

the Bulletin

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Serving Bloomfield, Friendship, Garfield, East Liberty, Lawrenceville and Stanton Heights Since 1975

New City Council Members Gear Up for Projects, Legislation

By Paula Martinac
The Bulletin

East End – The city’s East End neighborhoods have two new faces representing them in City Council this year – Deb Gross (District 7) and Dan Gilman (District 8). *The Bulletin* sat down with each of them at Commonplace Coffee to discuss their priorities for their districts and the challenges they see facing the city as a whole.

District 7

Fresh from dropping off her young daughter and son at school, Deb Gross, the new Pittsburgh City Council member for District 7, laughs that city politics “wasn’t in my life plan.” But she adds that her work with a range of neighborhood groups over the past 15 to 20 years gave her a good foundation for tackling the job of representing her district’s interests downtown.

And District 7 is a vast area to cover, taking in Lawrenceville, Stanton Heights, Morningside, Polish Hill, Highland Park and parts of Bloomfield, East Liberty and the Strip District.

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ABOVE: Jamele Fairclough (left) and Minette Vaccariello were among the neighborhood volunteers who helped collect electronic waste on January 4 from Garfield residents. Read more on page 2. Photo by Gary Cirrincione/GCAT

BGC Founder Was Tireless Organizer

By Paula Martinac *The Bulletin*

Garfield – Rev. Leo G. Henry, the activist Roman Catholic priest who founded the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation and *The Bulletin* in 1975, died on December 26 at Vincentian Home on

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East Liberty Tackles Crime

By Ross Hackett *The Bulletin*

East Liberty – With a staggering 49 percent decrease in overall crime in the five-year period between 2008 and 2012, East Liberty once again has hope and promise as a Pittsburgh community in

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Changing Communities at First Night Parade

By Meredith Hoppe *MGR Youth Empowerment*

Lawrenceville – What was *your* community contribution this New Year’s Eve? For the students in MGR Youth Empowerment’s Arts in Action program, ringing in the New Year together has become

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Penn Avenue has a strategic plan! Read the story on page 2. Photo by John Colombo Photography

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New Owner for 5430 Penn

Bloomfield – The building that once housed The Quiet Storm coffeehouse has been sold by Friendship Development Associates (FDA) to E Properties and Development.

Until now, E Properties has concentrated its projects almost exclusively in Lawrenceville, amassing a portfolio of residential for-sale and for-lease projects in that neighborhood, including the Holy Family Church site.

Emeka Onwugbenu, principal of E Properties, told *The Bulletin* that he is in discussion with a tenant for the first floor space of 5430 Penn, but “it is too early to talk about the plans.”

According to Onwugbenu, the building will “basically be staying the same. We’re just bringing in a new tenant for the commercial space.” As to the apartments upstairs, he said there are no plans to displace the tenants.

The Pittsburgh Housing Development Corporation purchased three properties spanning 5416 to 5424 Penn in 2013 from FDA and the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation. It is their intention to convey the properties to E Properties to construct a 7-unit, for-sale residential development on the site. A community meeting on Jan. 27 to discuss the specifics of the plans had not taken place by press time and will be reported on in the March issue of *The Bulletin*. – *Paula Martinac, The Bulletin*

Penn Avenue Has Five-Year Plan

Penn Avenue – After five months of planning, the Penn Avenue Stakeholders are the proud owners of the first-ever strategic plan for the business district. According to Samantha McDonough, business district manager for the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, the plan is meant to be a working document guiding collective efforts to improve the district through 2019. The plan can be downloaded at www.pennavenue.org or www.bloomfield-garfield.org/penn-avenue/mainstreets-program.

More than 40 community members took part in a publicized planning process during three consecutive monthly meetings in September, October and November at St. Maria Goretti Activity Center. Community input was then distilled down by a smaller steering committee.

The strategic plan covers major goals for Penn Avenue including: a focus on better marketing and communication; more ways to incorporate the work of local artists; ways to improve and support our local businesses; ways to visually enhance our street; how to become a more vibrant and diverse social arena; and much more.

If you are interested in becoming involved in working to make these goals a reality, please contact McDonough at bgcmmainstreets@gmail.com or call 412-389-5521. – *staff, The Bulletin*

E-Waste Collected in Garfield

Garfield – A first-ever electronic waste collection event was held on January 4th at the Kincaid Street Community Garden. With the help of PULSE and Allegheny Cleanways, local residents and Garfield Community Action Team volunteers Leah Thill, Minette Vaccariello, Jarnele and Mark Fairclough and Gary Cirrincione helped collect electronic waste from residents for free and safe disposal.

Garfield residents were able to drop off unwanted household electronics while the volunteers loaded them onto a truck for disposal. Abandoned TVs were also removed from Alhambra Way, Gem Way and Kincaid Street.

According to Thill, who organized the event, 27 items in total were collected, including 18 TVs of varying sizes and types, three cable boxes, one VCR, three computer monitors and two air humidifiers. “We had a pretty good collection for a pretty cold day in January,” reported Thill. – *Paula Martinac, The Bulletin*

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For a free, fold-out map of all of the businesses (with phone numbers), contact Samantha at the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, 412-441-6950, x 16.

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The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the publisher.

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BGC Founder from page 1

Perrymont Road. Father Henry was just two weeks shy of his 88th birthday.

A native of Morningside who attended St. Raphael School, Father Henry was ordained a priest in 1955 and retired in 1996. During his long career, he oversaw the founding of two local Catholic schools – Bishop Canevin High School in Crafton and St. Thomas High School in Braddock, and served as headmaster at each. The school library and newspaper at Bishop Canevin are both named in his honor.

He also authored a series of religion textbooks called *The Roots of Faith*, first published in 1966, and adopted by Catholic schools across the country.

Father Henry arrived in Garfield in June 1969 to become the pastor of St. Lawrence O'Toole Church (now St. Maria Goretti). Faced with a blighted and racially divided community, he immediately set out working for social change.

"The gangs were really bad," Aggie Brose, deputy director of the BGC, recalled. "There were guns on the streets in the middle of the day and robberies on Penn." Brose said she remembers Father



ABOVE: Father Henry addresses the first annual meeting of the BGC in September 1976.

Henry as "a brilliant person, way ahead of his time. He didn't care what people said about him. He just plowed ahead."

The BGC was founded at a community meeting convened by Father Henry in November 1975, and attended by about 500 people. Residents and merchants bought "shares" in the organization for \$5 each, with each share earning the holder a vote at BGC meetings.

The primary focus in the early years, as outlined at that meeting, included improving the Penn Avenue business district and putting an end to violence in the neighborhood. Within a few months, the new organization had raised the seed money to launch its mission, hire a professional community organizer and produce a video to present to City Council, clearly depicting the plight of the neighborhood.

The Bulletin newspaper also debuted in November 1975, to keep residents and businesses informed about community happenings and actions. Although the first few issues mostly reported parish news, the paper quickly blossomed into a more secular voice for community action and change. In the first issue, Father Henry said the newspaper would be "positively interested in making this section of the Pittsburgh community a better place in which to live and develop."

Under Father Henry's watch, the BGC brought a pharmacy and a branch bank to Penn Avenue; installed anticrime lighting along the corridor; planted trees and placed trash cans along Penn; blocked a methadone drug treatment center from locating in the neighborhood; and lobbied – and got – more beat police on the streets. But "by far the biggest victory we've had to date," Father Henry said at the BGC's first annual meeting in September 1976, was the securing of long-term, low-interest

loans for business owners insured by the federal Small Business Association.

With the priest's direction, "We learned the lingo," said Brose, "so we could talk to corporations like banks on their own terms."

Although Father Henry left St. Lawrence O'Toole in 1980 for another pastoral assignment, over the years he kept in touch with the BGC staff, sending notes of encouragement and contributions. After his retirement from active ministry in 1996, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and eventually went to live at Vincentian Home in McCandless Township.

Each year since 2000, the BGC has given the Father Leo Henry Founder's Award to a person who best exemplifies commitment to working toward social change in the neighborhood. And as late as 2007, Father Henry was in attendance at the BGC's annual fundraiser at the Pittsburgh Athletic Association, albeit in a wheelchair.

"He gave us a good, concrete foundation, so we are still here 39 years later," said Brose. "It's hard to imagine what Garfield would be today, but for Father Henry." ♦

Donations in Father Henry's name can be made to the Vincentian Home nursing staff, 111 Perrymont Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15237.

Improving Pittsburgh's "Best Kept Secret"

By Ross Hackett
The Bulletin

Bloomfield – According to the new executive director of the Bloomfield Development Corporation (BDC), “Bloomfield is Pittsburgh’s best kept secret.” A former senior neighborhood planner at the Pittsburgh Department of City Planning, Shelly Majcen is not shy about her passion for this East End neighborhood. With her new position, Majcen says she has the chance to improve a neighborhood that she already adores.

Having grown up in Bellefonte, Pa., Majcen was first exposed to Bloomfield as a 16-year-old visiting her older brother. She found Bloomfield to be a “quirky, weird neighborhood,” and says she has come to appreciate its distinctiveness even more since that first experience.

When asked about her shift from city planner to BDC director, Majcen explained that she “would not have left her former position for any other neighborhood.” She admits that it was hard to establish effective face-to-face relationships with community organizations and residents in each of the 21 neighborhoods that were her responsibility as a city planner. “I’m excited to focus on one neighborhood,” she notes.

Having secured a Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) with Duquesne Light, Majcen explains that the BDC will be receiving \$100,000 each year for six years. Her immediate goals revolve around two projects. The first project is to team up with West Penn Hospital to provide



ABOVE: Shelly Majcen came to Bloomfield Development Corporation from City Planning. Photo by Paula Martinac

senior housing to long-term residents who want to stay in the neighborhood. The challenge will be finding space in a densely populated neighborhood with few vacant lots.

The second project is to initiate a Saturday market in the lot on Liberty Avenue between Winebiddle and Gross Streets. Kelly Foss, director of the nation’s second largest farmer’s market, located in Des Moines, Iowa, is working as a consultant to this project. Considering the lack of urban farms in Bloomfield, Majcen says she hopes to establish partnerships with nearby community farms and to include community health organizations and live entertainment into the Saturday market events.

As far as long-term goals for the BDC, Majcen notes, “Liberty Avenue is a major concern.” Describing the extraordinary business district, bike lanes, wide sidewalks and robust network of transportation connections, she says she fervently believes that “Liberty Avenue’s assets need to be actively tapped into.”

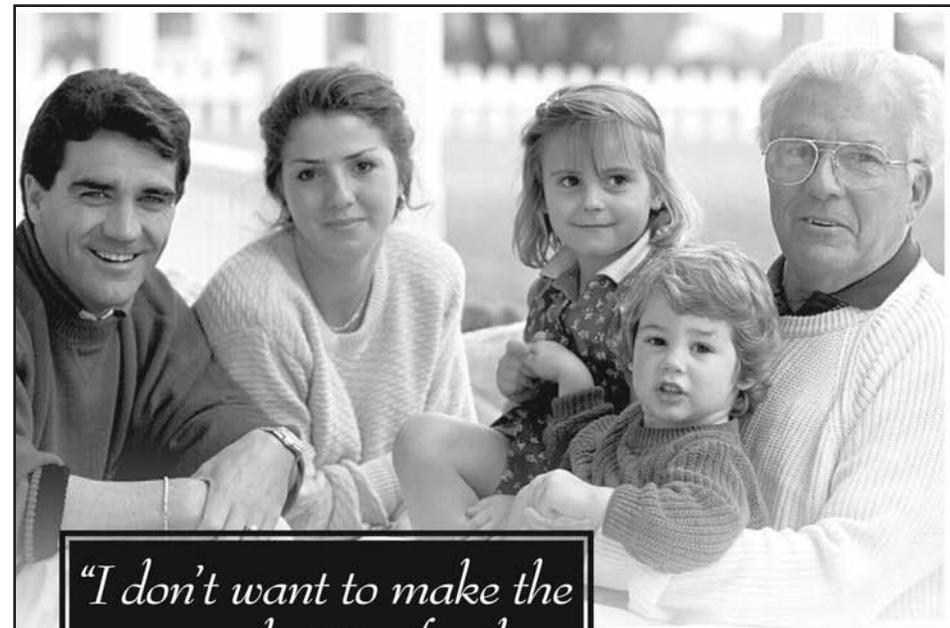
She recalls that, over the past few decades, “Bloomfield remained relatively stable when neighboring communities like

Lawrenceville and Garfield were in a state of decline. Bloomfield missed out on improvements and enhancements while there was so much work being done everywhere else.” As a result, Bloomfield has some of the oldest infrastructure, including the oldest traffic lights in the city.

Majcen says she ultimately wants to show businesses and residents that they have the capacity to improve the neighborhood and that they have her support. She says there is a gap between older and younger residents, and bridging it is a challenge.

“The younger residents of Bloomfield rarely attend community meetings,” she notes. Through the use of social media and blogging, she says she hopes to increase the involvement of young people in neighborhood meetings and community events, fostering a relationship between young and old.

With plans to hire a project manager and part-time office manager, Majcen says she looks forward to a brighter future for the BDC and the neighborhood of Bloomfield. ♦



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Enrolling in Affordable Health Insurance

By Wesley Davis

Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center

Garfield—The Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center (ENEC) currently assists individuals with enrollment in health insurance plans through the Affordable Care Act (also known as Obamacare) Health Insurance Marketplace.

Jim Storch said that he “was at a recruitment session for City of Pittsburgh jobs” when he signed up for an Affordable Care Act (ACA) health insurance enrollment meeting at the ENEC.

Storch explained that the “actual signup wasn’t that big of a problem but figuring out which plan to go with was a little confusing.” He said that it was helpful to meet with a Certified Application Counselor, a specialist trained to educate and enroll individuals in ACA health insurance plans, to clarify what his best options were.

Earl Hord Jr. said that he found out about the ENEC’s health insurance assistance program from a friend. After an individual meeting with an enrollment counselor at the ENEC, Hord said, “The net result was that I saved some money in the long run, and I think that the plan I chose will be beneficial to me and my family.”

Hord added that health insurance enrollment is a lot simpler when “you have someone trained and knowledgeable to sit there with you and guide you through the process.” Hord said that the enrollment specialist he met with was “well-trained, experienced, and was really helpful.”

Carol Hardeman, Certified Application Counselor with the University of Pittsburgh Outreach and Enrollment Team, said that she meets with individuals at the ENEC’s facilities as part of her effort “to assist as many people as possible to sign up (for ACA health insurance), to help people who are uninsured.”

According to Hardeman, when someone meets with her at the ENEC, “It’s a one-on-one appointment; we help them create an online account and take them through the application process.” Hardeman added that Certified Application Counselors educate individuals about their insurance options, only enrolling those who will be best suited to utilizing ACA health insurance plans.

Usama Al-Teraifi, Lead Employment Coordinator at the ENEC, said that he



ABOVE: Carol Hardeman, a Certified Application Counselor for the Affordable Care Act from the University of Pittsburgh Outreach and Enrollment Team. Photo by Wesley Davis

schedules enrollment and education meetings for interested community members, noting that “over 120” people have already met with a Certified Application Counselor at the ENEC, utilizing the ENEC’s staff and Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation’s office space and technology resources.

Al-Teraifi directed praise for the success of this project to the ENEC’s partners, the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, Get Covered America, The Heinz Endowments, The Pittsburgh Foundation, Staunton Farms Foundation, and the Jewish Healthcare Foundation, along with the healthcare organizations that provide enrollment experts to meet with clients at the ENEC – Consumer Health Coalition, East Liberty Family Healthcare Center, University of Pittsburgh Outreach and Enrollment Team and the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.

The deadline for enrollment is March 31, 2014. Those interested in scheduling a meeting with a health insurance enrollment specialist or volunteering to help others enroll in the Health Insurance Marketplace should call the ENEC at 412-206-1298, email ENECaffordableCareAct@gmail.com or visit the ENEC at 5321 Penn Ave. ♦



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Council Members from page 1

In November, Gross was elected to the seat left vacant when Patrick Dowd announced his resignation last summer, and she took office in early December. Two of Dowd's staff members stayed on, making the transition more seamless. "Nate [Hanson, chief of staff] lives in Lawrenceville and understands constituent needs.... Moira [Egler, community development liaison] has interest and experience in land use," explains Gross. "I got really lucky,... [having these] talented 20-something policy wonks."

However, Gross says she is rethinking other features of Dowd's tenure on council, like Council to Go, in which he met with constituents informally at coffee shops in the various neighborhoods. "We'll have to see if we'll keep that brand," Gross says. "It was very intimate and informal. But we will always have someone at community meetings, so we'll be visible."

In awe of the "strong neighborhood organizations" in her district, Gross ticks off the names of Lawrenceville United, Lawrenceville Corporation, Bloomfield Citizens Council and Bloomfield Development Corporation as good examples, but also notes the volunteer-run groups such as Stanton Heights Neighborhood Association. "They all have the volunteer power to see projects through. They make my job of being a partner inside city government

that much easier."

As the new chair of City Council's Land Use and Economic Development Committee, she identifies urban blight as one of the biggest challenges facing her district – and the city as a whole. "No matter where you are, even in wealthier neighborhoods, there's a problem with blight and maintenance."

According to Gross, she is "eager to talk to my fellow council members to compare and contrast our needs ... and talk about what tools we can bring to deal with abandoned properties." She explains that it can take two years to get clear title on an abandoned property. "The process shouldn't be that burdensome," she says.

Carrying through on her commitment to this issue, Gross introduced legislation in Council on January 14 to create a Pittsburgh Community Land Bank. If enacted, it would allow community groups to recycle distressed properties – numbering more than 35,000 across the city – more quickly and efficiently.

Another of her particular interests, she says, is alternative housing – imaginative ways to use space and create new housing at the same time. "I'm excited about the tiny house movement in Garfield," she says, although that's not part of her district. "I love the idea of creating these mini-neighborhoods. Can city govern-



ABOVE: One of Deb Gross's top priorities as a new councilmember is blight in the East End. Photo by Paula Martinac

ment get involved somehow, do something to help? Are there financing issues, for example? How can we make these projects more do-able?"

She says she's feeling her way as she begins to balance the demands of politics and family responsibilities. Her husband, she notes, used to work for a public official

and is accustomed to the schedule. And luckily, "little kids get up early, and council doesn't start until 10." Her 7-year-old daughter "has been to a lot of community meetings and loves them. She goes for the cookies... If the kids are OK with it, then everything works out."



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District 8

When he was younger, Dan Gilman says he thought he'd become a lawyer and work in a Washington, D.C. job. In fact, in college, he did an internship in the office of U.S. Congressman Mike Doyle. "It was the era of 'The West Wing,'" he recalls. "It was a neat experience for a political junkie like me."

But when he graduated from Carnegie Mellon University a decade ago, Gilman made a choice that he says he doesn't regret. Faced with two very different job offers – one as an aide to then-City Councilman Bill Peduto in Pittsburgh's District 8, and another working for President Bill Clinton – he chose District 8, which includes Shadyside, North Oakland, Point Breeze and slivers of East Liberty and Squirrel Hill.

"I love local politics," he says. "It's great coming home from work and seeing the tangible things you've done – like the stop sign that you got put up that day."

In November, Gilman was elected to fill the vacant District 8 council seat, and he says he couldn't be happier. "I love going to work in the morning," he says.

As Peduto's aide for 10 years, he was a very visible face of the councilman's office, often attending community meetings in his stead. Asked if he will continue that

level of involvement, he admits, "I love being out there. But I want to give my staff the opportunities I had." His aides, he says, are all new to city government, but bring a range of experience to their jobs, from environmental activism to campaign volunteering to nonprofit leadership.

Gilman has a laundry list of top priorities for his four-year term. He puts public education at the very top: "To quote Bill [Peduto], 'You can't have a great city without great schools, and you can't have great schools without a great city.'"

Gilman says he wants to see more communication between city government and the Pittsburgh Public Schools on issues such as school safety and bus transportation. He has a resolution that he will soon introduce at Council to establish televised, joint quarterly meetings between Council and the School Board.

As his second priority, Gilman cites attracting more young people to the city to stay. "None of the friends I went to college with are still here," he notes. He says he wants to find ways to support entrepreneurship and small start-ups that can grow into large businesses. "I'm not anti-hotel, but a hotel with 23 employees doesn't change a city. We need to refocus how we think about economic development."



ABOVE: Dan Gilman lists public education and attracting young people to Pittsburgh as his top business items. Photo by Paula Martinac

Gilman says he also wants to "bring city government into the 21st century... Right now, we're operating in 1983." Currently, he notes, you can't even pay for city services with a credit card online. "Who gets a cashier's check anymore? ... It's a huge challenge [to update technology], but one with an easy solution. There are many examples from other cities to follow."

Following the redrawing of district lines

that occurred in 2013, District 8 is one of the wealthiest in the city, and Gilman notes that his part of the East End is lucky because it doesn't suffer from the blight that plagues other neighborhoods. But he says he is in total support of bills like the Community Land Bank, introduced by his colleague and friend Deb Gross. "Every successful city has one," he states. ♦



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Getting Back By Giving Back

Program Rehabilitates Young Men by Teaching Them the Value of Community Service

By Ross Hackett *The Bulletin*

Garfield – As the leader of a community service initiative for his students at the Summit Academy, Jeff Harshman said he hopes to teach kids that “nothing bad comes with getting out and doing community service.” That lesson of doing service has brought his students all the way from their school in Herman, Pa., in Butler County to Garfield to do projects that have benefitted the neighborhood.

Harshman’s Garfield connection is Jason Sauer of Most Wanted Fine Art gallery, 5015 Penn Ave. As the former Community Service Director at Summit Academy, Sauer is “a friend who has become an important community contact,” according to Harshman. He said that Sauer connects academy students to service opportunities in Garfield and enthusiastically participates with them.

Harshman is currently the Industrial Trades Coordinator at the Summit Academy, overseeing the instruction of students in disciplines like landscaping, building maintenance, and carpeting. He said, “I try to get involved with the kids as much as possible, and one way that I have done so has been through community service.”

Summit Academy is a school for court-adjudicated young men, and Harshman described community service as being “very much a part of what we aim to do here.” A large piece of the mission at the Summit Academy, he said, is to “rehabilitate the



ABOVE: Summit Academy students cleaned and laquered all the boards for the artist’s bench before it was assembled at the corner of North Winebiddle and Penn. Photo by Jeff Harshman

“I see a different kid by the end of the project.”

kids by teaching them the value of giving back to the community.” A mandatory school requirement gets students involved in community service on and off campus.

In addition to frequently walking the length and breadth of Garfield to pick up litter, his students have worked on larger projects in the neighborhood such as Kite Hill Park. Harshman said, “The park has become a regular stop for landscaping and maintenance.” When they visit the park, Harshman and his students clear the court of dirt, debris, and garbage. He explained that his students also cut and primed all of the shapes that were assembled to form the artistic seating in the park.

Another project was the physical construction of the artistic bench located at the corner of Penn Avenue and North Winebiddle Street and designed by Rebecca Mizikar and Matt Zambelli, volunteers with the Green and Screen, a public art beautification project along Penn. Harshman and his students teamed up with Green & Screen to install the new bench at the site.

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Giving Back continued

The construction end of the project started at Summit Academy where “the carpentry class took recycled wooden boards and brought them back to life.” According to Harshman, “every board was cleaned and sanded, coated with lacquer for maximum protection, and transported to the city where the Green and Screen Team assembled them in their shop for the final install.”

Harshman said that he witnesses the students developing “a sense of pride in the community of Garfield and the work that they have done.” He said that even though it isn’t their neighborhood, the community service projects that students complete in Garfield give them “a valuable sense of community and giving back.”

By interacting with the students in the trades department, Harshman said that he is able to understand where their interests and skills lie. From there, he “finds service projects that are appropriate.” In addition to teaching kids the value of giving back, he noted that the projects they complete help to prepare them for the workforce after they graduate.

Harshman explained that the most satisfying part of his job is seeing the end result. “Time spent doing community service is useful and rewarding,” he said. “With the majority of my students, I see a different kid by the end of a project.” ♦

BELOW: Summit students did a landscaping project in front of another Green and Screen installation on Penn. Photo by Jason Sauer



Making Lasting Connections with Students

by Rachel Zadnik

Neighborhood Learning Alliance

Garfield – University of Pittsburgh senior Kyle Soto is Neighborhood Learning Alliance’s (NLA) Volunteer of the Month for February. Soto, a New York native, is currently in his final semester studying Information Science, Politics and Philosophy.

When asked about his favorite part of volunteering with NLA, he doesn’t hesitate to mention the kids. “They’re wonderful. In the midst of a stressful day of classes and work, they’re all smiles and fun,” he said. Adding what he is getting out of the program: “It’s amazing – you get this front seat to watch them learn and grow and, in a small way, you’re a part of that. It puts the importance of things like missing the bus into perspective.”

Even though he’s busy with school, work and finding time to enjoy things like drawing and architecture, Soto also dedicates multiple hours a week to the afterschool program at Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy. He makes the time for the program because, he said, “the people who you volunteer with are wonderful. And it’s not just regurgitating math and science lectures – it’s a whole community and sometimes just sitting and talking about the day with one of the students will make both your days a lot better.”

Like many NLA volunteers, Soto has a positive influence on the kids – any observer can spot the special bond he



ABOVE: Kyle Soto (left) with one of the students he works with in the afterschool program at Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy. Photo by Rachel Zadnik

created with several students. But he gives all the credit to the kids. “Bottom line is, it’s not just what you’re offering them but what they offer you,” he noted. “You’ll find hanging out with them and tutoring them will make you into a better person.”

In high schools across the city, NLA runs free, comprehensive afterschool programming that includes credit recovery classes, a focused 9th grade afterschool program, transportation home, and snack and hot dinner for every student. If you’re interested in volunteering and becoming part of the “Everybody Graduates!” campaign, email Zadnik@wireless-neighborhoods.org or call 412-363-1910. ♦



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Amber Jankowski,
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Matching Grants Available for Façades

By Julie Collins

Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Garfield – The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and the Community Design Center will hold an informational meeting about a matching grant program to improve home façades on Thursday, February 13, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the BGC Activity Center located at 113 N. Pacific Avenue.

The Residential Façade Program provides a dollar-for-dollar grant for work done to improve the front of a home. The grant pays for 50 percent of the total project cost, up to \$5,000.

In order to be eligible you must live in the Garfield neighborhood. The project must cost at least \$500, and there is a \$150 non-refundable application fee. The grant funds can be used for:

- Porch and awning upgrades/repairs
- Gutter and downspout repairs/replacement
- Exterior lighting
- Window and door replacement
- Brick replacement, repainting, cleaning, or repointing
- Other restoration work to the front façade

Representatives from the URA and the Community Design Center will be at the meeting to provide more information about the program and answer questions. Applications will be available at the meeting. Please RSVP by Friday, February 7, by calling 412-368-2180. ♦

East Liberty from page 1

transition. East Liberty Development Incorporated (ELDI) recently published these findings in a report called “East Liberty Crime Data Analysis.”

East Liberty thrived from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, with a successful business district and a large shopping area that attracted people from across the city. In the 1960s, however, catastrophic urban planning practices severely damaged the neighborhood, suddenly burdening residents with unemployment and the streets with criminal activity.

According to the report, which was completed by Pittsburgh-based consulting firm Numeritics, ELDI has collaborated with neighborhood stakeholders “to bring about positive change in the community.” This has included tackling the issue of crime that has existed in the neighborhood since it was first thrown into instability in the 1960s.

Realizing that crime incidents were coming from nuisance or abandoned buildings, ELDI focused a large part of its initiative on real estate acquisitions. Referencing a Minneapolis study by William Spelman in 1995, the organization based its initiative on the “hot spot” theory. This theory suggests that very few physical addresses are accountable for a disproportionate amount of criminal activity. Spelman’s study specifically claimed that 3 percent of addresses account for 50 percent of all calls to the police.

ELDI identified candidate “hot spot” properties in the neighborhood that they could acquire and renovate. Acquired properties in the neighborhood included the following: abandoned, vacant, and what are referred to as “problematic” properties. Problematic properties in East Liberty are owned and rented by slumlords who reduce maintenance costs to maximize their profits. Slumlords essentially offer cheap properties to clients who are willing to overlook their need for repairs.

For ELDI, post-acquisition activities such as screening potential tenants, hiring viable property managers, and conducting random inspections aim to prevent continued criminal activity at these properties. The acquisition and monitoring of these “hot spot” locations was the first step to a reduction of crime in East Liberty.

Understanding that East Liberty needed more than just real estate acquisitions to reduce crime, ELDI also focused its efforts on advocacy, civic engagement and collaborations. Involving residents in community meetings and the decision-making processes helped foster a sense of ownership and belonging within the community.

ELDI’s goal was to give a voice to residents in the neighborhood in an effort to build trust and strengthen the inclination of residents to act in favor of the common good. According to the report, residents are more likely to intervene and aid one another when such cohesion is established, achieving social stability and ultimately reducing crime in the neighborhood.

ELDI Real Estate acquired approximately 200 properties or 3 percent of all residential units in East Liberty over the course of five years and observed a near 50 percent decrease in crime, legitimizing the claims made in Spelman’s study. This initiative in turn communicated a message to residents that criminal activity will not be tolerated.

The report anticipates increased stability in the economic and social realms of the neighborhood over the next few years. With this will be an increased demand for property that is hoped will lower crime rates further in the thriving neighborhood of East Liberty. ♦

To read the complete report, visit www.east-liberty.org.

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PITTSBURGH DANCE CENTER

BELOW: Map depicting East Liberty crime hot spots in 2008 (left) and 2012. Red indicates the worst areas; yellow-shaded areas are tolerable; and green ones are good. Courtesy ELDI



Wear Your Jules, Ladies and Gents

By Christine Bethea
Bulletin Contributor



ABOVE: Inside the new boutique Jules in Lawrenceville. Photo by Christine Bethea

Lawrenceville – Urban Redevelopment Authority Senior Development Specialist Rochelle Lilien acknowledges that something wonderful is trending in the city. It seems Pittsburgh's young people continue to return by the dozens not only to live and work, but to start businesses in communities.

"While there isn't a lot of new money, there are wonderful resources here," said Lilien. "And the people coming in to talk to us are getting much younger, partly due to high-tech interests and spin-offs from universities like Carnegie Mellon. Even so, there is potential growth for nearly every area of business."

From the Hill, to Garfield, to East Liberty, young professionals are flocking, all looking to make good in historically disadvantaged Pittsburgh neighborhoods. Witness the ever-growing clusters of retail entrepreneurs lining Lawrenceville's Butler Street, which was recently joined by a brilliant new face. Her name is Julia Weiskopf, owner of Jules at 4502 Butler St.

Totally homegrown, Weiskopf grew up in Squirrel Hill and attended Allderdice High School. After graduation, she moved to Boston to attend Northwestern University, then spent seven years in New York City on the public relations fast track before returning to give her hometown of Pittsburgh a go. She snagged a position at Whirl Magazine and did some consulting, but ultimately opted to follow her dream to open a fashion boutique.

The store, which has been open just over six months, caters to fashion-savvy men and women who crave higher-end apparel. Her price points range from about \$100 to \$300. Jules carries shoes, clothing and accessories with labels like Fred Perry, Sugar Chicago, Benson, Deux Lux, DL1961, and Velvet not to mention looks by Pittsburgh-based designers.

The shop's interior has a Southwest-meets-modern cottage vibe with vintage dressers, a red leather sofa, antler wall decor and a cowhide rug. It oozes with stylishness and youthful optimism. Even a few setbacks like a busted "water pipe situation" during January's deep freeze, immortalized in a video on Facebook, didn't dampen her enthusiasm. While store personnel waded through murky water, a cheerful tweet went out: "We'll be back to business as usual tomorrow...with a few holes in the drywall."

Weiskopf says the overall look of Jules was inspired by the Sundance Film Festival, which she fell in love with during her visits to Utah. The Sundance atmosphere was inviting, relaxed and cozy, and she says that's exactly what she wants shoppers in her store to experience.

Jules will also exhibit artists on a seasonal basis, taking part in the popular East End tradition of celebrating the visual arts in small business spaces. For more information, visit Jules on Facebook or Julespittsburgh.com. ♦

NovaNET Credit Recovery

The Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation now offers NovaNET credit recovery tutoring to high school students at its Youth Development Office, 5321 Penn Ave. Tutoring is offered on Monday through Friday from 3 to 8 p.m. and on Saturday from 12 to 6 p.m.

NovaNET is a program, administered by Neighborhood Learning Alliance, that helps high school students recover failed or missing school credits. NovaNET offers students the opportunity to work individually on the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation's computers while trained tutors supervise their progress and provide guidance as needed. This service is also offered in Pittsburgh Public High Schools.

Students who need to recover high school credits are encouraged to stop by the Youth Development Office or call 412-441-9833. Those seeking more information about NovaNET or help learning whether you or someone you know needs to recover credits are encouraged to contact Neighborhood Learning Alliance at 412-363-1910.



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Teens Hold Reading "Extravaganza"

By Katy Frey

Neighborhood Learning Alliance

Garfield – Teens from the Reading Warriors and Amachi Ambassadors programs came together to host a Reading Extravaganza at the East Liberty branch of Carnegie Library on Saturday, January 11, to get children excited about reading books.

Reading Warriors, a program of the Neighborhood Learning Alliance, hires teens to work with elementary students in after-school and summer programs. Amachi Pittsburgh addresses the challenges faced by children experiencing parental incarceration through one-on-one mentoring, family reunification

support and advocacy.

The two groups of teens initially met in December to plan activities and get to know each other. For the extravaganza, the teen-led planning committee decided to focus on children's book authors Mo Willems and Dr. Seuss, and planned activities to go along with books by these authors. At one station, children could construct Dr. Seuss door-hangers that said on one side, "Do not disturb, I'm reading!" At another station, they crafted finger puppets of characters who appear in the Mo Willems book *The Duckling Gets a Cookie*, and used the puppets during inter-

active read-alouds led by the teens.

"Reading Is Fundamental" AmeriCorps members were also involved in the event and brought books to give out to each child who attended. They also donated books to the Reading Warriors to be used in after-school programming. The AmeriCorps members and Reading Warriors made plans to collaborate on future activities because they work in many of the same schools.

Participants ranged from toddlers to 5th graders, and came with parents, mentors or their teen siblings.

The highlight of the morning was the construction of a large, 3D mural of Pittsburgh, for which children created paper figures and wrote down positive adjectives to describe themselves. The teens closed the event with some spirited chanting: "P-O-W-E-R, we've got the power, because we are the Reading Warriors!"

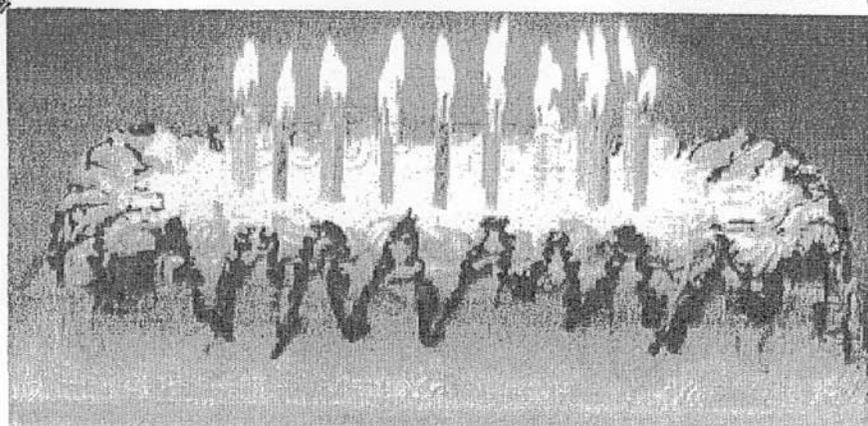
During the event, several Reading Warriors staged a public display of reading in the children's section of the library to raise awareness of the event and invite patrons of the library to the activities. Darius Lassiter, a junior at Pittsburgh



ABOVE: Reading Warriors Abrianna McCaskill and Rahsheena Jordan lead activities at the Mo Willems station. Photo by Katy Frey

Obama and a Reading Warrior at Pittsburgh Lincoln, said, "It's a good thing when children come together and have fun with books."

The teens plan to hold more events like this in the future, perhaps partnering with community organizations to get the word out. Organizations who are interested in inviting Reading Warriors to read at one of their events can contact the Neighborhood Learning Alliance at 412-363-1910. ♦



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Book Collection

We're collecting children and adult books for a lending library in Garfield. If you have books you would like to donate, drop them off on the porch of 5201 Penn Avenue.

PATF Program Empowers Girls with Information

By Paula Martinac

The Bulletin

East Liberty – What first attracted Katie Houston to her position coordinating Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force’s “Girl Talk” program was the job description. “The idea of ‘empowering young women’ really appealed to me,” explains Houston, who has been in the job for three months and has a background in working with young women.

“Girl Talk” is an offshoot of PATF’s nationally acclaimed “Girlfriends Project.” That program, launched by Lisa Dukes in 2009 and now run by Pamela Smith, was modeled on old-fashioned Tupperware parties, popular with women in the 1950s and ‘60s.

In the Girlfriends Project, however, instead of buying products, groups of women get together for free, home-based parties in which they obtain information about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases from a trained counselor in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere. The hosts and guests receive incentives such as gift cards; they can also be tested for HIV privately on-site.

“A lot of women in the Girlfriends Project asked if there was anything like that for their daughters,” Houston notes. The need, especially in the African-American community, is great, with AIDS the leading cause of death for African-American women ages 25-34.

And so in 2011, Girl Talk was born to serve girls ages 13 to 18. During the teen years, notes Houston, many girls become sexual and are vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and domestic violence. The Girl Talk program arms them with information so they can make better choices to stay safe and healthy. The parties are girls-only, fostering an atmosphere of openness and sharing in which girls can ask any and all questions they have about sex and STDs.

In its first year, the program hosted 22 parties, with 167 girls attending with parental permission. “The numbers are steadily going up,” Houston states. Most parties take place in the girls’ homes, but some are also held in youth homes, community centers and public libraries. The party host gets a \$50 gift card, and the six to 10 guests receive gifts such as journals, stickers, compact mirrors and safe-sex kits.

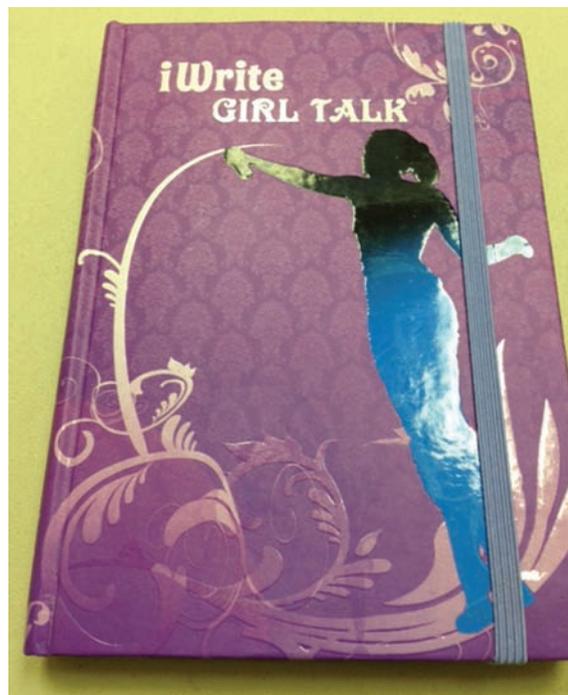
“They all seem to like the journal best,” observes Houston – an unexpected result

in the age of cell phones. “They like writing down their feelings.”

At the party, the girls take a preliminary survey to assess their awareness about HIV/AIDS and the dangers of unprotected sex. There’s also a segment called “STDs: Truth or Myth?” in which Houston reviews some of the common misperceptions about sexually transmitted diseases. The participants then watch a video called “Reflections,” written by a teenage girl, about three HIV-positive girls who all have very different lifestyles. During the Q&A that follows, “the floodgates open,” Houston says.

“Girls at the younger end of the age group don’t know much about sex,” says Houston. “And there’s a lack of information about how HIV is contracted.” Many girls, for example, believe they can contract the virus by drinking from the same glass or using the same toilet as an HIV-positive person. “And everyone wants to know if ‘blue waffle’ is a new STD,” Houston notes, referring to an explicit photo that has been circulating in social media. The short answer: “It isn’t.”

Girl Talk parties also feature lunch or dinner, condom demonstrations, a gift card raffle and a post-party survey to gauge how much the participants learned



during the two hours. Girls can also be tested at the party and receive an incentive of a \$20 gift card if they get and review their results with Houston a few weeks later.

Houston says she enjoys meeting new young women and helping them get answers to their questions. “When I feel like what I’m doing is making a difference, that’s the best feeling.” ♦

For more information about PATF’s Girl Talk program, email girltalk@patf.org or call 412-879-0GRL (0475).

LEFT: Girls enjoy writing in their “Girl Talk” journals, according to Houston. Photo by Paula Martinac



ABOVE: Katie Houston runs PATF’s Girl Talk program for teens. Photo by Paula Martinac



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the Bulletin BOARD

Local Events Classes Announcements Fundraisers

February 1

FRIENDSHIP

Next Stage

Kelly Strayhorn Theatres invites you to attend a showing of Next Stage dance residency, established in 2009, at 8 p.m. at the Alloy Studios, 5530 Penn Ave. Those who attend the Next Stage performance will receive a 50% discount on tickets to the Fresh Works dance residency showcase on Feb. 7 at 8 p.m., also at the Alloy Studios. General admission tickets for residency showings are \$10 and can be purchased in advance online at kelly-strayhorn.org/events/.

LAWRENCEVILLE

Night at the Races

Come to Teamsters Temple, 4701 Butler St., from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. to attend the annual fundraiser to support the 70th annual Lawrenceville fireworks display in Arsenal Park this coming summer. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at the Lawrenceville United offices at 4839 Butler St. Tickets will provide access to the event, food, and complimentary beer. Horses and jockeys will also be sold for \$10, each with a chance to win a \$50 prize. Event and race sponsorships are also available. Call 412-802-7220 for more details.

February 5

LAWRENCEVILLE

Art All Night

Join the Art All Night Planning Committee every Wednesday evening this month at 7 p.m. at the Stephen Foster Community Center, 286 Main St. New team members are encouraged to join the planning process for Art All Night 17. Bring ideas, organizational skills, and enthusiasm for this annual free arts event. Learn more about Art All Night at www.artallnight.org, by liking us on Facebook (Art All Night: Lawrenceville) or following us on twitter (@artallnight).

Cook-Off & Movie

Come celebrate Black History Month at the Carnegie Library of Lawrenceville, 279 Fisk St., from 6 to 8 p.m. Bring a dish for the soul food cook-off and enjoy a movie about music legend Thelonious Monk. A prize will be awarded to the best dish. Visit <http://carnegielibrary.org/bhm> for more information.

GARFIELD

Affordable Care Act

Learn about the Affordable Care Act at 5 p.m. at the BGC Community Activity Center, 113 N. Pacific

Ave. Learn about high quality affordable health insurance, gain knowledge on how to enroll in the Insurance Marketplace, and sign up for a free one-on-one enrollment session. Call 412-362-8580 or visit www.enecpittsburgh.org for registration and details.

February 7

GARFIELD

Make Moves Reception

Join the Irma Freeman Center for Imagination in celebrating the closing reception for renowned artist Bill Shannon's solo show, "Make Moves," from 7 to 10 p.m. at 5006 Penn Ave. "Make Moves" features video installation, assemblage sculpture, and line art along with select performance artifacts from the artist's past theatrical works. Call 412-924-0634 for more information.

PENN AVENUE

Unblurred

The first Friday of each month, from 6 to 11 p.m., various venues in the Penn Avenue Arts District, 4800-5500 Penn Ave., open their doors to showcase the work of a variety of artists and performers. For more information visit facebook.com/penn-avearts.

February 8

EAST LIBERTY

School-Age Fun

Come celebrate the legacy of Lewis Latimer as part of a Black History Month Program at Carnegie Library- East Liberty, 130 S. Whitfield St. at 11 a.m. For children from kindergarten through 5th grade.

LAWRENCEVILLE

Pancake Breakfast

Join the Lawrenceville Rotary for its 11th annual pancake breakfast from 9 a.m. to noon at St. Mary's Lower Lyceum, 333 45th St. Tickets, available at the door, are \$7 for adults and \$3 for kids 10 and under. Pancakes, sausage, bacon and eggs and real maple syrup will be served. Proceeds fund local non-profit organizations and Rotary International projects.

Day of Gadgets

Carnegie Library of Lawrenceville will hold an instructional Day of Gadgets from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 279 Fisk St. Tech-savvy librarians will give presentation sessions, demonstrations, and consultations to participants for a variety of electronic programs. Children and their families won't want to miss out! Call 412-682-3668 for more information.

February 9

BLOOMFIELD

Flash Fiction Workshop

Teens are invited to a Literary Arts Boom [The LAB] writing workshop from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh – Main Teen Department, 4400 Forbes Ave. There will be a mini lesson, writing time, and a chance to workshop pieces with peers and mentors. Participants are invited to share their writing aloud at a literary reading on March 6 at the East End Book Exchange in Bloomfield, 4754 Liberty Ave. Find this workshop online at www.literaryartsboom.org/calendar. Complete the registration form at bit.ly/LAB_flashfiction_Feb092013 or call 412-906-9522.

February 12

GARFIELD

Public Safety Task Force

The Public Safety Task Force has convened monthly in Garfield since 2000. At the table are representatives from the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, the Bureau of Police, other neighborhood organizations, the offices of the Mayor and City Council members, various city and county departments and the state. Community members are invited to bring specific concerns to PSTF's monthly meeting during the first 15 minutes. The meeting starts at 4 p.m. at BGC's Community Activity Center, 113 N. Pacific Ave. For more information, call 412-441-6950 x15.

February 13

GARFIELD

Home Instead Recruiting

Come to the Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center, 5321 Penn Ave., at 1 p.m. for the Home Instead Hiring Event. Home Instead is looking for a team of compassionate caregivers for one-on-one home care for seniors. A nursing certificate is not required, but prospective employees must have access to a car. Call 412-362-8580 for registration and details.

SHADYSIDE

Composting Workshop

Winter is the perfect time to compost indoors with red wiggler worms. Pennsylvania Resource Council's Vermicomposting Workshop will teach you everything you need to know to create a rich, organic fertilizer from your kitchen scraps. Participants receive a functioning Vermicompost (worm) Box to take home. 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Phipps Garden Center, 1059 Shady Ave.; cost is \$50 for individuals, \$55 for couples. Call 412-488-7490 X 226 to register or go to www.zerowastepgh.org.

February 14

BLOOMFIELD

Cupid Ball

Attend the black tie gala for singles from 7 to 11 p.m. at the Pittsburgh Dance Center (PDC), 4765 Liberty

Ave. Participate in a meet and greet, icebreaker games, dance lessons, and a DJ dance party. Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. Light fare and refreshments will be provided. Call 412-681-0111 for tickets and details. Additionally, PDC will be hosting a Brazilian Carnival from 7 p.m. to midnight on February 22nd. Check <http://www.pittsburghdancecenter.com/> for ticketing information.

GARFIELD

Alorica Recruiting

A recruitment session will be held to find in-bound customer service representatives at 11 a.m. at the Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center, 5321 Penn Ave. Call 412-362-8580 or visit www.enecpittsburgh.org for registration and details.

February 15

EAST LIBERTY

Family Fun: Quilting

Come listen to a story about how African Americans used quilts to escape slavery at Carnegie Library-East Liberty, 130 S Whitfield St., at 11 a.m. Representatives from the quilting club will be on hand to talk about their love of quilting.

Kids Create: Origami

Everyone is welcome to come learn how to make origami, folded paper creations. Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-East Liberty, 130 S Whitfield St., 3:30 p.m.

February 17

LAWRENCEVILLE

Black History Month

Children and their families are invited to celebrate Black History Month from 7 to 7:45 p.m. at the Carnegie Library of Lawrenceville, 279 Fisk St. We will read books, sing songs, and do a craft. Call 412-682-3668 for more information.

February 18

GARFIELD

Omni Hotel Recruiting

A recruiting event for the Omni William Penn Hotels of Pittsburgh will be held at 1 p.m. at the BGC Community Activity Center, 113 N. Pacific Ave. Recruiters will talk about their Open Hospitality and Tourism Positions. Available positions include housekeeping staff, cocktail server, front desk attendant, dining room attendant and many more. Call the Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center at 412-362-8580 for registration and details.

LAWRENCEVILLE

Adult Game Night

Join your neighbors for board games, word games or even video games at the Carnegie Library of Lawrenceville, 279 Fisk St., from 6 to 7:55 p.m. Ages 18 and up only. Call 412-682-3668 for more information.

Sorry, we do not accept listings by phone.

The Bulletin Board publishes listings of volunteer opportunities, free or low-cost events and classes, fundraising events and services that are of particular interest to our neighborhoods. Listings published on a space-available basis; we cannot guarantee placement.

Announcements for the March issue are due Friday, February 14, via email to bulletin@bloomfield-garfield.org.

Volunteer Opportunities & Services

February 22

LAWRENCEVILLE

Ton Pottery Opening

Attend the grand-opening community party from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Ton Pottery, a Ceramics Teaching Studio, 158 41st St. The event is free and will be open to the public. The event will feature demonstrations, door prizes, and the opportunity to try the potter's wheel. The event will continue February 23 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Call 412-863-3306 for more information.

February 23

GARFIELD

Black History Service

Pastor Elder Lamont B. Shields welcomes community members to a Black History Service at 4 p.m. at Morningside Church of God in Christ, 5173 Dearborn St. The service is titled "It Can Become a Reality, If You Can Dream!" Call 412-361-9865 for more information.

February 25

EAST LIBERTY

Pre-K Program

Pajama Storytime takes place at 6:30 p.m. at Carnegie Library- East Liberty, 130 S. Whitfield St. Kids are encouraged to wear their jammies!

February 26

EAST LIBERTY

Pre-K Program

Come to "What's the BIG Idea? A Math & Science Program for Preschoolers" at 6:30 p.m. at Carnegie Library-East Liberty, 130 S Whitfield St.

February

GARFIELD

Practice Is Perfect

Come to Assemble, 5125 Penn Ave., throughout the month of February to watch as performers create new skills and hone older ones in an informal rehearsal setting. "Practice Is Perfect" will display the mysterious, transformative and repetitive actions of performers as they rehearse in front of the public. The project is organized by Aaron Henderson, a filmmaker and performer, and recordings of the rehearsals will form the source material for a new film by the artist. Visit www.assemblepgh.org for the latest rehearsal schedule and email practice@aaronhenderson.com if interested in participating.

Crafternoons

Join Assemble, 5125 Penn Ave., on Saturdays for weekly Crafternoon workshops for kids from 1 to 4 p.m. Each week, kids will have the opportunity to

work with local artists, makers, and community organizations on make-and-takes or community-based projects. All materials provided. Call 412-540-5349 or contact jess@assemblepgh.org for more details.

March 1

LAWRENCEVILLE

Cash Bash

Our Lady of the Angels Parish invites residents to enjoy food, fun, and friends from 7 to 9 p.m. at St. Augustine's Auditorium, 220 37th St. With a ticket price of \$20, guests will receive food, beer, set ups, and two lucky numbers that offer a chance to win cash all evening. Contact parish@oloa.org or call 412-682-0929 for tickets and more information.

March 5

STANTON HEIGHTS

Fish Fry

Join the Stanton Heights Neighborhood Association for a fish fry from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Stanton Heights United Methodist Church, 4721 Stanton Ave. Fish dinners will be \$8 and fish sandwiches \$5. Please use the red door on the side of the church for entrance to the fish fry. Call 412-661-2587 or 412-782-3859 for pre-orders and details.

March 16

LAWRENCEVILLE

Church Launch

Come to Arsenal Middle School, 220 40th St., at 10 a.m. for the grand opening service of Encounter Church. Experience a friendly atmosphere, inspiring and heartfelt worship, and a teaching that's both spiritual and relevant. Programs will be offered to kids aged 6 weeks to 5th grade. Visit www.encounterpgh.com for more details.

Opportunities

EAST LIBERTY

Job Search Help

The Coalition of Organized Residents of East Liberty (COR) can help individuals find job opportunities in construction, retail and more. Residents can search for employment opportunities at COR's full functioning computer lab as well as receive help with resume building and cover letter writing. Call 412-661-2600 for more information.

GARFIELD

Visit the LAB

Teachers, parents and youth group leaders are invited to contact Literary Arts Boom for information on exciting workshops and field trips that focus on group storytelling, bookmaking, comics, poetry, and other creative writing projects. Contact literaryartsboom@gmail.com or call 412-906-9522 for more information.



LEFT: Lama Sonam gives an impromptu explanation about Buddhism and the sand mandala at Spinning Plate Gallery in Friendship. During the week of Jan. 12 to 18, Tibetan monks created the sand mandala, an ancient Tibetan form of religious art using a special tool to distribute the sand. After the mandala's creation, the sand was ceremonially swept up and transported to the Point in downtown Pittsburgh. There, it was released into the Ohio River, along with the monks' wishes that peace, compassion and kindness grow in the world. Photo by John Colombo Photography

"Beautiful Struggle" Explores Race

By Jonathan Luginbill

Kelly Strayhorn Theater

East Liberty – Baker & Tarpaga Dance Project's "Beautiful Struggle" tackles the challenge of sparking an accessible discussion about race. Its Pittsburgh premier is part of the spring season of KST Presents at Kelly Strayhorn Theater, 5914 Penn Ave. The show runs at 8 p.m. on February 21 and 22.

"Beautiful Struggle" ponders the visibility and invisibility of race and privilege and how violence and love live on in the body's memories. A mixture of dance styles from African, to hip hop, to contemporary permeate the work, making possible a vast range of bold, daring, and visceral movements that will keep any audience second-guessing.

"This is a provocative work that will spark conversation and, perhaps, new ways to talk about race," says Janera Solomon, executive director of KST.

Co-founders Esther Baker-Tarpaga and her husband, Olivier Tarpaga, originally from Burkina Faso, are ethno-choreographers who explore and investigate "the beauty and dissonance of the human condition" through dance and theater. Baker-Tarpaga used her research of African forms in dance as inspiration for the creation of "Beautiful Struggle," which was further supported by a KST mainstage residency in 2011.

"The burden is often placed on African Americans to educate white folks [about race]. I don't want that," Baker-Tarpaga says.

Instead, the interracial husband and wife duo, along with their team of multira-



ABOVE: "Beautiful Struggle" sparks a discussion about race through dance. Photo by Nick Fancher

cial dancers, tackle the burden together through a highly physical dance work that incorporates live energetic African instrumentation, recorded electronic music, spoken word, and performance art.

Whites Working and Hoping to Abolish Total Supremacy Undermining Privilege (WWHATS UP?!) is helping to facilitate a community workshop and discussion with Baker & Tarpaga Dance Project at KST from noon to 2 p.m. on Thursday, February 20. WWHATS UP?! is committed to creating discussion in new and exciting ways.

For more information and to purchase tickets in advance, visit kelly-strayhorn.org/events. ♦

First Night from page 1

a tradition steeped in community, art, and – believe it or not – giant puppets!

This fall, MGR youths at Arsenal 6-8 and Schiller designed, built and performed largescale puppets for Highmark’s First Night Parade downtown. A longstanding partner of First Night and Pittsburgh’s “puppet lady” Cheryl Capazutti, MGR’s Arts in Action program has marched in the parade for over five years, growing from a small group of students to a section of 50 students, families members, volunteers and staff this past New Year’s Eve.

The 2014 theme “Special Delivery” resulted in a colorful and interactive section that included a giant mailman (complete with his own mail bag and “Peace Mail” uniform) and a Peace Bird, whose worm friends delivered letters to audience members. These heartfelt letters, addressed to the citizens of Pittsburgh, carried messages of hope and change that expressed students’ wishes for their communities.

A highlight of the parade was the number of parents who attended with their children. One parent was overheard talking to a friend, explaining that through MGR’s program, she could bring her entire family downtown and not have to worry

about parking or transportation. She raved, “They even provided us all with warm gear: gloves, hats, and scarves!”

Another student and his father drove downtown to join in the festivities after missing the bus that carried his classmates to the convention center. At first, his father planned to just drop him off, but decided to stay after his son invited him by saying (in that way that only middle-schoolers can), “This is cool, Dad. I want you to be here, too.”

Participants in MGR’s Positive Spin Youth Cycling program at Arsenal were invited to participate in the parade for the first time. For three weeks, while the icy winter prevented them from cycling outside, students built delivery-bird-themed puppets for their helmets. These mini-bird puppets had beaks, tail feathers, wings and pieces of mail adorned to their beaks – each truly unique in style and production. The students took turns riding bikes in the parade as well, despite extremely cold weather.

Post-parade, students have had plenty of projects to busy themselves. Positive Spin will complete 10 weeks of bike mechanics and will earn students their own bikes through a partnership with Free Ride.



ABOVE: Arts in Action students prep their masks and puppets during the First Night parade line up on December 31. Photo by Meredith Hoppe

Arts in Action students will also have an exhibit of art and audio recordings about young people’s relationships to city police; the artworks and recordings will be presented to Mayor Bill Peduto through a partnership with Hear Me, a Carnegie Mellon University program that empowers students with technology.

“You might even see a giant puppet

wandering around Lawrenceville,” says MGR Executive Director Phil Koch. “We want to take every opportunity to showcase our students’ creativity, and remind our neighbors that young people care, want to contribute, and have ideas to make Pittsburgh an even better place to live.” ♦

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**FREE HELP WITH
 PREPARING & FILING
 2013 TAX RETURNS**



The Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, in cooperation with the Internal Revenue Service, will once again be assisting individual taxpayers with filing their federal and state returns online. There is no charge for this service, which will be offered every Saturday, beginning February 8th and ending Saturday, April 12th. Taxpayers will need to make appointments in advance, and then come to:

**BGC COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER
 113 NORTH PACIFIC AVENUE, GARFIELD**

between the hours of noon and 5 p.m. We are not able to assist business filers or individuals who have rental income or capital gains to report. City residents will also be able to receive help in filing their city tax returns if needed.

Call Rick Swartz at the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, 412-441-6950 x 11, to schedule an appointment.