



This Week

With the Mayor



January 25th, 2019

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Back Office Studio Grand Opening and Introduction

Three years ago, the founders of The Back Office Studio (<https://www.thebackofficestudio.com/>) embarked on a journey to build a community and place where people can come together to connect, create, design and build their future possibilities and opportunities. On Friday January 25th, they will be celebrating their grand opening. Located at 13 N Washington Street downtown Ypsi in the former Pub 13 building, The Back Office Studio (or the BOS) is a dynamic co-working community of passionate, hard working leaders, artists, entrepreneurs and talented people collaborating to build positive futures in Ypsi. The BOS embraces the values of inclusion, sharing and appreciation. They welcome with open arms, celebrate freely and assume positive intentions.

The 9,000 sq. ft. co-working studio offers private offices, dedicated and shared desks, and four conference rooms. Other amenities include high-speed WiFi, a pool table, a foosball table, a kitchenette, and a nap room "to recharge human batteries." Please join them on from 6-8pm on Friday Jan. 25th and help them celebrate with live music by the NTG House Band, local food and meet their community of members and supporters. Be sure to experience the wonders of their very own BOS member, Misha Tuesday - Hypnotist and Magician (<https://mishatuesday.com/>), as he strolls through the crowd amazing guests.

Nathan Phillips Incident in Washington DC Follow Up

Last Sunday, we all saw a disturbing video of a local Native American elder surrounded by dozens of young white men war “whooping,” tomahawk chopping, and mimicking him as he drummed and sang. I issued the statement below following that video.

Shortly after, a backlash happened including accusations that Nathan Phillips lied, a statement from one of the key young men in the video denying any intentional harm, and (I have to say it) the number of trolls on our local pages increasing dramatically.

Mr. Phillips inserted himself into a volatile and hostile interaction between a group called the Black Hebrew Israelites and the group of young students coming from the Pro-Life March. There were vile things being shouted at these young men, at nearby Indigenous people, and at anyone else nearby.

The young students from Covington Catholic HS did not leave. Instead, they started to sing and chant back at the Black Hebrew Israelites. This is where Mr. Phillips stepped in, singing and drumming.

Whether or not Mr. Phillips should have intervened is not mine to judge. He did what he thought was right. The response of the students was to mimic him, do tomahawk chops in the air, and to make “war whoops.” By all measures, this is racist mockery of an Indigenous elder. No excuses, no amount of explanation, nothing other than an apology is appropriate.

Do you find it surprising that the white man’s statement (the primary student in the video facing Mr. Phillips) has been widely supported/reported, yet the Native person’s statement and his integrity has been questioned and challenged repeatedly? What if it had been a crowd of young black male students surrounding and mocking an elderly white man? (Of note, the students are represented by a PR firm)

The young white students had many options. They could have left the location. They could have ignored the hate speech being spewed at them. They could have respected Nathan Phillips and allowed his music to calm down the situation. Instead, they mocked and taunted him.

[Here is a Detroit Free Press article](#) about Mr. Phillips’ offer to meet with the students.

Even after reading social media, reading the news, and getting some pretty darn exciting emails, and phone calls, I still stand by my statement below. Thank you.

Nathan Phillips, an outspoken Native American with long-term ties to Ypsilanti, was the focus of a shameful act of harassment and intimidation on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

The values of Ypsilanti are Pride, Diversity and Heritage. The treatment he received at the hands of young men in DC to attend a Pro-Life march are in stark contrast to those

values. As Mayor of Ypsilanti, I condemn the actions of those youth in the strongest of terms.

Mr. Phillips has served our country as a Marine in the Viet Nam war era, and has worked during his life to uphold the values and lands of Native Americans in many ways and places. He should be held up as a model to our youth. Instead, these young men treated him with threats and harassment.

As a long time resident of our town, Nathan has spoken at protests, city council, public meetings and events. He has held Powwows in our parks, is a water protector who went to Standing Rock with his daughter, and has worked with the Native Youth Alliance locally. Sadly, he was also the target of an act of racist harassment locally as well. He has always been respectful and strong in how he manifests his values. He is a valuable member of our community and I am appalled at how he was treated by these young men.

In stark contrast to his harassers, Nathan's response has been kind, prayerful, strong and in concert with his values and indigenous culture. He acted in the manner of a brave man in the face of threats and jeers, and he has continued that bravery in his statements and actions since then.

Ypsilanti and I are proud of Mr. Phillips for his bravery and actions.

Beth Bashert
Mayor, City of Ypsilanti

It's Snow Season

We have had our first (very late) snow and ice events of the year. Sadly, it happened over a long holiday weekend and the City did not do a good job of clearing snow. I regret that communications were such that the City appeared in a bad light in Facebook photos!

That said, I am not a fan of shaming as a tactic on social media. I find it negative, draining, and ineffective. It is not a direct way of communicating and I am a direct person.

I encourage our community to contact City Hall directly with your helpful information. If City Hall is not open or available, contact your City Council person or myself directly. Then we will get your helpful information to the right department or individual.

I realize that our city is not perfect. There are many ways in which we can do our jobs better. We make mistakes, and miss things. Like any person or organization, when someone helpfully points out something we missed, it is an opportunity to correct the issue. Thank you!

Opioid Epidemic and Local Situation

At my most recent Office Hours, someone asked me what impact the opioid epidemic is having on our community. The follow up suggestion was that I share it in this newsletter. I thought that was a fine idea, so here we are:

The opioid epidemic is nationwide and is impacting our community, as it is many others in our state and nation. There have been some incidents of people being found in a state of overdose in public places, which is painful and upsetting. In addition, implements like syringes sometimes turn up in our public places, which is similarly disturbing.

To be clear, these types of incidents are occurring in many communities, including more and less affluent, including more and less diverse, including more and less urban than ours. Ypsilanti is part of a spectrum.

Our public safety forces have had the opportunity to save some lives using Narcan to help the person until they can get to the hospital. This life-saving drug for on-the-spot emergencies is a small but important success. In some cases, when the person interacting with our first responders is an addict and not engaging in a crime, we are trying to get those folks to a medical facility instead of jail. If a crime has been committed, the situation becomes more complex. However, in some cases, we have been able to get an addicted individual into the recovery system instead of jail or prison.

Many services related to drug addiction are run by Washtenaw County or the State of Michigan. A relatively small municipality like Ypsilanti is a partner and a receiver of services rather than the entity that runs them. Because of this, we rely on our partners for support. Addiction resources are linked below:

<https://www.workithealth.com/blog/addiction-resources-washtenaw-county>

Highlighted Events of the Week:

Pride:

HERsay celebrates all women by opening a stage for singers, storytellers, poets, comedians, actors to speak their truth and say what's on their mind. Entirely volunteer run, the event has raised thousands of dollars for local charities. HERsay sells out every performance and leaves audiences cheering. Curator Patti Smith says, "I started HERsay because women are still not being heard. The goal is to get women on stage, especially those who have not performed before."

HerSay takes place at Go! Ice Cream on Friday 2/1/19 at 7pm

<https://www.facebook.com/events/224668261747577/>

Diversity:

If you have never seen the Prisoner Creative Arts Project show, I highly recommend it. Prisoners are inventive, given lack of materials; they may have to be extremely inventive to create their pieces. Items we think of as garbage, they turn into beauty. Talent, time, patience, and imagination all come together in this show, now in its 24th year.

The United States incarcerates more people per capita than any other country in the world. Our prison system has become the dumping ground, most often for mentally ill, Black, Brown, poor and addicted people. This show makes them visible in a way that is unique and poignant.

Prisoner Creative Arts Project, March 20-April 3 at the Duderstadt Center, UM North Campus

<https://www.facebook.com/events/548884425585680/>

Heritage:

The DDA wants to meet YOU. Yes, you. And you want to meet them. Here is why. They are doing beautification and improvements of our downtown districts. Don't you want to tell them your brilliant ideas? And hear theirs? Plus, the beer will be good and the conversations lively.

DDA Meet & Greet, Mon 1/28/19 6-9pm at 734 Brewing Company in Depot Town

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2648919031798420/>

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