

# Community Engagement Conference 2022

# Panelists

## **Monika Dix**

## **Japanese Language & Culture Transform Saginaw Communities**

*This community engagement project bridges the Japanese language program at SVSU with the Japanese Teahouse in Saginaw. The Japanese cultural center has a beautiful garden which opened to the public in 1971. It was designed by Mr. Yataro Suzue and Lori Barber. The tea house was designed by renowned architect Mr. Tsutomu Takenaka and constructed in 1986 as a collaborative effort between the City of Saginaw and its sister city Tokushima, Japan. Its foundation rests part on American soil and part on Japanese soil. It is treasured as one of the most authentic tea houses in North America. The form of tea ceremony performed there dates back in an unbroken lineage to 1600 AD. Monika Dix, Professor of Japanese and MFL Department Chair, has been doing community engagement with the Saginaw Teahouse since 2011, including lectures, demonstrations, tea ceremony, student internships, and volunteer work.*

## **Geoffery Haney**

## **Public Art Partnerships: Marshall Fredericks Sculpture Museum and the Great Lakes Bay Region**

*Currently in its pilot phase, the Public Art Passport is fast becoming a comprehensive portal to public art in Michigan's Great Lakes Bay Region. Developed and implemented by the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum, residents and visitors alike are now able to explore 360-degree views of public art across Saginaw, Midland, and Bay City including public art hubs on regional college and university campuses. Envisioned as an ever-expanding resource of and for the region, this PublicArtPassport.com website portal includes information about each public artwork, google map locations and links for ease of visiting in person, and also highlights arts and cultural organizations in the Great Lakes Bay Region. The Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum received five grants, one national and four regional, to help fund the 'NEA Big Read: Great Lakes Bay Region' community read. This initiative is not just a book club, but a series of programs and events centered around one book and its themes with the goal of bringing people together from our neighboring counties. The Museum and its partner organizations have selected the book 'The House of Mango Street' by Sandra Cisneros in part because it is accessible to a wide range of ages and abilities and has a children's companion book called 'Hairs/Pelitos' that helps to ensure everyone in the family can connect around the stories and themes, including 'neighbors and neighborhoods. The ten-month initiative included Latinx cultural events, the commissioning of three new public artworks, and the launch of 'Mi Casa, Su Casa: Sharing Stories about Neighbors and the Places We Call Home' throughout the three-county region.*

## **Andrea Ondish**

## **NEA Big Read: Great Lakes Bay Region**

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& EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

## Sherrin Frances

## Saginaw Chapbook Project

**Partners:** *Friends of Theodore Roethke Foundation, Kalamazoo Book Arts Center*

*The “Saginaw Chapbook Project” will provide a creative writing outlet for adults living in the Saginaw area and possibly across the state the opportunity to document the mood of Saginaw during the COVID pandemic. The major components of the project include a series of talks with poets, writing workshops, and building handbound letterpress books with participants’ poetry. The project culminates with a book launch and poetry reading. This project is grounded in the idea that creative writing positively impacts mental health. Reading and writing have long histories of being touted as holding therapeutic value. Historian Mary Mahoney (2017) writes, “The notion that books can heal is as old as reading itself but, during World War I, doctors and librarians joined together to apply reading as a form of therapy.” The connection becomes even more relevant when contextualized with three trends: Evidence of an increased need for mental health support since COVID began (Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority, 2021); a national trend showing an increase in adults who read poetry (Hutter, 2018); and an increase in people engaged in creative writing and reading during the pandemic (Mak et al, 2021). SVSU, the Friends of Theodore Roethke Foundation, and the Kalamazoo Book Arts Center are well-positioned to push an already growing momentum even further by providing free access to resources that may not be financially or logistically viable for individuals. These resources include access to professional writers, poets, and artists; writing guidance from creative writing instructors; access to bookmaking professionals and letterpress equipment; and an array of spaces in which to work including tech-enabled classrooms and the childhood home of a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet. The Saginaw Chapbook itself, the anthology full of participant poetry, will provide a lasting record of these people, living in this place, at this moment in time.*

## Julie Foss

## Roberts Fellowship Service Projects

*Members of the 23rd class of Roberts Fellows share their work on service projects in partnership with the Barb Smith Suicide Resource and Response Network and the Bay County Animal Services and Adoption Center.*

*Project: Carnival at the Cattery*

*Community Partner: Bay County Animal Services and Adoption Center*

*Project: Mental Health and Suicide Awareness*

*Community Partner: Barb Smith Suicide Response and Resource Network*

## Warren Fincher Rosina Hassoun

## Research Services for the Local Nonprofit Community

*Relying on funds through the CETL Departmental Innovation Grant, the Sociology Department has established an ongoing research forum – a “community research lab” – that links local non-profits in need of research assistance with faculty and students in the Sociology Department. We believe that this will serve as a beneficial resource both to the community partners by providing them with needed research resources and to mid-program and advanced sociology students, who stand to gain practical research skills and consequently bolster their graduate school and employment prospects. We are currently working on our inaugural project, as needs assessment for a local food bank, and we are currently arranging for our second endeavor.*

## Rajani Muraleedharan

## SVSU GoBabyGo

*SVSU Go-Baby-Go aims to provide mobility to special needs’ children with limited cognitive and/or physical disabilities. At the SVSU GoBabyGo workshop, ride-on toy cars will be modified to fit by parents with the help of SVSU students so children with developmental disorders and physical disabilities can drive independently. Go-Baby-Go is a not-for-profit global initiative which provides universities the chance to contribute towards the community and provide a positive impact worldwide.*