Monthly Contests

The September monthly contest had 52 entries from 17 members, with 24 entries in the assignment category (Macro) and 28 in the open category. The October competitions are open for entries (assignment: Barns). Contests will be in the clubhouse and on Zoom every month.



Photo by Carrie Heller
Basic - 1st Place



Photo by Kathy Fisher
Intermediate - 1st Place

Featured Monthly Contest Winner: Macro

Ross Ellet shares his hard-won knowledge on producing stellar supermacro snowflake images.



Photo by Ross Ellet
Advanced - 1st Place

Sometimes the most ordinary and common subjects can create unique photo opportunities. Each winter in the Great Lakes region, the cold, cloudy, and gloomy weather gives way to lake-effect snow flurries. Those snowflakes are a little bigger than the average snowflake, and can be full of interesting fernlike shapes or dendrites. Under a macro lens, with some light and patience, you can freeze a frosty moment in time.

Snowflake photography is best when the wind is light or calm. It doesn't take much for a snowflake to blow away or break up into pieces! The temperature should be around 28 degrees or lower, and I generally shoot most of my shots when the temperature is between 10 and 25 degrees. There are as many ways to photograph snowflakes as there are snowflake types, but I generally put a dark blue or black sock hat outside to collect snowflakes. The soft dark surface serves two purposes: first, it provides a soft landing for the snowflake and increases the chance it stays intact; and second, the background provides high contrast for the snowflake to pop more in photographs.

Snowflakes are incredibly tiny, and having a dedicated macro lens with 1:1 magnification or greater is best. I use a Laowa 25mm f/2.8 2.5-5X Ultra Macro lens, and also put a ring light on my camera for extra light on the subject. Often you can get colorful refractions in the snowflake by angling the ring light in different directions. The f-stop is around f/4 to f/6.3, and the shutter speed is at least 1/180 of a second, but I try to be at 1/300 of a second or faster if possible to limit blurriness. I put the camera on continuous shooting and carefully adjust the focus (by moving the camera back and forth), getting every sliver of the snowflake in focus. These images are focus stacked in Photoshop to get the end result.

This is a great way to turn a depressing weather and photography day into gold. For those interested in trying this for the coming winter, I highly recommend getting the ebook “Sky Crystals” By Don Komarechka. That book expands greatly on the shooting and editing process. --Ross Ellet

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Editor’s Note: A comprehensive review of the Laowa 25mm f/2.8 Ultra Macro lens with informative explanations of supermacro challenges is found at https://photographylife.com/reviews/venus-laowa-25mm-f-2-8-2-5-5x-ultra-macro

Monthly Contest Assignments

October 2025 Barns
November 2025 In a garden Flower, Vegetable, or combo
December 2025 Urban Decay
January 2026 Bokeh
February 2026 Black & White
March 2026 Print: Rule of Thirds
April 2026 Food Photography

Haley MacRitchie's stunning "Heaven and Earth" shot took First Place in the Open Intermediate Category

Check out all the entries on the PACT website!



Other Monthly Contests You Might Enter

Our local Kohne Camera in Perrysburg has a monthly "Wall of Frame" contest! Winners receive a framed print of their entry. Enter thru their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/Kohnes

Looking for a bigger venue for your best shots? Check the monthly themes here:

Motif Collective: https://www.motifcollective.com/open-competitions.html

Life Framer: https://www.life-framer.com/competitions/

Improve Your Photography Classes

Thanks to the members who helped with the IYP classes in September! There were six students, two of whom became new members. Watch for announcements of the next IYP class in the spring.



The third and final class of the September *Improve Your Photography* course featured Steve Stalker on the interaction of shutter speed, aperture, and ISO, and an introduction to photo editing.

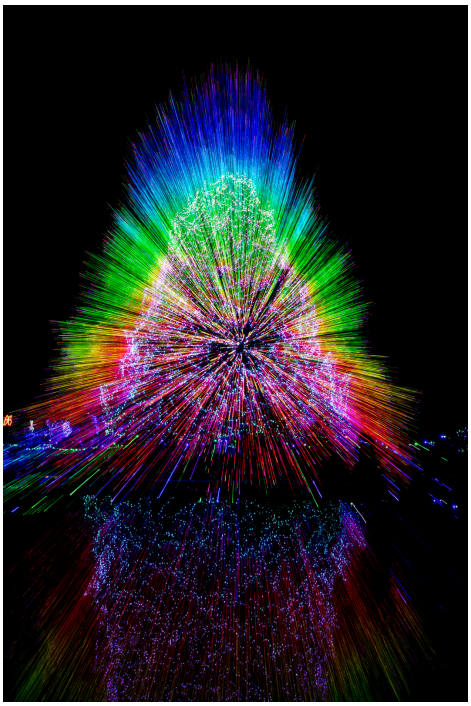
September Sunset Photo Shoot in Grand Rapids



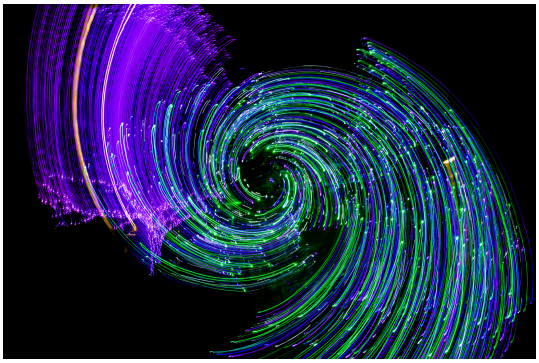
On September 13 we had a sunset photo shoot on Railroad Bridge in Grand Rapids. There were 13 people and although it was a cloudless sunset we were still able to get some nice shots as the sun set behind the island. Photo by Jack Myers.

Nov. 12 Education Night:
Zoom and Spiral Zoom During Exposure

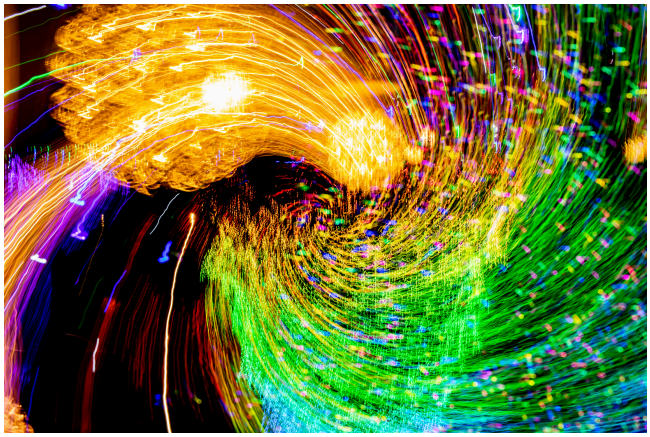




Rick Francis will share some tricks for zooming during long exposure, and a cheap but secure way to tripod-mount your rig by the lens zoom ring for smooth steady spiral zoom photos (camera rotation during zoom).



These techniques are especially fun to try at the Toledo Zoo's Lights Before Christmas or with Christmas lights in general!





Please welcome our newest club members!

- Matt Buchanan
- David Clarkson
- Virginia Clarkson
- Susan DeWeerdt
- Katelyn Ford
- Quentin Francis-Emonds
- Carrie Heller
- Kayla Henderson
- Shannon Smith-Lee
- Bob Wadas
- Sadie Worline

Board Members

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Committees
Lightroom - Charlie Mather - matherc@yahoo.com
Studio Group - John Dillon - jdillon356@aol.com
Photoshop Elements Group - Steve Stalker - sstalker@buckeye-express.com
Competition Chair - Jack Myers - jrmyers@roadrunner.com
Website Chair - Charlie Mather - matherc@yahoo.com
Membership - Cindy White - cwphoto63@gmail.com
Newsletter - Rick Francis - rick.a.francis@gmail.com

Upcoming events and meetings

October 20, 7:30 pm: Lightroom Group Meeting

October 22, 7 pm: Education Night, Critique via zoom

November 5, 7:30 pm: Board Meeting

November 12, 7-8 pm: Education Night on Using Zoom and Spiral Zoom During Exposure

November 15, midnight: deadline for submitting entries for the November competition (assignment: In a garden Flower, Vegetable, or combo)

December 3, 7:30 pm: Board Meeting

December 13, midnight: deadline for submitting entries for the December competition (assignment: Urban Decay)

January 10, midnight: deadline for submitting entries for the January competition (assignment: Bokeh)

Please refer to the website Events Calendar for Zoom links and more information.

A Message from the President

It's almost that time a year! Yes, it's time to be thinking about updating your prints and merchandise for Heralding the Holidays.

Heralding the Holidays is December 5, 6, and 7 this year. Watch for more details to come.

Are you looking for ways to help during the holiday season? Consider volunteering to be a hostess during Heralding. If interested a sign up link will be posted in November.

Or perhaps you would prefer to assist with decorating our building on the outside. These are just a few opportunities. Watch the newsletter for dates and sign-ups.

The Annual Holiday Members Christmas Party will be held on Sunday, Dec. 14th, at the Toledo Artists Club from 2pm till 4pm. More details to follow.