise by 3.71% ahead of upcoming semesters

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# Restroom signs torn off campus walls

Abby Carr  
Agora Staff

A survey conducted on campus early this year was a major factor in the recent removal of signs outside of the restrooms. Because of this, MCCC administration held a town hall meeting on April 10 from 12:30 to 1:30 in the Meyer Theater to address the results.

The survey, which featured questions about campus safety in regards to the restroom signs, was conducted in January and February, distributed via email and open to current students, faculty and staff, said Quri Wygonik, director of institutional effectiveness and chief data officer.

Wygonik said there were 381 survey respondents, 252 of which were current students, 45 were faculty, 79 were staff members, and five skipped this question. She said a one-time-only IP address safeguard was used in the survey tool to prevent the same device from being used to submit multiple responses.

Wygonik said the survey link was mistakenly distributed to all MCCC student email users, instead of only Winter 2025 students.

In an email sent to the whole college on March 21, Quartey informed the school of the decision to remove the signs outside the bathrooms on campus, and promised to expand the school's anti-bullying efforts.

The signs read, "You are welcome to use the restroom that best aligns with your gender identity," with the same message repeated beneath in braille. These were ordered in April 2024 after controversy with similar signs posted by the Gender & Sexuality Alliance. However, after the installation of these signs, yard signs appeared around the county that read "MCCC allows MEN in girls' bathrooms."

The town hall included presentations from President Kojo Quartey; Quri Wygonik, director of institutional effectiveness and chief data officer; Scott Behrens, vice president of enrollment management and student success; Gerald McCarty, dean of student services; and Joe Verkennes, director of marketing

and communications, about the current state of the college, executive orders, the college's recent climate survey, the results of the restroom sign survey, an update on the mental health task force and MCCC's strategic plan. It also featured questions from the audience.

Wygonik presented the findings of the restroom sign survey, including closed-ended responses and a thematic analysis of comments.

Quartey said in an interview there were conflicting messages regarding the restroom signs, so the survey was conducted to get concrete evidence of how people felt about them.

The results indicated the signs were not enhancing safety, he wrote in an email.

He said some people who took the survey felt the signs put a target on their backs, while others thought the signs were bringing attention to an issue that should be less public.

Wygonik gave the disclaimer that she was presenting as the college's researcher, and nothing that she said about the survey represented her personal opinions.

A question on the survey asked if the respondents felt the signs achieved the goals expressed by Quartey, she said. She said nearly 14.74% of respondents answered "not at all," about 22.63% answered "somewhat," about 42.11% said "very much" and 20.52% answered "not sure."

The next question asked respondents if they felt the signs had not met the goals to explain why not, she said. She said there were 119 responses. She said the redacted comments will be shared in the full report. According to the thematic analysis the fear of men in women's restrooms was a theme in 14 responses, she said. Other themes included that the real issue is bullying and it is not being appropriately addressed, the signs are creating issues, the signs are effective, the signs are divisive, they are only inclusive of one group, concern about opposite genders in restrooms, issue



Photo by Mick Valentino

(Above) President Kojo Quartey speaks at MCCC's town hall on April 10. The town hall was hosted to address various topics, including the removal of restroom signs. (Below) Signs in front of restrooms across campus have been torn from the walls following a survey.



Photo by Mick Valentino

See signs on page 3



# A journey after journalism

**Mick Valentino**  
Assistant Editor

The last three semesters here have been nothing short of a wild ride, and I hope that comes off endearingly. Every day in the newsroom I was met with something new, whether it was a person or a situation or idea. This newspaper has kept me on my toes in the best way possible and I'll miss that feeling.

It doesn't feel quite real writing this knowing I only have a month and some change left for this semester. Going from someone who was scared to join the Agora out of fear of rejection or not being good enough to the assistant editor has been nothing short of feeling like my own personal feel-good movie. I've grown, been forced to grow, and watched my staff grow from strangers to friends. I've made connections that I know will hold up well past college and into life years from now.

I think my favorite part of working on this paper, without sounding too egotistical, is the fact that I can really feel like I've made a difference. Writing opinion pieces and editorials about the issues on campus and knowing that they resonated with even just one person feels like a dream come true. Having professors or students come up to me to thank me for writing a particular piece would genuinely make my heart soar, and I can say with the most profound confidence that I will miss feeling like I've made a difference.

I'll miss the camaraderie that's been forged from determination and a small amount of spite. I'll miss the excitement of figuring out stories and who to give them to. I'll miss the trips and endless amount of time spent laugh-



ing with the crew.

Most of all, though, I'll miss seeing the friends I've made. As I write this, Maggie happens to be playing "Once in a Lifetime" by Talking Heads and it feels heartbreakingly perfect. There will be a day, and that day will be very soon, where I will not be able to look across the classroom and laugh with her about the music she's listening to. This profound sense of belonging I've found in this newsroom will come to an end, and I'm not very sure what I'll do with myself. I'll miss it here. I'll miss everyone involved. Feels good to be done, but God does it feel bad to leave it behind.

## The Agora

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### 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).

# Editor's note

**Maggie Sandefur**  
Agora Editor

As someone who has written more than I ever thought I would in the last four semesters, finding the words to describe leaving the Agora feels nearly impossible.

I started in Fall 2023, not even a week after my 17th birthday. I was a senior at the Middle College, and I'd been so shy that when it came time to assign our first stories, I wasn't even sure how to speak up. If I remember correctly, I was probably the quietest in the room, even though I'd been writing all my life and I was about to start as an editor of the MCMC yearbook.

Not even two months in, I was telling our adviser that I'd do whatever it took to get the editor position.

Now I'm 18, preparing to graduate from both high school and college. I'm finishing up coursework, planning a graduation party, and wrapping up one of my hardest semesters yet.

I've been an editor all four semesters of my time on the Agora, and if any of my past columns haven't said it enough: this newspaper has changed my life.

Being an editor is hard. It involves a lot of patience, hard work, long nights, dedication and commitment. That's not even including the writing, knowledge of journalism, understanding of technology, and interviewing skills you also need in the job.

But it's also so worth it. I've made best friends, traveled new places, laughed a lot, worked harder than ever, and I've learned lessons that are invaluable. Not only that, I've been given the chance to make a real impact.

It can be stressful, but it's all worth it when you get to work on award winning stories, or hear praise for a new piece you wrote. It's especially worth it when you get to hear fellow classmates or professors tell you that your editorials or columns are making an impact.

It's also extremely worth it when you get to take home awards. We got to take home four from the Apple Awards in New York City, then 13 from the MCCA conference up at Central Michigan University. Being able to not only make work we're proud of but also be rewarded for it is an incredible feeling.

Additionally, because of this newspaper, I've gotten opportunities like moderating MCCC's political forum in fall 2024, help-



ing MPACT run cameras at Christmas in Ida, and running a camera at the Philo Awards ceremony in October 2023 during a conference on campus. Without the Agora, I wouldn't have been granted these opportunities, which have greatly changed me.

There can be times where you feel lost, but it always ends up working in the end, which has kept me going for multiple semesters now.

At the end of the day, the stress and anxiety and confusion isn't all you remember after you've finished your time in a place like this - it's also the times you laughed, where you traveled, the people you met, the jokes you created, the music you listened to every class, the awards you won, the challenges you faced, the things you learned, the energy drinks you haphazardly consumed, even the donuts you ate at the start of an extremely long deadline. I think blueberry donuts will haunt me forever for that very reason.

Even though I'm excited to move on and pass the torch to someone else, I know it'll be emotional to go. I practically live in the newsroom, which any staff member can attest to. Knowing this is my last issue as editor is bittersweet, but also exciting in a weird way. I know this paper will be left in good hands.

Every time I try to end this piece, it feels tacky in some way, so I'll leave with this:

The Agora has been more than a newspaper to me - it's been family, one I know will last a lifetime, and no words can properly capture how grateful I am for that.



# Survey results in signage removal

## SIGNS: from page 1

was created by small group, there are laws against discrimination so the signs are unnecessary, and they are confusing, she said.

Another question asked what the respondents thought the college could do to achieve their goals, she said. Wygonik said a theme among 26 respondents was to remove the signs. Other themes included adding more single use gender neutral restrooms, more education on gender diversity, enforcing anti-bullying policies, keeping gendered restrooms, ignoring the community, encouraging the use of single-use restrooms, more education on the law and that Quartey should take a definitive stance on the restrooms, she said.

She said respondents were asked how much they thought the signs impacted campus safety. She said 38.1% said “not at all,” 24.6% said “somewhat,” 22.75% said “very much” and about 14.55% said “not sure.”

Respondents were asked to explain their answer to the previous question, she said. Many respondents (45) felt the signs increased the risk of men in women’s restrooms. Other themes include an outside group spreading misinformation about the issue (23), “people just want to use the restroom,” “signs make people feel safe,” “the community is angry,” “increase single-use restrooms,” “the signs will increase the risk of sexual or other assault,” “the signs do not affect safety” and “the signs will not affect assault,” she said.

Wygonik said MCCC’s conclusion from the survey is there is a major need for education on gender diversity; the law; anti-bullying, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment; their consequences and already existing safety measures.

Quartey said the results will be shared via email.

Quartey said the survey is not the only reason the signs were removed. Conversations with the Student Government and GSA clubs and three threat assessment meetings were also factors in the decision. He said threat assessment meetings are held when safety issues are detected on campus. They are meant to be proactive and preemptive, he said.

The president of Student Government, Alaina Mullins, said in an email that the conversation Quartey referred to was an informal one between him and some of the members.

Mullins said most Student Government officers pointed out that removing the signs would be unethical, and they said if the college removed the signs they should put a message on the MCCC website explaining

the state law.

Mullins said it was not a formal decision, nor was it presented to them by Quartey as a formal decision.

Student Government members are working on making a statement to the college, Mullins said.

One of GSA’s advisors, Melissa Grey, said in an email GSA leaders discussed gender diverse students’ mistreatment and intimidation from use of restrooms on campus prior to the signs’ installation with Quartey.

She said while the signs were up, some students felt more comfortable using the restrooms than others, but removing them does not make students safer.

“We need to confront and prevent mistreatment, harassment, and bullying, hold those accountable who engage in it, and provide education to prevent it,” Grey said.

Quartey wrote he and the executive staff will continue to support students and to abide by the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.

The act prohibits discrimination in various places in Michigan including educational institutions and in various situations dealing with topics including gender identity.

He said the signs had served their purpose by informing people and making them aware of the law; however, they were not making the campus any safer.

Quartey wrote, because people are concerned about bullying, harassment and discrimination, MCCC will create an anti-bullying campaign that goes beyond the bathrooms.

“The bottom line is that bullying, harassment, and discrimination will not be tolerated anywhere on our campus,” he wrote. This includes actions in restrooms and other spaces on campus; and communication among staff, faculty and students that is discriminatory or harmful.

He wrote MCCC’s support goes beyond the requirements of the law as they plan to “open sincere dialogues and work with experts to offer educational opportunities for our campus and our broader community.”

He said their focus is on educating more people about the law and gender identity issues and on reducing discrimination, harassment and bullying on campus.

“Discrimination, bullying and then harassment,” Quartey said, “There’s no place for that here in our institution. Absolutely not. We will not tolerate that. And that is the crux of our campaign at this point, for all the students, faculty and staff.”

He said bullying absolutely will not be tolerated and it will have consequences. Quar-



Photo by Mick Valentino

**Quri Wygonik, director of institutional effectiveness and chief data officer, presents the survey results at MCCC’s town hall on April 10. The survey was conducted following feedback on bathroom signage that was posted last year.**

tey said these consequences could include termination of employees and expulsion of students.

Quartey said the college plans to do seminars and workshops through HR as part of the anti-bullying campaign. There is one scheduled for May 7th over Zoom, which will be free. Sarah Lagnese and Michelle Blue will present the seminar, which will be about gender diversity and inclusion. Quartey said it was also held last year.

“Let’s ensure that students are getting a quality education in an environment that’s free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying,” Quartey said.

He said there are red signs currently being placed around campus in every restroom and in key locations. He said they not only inform, but give a solution with a number that can be called to reach safety services.

The red signs say, “MCCC does not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment. To ensure the safety and security of all individuals on this campus, we ask that anyone feeling unsafe, experiencing harassment or discrimination call or text Campus Safety at 734-735-9401. [QR code] SCAN here for the procedures for filing a complaint of illegal discrimination or sexual harassment.”

Jenna Bazzell, GSA’s other advisor, said in an email, “The College can and should post signs for students to report harassment, bullying, and mistreatment.” However, she said reporting such actions is voluntary and some students are uncomfortable or uncertain of the

identity of the perpetrator and therefore do not report it.

She said she would challenge anyone who has not experienced being discriminated against for using a public restroom to reflect on what that is like.

“The fact is we are all human,” Bazzell said.

Quartey said the signs previously outside the restrooms informed people of the policy in line with state law, but they did not enhance safety. He said the red signs will make the campus safer.

He said the red signs give a solution that the signs outside the restrooms didn’t: contact security if you are being harassed.

The red signs are meant to be a deterrent to discrimination and harassment, he said.

“We will have these signs all over,” he said, “and we are asking that anyone who feels bullied: report that so we can investigate that.”

He said the purpose of the college, which is to educate, enrich, inspire and motivate students to achieve is what needs to be focused on, not fighting internal and external battles.

“That’s why I love what I do so much,” Quartey said. “It’s making a difference in young peoples’ lives, but in the process we need to ensure that we are maintaining everyone’s humanity and dignity — everybody. Regardless of who you are, where you come from, what your race is, what your identity is, we need to maintain everyone’s humanity and dignity.”



# Lack of supervision leads to Cellar closing

**Abby Carr**  
Agora Staff

The Cellar, a student hangout area, has been closed since September due to safety concerns.

A yellow sheet of paper attached to the Cellar's door says, "The Cellar is closed until further notice. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. The office of Dr. Scott Behrens 9/25/24."

Prior to the coronavirus there was a student worker who supervised the Cellar, however, after the COVID-19, the Cellar stopped being used as much and student workers for the Cellar were no longer hired, said Scott Behrens, vice president of enrollment management and student success.

He said he chose to close the Cellar because, although there were not many, there were enough concerning complaints about inappropriate behavior.

Behrens said when making a decision regarding the cellar, he would consider whether or not he would want his own son or daughter there, as he himself has a 14 year-old daughter.

"If the answer is 'no' then it's just too much of a safety issue for me," Behrens said, "But yes, I want to open it up because I would want my child to be able to enjoy that space, but in a safe way."

He said room will be made in the new budget on July 1 to hire student workers so the Cellar can be reopened.

The student workers will be able to supervise the area, provide support for activities and manage equipment, he said.

"I value that as a space," Behrens said. "I want to make it available to students."

He said he wants to make sure that they "do it right" when they reopen the space.

Elizabeth Dyson, a 22-year-old MCCC student, said she used to hang out and study in the Cellar prior to its closure.

"I found it a few months before it closed, so I've been down there a few times," she said. "We used to just go down there and play pool or hang out between classes."

Meredith Johnson and Molly Crews, 18-year-old MCCC students, said they have never been to the Cellar but are interested in

visiting it.

"It's a great little place to go in between classes to, like, just hang out and relax when you have down time but don't have time to go home," Dyson said.

If a group wants to use the cellar before a student worker is hired, Behrens said they can contact him to work it out. He said he is glad to make it happen as long as he has advance notice.

He said if students want to inquire about using the Cellar before the student workers are hired, they are free to bring those issues to Student Government on Tuesdays at 12:30 in S-165.

# Board approves tuition increase

**Maggie Sandefur**  
Agora Editor

The Board of Trustees narrowly approved a 3.71% increase in tuition across the board during their meeting March 24, which includes in-county and out-of-county fees. The motion passed 3-2 and is scheduled to take effect fall 2025.

Curtis Creagh, vice president of Finance and Administration, presented a proposed 4.5% tuition increase. However, multiple board members were hesitant to approve this, and instead delegated the possibility of a 3.71% increase.

The 3.71% increase includes a total net tuition of \$566,594.75. This includes resident tuition, non-resident tuition, out-of-state tuition, as well as Lifelong Learning for the Fall, Winter and Summer 2025 semesters, according to a presentation from the board meeting.

For the Fall 2025 semester under the 3.71% increase, resident tuition would be \$134.33 per contact hour, non-resident tuition would be \$229.47 per contact hour, and out-of-state tuition would be \$255.62.

Current tuition rates for the summer 2025 semester are \$129.52 for in-county residents, \$221.26 for non-residents, and \$246.48 for out-of-state students.

Creagh said the recommendation was to go with the 4.5%.

Creagh agreed the 3.71% raise is essentially the same amount as the 4.5% raise, just with money dispersed differently.

If the board agreed to the 4.5% increase, resident tuition would have been \$135.35

per contact hour, non-resident tuition would have been \$231.22 per contact hour, and out-of-state tuition would have been \$257.57 per contact hour.

President Kojo Quartey said the 4.5% raise was the Governor's cap on tuition increase. This means they couldn't raise the amount above 4.5%.

Quartey said the intention was to raise it across the board and not just in certain areas.

Trustee Linda Roberts questioned if the 4.5% raise would be a good idea since the board is planning on putting the millage back on the ballot after it failed during the Nov. 5, 2024, election. A millage is a property tax.

Trustee Julie Edwards had concerns about going for the highest amount they could.

"I think all of us, as elected trustees, have to look out for the people that elected us and raising it to the top tier — honestly, it just does not feel good, and it's written all over my face," Edwards said. "You can all see it. I don't think that that's a wonderful idea."

Edwards said between the millage and technology fees, it seemed like a bad idea.

"So, we're asking for more and more, which does not feel good," she said.

Edwards also explained how she was concerned about MCCC's tuition being higher than that of neighboring schools, including Wayne County Community College.

However, Chair Aaron Mason said there was a different rate of dollars when talking about out of county, which is more expensive.

Josh Myers, executive director of The Foundation, said there could be an argument



Photo by Mick Valentino

**Trustees Mary Kay Thayer and Kristy Svatek-Whitson read over documents at the March 24 Board of Trustees meeting.**

made that the board should steadily increase tuition over time to prevent any future problems.

Myers said students should apply for scholarships, even if the tuition increase doesn't affect them as much as others.

Trustee Mary Kay Thayer said she would have felt more comfortable going with a 3.0% raise because of the similarities between the

3.71% and 4.5%.

"It's the same dollar," Thayer said.

Mason said he was not comfortable with the 4.5% increase either. He said the 3.71% was acceptable to him.

The motion passed with nays from Thayer and trustee Kristy Svatek-Whitson.



# Agora staff picks: summer favorites

## Agora Staff

With the semester coming to an end, we wanted to do another staff favorite section. This time, we decided to pick some of our favorite things about summer, from our favorite memories to our favorite songs.

### What is your favorite thing to do during the summer?

**Abby:** I really enjoy the freetime I have during summer to hang out with my friends. It's fun to go swimming with them.

**Dana F:** I love going to Cedar Point with my friends, going to various craft shows or comic cons.

**Dana W:** Being able to spend more time with my family and feel the sun on my skin longer.

**Maggie:** I absolutely love sitting on my porch and listening to music. Being able to people-watch and relax outside with some good tunes or a movie is my idea of a nice summer day.

**Mick:** My favorite thing to do is hike. If I could spend all day every day hiking in the summer, I would.

**Sidney:** My favorite thing to do during the summer is go swimming and read outside.

**Clark:** I like to get drinks with my friends, drive with my windows down blasting my favorite songs, and go to outdoor events like concerts, farmers markets, trade fairs and festivals!

**Eren:** I love mini-golfing, cat naps in the sun and walking through town with my friends.

**Reese:** I love swimming, riding my bike and spending time outside. This summer, I plan on having a lot of bonfires and having my girlfriend Mia over to sit outside and look at the moon and stars through my telescope.

### What is a song that gets you in the mood for summertime?

**Abby:** "Sunroof" by Nicky Youre and Dazy.

**Dana F:** "Chk Chk Boom (Festival Vers.)" by Stray Kids. It's my favorite song to blast while driving.

**Dana W:** "Feels like Summer" by Childish Gambino.

**Maggie:** I actually have a whole playlist of summer songs, but I would say "She Looks So Perfect" by 5 Seconds of Summer. They're

one of my favorite bands and it reminds me of summer as a kid, which is when the song first came out.

**Mick:** "This Must Be the Place" by Talking Heads. Listening to that while around a campfire or while driving in the middle of the night with my windows down makes life feel so much better. A happy song for a happy season.

**Sidney:** "I Love It" by Icona Pop ft. Charli XCX.

**Clark:** "Semi-Charmed Life" by Third Eye Blind.

**Eren:** "Kids In America" by Kim Wilde or the cover band The Muffs.

### If you could go on a summer road trip, where would you go?

**Abby:** I would go to Florida so I could visit Universal Orlando or Disney World for the first time. I would also love to swim in the ocean there, of course.

**Dana F:** I would go to Chicago or back to Nashville.

**Dana W:** A summer road trip for me would include traveling out West to see the stampedes of wild horses and visit a ranch or a historical town like Tombstone, Arizona.

**Maggie:** I'd like to go to one of the Carolinas. I went when I was a kid, but I was too little to remember anything.

**Mick:** Snoqualmie Falls in Washington. Not only would the sights be stunning, but Snoqualmie Falls were used for the opening scene in one of my favorite TV shows ever, "Twin Peaks." I could act like Dale Cooper. Solve a murder or two. Damn fine.

**Sidney:** I would go out West somewhere. I've always wanted to go to Colorado and Wyoming because of the scenery and nature. I want to check out Yellowstone National Park, definitely a bucket list place!

**Clark:** Maine, baby!

**Eren:** Probably Florida, I miss the beach in Siesta Keys.

**Reese:** I would love to go to Salem, Massachusetts. It would be so cool to see witch country while the weather is still warm.

### What is your favorite summer memory?

**Abby:** Last summer, at a church camp, I went zip lining with my friends and my sister. We planned ahead of time so we could all go together but it rained very hard shortly before the time we had scheduled. The camp has a

policy of shutting down the waterfront and zip line for a certain amount of time after the last lightning strike so we thought we wouldn't be able to go. We decided to walk to the zip line and check just in case they would let us go, and the exact right amount of time had passed so we were able to zip line after all.

**Dana F:** It would be going to Upheaval Fest in Grand Rapids in 2023. Bring Me The Horizon was playing. That weekend was so fun!

**Dana W:** I went to my grandfather's lake-house one summer to make enough memories to last a lifetime with a group of friends. By the next year, I no longer talked to the same people. Yet, I have no regrets. We all chose different lives and paths, some still intertwined and some completely separated. I can only hope we're all happier or better off for how things went.

**Maggie:** Two years in a row, I went to Illinois for a couple of days to celebrate my Aunt Denise's birthday with my mom and aunts. In 2023, we went to Chicago for a day to explore and look around. It was super cool to see sights I'd only seen in pictures before, especially considering the only other big city I'd been to was Detroit.

**Mick:** Longer story here. I was 19 and just found this band called Electric Six. I was sort of following them for a few days while they travelled around Michigan, and one particular show happened to be at a festival in Ferndale. I ended up standing next to two Australians who I befriended before the show started. One thing led to another and suddenly they were staying at my house for a week, and I was now going to more Electric Six shows with them because they were good friends with the singer and guitar player. So two days of music and mayhem turned into a week full of it. Lovely times!

**Sidney:** My favorite memory would be hosting our annual family reunion. We host it every July, and we have family come into town from all over. My favorite part is getting to see my cousins from New York because I barely get to see them and it's always good to spend time with them.

**Clark:** Probably going to the state fair in Monroe with my best friend.

**Eren:** Growing up, my parents would throw a pool party on our family's last day of summer.

### What is your favorite food and drink to have during the summer?

**Abby:** I love eating hotdogs and fruit salad outside in the summer. A favorite summer drink of mine is ice cold root beer, especially the root beer they sell at the Monroe County Fair.

**Dana W:** Buñuelos, which are a Mexican pastry akin to elephant ears, and a Traverse City cherry margarita.

**Maggie:** I love having the Modern Prometheus from Nocturnal when it's hot out since it's an iced drink with lemonade, strawberry and matcha. As for food, I'd also have to say any kind of fruit. You can never go wrong.

**Mick:** I'm a big fan of lemonade, so sign me up for that. You can't go wrong with plain old water, though. Cold water after a soccer match? Heaven. As for food...give me any fruit and I'm a happy guy.

**Sidney:** I enjoy having iced tea and also having s'mores by the fire.

**Clark:** Funnel cakes and a marg!

**Eren:** A seafood boil of any kind with a nice coke.

**Reese:** Barbecued anything and an ice cold Monster Energy.

### Are there any hobbies that you do more in the summer than any other time?

**Abby:** Reading, for sure. I love to read and the summer is when I get the most time to do that.

**Dana F:** I play a lot more video games like Minecraft. I also crochet a lot more to support my small business.

**Maggie:** I definitely go on walks more. I enjoy going on walks to begin with, but it's nice to go to a park or walk downtown with a cold drink and some good music.

**Mick:** A bunch of them, actually. Kayaking for sure, obviously. Swimming. Camping. A lot of my little sporty get-togethers get put on hold until summer, so soccer, football, frisbee and basketball are big hits. Basically...anything I do outdoors becomes way more popular once summer rolls around!

**Sidney:** I tend to go outside a lot more since there is obviously nicer weather during the summer. I also ride my four wheeler and I like to go for walks at Sterling State Park.

**Clark:** I like to go on runs or draw outside.

**Eren:** I'm more likely to relax on the deck or roast marshmallows in our firepit.

**Reese:** Having lots of down time to spend with loved ones. I plan on spending a lot more time with Mia outside and enjoying the warm weather.



# Super Seniors serve win

## Middle College students participate in annual volleyball tournament



Photo by Clark Guzman

From left, Middle College fifth-years Riley Peer, Kendall Gunter, Saloni Joshi and Van Broshious pose for an image after winning the annual volleyball game, hosted as part of MCMC's Spirit Week. This is the third year in a row the Class of 2025 has won.



Photo by Mick Valentino

Middle College seniors Reese Kuderik and Hailey Colon sit on the bleachers after the Super Seniors' win.



Photo by Dana Willi

Students gather on the gymnasium floor after the game ends. Each grade was assigned a different color for the Spirit Week activity, which included pink for fifth years, also referred to as Super Seniors.



Photo by Mick Valentino

Fifth-year student Daniel Kreger serves the volleyball during a practice game after his grade's win in the annual volleyball tournament.



Photo by Mick Valentino

Students participate in a practice game after the volleyball tournament.



# Holocaust survivor returns to MCCC

**Reese Bowling**  
Agora Staff

There are still smells and sounds that make Irene Miller emotional after all these years.

The Holocaust survivor and author of “Into No Man’s Land: A Historical Memoir” returned to MCCC April 2 to talk to students, faculty and community members about her life growing up and how she survived during the Holocaust.

This is the second time Miller has visited the campus to talk about her book. She presented at the Meyer Theater in November 2023.

At her recent visit, she spoke of her memories and the mental scars she still carries as she shared her story of survival and what she endured in order to stay alive.

There were several memories Miller openly discussed with her audience.

She spoke of having her head shaved after being told she had lice and other parasites living in hair. She said when she thinks about the lice, she wants to grab her hair and rip it out.

Miller said she remembers seeing large piles of men’s, women’s and children’s shoes and hair that had been cut off before these groups were sent to the gas chambers.

She said there were soap and lampshades made of human flesh. Miller said it took a long time before she could hold a bar of soap and not think of those who died.

Miller spoke of her struggles in Poland and her journey. She spoke of the harsh conditions, fear and hunger she experienced.

The United States was the third country she took refuge in without knowing the language, the former Soviet Union and Israel being the first and second.

She came to the states when she was approximately 21 years old. She was married and had a child.

Among the stories shared was one about her mother and a question she had asked to pretend there was no war going on. She was asked what she would like as a gift for her birthday.

Miller responded, “A big loaf of bread and as much as I could eat.”

Miller said she holds events like this, especially at schools, because it makes her feel like a teacher watching her students grow into a productive adulthood.

Following her talk, the floor was open for event attendees to ask questions.

On May 1, Miller is scheduled to be recognized at Oakland University for a doctorate in humanities.



Photos by Reese Bowling

(Above) Students line up to sign in for class credit for attending Irene Miller’s talk about growing up during the Holocaust.

(Right) Irene Miller, Holocaust survivor and author of “Into No Man’s Land: A Historical Memoir” signs copies of her books on April 2 in the La-Z-Boy Atrium. Miller spoke about her life growing up and how she survived during the Holocaust.





# The end of an era

**Sidney Robison**  
Agora Staff

My four semesters on the Agora has been challenging but also rewarding at the same time. When I first joined, I was hesitant about making new friends. The first few days were just getting the new people used to the newsroom and how all of the equipment worked. I was then assigned to do my first interview. I was so scared and I was worried about messing up my questions in front of someone I didn't even know. After the interview, I thought to myself, "I think I can do this."

Over the course of a few semesters, I've had so many different experiences. My favorite experience has been the yearly trip to New York City. It was cool to see all of the colleges that come to the conference and I got to see the different newspapers and how each school designs them. The restaurants we ate at were amazing and I miss the food. I loved hanging out with the people who went on the trip and going to restaurants, markets, and walking for miles to get to one of the museums. My knee did not enjoy that.

To sum up this goodbye column, because I don't want to write too much, even though Bird-Meyer says "More is better!", I'm just grateful that I got the opportunity to be able to join the Agora and have all these experiences and be able to learn everything there is about journalism. Through the guidance of our editor, Maggie, and our adviser, Bird-Meyer, I don't think I would have wanted to go into the



field of journalism. They both encouraged me to go out of my comfort zone and to just have fun with my writing and make it my own.

I will miss making and putting memes on the wall, having parties in the newsroom, watching episodes of Glee on the big tv screen, listening to Weezer while we all do our work, writing the question of the day on the whiteboard, and just having fun, because even though the Agora is a small group, the smaller we are, the closer we get.

# Saying a final goodbye

**Reese Bowling**  
Agora Staff

As an Agora staff member this is my last byline and as a student it's my "bye line."

Starting at MCCC, I never thought I'd write for the college's newspaper but I joined the Agora in the fall semester of 2023 with a goal to take photos and shoot videos.

Joining the staff, I had some experience with taking pictures. I'm a freelance photographer for The Monroe News. It's a job I'd like to do more of. I enjoy capturing someone's story through photos.

I graduated in May 2024 with my associates degree and stayed at MCCC for the Siena Heights University's 3 + 1 program. It allows students to complete three years of their bachelor's degree at a community college and then transfer to Siena Heights to finish the final year.

Being on the Agora has been an awesome experience. I got the opportunity to cover news stories and meet people on campus I'd probably never would have met. I was lucky to develop connections with some of the faculty members. They quickly became reliable sources for me when I was covering an assignment.

I am grateful to the interviewees who never made me uncomfortable when I had to go back to get more information and to the administration who helped me meet deadlines. I always felt the staff and administration respected "the press" and what we do even if they did not care for the subject we were writing about.

But there's more to just writing when you're on staff. I enjoyed working at MPACT with the other Agora staff members. Learning how TV shows and radio stations operate is really interesting to me and getting to experience that work up close was a great opportunity.

From covering breaking news stories to writing horror columns to taking pictures of a Holocaust survivor, it has all been an awesome learning experience.

I'm proud that I was able to write about subjects that matter like security on campus and inclusion. Two very serious and important topics making headlines across the country.

But overall, one of the best assignments was meeting other students and getting to hear their stories and why they came to MCCC.



I'd like to think I've improved my work, as not only a writer, but as a photographer and videographer.

Thank you, Megan Kane, Maggie Sandefur, Ashley Atkins and Mick Valentino for your editing skills. It was a privilege to meet and work with Dalton Brown, Abby Carr, Dana Fracalossi, Destiny Gallina, Clark Guzman, Jamie Hunt, Eren Markavich, Layla Pavlick, Sidney Robison, David Topolewski and Dana Willi.

Each of you have left a mark in my memory bank.

Prof. Bird-Meyer, I appreciate your willingness to do independent studies and never stifle my ideas. Your taste in music is impressive and so are your skills as an adviser.

As I leave the Agora and MCCC, I'm taking with me a pile of printed newspapers, a handful of awards and memories I hope will last a lifetime.

Student newspapers are vital platforms for student voices and opinions. Thank you, Agora, for allowing me to share my byline. I guess this is the end of our conversation and now it's time for me to say, "Goodbye."

# Letter to the editor

I was saddened to hear of the passing of Dr. Bill McCloskey on March 08, whose impact to both Greater Monroe County and the Monroe County Community College (MCCC) campus community is unlikely to be overstated.

I was fortunate enough to take English Composition II under the direction of Dr. McCloskey nearly 18 years ago. During my time in college, I was a student under the direction of professors of great caliber, some not so great, and others in between, but Dr. McCloskey was consistently in the upper class and is one of my all-time favorite instructors during my time at MCCC.

Dr. McCloskey's wit, enthusiasm, and obvious passion for the topic made the semester far more interesting for many students who often only tolerated college-level English courses as obligatory to receive

one's academic credits. He especially loved introducing students to the work of Shakespeare. If not for Dr. McCloskey, the wide array of life lessons available to us from our language's greatest playwright might have been lost on me.

It is because of Dr. McCloskey that I not only gained a better understanding of the Ides of March or Macbeth as a young man, but I also continue to revisit the lessons and timeless wisdom of Shakespeare as my life has progressed and as I have occasionally revisited Hamlet, King Lear, Henry V and others throughout my adult life.

Like many of the great ones, Dr. McCloskey touched the lives of thousands of students during his tenure at MCCC, and he will be missed remarkably.

Casey C. Cheap  
Palm Coast, Florida



# '90s Nostalgia hits MCCC

## Class of '98 performs nostalgic hits in the Meyer Theater



Photos by Eren Markavich

The Class of '98 tribute band performed a range of nostalgic tunes, from 'N Sync to Snoop Dogg and Nirvana to The Spice Girls, March 29 at the Meyer Theater.

The Meyer Theater has two more concerts in the coming weeks. The Agora Chorale concert is scheduled for Tuesday, April 29. The College/Community Symphony Band is scheduled to perform Monday, May 5.



# Sail into summer with these four books

## Four stories to dive into while soaking up the sun

**Sidney Robison**  
Agora Staff

As the weather gets warmer, summer is quickly approaching. As my last book review, I've chosen four books that will get you in the summer mood.

### It Happened One Summer by Tessa Bailey

Piper Bellinger has a reputation as a wild child and that means the paparazzi are constantly on her heels. During an out-of-control rooftop party, Piper ends up in jail and her stepfather decides enough is enough. So he cuts her off, then sends Piper and her sister to learn some responsibility running their late father's dive bar in Washington. Piper then meets sea captain Brendan. She's determined to show her stepfather and Brendan that she's more than a pretty face. Piper and Brendan are polar opposites, but there's an undeniable attraction between them.

I really enjoyed this book, mainly for the humor. There were a lot of parts where I was grinning and laughing to myself. I also enjoyed how the romance progressed from strangers to friends to something more. The book had a very natural and realistic pacing. Piper has some good character development throughout the story which I really liked.

### The Summer I Turned Pretty by Jenny Han

Belly measures her life in summers. She says that everything magical happens between the months of June and August. Conrad and Jeremiah Fisher are the boys that Belly has known since her very first summer. They have been her brother figures, her crushes, and everything in between. But one summer, everything changes, and Belly has to navigate through obstacles and has a chance to end up with one of her dream boys.

I had a fun time reading this book and it made me get in the mood for summertime. There were a few times where Belly could be annoying and didn't make good choices, but she was also relatable. The love triangle going on in the book was interesting and had me on the edge of my seat in regards to who she would pick in the end.

### Just for the Summer by Abby Jimenez

Justin is living with a curse: every woman he dates goes on to find their soulmate the second they break up. When someone slides into his DMs with the same problem, they come up with a plan: they'll date each other and break up. Their curses will cancel each other out, and they'll both go on to find the love of their lives. Emma hadn't planned that her next assignment as a traveling nurse would be in Minnesota, but she and her best friend agree that dating Justin is too good of an opportunity to pass up. It's supposed to be a fling, just for the summer. They get to rent a cottage on a private island on Lake Minnetonka. But when Emma's mother suddenly shows up and Justin has to assume guardianship of his three siblings, they're suddenly navigating a lot more than the feelings they have for each other.

Abby Jimenez is one of my favorite romance authors, so I was excited for this release. I really enjoyed this book and the characters were fun to read about. Emma was a strong character and I found her to be relatable and realistic. The bond between Emma and Justin was refreshing to see and it was like they were made for each other. Overall, this book was one of my favorites this year and it was very enjoyable.

### Meet Me at the Lake by Carley Fortune

Fern Brookbanks has wasted too much of her life thinking about Will Baxter. She gets a chance encounter that spiraled into a daylong adventure in Toronto. The timing was wrong, but their connection was undeniable and they made a pact to meet one year later. Fern showed up. Will didn't. At thirty-two, Fern's back home, running her mother's lakeside resort. Suddenly, Will arrives nine years too late with a suitcase and an offer to help. But how could she possibly trust him? He seems nothing like the young man she met all those years ago.

I wasn't a big fan of this book. I found Fern to be kind of annoying the whole time. She was mad over an interaction that happened ten years prior. Will, on the other hand, wasn't as bad. I felt for him as he was struggling in his life and was dealing with anxiety. Toward the end, there was unnecessary drama going on that I felt could have been left out.



Illustration by Sidney Robison

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# GSA to hold annual Pride Party

**Sidney Robison**  
Agora Staff

Celebrate diversity and inclusion with the annual Pride Party at MCCC.

The MCCC Gender & Sexuality Alliance is scheduled to hold their annual Pride Party on Friday, April 25 from 5-10 p.m. in the S Building in room S-165.

“Pride Parties follow a tradition of celebrating living authentically and embracing who we are as LGBTQ+ people. The more others around us cast doubt about our existence and worthiness, the more pride and love we generate,” said Melissa Grey, advisor for the GSA, in an email.

Since 2015, the Pride Party has been a tradition for the GSA.

“As far as we know, it has been happening since 2015. The club was established in 2009.

We have had a pride prom or pride party every year since 2015,” Grey said.

Grey said there will be card games, board games, and giant Jenga as well as a variety of food and snacks.

There will be some gluten free and vegan options as well.

This year’s theme is set to be “Underwater.”

“The planning committee is working on incorporating an underwater theme. We are encouraging attendees to wear blue, but it is not required, and attendees can dress up or keep it casual,” Grey said.

The Pride Party is open to anyone and free of charge.

“Pride Party is free and open to anyone who belongs to the LGBTQ+ community including those who are LGBTQ+, allies, friends, and family,” Grey said.

CELEBRATE WITH TONS OF  
MUSIC, DANCING, AND FOOD!

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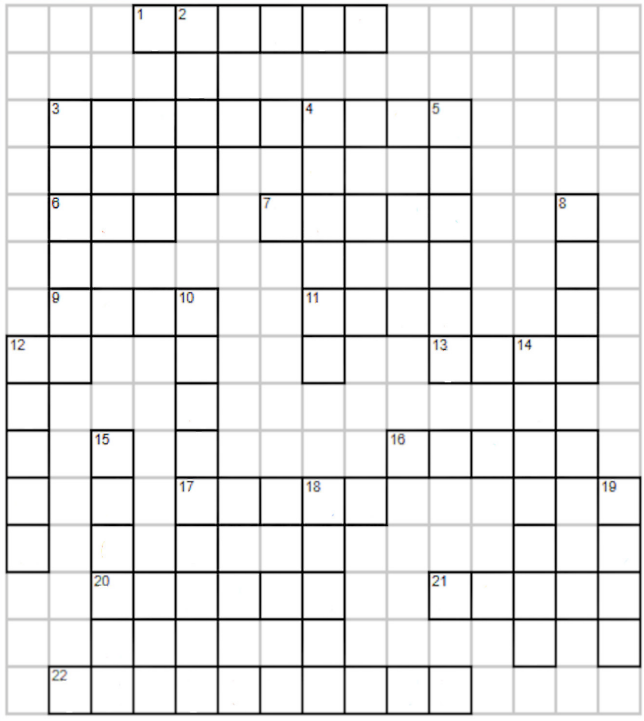
**APRIL 25, 2025**

LOCATED IN ROOM S-165  
STUDENT CLUBS ACTIVITY  
ROOM AND THE SAFE  
SPACE



Graphic by Sidney Robison

## The Spring and Summer Crossword



### Hints

Across

1 - A zephyr.  
3 - The season of renewal.  
6 - The shortest month with 31 days.  
7 - Parties.  
9 - Often hidden on (5 Down).  
11 - What is celebrated on (12 Down).  
12 - Atomic number 18.  
13 - A type of (15 Down), associated with February.  
16 - What the sun does.  
17 - A week of vacations in (3 Across).  
20 - Money.  
21 - The month famous for (2 Down).  
22 - What (8 Down) is, to some.

Down

2 - Part of the water cycle.  
3 - The time after (3 Across).  
4 - Still too young to drink!  
5 - It falls on (21 Across), (4 Down) this year.  
8 - The first month of (3 Down).  
10 - Bring it to the beach to catch some waves!  
12 - A day two days after (5 Down) this year.  
14 - What you can get without UV protection.  
15 - A blooming plant.  
18 - Those with allergies might shout this near a (15 Down)!  
19 - Caesar's month.

Crossword by Keegan Schmitt

Answers to the Spring and Summer crossword will be available on the Agora website.