

to the community: letters from the staff

In case it is not obvious, this is a DIY publication, the first issue of which was developed over a period of many months—and it took that long, in part, because I lacked previous page layout experience and had to learn Adobe InDesign from scratch. This issue had to be slapped together in just a few weeks, and all the caffeine poisoning and mad scrambling demanded by this time frame has had me doing a lot of thinking about what *DIY* really means. The term “DIY” can simply denote a chosen approach to a specific task, or it can be used to describe an entire way of life. Either way, it seems to me, there are a few essential ingredients—you could call them values, beliefs, or maybe system requirements—at the heart of DIY.

One is a willingness to tolerate imperfection—a willingness to make mistakes. We, and especially *I*, have made plenty. Just for starters, I took such a long time placing and tweaking this issue’s ads that I ran out of time to finish revising and fact-checking my article about the Macomb Food Co-op’s recent progress and future plans, so—with apologies to all concerned—that article will have to run in March.

I could go on and on listing my personal missteps related to this project, and the ones we have made collectively, but it seems worth noting that they all have to do with another DIY ingredient—the process of learning by doing.

Before the life events that indirectly landed me in Macomb, I taught drawing classes to college freshmen and sophomores in art departments all over this land. Most of these students had not done much drawing from observation previously, but many of them still wanted—*expected*—their drawings to be proficient right away. They did not want to wade through the MESS, and the million MISTAKES, that comprise the process of learning to draw—that, in fact, *are the act of drawing itself*. They held themselves back from this process, frozen and tentative, until I gave them explicit permission to dive into the mess by *commanding* that they make hundreds of bad drawings. More, more! Faster, worse! Look at your subject; not at your drawing! Until, disheveled and smudged with charcoal dust, they stopped thinking about the product and were fully engaged in process. As they became brave and wandered off their stilted scripts, their drawings got better. They became

proficient.

At *the Macopolitan*, we’re somewhere in that messy pit from whence proficiency emerges. And here’s the thing: once you are in it, you notice other brave souls there. People who dove in, with or without permission, and are figuring it out. John Lane, DIY farmer. Margaret Brabham, DIY blogger. Chew Toy, DIY band.

One thing that Dan Clark and I have learned in this crucible is that assembling even a rinky-dink monthly mag is a bit too much work for two human beings who already and necessarily have other jobs. So next month we are welcoming Heather Swope to the DIY mosh pit, as our Calendar Editor. Heather will have full responsibility for collecting and assembling all the local happenings found in the center pages of *the*



Macopolitan, and we’re sure she’s going to do an amazing job. Here’s a photo of the lovely Ms. Swope, and you can read her bio on our website. When she asks you what you’ve got going on, you should tell her.

Until then: more, more, faster, worse!! It’s the only way we’re gonna make it through this thing. And thanks for your patience while we get it figured out.

A black and white advertisement for Lane Brothers Piano Tuning. The text is arranged diagonally: "LANE BROTHERS" at the top, "PIANO TUNING" in the middle, and "regular tuning \$50" at the bottom. Below this, in a dark box, is the email "johndaniellane@gmail.com" and the phone number "309 255 6245".

Hillary McMahan
Managing Mistake-
Maker
the Macopolitan



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