

## Whitmer signs bills that give Michigan's foster care youth hope for a quality education

by Lori Higgins



*Christian Randle (center) speaks to the Michigan Board of Education on Dec. 12 about legislation regarding the education of foster care youth. Randle was in the foster care system for years. (Image courtesy of Park West)*

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has signed legislation to ensure that students placed in foster care receive a quality education, a guarantee that has been missing in Michigan and has led to gaps in education for many youth.

The legislation was inspired by the stories of young people who told state education officials and lawmakers that their education was disrupted or inadequate.

The legislation Whitmer signed Thursday was part of a three-bill package that will now require residential facilities to enroll students in school within five days of placement and to provide an education that meets the state's graduation requirements.

The bill was designed to address complaints from foster youth that they missed weeks of school and in some cases learned that the education they received didn't meet state standards. The state has an estimated 10,000 kids in foster care, but the total number is unknown because many go uncounted in the current system, advocates say.

"When I heard the heartbreaking stories of foster youth who were working hard at their studies, only to discover their caretakers had given them busy work that wouldn't count toward graduation, I knew I had to act," Rep. Stephanie Young, a Democrat from Detroit who introduced the legislation, said in a statement.

Young told Chalkbeat earlier this year that many foster youth have experienced trauma and that "the very minimum we can do is ensure they get the best education they can."

Whitmer previously signed two other pieces of legislation that were part of the package. One requires the Michigan Department of Education to oversee residential foster care facilities' educational programs and enforce compliance. The other requires the education department, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and the state Center for Educational Performance and Information to track the number of children in foster care, where they are, and how they're progressing in their education. That information must be reported to the legislature.

### Fall 2024

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Submit your artwork to be featured in upcoming newsletters! Ask your worker how to be featured in future newsletters.

Christian Randle, a high school senior who was in foster care for several years, said this to Chalkbeat earlier this year about the legislation:

“It’s the bare minimum that they can do, because they haven’t been doing anything for years,” said Randle. “It shouldn’t even have taken this long to pass the bills. Just the fact that it’s had to take this long shows a lot about how kids in foster care are treated.”

Randle entered a foster care residential facility at age 11 and worked diligently on his schoolwork to fulfill a promise he made to himself to graduate high school. But when he tried to enroll in a traditional high school two years ago, he found no record of him attending nearly three years of high school.

“Through all that stress and trauma going on inside of that foster care facility, the one thing I was happy about coming out of it was my schooling,” Randle, who now lives on his own, told Chalkbeat. “And that was taken away from me.”

“Michigan’s foster kids deal with so many challenges in their lives, but being denied graduation because their curriculum is inadequate should never be one of them,” Thomas Hickson, Jr., vice president of public policy and advocacy for the Michigan Catholic Conference, said in a statement. “All Michigan’s children deserve a quality education to be able to succeed later in life.”

*Chalkbeat reporter Hannah Dellinger contributed to this report.*

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## Heart Gallery Recap



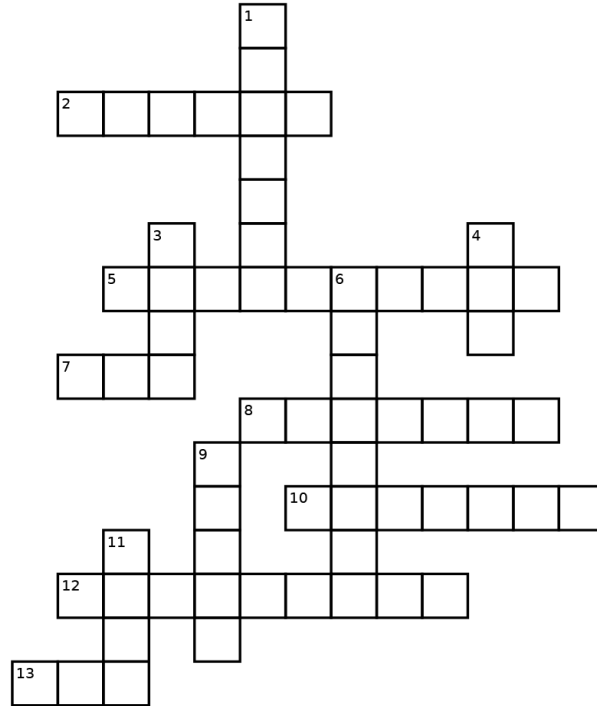
On Saturday, September 21st, roughly 160 people were in attendance for the 2024 Michigan Heart Gallery Premiere. Those in attendance enjoyed the premiere of the Heart Gallery film, a lunch, and movie theater treats!

We were delighted to see so many MARE youth enjoy themselves at this event. Do you want to be featured on next year’s Heart Gallery? Contact your adoption worker and let them know!



# Fall Activity

## Fall Crossword Puzzle



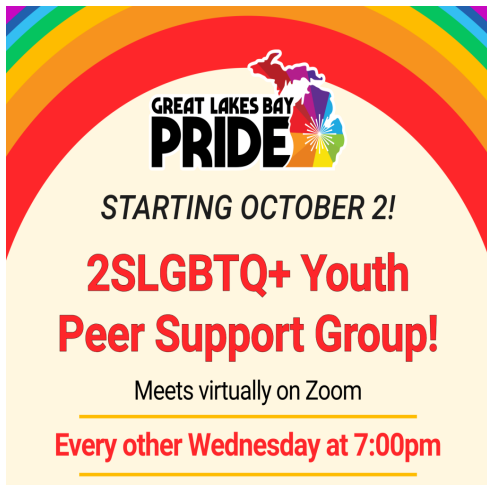
### Down:

1. a large, round, orange vegetable
3. feeling of warmth and being snug
4. baked dessert with many different fillings
6. a path cut into a field of corn that visitors have to find their way through (2 words)
9. fruit that can be made into cider
11. season after summer

### Across:

2. season of changing colors and cooler temperatures
5. a symbol of abundance that many associate with Thanksgiving
7. fed to a variety of animals and can be used as seating for a ride
8. an outdoor fire
10. the process or period of gathering crops
12. celebrated with trick or treating and wearing costumes
13. nocturnal bird that hoots

# Peer Support Group Meetings

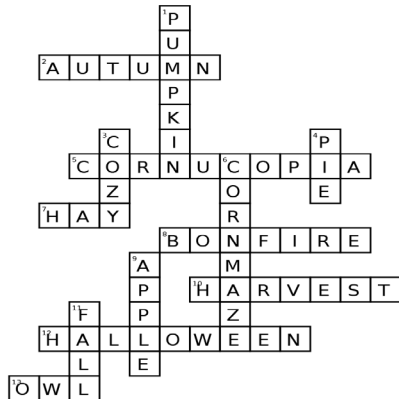


Great Lakes Bay Pride are hosting monthly peer support groups for 2SLGBTQ+ members. Great Lakes Bay Pride's 2SLGBTQ+ Youth Peer Support Group is a casual networking and peer support opportunity for young people to connect in the community. Ages 13-17 youth who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ and their youth allies are welcome to attend. This group is facilitated by a LMSW and advance registration is required.

The have virtual meetings every other Wednesday from 7-8 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for November 13th. If you have any questions, contact the Program Manager, Kt Mandoka, at [kt@greatlakesbaypride.org](mailto:kt@greatlakesbaypride.org).

## Fall Crossword Answer Key

### Fall Crossword Puzzle



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## Calendar

### November 23 National Adoption Day

National Adoption Day is a collective, grassroots effort to raise awareness of children waiting to be adopted from foster care in the United States.

### January 18 Meet & Greet Virtual Event

Registration will be available on [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org)

### February 22 Meet & Greet Ann Arbor

Registration will be available on [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org)

For more information, contact [jessica\\_thompson@judsoncenter.org](mailto:jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org) or call 734-528-2070.

**Take note:** Watch for notices of upcoming Meet & Greets on [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org) and on Facebook and Instagram.

## MARE contact information

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3840 Packard Road,  
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TTY: 734-794-2984  
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