HIDDEN in PLAIN SIGHT

There is a priceless collection of fine art around Washtenaw's campus, and chances are you haven't even noticed it.

By Micheal J Hlywa
Photos By Nathan Clark

A dark-haired 20-something sits alone at a table, her Uggs propped up on the chair in front of her, tapping away at the keys of her laptop. She pauses for a moment to glance at a dog-eared notebook and then continues tapping away. About an hour later, she packs up her stuff and hurries off, leaving behind an empty table – and a prismatic display of textile art worth thousands of dollars hanging ignored on the wall behind it.

CAMPUS ART
CONTINUED ON C2

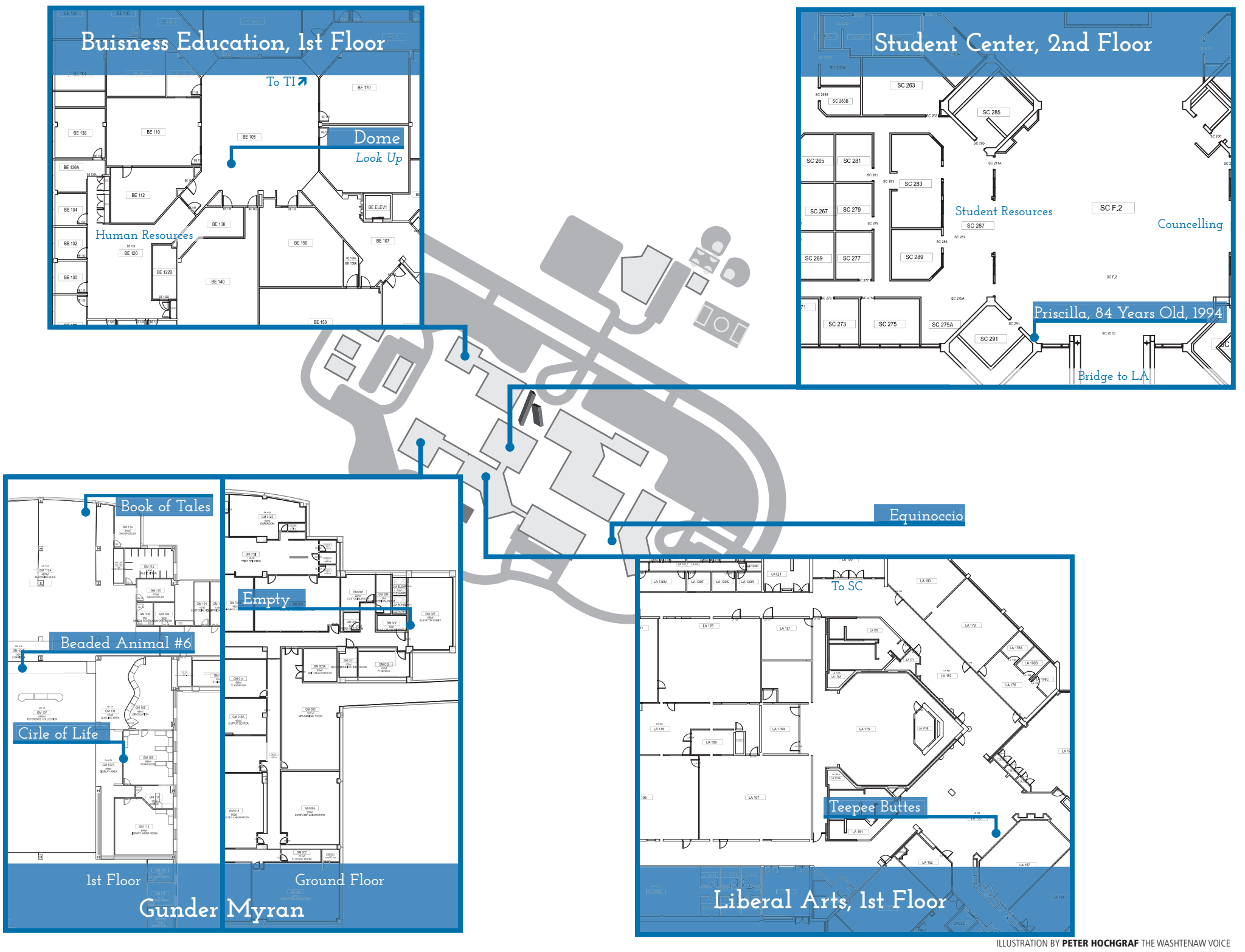


ILLUSTRATION BY **PETER HOCHGRAF** THE WASHTENAW VOICE

CONTINUED FROM **C1**

In every building on Washtenaw Community College's campus, the scene is the same – students absorbed in their studies and their social lives, seemingly oblivious to the profound works of art that surround them. But even without active contemplation, WCC's art collection imbues the college's students with a little extra humanity, which can't be said of most two-year institutions.

WCC's dedication to art makes it unique among community colleges.

"This college has a mission to expose students to the arts and humanities in the belief that you are not well educated unless you have some familiarity with this sort of work, at least some idea of what's involved and how it can move people," said Anne Rubin, director of Gallery One.

This mission began in 1985, when board member and philanthropist Dr. Harry Towsley donated $5,000 to the college for the sole purpose of developing an art collection. The initial collection included 10 works purchased with Towsley's endowment along with a handful of donated pieces. Within a few years, a permanent Art Advisory Committee was chosen and given a $7,000 annual budget to manage, build and enrich the collection.

Judith Corkran Hommel was the executive associate to Washtenaw's former president before she retired. Now she serves as a consultant to Julia Gliech, campus aesthetics coordinator and manager of the digital media arts production center. During her tenure, Hommel worked closely with the committee to nurture the college's collection.

"The committee was started to create a more humanized culture at WCC by placing art," Hommel said. "I've always thought it was important that the hallways reflect something for you to reflect on. Therefore, you're learning and it's free. It creates opportunities for didactic and ecstatic viewing."

Today the college's art collection contains about 125 pieces and is managed by Gleich, The works, predominately of well-known local artists, have been donated, purchased by the college or procured by the WCC Foundation.

"I can safely guess that the collection is worth tens of thousands of dollars," Gleich said.

"I think they have put together a collection for a community college which is unparalleled. I'm glad to be part of that, and I'm glad to be part of helping it continue."

Rubin, Gleich and Hommel agree that art teaches people something about themselves and the world in which they live. Contemplating a good work of art is just as educational as cracking open a textbook or attending a lecture.

"People who don't expect to be moved by art," Rubin explained, "are often seriously surprised when they encounter a piece of art that really resonates with them. It can be life-changing."

And with dozens of pieces displayed on every floor of every building on campus, students are exposed to numerous potentially life-altering experiences. So where does one begin?

Well Rubin, Gleich, and Hommel put together a list of eight selections from the works around campus that reflect the variety, complexity, and intrigue of WCC's owned art collection. All of them are highly visible pieces that most students, faculty and staff pass by multiple times each day. To really get something out of them, however, people have to take a good look.

"It's not something you can buzz by," Rubin said. "You don't get things out of it like that. You have to stop and think about it. All of these pieces are about content expressed with beautiful aesthetics, and that's what makes really good art – that the artist has something to say, and they say it in a way that catches your eye and your soul."



'Dome' by Gerome Kamrowski

Medium: **oil paint on canvas**
Campus location: **around the skylight in the Business Education building**

Gerome Kamrowski began his studies at the Art Students' League in New York in 1938. In 1946, he was offered a faculty position at University of Michigan and, even though it meant losing the fame and exposure he would find in the big city, Kamrowski decided to take it.

Rubin had an opportunity to study with Kamrowski. She recalls him being a very dynamic individual.

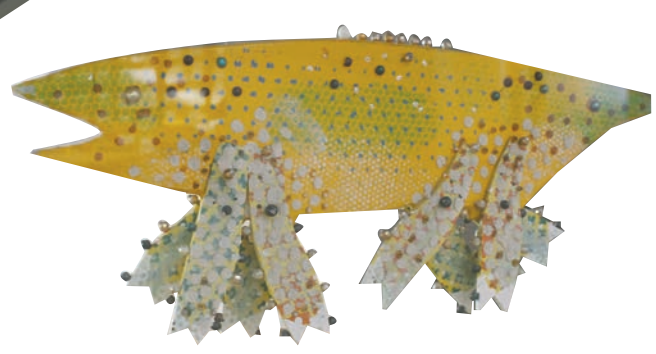
"Gerry chose less fame and more artistic freedom," Rubin said. "He was a very, very interesting character. He was very inventive. And the fact that he was at U-M, had a steady income and didn't have to think about whether things would sell or not meant that he could be continuously, until the end of his days, inventive and explorative.

"He didn't have to worry about whether anyone ever bought it, whether there was any interest in it or was ever displayed by anybody other than himself."

During his time at U-M, Kamrowski met and befriended Buckminster Fuller. Influenced by Fuller's geodesic dome, Kamrowski created about 30 52-inch triangle pieces that attached to a steel frame to form a dome approximately 12 feet across and 6 feet high.

In 2009, just a few years after Kamrowski died, Mary Jane Kamrowski, his wife, donated the triangles to WCC. Some of them were scuffed or mildewed from sitting in storage for years, and the frame was lost. But Rubin recalls finally finding the best site for them.

"We tried to find a way to display them that would give you some sense of the original intent," Rubin said, "so this is what we ended up with. The light plays on them. You can see they've turned the white wall a faint blue from the light bouncing off them."



'Beaded Animal #6' by Gerome Kamrowski

Medium: **polychromed wood with beads on aluminum**
Campus location: **underneath the staircase in the Richard W. Bailey Library**

Kamrowski is probably best known in Michigan for his Venetian glass mosaics that cover the walls of the Detroit People Mover's Joe Louis Arena station. The fanciful creatures depicted at the station obviously come from the same imagination that inspired the artist's "Beaded Animal" pieces.

"It gives (people) a creative way of thinking what you can do," Hommel explained. "You don't always have to do a realistic animal to get pleasure out of art. It's a delightful piece that serves to make us pay attention to materials."

According to Rubin, Kamrowski found the materials for his animal figures – old buttons, beads and jewelry – at garage sales.

"Those (beaded animals) were just a lot of fun," Rubin said, "and they got him a lot of attention at the end of his career."

Rubin admits that, although much of her knowledge comes directly from the artist himself, her stories of Kamrowski do seem a little extravagant.

"A story about him that he told me," Rubin added, "which may or may not have been true, but he and Jackson Pollock and some other guy were drinking in his studio. Pollock had a big canvas on the floor, and they started throwing paint around, and that was the start of Pollock's career. That sounds very real to me, but whether it is or not, I don't know."



'Cycle of Life' by Elaine Wilson

***Medium*: oil paint on linen**
***Campus location:* right of the front desk in the Richard W. Bailey Library**

Elaine Wilson has been a studio art professor at WCC since 2003. From 2000-12, Wilson spent much of her time at a specific dairy farm in Washtenaw County.

This 54-by-90-inch painting is one of five of a similar size in which Wilson documents her experiences during this time. Wilson uses her pieces to call attention to the importance of Michigan's agricultural life.

"Washtenaw County is becoming more and more urban over time and less and less agrarian," Wilson said. "I think that (my work) is a document that reminds us that this is a vital part of our lives."

Rubin compliments the gorgeous use of color and skillful painting found in "Cycle of Life," and she praises Wilson for her choice in subject matter.

"Rural scenes are not the thing you'll see in New York galleries right now," Rubin explained. "That does not take away from her extraordinary painting ability. Either an artist follows the fad of the moment, or an artist follows what they should be doing."

Gleich is impressed by the painting's realism and expression.

"Of course you see a cow immediately," Gleich said, "but before I knew it, I was drawn right in. I mean, I could almost smell the barn. And I realized that she had represented the cycle of life in there. It's a story."





'Book of Tales' by Stephanie Rowden

***Medium*: mixed media with sound**
***Campus location:* right of the windows overlooking Community Park in the Richard W. Bailey Library**

Stephanie Rowden received her bachelor's in studio art from Brown University in 1982 and her master's in community counseling from Eastern Michigan University in 1999. Now she is an assistant professor in the School of Art and Design at U-M, where she specializes in incorporating audio elements into art.

Rowden had a show at Gallery One in 2003. During this show, Larry Whitworth, president of the college at the time, fell in love with her work and urged the college to purchase one of her pieces for its collection out of the president's own budget.

"Book of Tales" is a hardcover book that sits atop a teak lectern in the library. Underneath the cover is a solid wooden surface with a small, smooth hole worn through the middle – looking like a portal to a dark, enchanted microcosm. Listening through the hole reveals a medley of noises, including rustling leaves, singing birds, buzzing insects and many more.

Hommel recalls experiencing the wonder of Rowden's book on several occasions.

"Not only do you view the beauty of that wooden book with the fine craftsmanship she did, you also open it up and enter it. You listen to it. I've hear birds in there, and I think I've heard an ocean a couple of times. It's not a simple piece, yet it's a handsome piece," Hommel said.

Rubin also appreciates the auditory component of Rowden's art, which sets her apart from other more visually-oriented artists. She invites students to touch it, but to make sure it's plugged in first.

"It's just a really lovely, really contemplative piece. If you don't open it and listen, then you missed the point. It's all about opening the book. It's a library piece, really. She does very interesting work," Rubin added.

'Equinoccio' by Leonardo Nierman

***Medium:* stainless steel**
***Campus location:* overlooking the pond next to the Morris J. Lawrence building**

Leonardo Nierman, born in 1932 in Mexico City, had musical aspirations. But when he realized that his talent did not equal his dreams, he abandoned music and pursued art instead.

Nierman, largely self-taught, considers himself to be a painter, foremost, but designs sculptures and tapestries as well. Rubin explains how one of his sculptures, "Equinoccio," came to the college as if by providence.

It began with Sonia Kaufman, who returned to school later in life. Kaufman was enamored with Washtenaw, the education it provided her and the artwork it showcased. When she described the richness of WCC to her artist friend, he was moved to donate one of his sculptures. That friend was Nierman, and the sculpture was the brilliant, stately piece that now stands sentry over the pond outside of the Morris J. Lawrence building.

Rubin remembers the series of events that followed the donation.

"So that was a big project. We sent a class to Mexico City – I think there were 12 of them. They studied his work for a week, and Mexican art history for a week and then went to Mexico City for a week," Rubin recalled.

"He (Nierman) was unbelievable to them. He took them to concerts, took them to dinner, had them in his studio where they got to choose a piece. I mean he was just so sweet. Then it took us another year before we were ready to install and dedicate, and he came for the dedication, which was very nice."

Rubin is particularly fond of this story. It clearly demonstrates the educational opportunities that art can bring to students. Plus, without the dedication to the arts that impressed Kaufman, Washtenaw would not have been the recipient of such a prominent work of art.



'Empty' by Toko Shiiki

***Medium:* photography**
***Campus location:* ground floor study lounge wall of the Gunder Myran building**

Toko Shiiki is a WCC student, assistant in the photography lab, and member of October Babies, a local art-rock band. Shiiki says that "Empty" tells the story of a man who "lost his identity between birth and death" but then "found a face, and somehow began moving forward again."

Since both women work in the GM building, Gleich is very familiar with Shiiki and her work. So when she read in the WCC Foundation's newsletter that this Washtenaw student won first prize for her entry in an international photography show, Gleich was excited.

"I took a look at it (the newsletter) and I thought, 'I know Toko!' and since I am buying art for the college, I bought the file and printed it myself under her guidance. It's a beautiful piece. A lot of people are very touched by it. There's something really sensitive about it. It's about aging," Gleich said.

Hommel finds Shiiki's piece to be a perfect example of how good art can demand contemplation.

"It challenges me to look at this composition and sort it out. It's not your typical photograph. I think people are intrigued by it, and that's what art is supposed to do," Hommel explained.





'Teepee Buttes' by Sherri Smith

***Medium*: cloth**
***Campus location:* first floor atrium wall of the Crane Liberal Arts and Science building**

Sherri Smith received her bachelor's in art from Stanford University and her master of fine arts from the Cranbrook Academy of Art. She is now a professor of art at U-M. Smith specializes in colorful textile pieces.

"Teepee Buttes" was donated by Margaret Goudron and now dominates the LA building wall, measuring 61 inches tall and 110 inches long. It is fabricated from cotton webbing, which Smith dyed prior to plaiting.

"She's an extraordinary weaver, a real trendsetter, a real breakthrough-type artist and an unbelievable human being. Incredibly intelligent," Rubin said. "We're so lucky to have a piece like that. It's so beautiful. For color theory, you just can't beat Sherri."

Beyond being a textile innovator, Smith is also passionate about bird rescue and serves as the membership chair for the Washtenaw Audubon Society. When Gleich first learned of Smith's avian efforts, she was surprised.

"When I heard them saying that Sherri Smith ran the bird sanctuary, I said, 'You mean Sherri Smith the weaver?' I never would have put the two together. I kept thinking she was consumed with her weaving as most artists are. It was fascinating that it was something totally different, doing this bird rescue."



'Priscilla, 84 Years Old' by Joanna Katz

***Medium:* acrylic on unstretched canvas**
***Campus location:* left of the Student Resource Center on the second floor of the Student Center building**

Joana Katz received her bachelor of fine arts from the State University of Iowa in 1959. This California artist got involved with The Beauty Project, an organization dedicated to challenging society's standard for women's beauty.

During this time, Katz was teaching art classes to a group of elderly women in a Berkley, Calif. nursing home. While working with these matriarchs, Katz became inspired by their wisdom and experience.

"Priscilla, 84 Years Old" was one of a series of 69-by-42-inch portraits that Katz painted at the home.

"I wanted to bring attention to a group of people who exist outside of any beauty standard....We consider nursing home residents a burden when they could be considered a resource," Katz said in a statement.

Hommel first saw the series at a showing during one of Katz's trips back to Ann Arbor to visit family, and describes choosing to purchase the "Priscilla" piece.

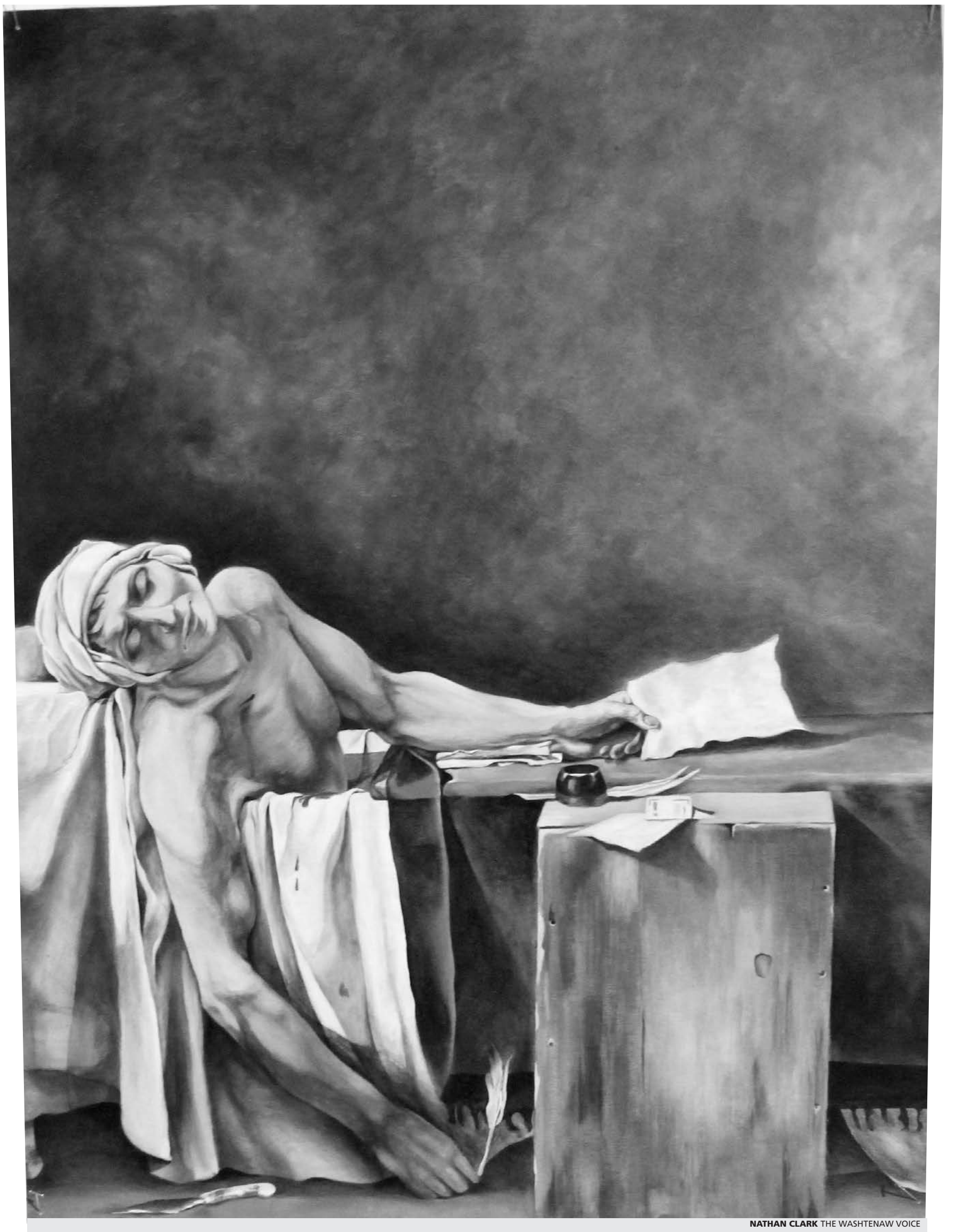
"We picked this one because it showed to me how much life this woman in a nursing home still has. She still was proud of being a woman; the woman had not given up. I found that very strong," Hommel said.

Of all the pieces in the college's collection, Gleich finds this one to be one of the most moving.

"When I first saw it, I thought it was an amazing painting. I was very touched by the image and what's happening. You look at it, and you don't necessarily enjoy looking at it. Yet it's so beautiful and beautifully done. You get a twang of pain because we all know that this is a difficult time for anyone, and of course we think of ourselves in that position. But they're very touchingly done," explained Gleich.

She points out that Katz's portrait is the perfect example of how discovering the story behind a work can make it more poignant.

"When I read all the background of the piece then the piece became more touching and significant to me," Gleich said.



NATHAN CLARK THE WASHTENAW VOICE

Worked to the Bone Karen Poslaiko won first place in Gallery One's campus art contest with a large-format painting of a fatigued scholar on Feb. 8.

Rewarding creativity

By NATHAN CLARK
Photo Editor

Students and art enthusiasts gathered recently at Gallery One for the announcement of the winners of the contest created by the WCC Arts Club.

"It was a really good turnout," said Mallory Wayt, 27, liberal arts major from Ypsilanti, Arts Club president and host of the event. "We didn't have enough wall space for all the art."

There were 72 pieces of art on display in the contest. Students voted on what they though the best artwork on display was by filling out a ballot in the gallery throughout the week.

The works had no artists name or titles to discourage people from voting for art created by people they know.

Prizes for the contest were provided by Indiehorror.tv and awarded on Feb. 8. The first place prize was a $150 gift card, $100 for second place and $50 for third.

The first place prize went to Karen Poslaiko, 52, Tecumseh, second to Leah Peterson, no info available, and third place to Frances Ross, 22, Ypsi.



NATHAN CLARK THE WASHTENAW VOICE

Presidential Pride: Arts Club president Mallory Wayt, second person from the left, standing in front of several pieces of student art that were competing for the prize, prepares to announce the winners of the art contest.



NATHAN CLARK THE WASHTENAW VOICE

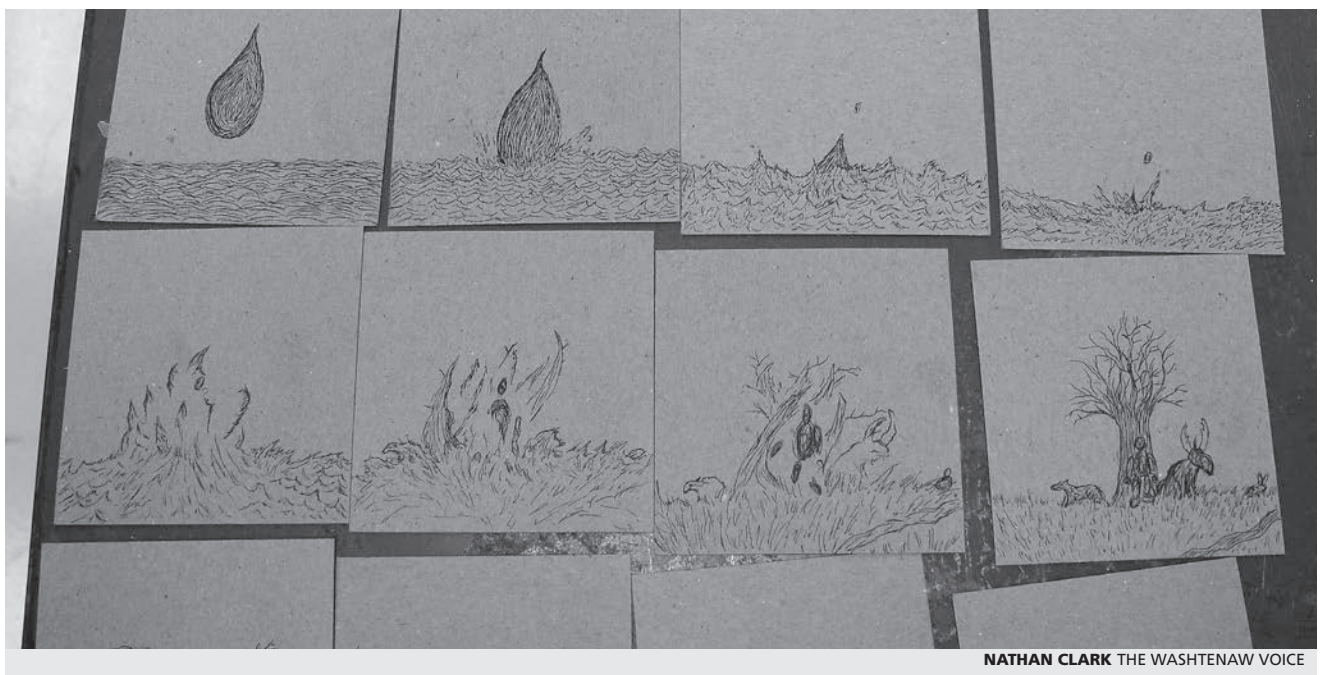
Finding a Muse: Some of the artwork being judged consisted of basic line drawings and detailed charcoal portraits.

Sustainability 'pours' into student artwork



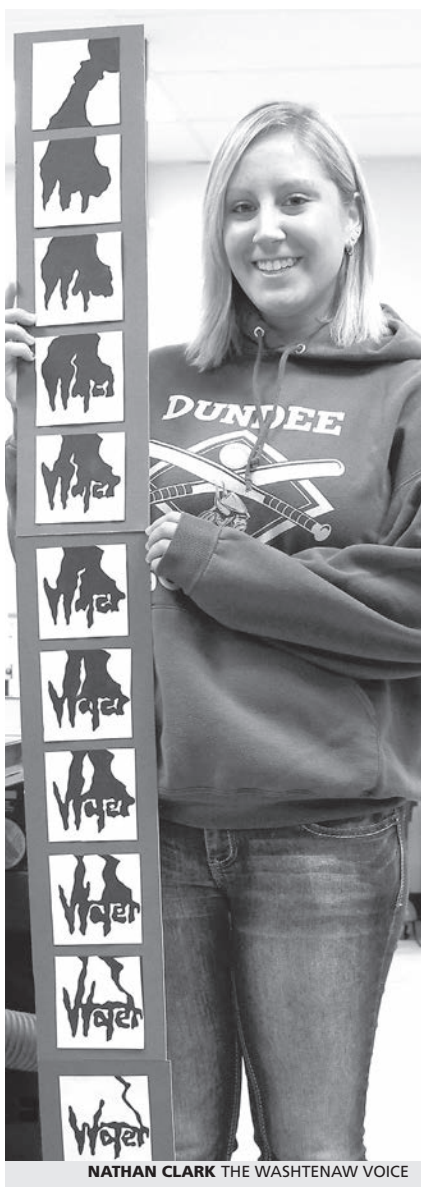
NATHAN CLARK THE WASHTENAW VOICE

Carbon Copy: Luna Park's cut illustrations of a world without water is just one of many unique ideas that students express in a recycleable media.



NATHAN CLARK THE WASHTENAW VOICE

Circle of Life: A series of ink drawings on recycle cardboard show a expression of the cycle of life.



NATHAN CLARK THE WASHTENAW VOICE

Falling Water: Victoria Ewing holds a series of prints that flow into a typographic expression of water.

By ANNA ELIAS
Staff Writer

Sustainability is a hot pop-culture topic and commonly on the tongues of faculty, students and staff at Washtenaw Community College. Art instructor Belinda McGuire has latched on to this thought trend and incorporates these themes into her two-dimensional design classes.

To invite students and employees to take part in the such topics, Washtenaw's sustainability committee has started to flavor each academic year with a different sustainable idea. This year, water is the focus, with many events, including lectures and workshops, organized throughout the school year.

McGuire incorporates the topic of water conservation to the forefront of her students' minds through art prompts.

Liberal arts student Luna Park searched the internet to find inspiration for her water conservation piece. She found an image of a water droplet coming out a faucet forming into the Earth that sprouted her idea for an eight-frame, black-and-white paper cutout art.

From top to bottom and left to right, the frames show how Park envisions the world as water is steadily wasted.

"I had this idea that if it falls, it's going to break and it's going to be gone," said Park, 20, of Ypsilanti.

She hopes people will realize that if we keep wasting water, we won't have anything left. And without water, life cannot be supported.

In her native country of South Korea, Park says, they have a much worse water conservation problem than in the United States.

"It's a way smaller country, but we use the same amount of water, I feel like," Park said. "I just think (water management problems are) everywhere on Earth that has a lot of people."

Park's classmate Victoria Ewing agrees that water conservation is a worldwide problem. Through recycling and being "water aware," she says it is very influential building the world she wants to continue to live in.

"Essentially, people waste water every day," said Ewing, an art education, English and counseling major, 20, of Dundee.

Her black-ink images are of a water bottle pouring out water morphing into the word water through 12 frames that she hopes will incite people to be aware of how much water they waste.

While Park and Ewing both share water conservation with two unique focuses, classmate Brice Burwell takes the water droplet a step further. He pictures his concern of how man destroys the Earth.

His 12 frames show the droplet of water transforming into man with a tree and grassy area forming behind him. The tree turns into an oil can to represent the 2010 BP oil spill.

"They had problems of BP and the oil spill out in the ocean," Burwell said. "I want people to be aware of what they're doing, whether it's wasting water or just being aware of what corporations are doing, where to buy what from. Make sure that people are doing things safely and correct."

Starting with a simple water droplet, life forms, and then man ruins the world it was so freely given, Burwell said.

"From life came man, from man came pollution. Be conscious of what you are doing," Burwell said.

He said he wants people to realize the importance of knowing the company producing the products they buy so that they can understand the issues that the company stands for.

Everyone wants to save the world, and through art, Park, Ewing and Burwell are able to have an impact on others through thought-provoking frames.

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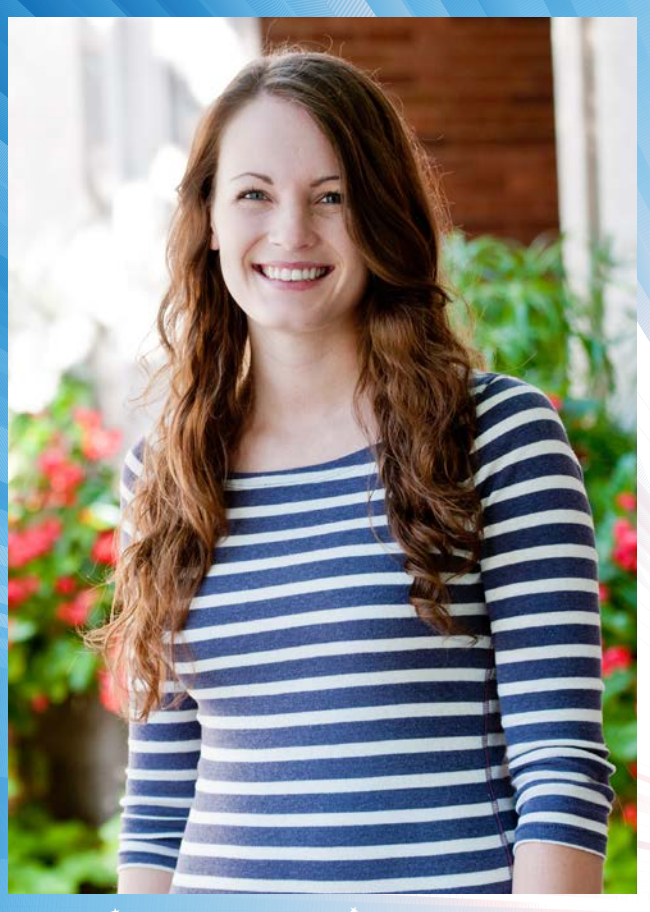

Courtney Keller, WCC '11, SHU '14

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Witness the magic!
Tickets: $23/each
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Sunday, April 21, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Free Root Beer Floats! Grab this Tasty Treat
Thursday, February 21
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While supplies last
SC Community Room

Ticket: Yo-Yo Ma
Hill Auditorium
Saturday, March 16
8 p.m.
Only $25!

Relay for Life
Join our team!
http://tinyurl.com/WCC2013TeamRelay
Raise money and awareness for the American Cancer Society

Lunch with the President
Sign-up for a chance to win a free lunch with Dr. Bellanca!
Lunches occur on selected Mondays between Noon-1 p.m.
http://tinyurl.com/wcclunchcontest

Talent Show
Check out your fellow students as they wow the crowd!
Friday, March 15
Towsley Auditorium
6 p.m.
Be among the first attendees and receive a free glow stick!

Tickets Coming Soon!

- Cedar Point
- Traverse City Weekend Getaway
- Rolling Hills Water Park

Don't miss out! Find out about ticket sales dates by signing up for hub alerts: http://tinyw.cc/sda

Purchase tickets at the Cashier's Office, 2nd floor SCB, M-F, 8:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

UPCOMING SPORTS

Men's Soccer Tryouts
Monday, February 18th 3:30-5:30 p.m. and Thursday, February 21st 4:30-6:30 p.m.
High Velocity Sports Complex (Canton, MI)
Bring your WCC ID
Practices will be primarily on Mondays and Thursdays with games on Sunday evenings

Women's Soccer Tryouts
Monday, February 18th 5:30-7:30pm and Wednesday, February 20th 5:30-7:30pm
High Velocity Sports Complex (Canton, MI)
Bring your WCC ID
Practices will be on Mondays and Thursdays with games on Tuesdays (7pm or later)

Co-ed Wrestling
ML Police Academy Training Room
Practices: Tuesdays and Thursdays 7-9 p.m. Matches will be held on the weekend. For more info and to register, stop by SC 116. Bring your WCC ID (must be 18 years or older)

Coed Running /Walking Track
Practices held on Mondays and Thursdays at 4 p.m. and 5 p.m.
Teams should meet at the Sports Club Office (SC 116)
Races will be held on the weekends for those who are interested

Arm Wrestling Tournament
SC 116
Competition: Wednesday, February 27
Registration: Feb 11- 22 in SC 116 Bring ID. Free for students!



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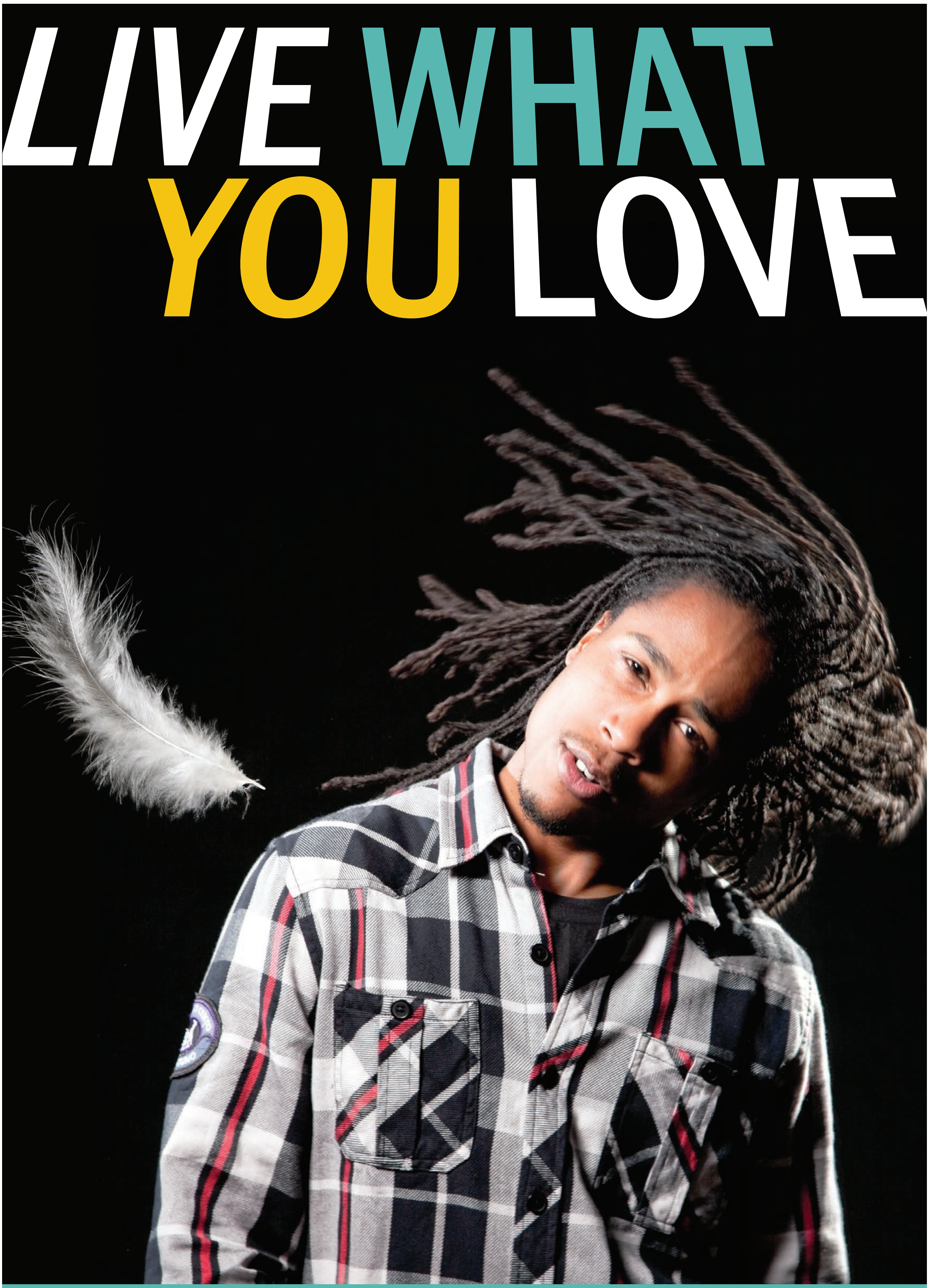

We will be at **The WCC Transfer Fair** on **February 27th.** Stop by **Table #29** to learn more about our unique academic and creative community.

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