



Published on *East Lansing Info* (<https://eastlansinginfo.org>)

Home > Blue Owl Encourages Community and Creativity with Weekly Mic Drop

---

## Blue Owl Encourages Community and Creativity with Weekly Mic Drop <sup>[1]</sup>

Tuesday, June 4, 2019, 10:13 am

**By:**

Sarah Spohn



*Everyone is welcome to perform at Blue Owl's open mic night regardless of preparation levels, skill sets or age. (Photos courtesy of Aaron Arkens)*

When Nick Berry, Rich Whitman and Adam Klein crafted the idea for Blue Owl Coffee, their mission was always to create community: a coffee shop that wasn't centered just around caffeinated beverages, or fancy roasts, but rather a welcoming space for all kinds of creatives.

This mission has taken hold at Blue Owl's East Lansing location <sup>[2]</sup>, and is on display from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. every Wednesday for the Mic Drop Open Mic night event.

After a successful Monday night debut at Blue Owl's Lansing location in REO Town, Nick knew he wanted to bring a similar concept to East Lansing.

"We wanted to create something, but not duplicating it for this neighborhood," Berry said,

?giving it a space that this neighborhood had a voice to create and do what they're doing.?

?It's the mission that has resided at Blue Owl since the beginning: to establish a unified voice of hope and joy in what we can create together as a community,? Berry said.



The Mic Drop Open Mic night [3] is in partnership with All of the Above Hip Hop Academy (AOTA), a collective of artists and hip hop advocates aimed at empowering the youth community through the arts. Founded in 2010, by recording artist and educator Ozay Moore, AOTA hosts many music-related events in local high schools. It's a cause that spoke personally to Alexis Rosado, host of Mic Drop, spoken poetry artist, and member of AOTA.

?This is a space where high schoolers can express themselves in art,? Rosado said. ?This is a safe space for creatives to have opportunities on the mic. It is a safe space, a welcoming space. All are welcome, and all are welcome to express themselves.?

There are no weekly themes. Rosado welcomes everyone to perform regardless of preparation levels, skill sets or age. Each open mic night features new performers, material and reactions.

?You have rappers, poets, musicians playing on an acoustic guitar. There's this guy who is singing a capella songs of all different varieties,? Rosado said. ?Two weeks ago, a homeless guy asked me to get on the mic, and we freestyle rapped.?

**'? we didn't know what East Lansing was going to bring ?'**

For Rosado, hosting the weekly event is the highlight of her week; for Berry, it brings a pride in knowing both neighbors and strangers are showing up for one another.

?You can expect to see your community doing their thing ? that's what this is about,? Berry said. ?We had a lot of expectations from the REO Town thing, but we didn't know what East Lansing was going to bring, and that's been the fun part.?

Berry describes the event as a little curated, yet not programmed.

"There is a hunger in the creative community that needs a space and a place to connect with other people trying to build something, and that's really what this is all about," Berry said.

Rappers, comedians, singers, poets, and more step up to the mic. It's the wide range of talent levels and personal backgrounds performers bring that Rosado really enjoys.

"You're going to see diversity — age diversity, and cultural diversity," she said. "(Recently) I also had a group of high schoolers, and one got on the mic and read through her poetry booklet."

For many performers, this the first time they've shared original material in front of an audience. Rosado makes it a point to introduce herself to the audience, and helps people feel comfortable no matter how vulnerable stepping up to the mic might feel.

"It's definitely a culture of creativity and a culture of inclusivity, as well," she said.



Each singer is allowed three songs, and each poet has five minutes to perform their material. Last week there were nine performers, including comedians, singers, and a candidate running for political office (MSU student Warren Stanfield).

Between performers, AOTA DJ Rayshawn plays hip hop music.

In the future, Rosado hopes to bring talented performers and poets to the stage, to motivate those who sign up for Mic Drop. But for now, the weekly event is already one that is touching both performers and the audience members, who are starting to become regulars.

?Open mic is a really good spot for people to realize what can be built in a space like this,? Berry said. ?We want more community reaching out to us saying, ?Hey, is this allowed here?? We?re most likely going to say ?yes.???

### **Related Categories:**

Arts & Entertainment [4]

Business [5]

Community [6]

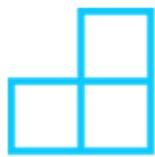
East Lansing Schools [7]

Food and Drink [8]

Local Businesses [9]

Special Places [10]

## **ELi is a member of INN and LION Publishers**



**Institute for  
Nonprofit News**



This news is brought to you by our financial supporters!

---

**Source URL:** <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/blue-owl-encourages-community-and-creativity-weekly-mic-drop>

### **Links**

[1] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/blue-owl-encourages-community-and-creativity-weekly-mic-drop>

[2] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/blue-owl-coffee-opens-downtown-tomorrow>

[3] <https://www.facebook.com/events/426492881436085/>

[4] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/aande>

[5] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/business>

[6] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/community>

[7] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/elschools>

[8] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/eat>

[9] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/localbusiness>

[10] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/places>