



# Illuminate

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## Beecher Community Schools gives SFTC “Resolution of Support”

Even in the best economic circumstances, public schools struggle to provide even minimal exposure to the arts, let alone the opportunity for students to completely immerse themselves into the people and businesses where they live, while they become part of the living art scene of their community. Shop Floor Theatre Company is on a mission to bring students and the arts together where the students, the artists, and the City live and work. The students not only learn who makes the arts live, breathe and work around town; they experience an environment in which to discover and channel their own creativity and talent. “Everyone I have met has such a unique perspective on the world; I want these students tell their stories through their eyes,” explains the SFTC Executive Director, “acting, producing and performing plays of their own writing, based on interviews with members of the community, staging the events in the forgotten buildings in their own back yard.” In his letter announcing the recent Resolution of Support from Beecher Community Schools, Superintendent Josha Talison writes, “The Theatre Company has been able to fill a void in curricular offerings, creatively engaging students with their neighbors in a way that is both educational and enjoyable. They are a gem to the district.” In its third year of partnership with Beecher, SFTC is ready to grow with the students, offering new and exciting opportunities to reach more students, with the introduction of our new team members’ fresh ideas and resources. As the Executive Director says, “This is a dream come true for all of us”. •



### What else is new??

- SFTC Proudly Introduces Rebecca Smith
- Welcome Arts of Citizenship Intern, Laura Yakas
- Greg Fiedler Discusses Greater Flint Arts Council and SFTC



## City of Flint Mayor Dayne Walling Sends His Thanks



Times have been trying in Flint, this does not mean the people within its borders cannot strive. Through the toughest of days, the arts community in Flint has found a way to flourish and grow quite resilient. Shop floor Theatre Company ambitiously set forth to give a voice to the people of this community. By walking into the neighborhoods and putting on productions outside of the theatre, SFTC adds authenticity to their productions. “Everyone, through their own hardships, has a story to tell. I want them to have an opportunity to give their story; each and every one of them”, the SFTC Executive Director stated. This mission has gained serious popularity from the city. Recently, Mayor Dayne Walling expressed his gratitude for the services SFTC provides. “Thank you for all of your efforts throughout our community to build civic capacity and engage citizens in promoting positive change through place-based arts. Flint is in the midst of a difficult transition into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and it is organizations like yours that are leading this process in a truthful and meaningful manner”, Mayor Walling declared in his letter of thanks.

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## SFTC Introduces: Arts of Citizenship Fellowship, Laura Yakas



is particularly resonant with my own journey as an international student in the United States, and familiarity both personally and intellectually with the issues surrounding immigration,” she stated recently. Laura’s love for the theatre started at an early age. Her deep passion for place-based art and ambitious nature involved her in countless productions; eventually landing a role in a professional stage play directed by New Zealand’s own Stuart Devenie. With awareness, community, and tolerance being the center for SFTC’s mission; the consensus is Yakas is a perfect fit. “This internship marries my youthful and mature passions in such a glorious way!” We look forward to seeing the impact this bright mind has on SFTC and the community this summer. ●

Shop Floor Theatre Company’s recent selection for U of M-Ann Arbor Arts of Citizenships Fellowship brings a very new and talented student to join the Shop Floor team. Ann Arbor has selected one of their finest to join SFTC this summer. Laura Yakas, who received her Bachelor of Arts from Kenyon College (Summa Cum Laude); is furthering her studies at University of Michigan as a doctoral student in Socio-Cultural Anthropology. Equipped with past experience as an organizer, Graduate Student Instructor, and social advocate, she will bring a unique blend of political and social awareness to an already impressive Shop Floor. “In addition to being deeply inspired by the SFTC’s role and goals in general, this summer’s production topic *Immigrant U: An Original Play about the Experiences of International Students in American Universities*



*“I am confident that I would thrive in this position, utilizing and further developing my creativity”*



## Mayor Dayne Walling Continued

“I am also impressed by SFTC’s involvement with youth. The ongoing programming with the Buckham Share Art Project and Genesee Valley Regional Center [youth detention center] encourages and promotes positive social and life skills through theatre. In addition, working in tandem with Project Citizen Youth Perspectives, you have brought a voice to a group of 10-15 year olds in helping to create a series of public service announcements; which promote positive youth civic engagement”. The mayor is excited to view SFTC’s future programming and expects great success. As SFTC’s ramps up with new, creative staff and concepts, the future affiliation with the City of Flint and SFTC will be prosperous. ●

## SFTC Would Like to Welcome: Rebecca Smith

Over the last few months, Shop Floor Theatre Company has moved in some new and exciting directions. One of SFTC’s newest arrivals, brings the character and depth one would expect this organization to acquire.

Rebecca Smith, raised in the Greater Flint Area, involved herself heavily in as many volunteer programs as she could. Throughout her academic career Becca, as SFTC knows her, has worked in her community to provide herself a “hands-on” personal development. As a graduate in the top of her class from The Valley School [Flint, MI] her curricular and extra-curricular activities afforded her the opportunity to experience multiple leadership roles. In her first semester of college, she was awarded the coveted William J. Branstrom Freshman Prize; this is only awarded to the top 5% of students in Michigan. Asking her about SFTC, Becca shows great enthusiasm and is ready to hit the ground running. “I have been enamored with SFTC ever since I heard of them. Their goals are so inspiring to me and I jumped at the opportunity to work with this organization”, she stated in a recent interview. It is our great pleasure to introduce this young and outgoing woman. SFTC couldn’t be more thrilled; her induction increases, exponentially, the community outreach and family oriented programming Shop Floor Theatre Company has in store this summer. ●







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## On a Personal Note:

Greater Flint Arts Council (GFAC) programs and services are designed to engage the community in creative processes; support the work of Michigan artists; develop sustainability in arts agencies throughout Genesee County and bordering communities; aid in the development of new programs and new careers in the arts; increase awareness of the vast number of artistic/cultural offerings; enhance arts education at all levels; stimulate local economic growth while showcasing to the nation the beauty and livability of the greater Flint community. GFAC provides support services and acts as presenters to create professional venues for Michigan artists. We do this to build their careers and enhance economic development. At GFAC we believe that emerging art can transform our community and we can be instrumental in creating an environment where art can develop. Our partnership with the Shop Floor Theatre Company fulfills our mission in many ways. Their verbatim theatre format provides a voice for those who are unheard.

They engage community members and artists in creative work. They bring positive recognition to our community; showing the rich heritage of culture and talent that has always transpired from a community that played a significant role in changing the world. Shop Floor Theatre Company advances arts education and will be expanding in that capacity in the years to come. They are a poster program for why there is a Greater Flint Arts Council and we are proud to be able to serve them. •

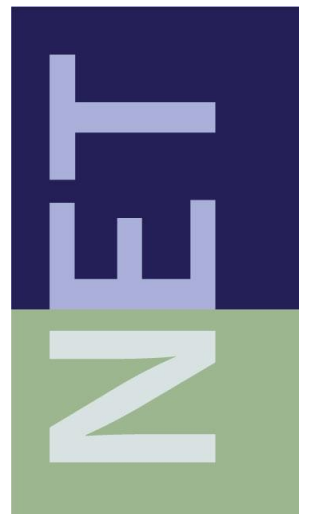
Greg Fiedler  
President & CEO  
Greater Flint Arts Council

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