



# myMCLS

## MONROE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

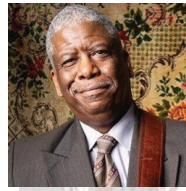
WINTER 2025  
NEWSLETTER

Celebrating the  
**38TH YEAR OF THE ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

# Blues Series



RECIPIENT OF THE BLUES FOUNDATION'S KEEPING THE BLUES ALIVE AWARD 2009



The Monroe County Library System is thrilled to kick off the 38th Annual Blues Concerts Series, a cherished tradition that brings the community together through the power of music. A wide range of blues music styles delivered in live performances are scheduled for the annual celebration of Black History Month, acknowledging the contributions made by African American artists to our country's musical and cultural traditions.

National recording artist **Nora Jean Wallace** headlines at the main concert, *The Big Gig*. Artists from metropolitan Detroit, Ann Arbor, Toledo, and Louisiana will present concerts in library branches throughout the county. All events are free and open to the public.

Weekly "Tuesday is Blues Day" concerts are scheduled in six community library branches. Concerts begin on Tuesday, January 28 and run every Tuesday through March 4. Artists performing are finger-style and slide guitarist **Rollie Tussing**; Detroit's "Prince of the Blues" **Chris Canas** in a solo show; **the Brothers Groove** paying tribute to the late "Gentleman of the Blues" **Johnnie Basset**; Detroit writer **Bill Harris** with **Rev. Robert Jones** explore the universal appeal of the blues through music and poetry; accordion player **Mark Palms** and acclaimed Louisiana fiddler **Cedric Watson** celebrating Mardi Gras with Creole music; and Toledo's dynamic gospel group **Nikki D & The Sisters of Thunder**.

The 2025 *Big Gig*, the series' multi-act concert, takes place on Saturday, February 22 in the Meyer Theater at Monroe County Community College. In celebrating Black History Month and "the roots of all American music," this year's show takes a journey through blues styles that influenced pop and American roots music in the 1950s, 1960s and beyond. **Reverend Robert B. Jones** carries on the program's long tradition of serving as the master of ceremonies and opening with a set of acoustic country blues coming out of the South. Ann Arbor's renowned guitarist **George Bedard and the Kingpins** play a mix of blues and related styles including rockabilly, swing, jazz, country, and rock and roll mostly from the 1950s. Veteran Chicago area singer **Nora Jean Wallace and her band** explore blues coming out of the Delta in the deep South and up to Chicago.



Monroe County's 38th Annual Black History Month Blues Series is presented by the Monroe County Library System, Monroe County Community College, and the 2025 Blues Coalition of community partners: DTE Foundation, Monroe NAACP, Friends of Bedford, Friends of Carleton, Friends of Dorsch, Friends of Ellis, Friends of Ida, and Friends of South Rockwood.

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For more information on all 2025 Blues Series events visit us online at <https://mymcls.com/blues>

# Letter From the Director

Happy New Year! One of my favorite traditions is kicking things off with a sneak peek at what's ahead. The highly anticipated 38th Annual Black History Month Blues Series sets the tone for an exciting year. Please be sure to check out the full schedule of 2025 Blues Series events included in this newsletter, or online at [mymcls.com/blues](http://mymcls.com/blues).

While I should probably pace myself with big announcements, I just can't resist sharing a few teasers—there's so much in store to strengthen and grow our community! Thanks to the City of Monroe's focus on growth and expansion, the L.S. Navarre Branch Library will be undergoing significant renovations. The branch will temporarily relocate while work is underway, and opening details for their temporary location will be announced as soon as possible. This large-scale project is part of the City of Monroe's vision to create a community campus that will house the L.S. Navarre Branch Library, Learning Bank, and the Opportunity Center. The renovations will focus on improving accessibility, upgrading technology, and creating inviting spaces for study, collaboration, and community events.

I'll keep this message brief to make room for articles that spotlight our programs and services, but before I go, thank you for your continued support. It's because of you that we're able to thrive and make a difference together. Here's to an amazing year ahead!

Warm regards,  
- Nancy Bellaire

# Kids Corner



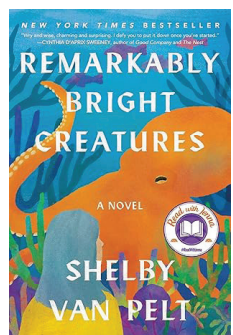
## ABOUT 1000 BOOKS BEFORE KINDERGARTEN:

Read to your child early and often! The goal is to have read 1,000 books before your little one starts kindergarten. Reading just one book a night will equal out to 365 books in a year. That is 730 books in two years and more than 1,000 books in three years. Reading with your child provides a great opportunity for bonding.

## HOW TO PARTICIPATE:

Keep track of the number of books your child reads using a 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Reading Log, available to pick up at any branch of the Monroe County Library System. At each milestone, visit a branch to redeem a prize.

Learn more at [mymcls.com/1000-books](http://mymcls.com/1000-books)



## What if everyone read the same book and then joined all those readers in talking about it?

That's the idea behind One Book, One Community of Monroe County. Each year, the One Book, One Community of Monroe County selection committee chooses a readily available and discussible book written by a major author. Monroe County residents are then invited to read the same book at the same time and discuss it through a series of free programs running approximately one month.

Each year's events feature book discussions and free county-wide community activities related to the themes raised by these provocative and inspiring stories. One Book, One Community of Monroe County aims to enrich the experience of reading for everyone, regardless of race, gender, age, income, or the neighborhood they call home.

The Committee is excited to announce that the One Book One Community selection for 2025 is *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by **Shelby Van Pelt** - a beautiful exploration of friendship, reckoning, and hope.

After Tova Sullivan's husband died, she began working the night shift at the Sowell Bay Aquarium, mopping floors and tidying up. Keeping busy has always helped her cope, which she's been doing since her eighteen-year-old son, Erik, mysteriously vanished on a boat in the Puget Sound over 30 years ago. As she works, Tova becomes acquainted with curmudgeonly Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus living at the aquarium. Marcellus knows more than anyone can imagine, but wouldn't dream of lifting one of his eight tentacles for his human captors—until he forms an unlikely friendship with Tova.

Ever the detective, Marcellus deduces what happened the night Tova's son disappeared. As his affection for Tova grows, Marcellus must use every trick his old, invertebrate body can muster to unearth the truth for her before it's too late.

*One Book, One Community of Monroe County aims to enrich the experience of reading for everyone, regardless of race, gender, age, income or the neighborhood they call home. For more information and to find a One Book One Community event, visit [www.monroecc.edu/one-book-one-community/2025](http://www.monroecc.edu/one-book-one-community/2025).*



# BLUES SERIES 2025 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

All concerts begin at 7:00 p.m. and are free and open to the public. Seating is general admission, first-come, first-served until branch capacity is reached.

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2025 at 7:00 PM

### Rollie Tussing - Ida Branch Library

Award winner fingerstyle and slide guitarist, Rollie Tussing, kicks off the 2025 Blues Series. Tussing describes his music as "lonesome tunes" consisting of blues, country and folk from the early 1920s and '30s.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025 at 7:00 PM

### Chris Canas - Dorsch Memorial Branch Library

Known for his blistering electric guitar and high-octane performances, Chris Canas, Detroit's "Prince of the Blues," unplugs for a solo acoustic set of original and classic blues.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025 at 7:00 PM

### Rev. Robert B. Jones and Bill Harris

#### Carleton Branch Library

Detroit writer Bill Harris and musician Rev. Robert Jones present "The Blues and What They're Good For," an exploration of the blues as a musical art form with songs that speak to a problem and provide a way to cope with the situation. Through spoken-word prose and poetry provided by Mr. Harris and musical accompaniment by Rev. Jones, they blend different art forms to produce a deeper understanding of the blues.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2025 at 7:00 PM

### The Brothers Groove - Bedford Branch Library

The Brothers Groove led by organist Chris Codish pay tribute to one of the blues series' favorite performers, the late Johnnie Bassett. Accompanying the band for the tribute are special guests guitarist Brett Lucas and sax player Keith Kaminski.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2025 at 7:00 PM

### THE BIG GIG! - Monroe County Community College

Celebrate Black History Month and "the roots of all American music" with Monroe County's award-winning annual blues music concert, The Big Gig! This year's show is a musical journey through a variety of blues styles that influenced American roots music in the 1950s, 1960s, and beyond.

Rev. Robert B. Jones serves as the master of ceremonies and opens with a set of acoustic country blues coming out of the South. Ann Arbor's renowned guitarist George Bedard and the Kingpins play a mix of blues and related styles including rockabilly, swing, jazz, country, and rock and roll mostly from the 1950s. Veteran Chicago area singer Nora Jean Wallace and her band feature Delta and Chicago blues.

*The Big Gig! is an extremely popular event. No advance tickets are required and seating is general admission, first-come, first-served until Meyer Theater capacity is reached. Doors to the theater will open at 6:00pm and the show begins at 7:00pm sharp.*

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2025 at 7:00 PM

### Creole du Nord and Cedric Watson

#### South Rockwood Branch Library

Mardi Gras in Monroe is celebrated with the Michigan-based group Creole du Nord featuring accordion player Mark Palms. The band is joined by Louisiana's acclaimed fiddler Cedric Watson in a concert showcasing Creole, Cajun and Zydeco styles.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2025 at 7:00 PM

### Nikki D & the Sisters of Thunder

#### South Rockwood Branch Library

Toledo's dynamic gospel group Nikki D & the Sisters of Thunder blend gospel and blues providing infectious rhythms and grooves. Nikki D, known as "The Jimi Hendrix of Sacred Steel," leads the group on vocals and Hawaiian steel guitar.

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 Find more events at [bit.ly/eventsatmymcls](http://bit.ly/eventsatmymcls)

## Baby Bop

### At the Ellis Library & Reference Center

#### Tuesday, February 4, 2025 from 9:15am - 10:00am

Let's cultivate a love for books, music, and the library! Join us for "Baby Bop" a playgroup and storytime for our youngest patrons, at the Ellis Library & Reference Center. You can play and socialize with other little ones while enjoying music, bounces, sensory activities, and board books. This is open to babies 18 months or younger. Register online at: [bit.ly/ellisbop](http://bit.ly/ellisbop)

## Illustrator's Workshop

### At the Ida Branch Library

#### Wednesday, February 5, 2025 from 10:00am - 11:00am

Join us each week as we explore the world of art in children's books. We'll learn about different artists and how they make the art that they do. Then, we'll try out their techniques for ourselves! Register online at: [bit.ly/idaillustrate](http://bit.ly/idaillustrate)

## Library Games Guild

### At the Dundee Branch Library

#### Sunday, February 16, 2025 from 2:00pm - 7:00pm

Welcome to the Library Games Guild at the Dundee Branch Library, where dice roll, cards shuffle, and strategy rules supreme! Join us on our cozy, mysterious lower level, our secret lair of board game bliss (or, you know, the basement). This is a 16+ event where adults and older teens can gather, snack, and unleash their competitive spirits over tabletop games.

Oh, and here's the fine print: no little guild members allowed. This is strictly an adventure for the grown-ups and big kids, and unfortunately, we're unable to offer child care. So, leave the kiddos at home, grab your game face, and prepare for strategic mayhem, laughter, and the thrill of victory (or at least a solid attempt)!

## Coming Soon Booklist

### April 2025

- Strangers in Time by David Baldacci
- The World's Fair Quilt by Jennifer Chiaverini
- OverKill by J.A. Jance

### May 2025

- Nightshade by Michael Connelly
- South of Nowhere by Jeffery Deaver
- Hidden Nature by Nora Roberts

### Discover GREAT TITLES coming to MCLS:

- [mymcls.com/all-recommendations](http://mymcls.com/all-recommendations)

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**Holiday Closings**

All branches of the Monroe County Library System will be closed:

February 17, 2025 in observance of Presidents' Day  
and  
April 20, 2025 in observance of Easter



# Become a Friend of the Library!

If you love the library and want to help enhance library services and promote library use, we extend an invitation to you to become involved in the Friends of the Monroe County Library System. Your membership also entitles you to invitations to Book Sale previews, special Friends events, and related Library mailings.

Please fill out the application below, call 734-241-5770, or visit <https://bit.ly/mymclsfriend>

**New Membership**  **Renewal**

Name: .....

Address: ..... Phone: .....

City: ..... State: ..... Zip: .....

Please make checks payable to **FRIENDS OF THE MONROE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM.**

**Classes of membership:**

- Individual (annual)-\$10.00
- Family (annual)-\$15.00
- Senior (annual)-\$5.00
- Junior (annual)-\$2.00
- Life- \$200.

Joining the **FRIENDS of MCLS** entitles you to membership in your local **FRIENDS** group. With which branch library would you like to be affiliated? .....

What would you like **FRIENDS** to support?

Books  Technology  Programs  Beautification

Other? .....

We also welcome corporate sponsors. Please call the library for details.

**The Monroe County Library System Board of Trustees**  
Rob Peven, **Chair** ♦ Beth LaPensee, **Vice Chair** ♦ Dr. Rita Gordon, **Secretary**  
Catharine Calder, **Trustee** ♦ Mike Grodi, **Trustee** ♦ **Director:** Nancy Bellaire