

Flint Diaspora

“SPREADING THE NEWS ABOUT FLINT”

Flint Club Highlights

The Weather Outside was Frightful, but the Soiree was so Delightful.

Despite freezing temperatures and blustery winds, over 30 people braved the cold to attend Flint Club's 1st Annual Holiday Soiree and Silent Auction. The buffet line was long, but it moved quickly as partygoers filled Flint Club's offices with smiling faces and holiday cheer.



Bidding on the silent auction items was civilized but fierce, as members bid on gift certificates for salon visits and massages, holiday gift baskets

filled with treats, and exquisite handmade costumes donated by artist and Flint Club member Andrew Weakley.

The evening's big winner was Amy Surles-Rosario. With the help of her diligent daughters Anna and Sophie, she was ready to outbid all comers.

She took home seven auction items that night, thus taking care of a significant part of her holiday gift list. "It was a good event and the kids really enjoyed it. I hope that more people here in town can make it next year. It was a great way to connect with other like-minded Flint-ites," said Amy.



Mission

"To connect people across boundaries and create channels of action to make Flint, MI a truly great community!"

1. The FIA was recently awarded the 2007 Governor's Award for Arts and Culture.
2. In the FIA's Nature of Asia Gallery there is a 17th century Japanese katana sword.
3. The FIA now has a Starbucks café.
4. The gift shop and café area of the FIA is framed by a mural painted by Flint native Hubert Massey.
5. The FIA has a collection of pre-Columbian pottery and statuary including a Costa Rican statue of the Wind God.
6. The FIA boasts a newly renovated movie theatre that shows a new film every weekend.
7. The FIA's newest Art School Catalog was just released and it offers classes for all ages and skill levels.
8. Yes, the FIA still has the European Renaissance room with 16th century tapestries and furniture that was so cool during your 6th grade class field trip.
9. The FIA maintains a rotating gallery of art from other institutions.
10. The FIA recently launched an e-newsletter to keep you informed about all these things and more. You can sign up for at their web site www.flintarts.org

Ten Things You May Not Know About The Flint Institute of Arts

Community Corner - Community Challenge Update

Community Challenge Focuses on Attracting Young Mobile Talent to Flint

Over 350 people made time in their busy schedules to attend the latest Community Challenge meeting at The Northbank Center on the University of Michigan-Flint's campus. Creating an environment attractive to young mobile talent was the focus of the November event. Attendees heard presentations from local leaders and from nationally acclaimed speaker Carol Coletta.

Keynote speaker Carol Coletta, President and CEO of CEO's for Cities and host of Smart City, Chicago, Illinois, presented on why we shouldn't give up on cities such as Flint. She disagrees with those that downplay the importance of cities. She argues that the fates of cities and their suburbs are in lock step; their fates are tied together and that America cannot compete without strong, competitive cities like Flint, MI. "We are now at a point where cities are the solution to our problems; problems like the environment, jobs, innovations, obesity and preventable disease, and assimilation of newcomers. Cities are the only places where we can solve these problems."

Coletta then shared her thoughts on the focus of the event--creating an environment attractive to young mobile talent. "We must focus on young talent for one reason" she said, "we need them for the labor force." She then shared some research that addressed what attributes young people look for when choosing a place to live. They are looking for a city that is clean and attractive and that gives them the opportunity to live the life they want to live. They also want their chosen city to be safe and green with affordable housing that meets their expectations. And finally they want a city that makes them feel welcome.

A successful city, in her estimation, is good at developing talent and is good at making connections between its citizens, and to other area cities in its region and around the world. Successful cities must also promote their unique history and culture and be willing to celebrate and develop it. And finally she said that successful cities must be willing to innovate every day in every way. She encouraged those in attendance to make these factors a part of their civic work and concluded her speech by saying that "America needs a strong Flint, MI."

Coletta's presentation was followed by a presentation by Michael Freeman, Director of the Flint Local Initiatives Support Coalition. He spoke about his experiences moving back to Flint at age 18--because Flint is the city he believes in. He discussed how Flint needs to concentrate its redevelopment to make a substantial impact in one place instead of sprinkling our efforts all over for a very small impact.

"We need a success story. We need to be advocates for everybody's efforts. We don't all have to agree on everything, but if we work together on the things we do agree on, then we can make a difference" said Freeman.

Flint Institute of Arts Director John Henry spoke about the institute's recent additions and accolades. The FIA recently underwent a \$20-million renovation and was also awarded the

Governor's award for Arts and Culture. Despite these accomplishments, Henry lamented the difficulties the FIA has in reaching Flint's youth through traditional media outlets. He shared his hopes that the FIA's launch of a new e-newsletter will help to reach out to high school and college students in the Flint area and encourage them to participate in its many programs and events.

Participants also watched a promotional video produced by the Genesee Regional Chamber of Commerce and introduced by GRCC President Tim Herman. The film focused on the ways that Flint is transforming in the 21st century, the resources and institutions that are already doing great work in Flint, and new ways that Flint can grow and adapt.



Flint Club member and attendee Wesley Whittaker left the event with mixed thoughts on the effectiveness and success of the meeting. "The event was billed as a forum on attracting young, creative talent but much of her (Coletta's) talk focused on Baby Boomers returning to urban living. The reality is that 400-plus students are going to be living in the downtown area in a year and there are insufficient facilities and resources to accommodate them. I would like to see a serious gathering of the stakeholders and resources in this community for identifying some coordinated actionable goals and establishing accountability and feedback." said Whittaker.

A follow-up community Challenge event is planned for February 21st, 2008 to discuss many of the concerns that attendees like Whittaker have. The event will again focus on creating an environment attractive to young mobile talent and will discuss visioning, prioritizing, involving key stakeholders, developing action steps and follow through.

Flint Club is a core partner of the Community Challenge along with The Resource Center, The Community Foundation of Greater Flint, and UM-Flint's University Outreach program. The mission of the partners and everyone involved with Community Challenge is to build a better community here in Flint. Community Challenge events are a way for citizens and local non-profits to decide on common goals and inspire new approaches to the challenges Flint faces in the future.

For more information on these projects please visit the Community Challenge website at www.thecommunitychallenge.org or call Flint Club.org at (810) 233-5468 ext. 3.

Member Profile By Nedra Pickler

I was born at McLaren Hospital in 1975 and went to Bentley Schools in Burton. My biggest influence was my mom, Marcy Pickler, a native of Flint herself who stuck with her hometown in the hard times. Mom raised my sister Anna and me on her own, and the 1980s in Flint were especially tough. She often had no paycheck, but she wouldn't leave the people and place that she loved so much. She went to Mott to get a degree when she couldn't find a job. When she couldn't get work even after graduating, she volunteered fulltime at Love Inc. to help others who were struggling.

She never let the tough economy dampen her spirits and our home was always filled with laughter. She taught my sister and me that we could be anything we wanted, and she exposed us to every cultural opportunity she could around Flint. The city had so much to offer, from programs at the planetarium to the Flint Youth Theater. Eventually, she got a break when I was in high school and the Flint Post Office hired her to sort mail. She still works there to this day.

Today I live in Washington, D.C., and work as a journalist for The Associated Press. I cover presidential politics and have been able to travel the country with President Bush and candidates for the White House from John Kerry to Hillary Clinton. Almost two years

ago, I was on a trip to Mexico with President Bush where I met my future husband, Eric Conner. He works for Fox News, and we are returning to Mexico over Thanksgiving to get married.

The first time I went to the Oval Office to meet the president, I couldn't stop thinking about how I was just this poor kid from Flint and how it was true what my mom told me – that I could be anything that I wanted. In fact, I often think being from Flint gave me a leg up in life. Those of us who have stuck with Flint are survivors!

My greatest source of pride is that I was able to buy a home in the Flint area a couple of years ago so that my mom and grandmother would have a nice place to live. Plus, it's a way for me to stay invested in the community even if I live somewhere else. And it's a place to visit often!

I also am proud that in my mid 20s, I started a scholarship for students at my high school so that I can start to "pay forward" all the people in the community who helped support my education. I never would have been able to go to Michigan State if it weren't for the generous scholarships available in the community. My dream is that one day I'll strike it rich and be able to help pay for even more students to go to college. I named the scholarship after my mom because I wanted it to reflect her lesson

– even if you are poor or times are hard, you don't have to become a statistic. You can be anything.

Tis the Season...

During this season of holiday giving don't forget to include Flint Club on your gift list. Donations of any size will help continue our work to make Flint, Michigan a truly great community. You can give a once-a-year gift or sign up for a monthly donation—the choice is yours.

Please make a donation today by visiting www.flintclub.org or give us a call at (810) 233-5468 or toll free at (866) 54-FLINT.



Local Leadership Development

Leadership Genesee, formerly known as Leadership Flint and Community Leadership, is looking for students for its 2008 class. If you are a business, nonprofit, government, education, or health care professional, or an up-and-coming community leader then Leadership Genesee offers you a unique opportunity to build leadership skills and expand your professional network here in Genesee County.

Leadership Genesee sessions will include discussions on personal leadership styles, economic development, regional cooperation, media relations, public safety, politics & government, diversity, arts and culture, community volunteerism and philanthropy, human services, health care, history and the future of Greater Flint, and education.

Meetings are held weekly from mid-January 2008 until the New Leaders Dinner on Tuesday, May 20. Meeting times will vary with approximately one day-long session each month, one-two 4-7 PM sessions each month and two one-hour lunches each month.

The Early-bird tuition rate is \$1000 per participant, if registered by January 7, 2008. For more information about how you can become involved with Leadership Genesee, call (810) 232-6425 or visit the Leadership Genesee [website](http://www.leadershipgenesee.org).

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscribers are welcome to reproduce, utilize and distribute any and all portions of this newsletter on the condition that Flint Club/Flint Diaspora is cited as the source. Subscribe by joining Flint Club online at www.flintclub.org/membership. Unsubscribe by sending an email to unsubscribe-flintclub@yahoo.com. Further information about the newsletters and an archive of recent issues are available from www.flintclub.org.

Flint Club is a virtual, community-based network for Flint, Michigan. The Club is a 501(c)(3), nonprofit organization with more than 600 members that aims to link people to the life of the city no matter where they live. Contact Rhoda Matthews, Executive Director, Flint Club at (810) 233-5468 and rhoda@flintclub.org for more information.

Send correspondence to Flint Club, P.O. Box 7604, Flint, MI 48507. Visit Flint Club World Headquarters, Capitol Theatre Building, 134 E. Second St., Flint, MI 48502. Call locally (810) 233-5468 or toll-free 1-866-54-FLINT. Fax 810-233-5556.