

# Theatre Arts Club hosts 'Summer Speakeasy and Art Exhibit'

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*By Jody McVeigh on May 10, 2023*

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Members of the Theatre Arts Club invite revelers everywhere to channel the Gatsby era by donning their most spiffy smart pants or fringe-hemmed flapper dresses — with gloves, of course — for its Summer Speakeasy and Art Exhibit, from 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 20, at Grosse Pointe Congregational Church, 240 Chalfonte, Grosse Pointe Farms.



Kim Czasnojc, left, and Lisa Lechniak, both past presidents, organized the speakeasy event.

Cats and kittens will be escorted via elevator to the lower-level hall where a wine bar and light beverages await, along with summer snacks and charcuterie boards.

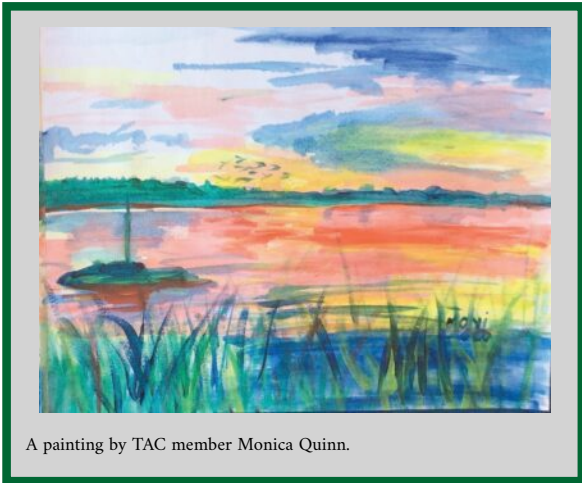
“Music will be themed to the speakeasy 1920s era,” said Lisa Lechniak, who is co-chairing the event with Kim Czasnojc. “We’re asking people to dress the part if they want.”

Not only will the event entertain — some TAC actors will be costumed and in character, Lechniak noted — but it will be educational for those interested in learning more about TAC, which was established as a ladies-only drama club in 1910, and is believed to be the oldest women’s theater group in the country.

The atmosphere will be enhanced by the artwork of TAC member artists Izzy Donnelly, Monica Quinn and Ashley Menth, whose work ranges from paintings to picture scarves to greeting cards. All of their pieces will be for sale via cash or check only; Donnelly also accepts Venmo.

"We had always done two plays a year, but post-COVID, we do an event in place of one play," Donnelly noted.

"We vary what we offer," TAC President Jackie Canny added. "We've done Kentucky Derby parties, Bunco fundraisers and other themes to build up our scholarship fund."



That's the point of the party — bringing in dollars to dole out to a deserving drama student at Wayne State University. The Eva Woodbridge Victor Scholarship has been awarded annually since 1952.

Though in years past, the club would interview candidates and select a scholarship winner, the university now chooses who gets the \$2,600 award. Payment for the student will start with the fall semester, Lechniak said.

"This marks 71 years of the scholarship," Donnelly added. "Every cent we raise goes to the scholarship. It's a wonderful cause."



In addition to food and drinks, a silent auction will feature items donated by members of TAC, as well as a few businesses. Jewelry and gift baskets will be among the prizes up for bid. Additionally, each artist featured in the show has donated a piece of their work for the auction.

"People are very generous in donating silent auction items," Canny said.

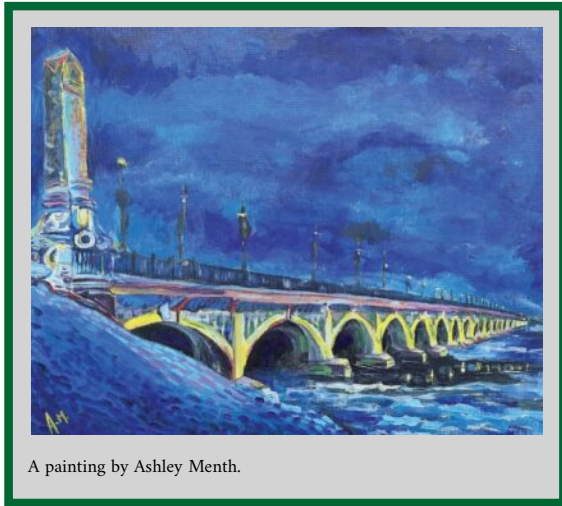
"... And the church is a really good partner

with us," she added, noting TAC uses Congregational's fellowship hall for play rehearsals.

Their main event takes place in the fall at The Players Club in Detroit.

Lechniak, who is a TAC past president, said camaraderie is the No. 1 reason she enjoys participating in the group.

"Everyone is gracious and friendly," she said. "Even if they don't act, they ask if they can do something else, like jump in behind the scenes or set up beforehand. Plus, it's become more of a



A painting by Ashley Menth.

social group.”

TAC hosts a book club, a new writing class and monthly lunches for members.

“Age doesn’t matter,” Lechniak said. “We all feel right. We range from 40 and up, but we welcome the younger crowd too.”

For more information about the Summer Speakeasy and Art Exhibit or to apply for TAC membership, visit [theatreartsclub.com](http://theatreartsclub.com).

“This is open to the public,” Canny said of the event. “We encourage any and all who have any interest in the arts to attend. Come and have a fun afternoon close to home.”

### The details

Who: Theatre Arts Club

What: Summer Speakeasy and Art Exhibit: a fundraising event for the Eva Woodbridge Victor Scholarship Fund

Where: Grosse Pointe Congregational Church, 240 Chalfonte, Grosse Pointe Farms

When: 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 20

Cost: \$26.50 per person in advance or online via PayPal; \$28 per person at the door, cash only. The deadline for purchasing tickets in advance is Thursday, May 18.

Info: Email [questions@theatreartsclub.com](mailto:questions@theatreartsclub.com)



### About Eva Woodbridge Victor

Eva Woodbridge Victor was one of the founding members of the Theatre Arts Club when it formed in 1910, and served as the club president 1928-30. She was a dramatic actress who appeared in a number of Broadway productions and with the Jessie Bonstelle Stock Company in Detroit. She also was a stage teacher in diction and had her own radio program, “The Word Woman,” where listeners would tune in to hear her perform dramatic readings and teach the importance of proper diction. The program aired daily on Detroit’s WJBK.

The Eva Woodbridge Victor Scholarship Fund serves as a memorial to her. Upon her death on Feb. 2, 1952, she bequeathed a monetary gift to TAC to be used specifically for scholarship awards. TAC continues to make contributions to this award through fundraisers.

Since 1952, TAC has awarded this yearly scholarship to an outstanding drama student for their senior year's tuition at Wayne State University. The selection is based on the student's talent, contribution to the theater program at Wayne State and financial need. This scholarship is made possible through the donations of TAC members and others who support TAC's scholarship fundraising events.