

BEYOND SOCCER

WORLD CUP HOST CITIES FROM NEW YORK TO SEATTLE HAVE SO MUCH MORE TO DO FOR VISITING FANS. HERE'S A PEEK AT THEIR TOP ATTRACTIONS. L8

Sunday

Muskegon Chronicle



LITTLE MISS FLINT

Ten years later, her message is still 'save the children'



2016

Amariyanna Copeny, 8, of Flint, stands with a protest sign during a #Justice4Flint rally at Wilson Park on University of Michigan-Flint's campus in March 2016 in downtown Flint. Photos by Jake May, MLive.com

Amariyanna Copeny first caught the public eye as an 8-year-old protesting Flint's water crisis.

Jake May jmay2@mlive.com

FLINT — Since she was 8 years old, Amariyanna Copeny has shined a light on Flint's environmental injustice and how the water crisis affected her community.

While everyone locally knows her as Mari, some know her better by the nickname from elementary school classmates that has become synonymous with her compassion for change — Little Miss Flint.

Copeny's community work has grown immensely and has been noticed by state and national officials and organizations.

From a young age, Copeny has been socially conscious, politically aware and ever-present in her city, constantly finding new avenues to be charitable with time, resources and influence to improve the lives of others — especially children in Flint.

At 10 years old, she raised nearly \$16,000 to provide more than 150 seats for a free screening of "Black Panther."

At age 14, Copeny received the Change-maker award at the Billboard Music Awards, an honor given to pop culture fig-



2026

Copeny, now 18, has not let up on her mission of standing up against gun violence, demanding clean water and becoming a generational philanthropist for the youth in her community.

ures speaking truth to power through their commitment to individual action and leadership.

At 16, she stood confidently with a microphone in front of City Hall on the 10-year anniversary of the Flint water crisis, continuing a never-wavering demand for clean water for residents.

Copeny's impact is impressive, especially having done it all by the age of 18.

KIDS FIRST

Through her back-to-school events, she has given out 21,600 backpacks, stuffed with school supplies and other essentials. She's provided 600 uniforms, 500 pairs of shoes, 1,000 packs of socks and underwear, 1,000 period hygiene kits, 3,000 toothbrushes, 700 hairbows or packs of barrettes, and 30,000 books.

"I love giving to Flint. I don't expect anything. All of it is for the kids. A lot of the kids, we were affected by the water crisis, and Flint kids deserve to have something fun, too. You know, a lot of families here can't afford a lot of things. That's what I do," Copeny said.

"That's why I do the things that I do, because everybody deserves to have fun and to be seen and loved. Everybody deserves to be whimsical and have magic in their lives, especially as kids. No kid should ever feel left out of anything. Point blank, period. That's forever going to be my motto." And Copeny's care for Flint kids doesn't stop there.

During the holidays in December, she holds a toy drive and giveaway for families in need, giving out 50,000 toys and 3,000 coats so far. She has even provided eggs and custom-made baskets during Easter, and candy and costumes on Halloween.

SEE LITTLE MISS FLINT, A2

A MICHIGAN PRESIDENT?

Three Democrats are eyeing 2028. What is their message?

Three possible Democratic candidates for president paint themselves as moderates capable of reaching across the aisle.

Danielle James djames@mlive.com

MACKINAC ISLAND — Three Michigan Democrats considered possible presidential candidates were in close quarters — the 4 square miles of Mackinac Island — during the last week of May.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and U.S. Sen. Elissa Slotkin, of Holly, each strolled the porch of the Grand Hotel during the Mackinac Policy Conference, a three-day economic forum attracting hundreds of business and political leaders.

All three have been identified by pundits as part of the vast — and still murky — 2028 presidential pool.

Last month, The New York Times included the trio in what the outlet described as a "very long list," with 62 names. Just last week, The Washington Post placed all three in the "middle of the pack" when ranking presidential contenders.

It's not yet clear if all or any of them will actually run for the White House, but in speeches on the island, Whitmer, Buttigieg and Slotkin each gave clues at the approach they could take.

They painted themselves as moderates capable of reaching across the aisle, balancing conversations about the importance of bipartisanship with criticism of the current Republican administration. The theme of the conference was a "quest for common ground" in politics.

GRETCHEN WHITMER

For a few hours on May 28, it appeared the trio of Michigan's presidential prospects would be whittled down to two, after Whitmer told WJBK-TV in Detroit that morning she would not run for president in 2028.

The term-limited Democratic governor said there will be a "robust group of people running for president."

"I will not be one of them in 2028, I can tell you that," she said. But only a few hours later, Whitmer walked it back, saying she needed to "correct the record."

"I never thought I would run for governor, so I guess I should know better," she said. "Never say never."

Whitmer developed a national following during her first term as governor, in part for criticism of President Donald Trump. She was on former President Joe Biden's shortlist for vice president in 2020. Now, she's maintained high approval ratings during her second term as she takes a more conciliatory tone with Trump.

SEE A MICHIGAN PRESIDENT?, A3



LIVELY FESTIVALS? LANSING'S MY CHOICE

- Eaton County Fair | July 13-18
- Taco, Tequila & Margarita Festival | July 25-26
- JazzFest Michigan | July 29-August 1
- Ingham County Fair | August 3-8
- St. Johns Mint Festival | August 7-9
- DeWitt Ox Roast | August 14-16

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