



Week in Focus: Gazette photographers cover Allegan County Fair, WMU medical school and Sophia's recovery

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on September 20, 2014 at 7:00 AM, updated September 20, 2014 at 7:09 AM

KALAMAZOO, MI -- MLive/Kalamazoo Gazette photographers looked back over work from the past week to select some of their favorite and most meaningful photos to write about. Here are their thoughts into making this week's best-of collection.

Mark Bugnaski, multimedia specialist

On Western Michigan University's Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine: There's a very impressive new facility in downtown Kalamazoo. The former Upjohn/Pharmacia/Pfizer Building 267 donated to Western in 2011 by MPI Research is now a state-of-the-art medical school. **The Stryker Medical School** is open and recently welcomed its inaugural class of 54 students. The space is modern and beautiful, and the school is a significant development for the downtown. I had a chance to meet and greet a few of the new students and I'm inspired by their commitment and desire to study here. The school's success will also be our success. Let's make these students feel welcomed.

On Sophia's recovery: Sophia Putney-Wilcox met with MLive reporter Aaron Mueller and me at Bronson Methodist Hospital this week. Putney-Wilcox is recovering from injuries suffered during a confrontation involving her ex-boyfriend, **Adam Shigwadja**, 18, who allegedly broke into her home and set it on fire. I admire her bravery to talk publicly about her abuse and to give warning to other young women who might find themselves with a controlling or oppressive relationship. Putney-Wilcox advised women to listen to their intuition and said to reach out for help early. "Every single person deserves better than what I went through," Putney-Wilcox said.

Katie Alaimo, multimedia specialist intern

On Allegan County Fair: The Allegan County Fair came to a close last weekend. Over the nine-day run for the fair I had the chance to follow Robyn Wixom and her two boys as they prepared to show 4-H livestock. I'm not sure that the general public has any idea how much work goes into showing cattle, pigs and goats, but I for one didn't before following Miles and Trace as they prepared their dairy and beef cows before hauling them off to the livestock tents. In addition to making some fun photos, I also learned a tremendous amount about the dedication and effort required to raise animals for 4-H.

On Flying Star Rodeo: The rodeo is also another staple at the Allegan County Fair I was anxious to cover. I've always been fascinated by the modern-day cowboy, for whom rodeo is a way of life. Not only did Junfu Han and I cover the rodeo as a news event, we also had the opportunity to get up-close with the athletes and **capture their portraits**, giving us the chance to show readers the men and women beneath the ubiquitous cowboy hats.

Junfu Han, multimedia specialist intern

On cowboy portraits: I never really liked taking portraits when I started photography. I thought those were just posed,

stated, easy-to-do, non-documentary, non-photojournalism works. But I started to get into portraits almost two years ago, when I was traveling to small, run-down towns in New Mexico and also to New Mexico's U.S.-Mexico border while working on my thesis in grad school. When I started visiting those towns, my conversations with the residents began with making portraits. Most of the time, I met them on the street or in front of their houses, but they chose the spot, the pose they were most comfortable with for me, a stranger to take their photos. I began to love portrait photography as a way to get to know someone, to let them tell their stories in front of my camera.

This is one of the reasons Katie Alaimo and I decided to work on the portrait gallery of bull riders and bronco riders at the Allegan County Fair rodeo. Each piece of gear on those cowboys -- the vest, the spur, the hat, the shirt -- tells a story of the person. Rodeo is their show, their competition, and their lifestyle. Katie and I were able to show a slice of that lifestyle from behind the scenes through the portraits.

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