

# the Bulletin

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*Serving Bloomfield, Friendship, Garfield,  
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## Fighting hate with kindness: Holocaust survivor shares story with local students

By Deana Callipare

*Environmental Charter School*

Garfield – On Dec. 12, Shulamit Bastacky, a Jewish Holocaust survivor and local resident, visited the fourth- and fifth-graders at Environmental Charter School (ECS) to spread her message of “one person can make a difference.”

Born in Poland on Aug. 25, 1941, almost two years after the start of World War II, she credits a Roman Catholic nun for helping her survive the Holocaust. The nun safely hid Bastacky, who was still an infant, from Nazi authorities for the duration of the war.

“If it were not for her,” Bastacky told the students, “I would not be here to speak with you today.”

Bastacky opened the session by asking

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**ABOVE:** Jackson (left) enjoys his first play-through of the classic “Operation” board game at Children’s Home of Pittsburgh (5324 Penn Ave.) on Monday, Dec. 23. Lisa Spinello (right, daughter of Operation creator John Spinello) distributed 10 of her father’s hand-signed board games to kids in the Child’s Way Daycare program. See more photos on page 9. Photo by John Colombo.



**ABOVE:** Visitors engage in a pointed discussion at Springboard Gallery (5125 Penn Ave.), a new destination for local art lovers, during the “Unblurred” gallery crawl on Friday, Dec. 6. Photo by Andrew McKeon.

## Unpacking the city’s 2020 operating & capital budgets

By Joe Reuben *Bulletin contributor*

Pittsburgh - On Dec. 17, City Council voted to pass a \$608 million operating budget and a \$110 million capital budget for 2020.

Most Pittsburghers probably yawned at the news, which was only available online due to a lack of daily print coverage [long, industry-specific story].

Many city residents were likely facing more pressing concerns related to family, job, health, and - of course - the holidays. Others were simply more worried about the Steelers’ and Penguins’ chances of making the playoffs

in their respective sports.

As for Pittsburgh’s financial affairs, the city has finally emerged from over a decade of supervision by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In a legislative measure known as “Act 47,” the state required an outside agency, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority (ICA), to have final say over the city’s annual budget.

That oversight put a major crimp in city spending, requiring it to start paying greater attention to serious items

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PORT AUTHORITY CONSOLIDATING  
BUS STOPS ALONG PENN AVE.

HOUSING DATA VISUALIZER  
SETS SIGHTS ON EAST LIBERTY

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## Survivor continued from page 1

**BELOW:** Holocaust survivor Shulamit Bastacky (back center, holding microphone) speaks to Environmental Charter School students about conquering hate with kindness. Bastacky recalled her experiences escaping Nazi persecution as an infant, and how a Roman Catholic nun saved her life. Photo courtesy of Deana Callipare.



the students what they think of when they hear the phrase “world kindness,” as well as what the word “hate” brings to mind.

She related their answers to her own life experience, and how she was able to overcome what she described as “the most horrific event in history.”

After being placed in a Lithuanian orphanage at the conclusion of the war, Bastacky was eventually reunited with her parents. Years later, in 1963, she arrived in the United States, where she finished high school, earned a bachelor's & master's degree from the University of Pittsburgh, and then became a social worker.

Once she retired from social work, Bastacky began traveling to area schools and speaking with children about diversity, inclusion, and cultural acceptance.

These days, she brings a survivor's perspective to the ongoing conversation about hate and intolerance.

Bastacky implored the ECS students to stand up for each other, rectify inaccurate information, seek out a diverse group of friends, and fight hate with love.

“These students give me hope,” she explained afterwards. “Their answers and responses show that there is hope because they, at a young age, already practice tolerance and love for one another. They are the future of the world, and I challenge them to make a difference.”

One person - who came from a different background - was able to change Bastacky's life forever. Now, she invites future generations to do the same for others from all backgrounds.

“The things we say and do matter. We all have the ability to do something good, and I encourage these students to volunteer and engage with people of different backgrounds in their community,” she said. “Simply treat human beings as human beings.”

Wearing a “Stronger than Hate” pin, Bastacky touched on the 2018 tragedy at Tree of Life Synagogue in Squirrel Hill.

She said that, while the loss of 11 lives to a hate-crime is beyond disheartening, it is the outpouring of support for the synagogue - coming from different religious leaders all over the world - that upholds her faith in humanity. ♦

### City of Pittsburgh - Public Meeting Penn Avenue Phase 2 Reconstruction Project

The City of Pittsburgh invites you to attend a public meeting being held for the **Penn Avenue Phase 2 Reconstruction Project**.

This meeting offers an opportunity to view the preliminary Penn Avenue reconstruction details, developing plans for Maintenance and Protection of Traffic During Construction and the overall construction schedule. The project team will also be available to answer questions.

#### MEETING DETAILS

Thursday, February 6, 2020;  
6:30 PM - 7:30 PM  
**OPEN HOUSE PUBLIC MEETING**  
Pittsburgh Glass Center  
5472 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15206

For more information, please contact:

Eric Setzler, PE, Project Manager  
City of Pittsburgh Department of Mobility and Infrastructure  
(412) 255-2883 or [Eric.Setzler@pittsburghpa.gov](mailto:Eric.Setzler@pittsburghpa.gov)

The meeting facility is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition, if you or an individual with whom you are familiar does not speak English as their primary language and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English desires to participate in this meeting or if you require special assistance to attend and/or participate in this meeting or need additional information please contact the number above.

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### THE BULLETIN WANTS YOUR FEEDBACK!

This publication begins and ends with you, local community members, so we respectfully invite your opinions & insights.

We'd love to hear from you, so drop us a line anytime!

Please email our tip-line/suggestion box:

[Bulletin@Bloomfield-Garfield.org](mailto:Bulletin@Bloomfield-Garfield.org).

## City joins Garfield groups in push for upgrades to Ft. Pitt Park

By Cody Webb Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

*Garfield* - Exciting news is on the horizon for anyone who enjoys spending time in the neighborhood's historic Ft. Pitt Park & Ballfield. A task force has been assembled to discuss improvements for this well-worn, yet well-loved, green space.

The task force - comprised of representatives from the Department of City Planning, city Councilman Ricky Burgess's office, the Garfield Gators youth sports teams, and the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation - has engaged firms interested in creating a "master plan."

This plan would detail how to make modern upgrades to the park and ballfield, and guide any potential expansion down the road. In response to a request for proposals, made public in the summer of 2019, architecture and development firms have continued submitting their ideas to the task force for review.

Thanks to voters' recent approval of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy's "Parks Plan," which will allow for more funding directed to park improvement and maintenance, changes to Ft. Pitt Park & Ballfield may come sooner than expected.

So far, some of the task force's main topics of discussion have been upgrades to the football field's turf and lighting, new and improved playground equipment, "green" stormwater management, and connected walking trails.

The task force mandates that any developer selected through the process will engage openly with the park's neighbors in Garfield, fielding their suggestions for improving a vital community space. Look to future editions of *The Bulletin* for more information about this exciting park project as it develops. ♦



**AT LEFT:** Outdated playground equipment behind Ft. Pitt School, which sits adjacent to Ft. Pitt Park in Garfield, is now being considered for much-needed upgrades. Photo courtesy of Cody Webb.

## Weathering this winter: resources available for local residents

A Message from State Rep. Adam Ravenstahl (D-Allegheny)

*Allegheny County* - While the holiday season marks a high point of the year for many local residents, this time of year also brings challenges to some of our less fortunate neighbors.

Winter heating bills, bad weather, and unexpected circumstances can quickly force a family into difficulty.

But help is available with home heating bills or water issues; my district office can help connect families or individuals to programs that assist with these challenges. For example, did you know that, two years ago, the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority [PWSA] began offering help to customers with their water bills during the winter months?

Among the services offered is assurance that, between Dec. 1 and Mar. 31, a PWSA customer's water service will not be shut off due to unpaid bills.

The authority also offers a bill discount program of 75% on fixed water and sewer charges. Details about the eligi-

bility requirements for these programs are available at pgh2o.com.

The other program I want to highlight is LIHEAP, which offers cash grants to help with home heating bills and crisis grants to help with emergency situations, such as a broken furnace or an unexpected fuel shortage.

Renters and homeowners who qualify can get a cash grant - that does not need to be repaid - sent directly to their utility company or fuel provider. Grants range from \$200 to \$1,000 based on household size, income, and fuel type; crisis grants are also available.

The eligibility requirements for this program are listed at dhs.pa.gov. If you know of a family or individual who could benefit from one of these programs, please consider sharing this information with them.

Feel free to stop by the district office at 3689 California Ave. or call us at 412-321-5523 with any questions. ♦

## the Bulletin

Serving Pittsburgh's  
East End neighborhoods  
since 1975

with the mission of reporting on issues affecting underserved communities and facilitating local residents' exchange of ideas.

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**Board Meetings** are held by the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation at 6:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month, at the BGC Community Activity Center (113 N. Pacific Ave.), and are open to the public.

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

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[Bloomfield-Garfield.org](http://Bloomfield-Garfield.org)

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## INFORMATIONAL SESSION

Wednesday, January 15th  
10:00 AM—2:00 PM

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# City Budget continued from page 1

like unfunded pension liabilities.

For decades prior to the state's involvement, the city's mayors only ever put enough in the line-item for the pension program to meet the barest minimum required by law.

When the state essentially said that was not good enough, the city had to start upping its contribution. In 2020, the city's contribution will come to \$106,500,000.

Ponder that for a moment. What is in the fund today covers less than 60% of what the city could ultimately owe its employees once they retire; if the employee should die, the pension payment passes on to their surviving spouse.

Although Council adopted what is traditionally called a "final" budget, there could be a major increase still to come in terms of personnel costs. Now that the state is no longer dictating what the Mayor could propose - and what Council could approve - regarding increases to city workers' wages, the city is staring into the abyss alone.

The unions representing city workers are getting new contracts in the works for, among others, firefighters, paramedics, and police. The first two

groups seem to have worked out new wage and benefits deals, but [as of press time] the police contract is still up in the air.

So city hall is left holding its collective breath while negotiations continue through a process overseen by an independent arbitrator. It is the arbitrator who will make the final call.

In the years prior to the ICA's involvement, arbitrators awarded contract increases that did not necessarily take into consideration the city's ability to pay - partly how the state ended up becoming the city's fiscal watchdog in the first place.

A multitude of new commercial and residential developments will be cropping up in various parts of the city over the next few years. One would think this might significantly increase any revenues that the city could derive from its real estate tax, yet the city's own projections indicate otherwise.

In 2020, the city's real estate taxes are expected to bring in a little over \$150 million. In 2021, that number is projected to go to only \$152.7 million.

That is a mere 1.5% increase, and it continues at the same rate through 2024. How can that be?

The answer could lie in the details of the deals that the city often cuts with individual developers. In some cases, developers can direct those new tax revenues back into their own projects to complete things like infrastructure improvements or parking facilities.

For major residential projects, the city, school district, and county have a program known as LERTA that can hold down the tax assessment on any new development for as long as 10 years. The county and school district must vote to approve the arrangements for each project. For the city, the approval is automatic; no vote of City Council is required.

The budget is also revealing in how little the city receives for its operations from major nonprofits like hospitals, universities, and cultural institutions.

Any type of contribution from its own public housing authority, which still manages over 2,000 housing units that are not on the tax rolls, is also missing.

The budget for 2020 anticipates a scant \$531,000 from the tax-exempt crowd. Most of the well-endowed nonprofits are required to pay something called an "institution service privilege tax," but it is always up to the organizations

themselves to determine just how much "tax" it is they actually owe. The estimated 2020 haul from that tax is only \$656,000.

Mayor Bill Peduto and his predecessors have routinely tried to boost the tax yield from the nonprofit sector. Regardless, these interests have powerful friends in Harrisburg, and it is state lawmakers who, ultimately, must approve any new tax the city would want to levy on them. Fun fact: over 40% of the city's land area is held for tax-exempt use.

Finally, there is the matter of the \$110 million capital budget. A large chunk, \$50 million, is to come from a bond issue, which means borrowing money from the private sector. Another \$30.2 million is to come from "other," which is decidedly vague, but usually means other levels of government.

Additionally, \$13.5 million is slated to come specifically from the federal Community Development Block Grant Program, known as "CDBG" for short.

How, you might ask, will the \$110 million be spent? About \$3.4 million will be spent on the thankless task of

- continued on next page -

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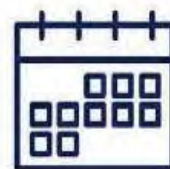


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razing condemned buildings. With the pace of demolition in the city slowing noticeably in recent years, due in part to a lengthier permitting process, some neighbors are questioning whether the city can spend even half that amount in one year.

There is \$8.6 million in the capital budget for “park reconstruction,” though this does not include money that will supposedly come from an increase in the millage rate for real estate taxes, which was approved by city voters in a November referendum.

Council has yet to decide how and when it will enact that tax increase to net what is estimated to be an additional \$10 million for park reconstruction. The question is who will direct that spending - the city or the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, which spent heavily on advertising to champion the tax increase?

As it stands, a number of Council members have gone on record that they do not want to turn those funds over to the Conservancy. The 2020 capital budget contains \$7.2 million marked for “improvements to public safety facilities” like police, fire, EMS stations. An additional \$19.7 million is set aside for an initiative called “Complete Streets” - not to be confused with street resurfacing, which has been budgeted separately at almost \$17 million.

The city’s website defines the Complete Streets program as “making streets safe and comfortable for all to use, activating public spaces, and interconnecting various transportation networks.” Of the \$19.7 million re-

served for Complete Streets, over \$13 million is expected to come from the pockets of either the state or federal government. There is actually an “advisory committee” that any Pittsburgh resident may join [Google “City of Pittsburgh Complete Streets Program” for application details].

Of greater interest to local activists: the funds to promote equitable development in the city. With the pressures of gentrification now felt by many local communities, recent estimates of population shifts indicate that low-income - and African-American households, in particular - are being forced to move to other neighborhoods.

Curiously, Mayor Peduto just decided to chop \$3 million in CDBG funding [see above] that, historically, has been directed to stimulate the preservation or development of housing, and business opportunities for low-income Pittsburghers. From those same funds, the Mayor also cut an allocation that is used to pay for Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) staffers - the ones who do the actual work - from \$1 million to \$500,000.

Explaining the cuts to City Council in December, the Mayor’s chief of staff, Dan Gilman, proclaimed that the URA needs a “new business model.”

Gilman did not describe what that model might look like but, depending on who the URA names as executive director, anything could be possible in the way of restructuring. As members cast their final vote on Dec. 17, City Council was looking to restore at least \$900,000 to the line-item for URA funding [staff and programs]. ♦

## BULLETIN TIME CAPSULE: Penn Ave. corridor circa 1940

**BELOW:** Kudos to Annie Ruefle (of Columbus, OH) for this incredible 1940 photo of the Penn Ave. & S. Evaline St. intersection. Her father - Joseph Ruefle, born in 1918 - grew up in Garfield and her mother’s father, Martin Noone, opened “Noone’s Bar” at 5106 Penn Ave. in the 1930s. Photo courtesy of Annie Ruefle.



**ABOVE:** A snapshot of the very same intersection, 80 years later, reveals a different Garfield neighborhood. The modern motor vehicles, enhanced streetscaping, and spiffy building exteriors speak to a world of change. Photo by Andrew McKeon.



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## Port Authority considers eliminating Penn Ave. bus stops, asks for riders' feedback

By Arnold Miller *Bulletin contributor*

*Perspective/Penn Ave.* - In September, the Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC) announced it would begin the process of consolidating bus stops throughout its network. PAAC's plan is to eliminate a portion of bus stops throughout the network with the stated goal [per its website] of "improving on-time performance."

The program will look at two routes every quarter before releasing a plan identifying the bus stops being considered for removal. The public will then be given approximately two months to register comment [via online form], after which the PAAC will make a final decision.

The local transit advocacy group known as "Pittsburghers for Public Transit" sums up the program's dilemma on its website by saying "for some, PAAC's bus stop consolidation program creates just a minor inconvenience that is outweighed by the slightly faster ride. But for riders with limited mobility, or for those that live

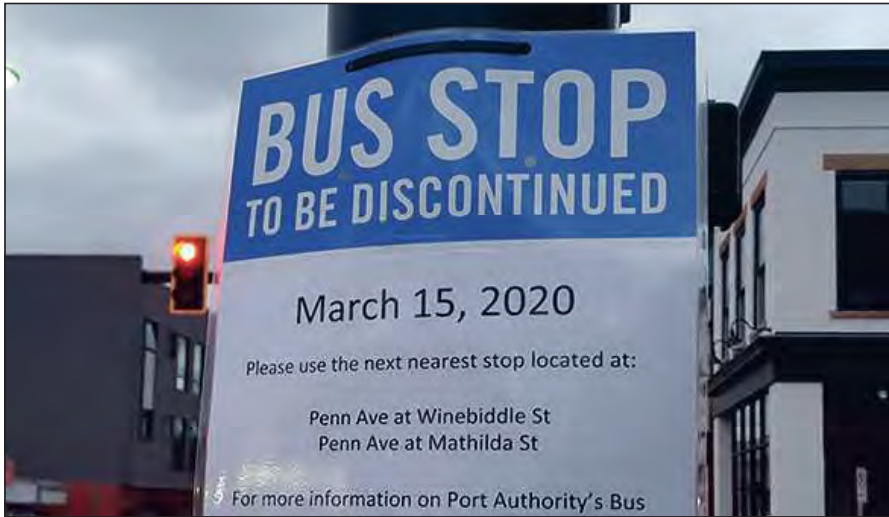
a distance from stops to be eliminated, it can create hardship or even an insurmountable obstacle to the use of transit."

I agree that it is important for the public to be fully included in the decision-making process, every step of the way. Now that the Authority's plans are targeting the 88-Penn bus route, many communities of transit riders along Penn Ave. will be greatly impacted by the bus stop consolidation program.

The 88-Penn route serves Downtown, the Strip District, lower Lawrenceville, Bloomfield, Garfield, Friendship, East Liberty, Bakery Square and North Point Breeze. The current proposal would eliminate 22 stops, which is 24% of the stops on the route. In addition, two inbound stops would be merged at a new location and one other stop relocated. Because the 88-Penn shares many stops with other bus lines, it is important to note that the stop eliminations and consolidations on the 88-Penn may also affect riders who use the 54, 71C, 74, 77, 82, 86, 87, 89, 91 bus routes as well.

Every day, a total of more than 2,400 daily bus riders would be affected by the bus stop eliminations and consolidations proposed for the 88-Penn. Accessible public transit is critical for residents of all ages and abilities - in Garfield, Bloomfield, Lawrenceville, and other neighborhoods throughout Allegheny County.

It is critical for anyone who uses public transportation to review the new plan at [portauthority.org/busstop](http://portauthority.org/busstop) and then submit feedback. PAAC spokesperson Adam Brandolph announced that his agency will meet with local residents over the next few months to explain all the changes. For meeting details, call 412-441-6950. ♦



**ABOVE:** As of press time, Penn Ave. signs still instruct transit riders to use other 88-Penn bus stops. Despite requests for clarification, the Authority has already decided which stops remain. Call 412-442-200 with any questions. Photo by Andrew McKeon.



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# Bloomfield Saturday Market boosts sales for local brick-and-mortars

By Christina Howell Bloomfield Development Corporation

Bloomfield – In early 2019, the Bloomfield Development Corporation (BDC) set a goal to provide more benefits for local brick-and-mortar businesses through its Bloomfield Saturday Market program.

By offering free vending stalls to Bloomfield businesses, up to four times a year for each participating business, the market program was expanded to help neighborhood shop-owners increase their customer base.

BDC worked with Peace of Time Well-

ness, a business that opened at 4810 Liberty Ave. last spring, to offer weekly massage therapy, nutrition counseling, and mental health support at the Saturday Market throughout its summer season.

“As a newly established Bloomfield business,” Shellie Vincent, a licensed therapist at Peace of Time Wellness, said, “the Market provided us a great avenue to engage the local community and advance wellness awareness.”

Elsa Santos credits the program with

increasing the visibility of her business, the popular Azorean Café (4715 Liberty Ave.), which she opened in 2018.

“We were able to build relationships within the community while offering our food and products,” she said. “Especially as a newer business in the neighborhood, it has been a great experience.”

After relocating from Lawrenceville to Bloomfield in 2018, Gryphon’s Tea became a full-time vendor at the Saturday Market last year.

“This was our first time at the market, and we were happy to be there. It let the neighborhood know who we are, owner Diana Stoughton said. “Sometimes, people who just found out about us at the market will go and visit our storefront on the same day. Being at the market has provided us with a much more consistent customer base.”

Chantal’s Cheese joined the Market later in 2019 in order to get the word out about its 4402 Penn Ave. storefront, located right across the street from Children’s Hospital. Chris Loughran, of Chantal’s Cheese, said that the market helped him connect with local community members and build awareness of his store’s physical location.

After learning about his business on a Saturday, Loughran said, many new customers would then visit Chantal’s Cheese the following week.

The Bloomfield Saturday Market has ended for the summer season, but it will resume operations in May. To inquire about dates and availability, please call 412-681-8800.

In the meantime, the Bloomfield Winter Market takes place every first and third Saturday, from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. at 5050 Liberty Ave. ♦



**AT LEFT:** Azorean Café (4715 Liberty Ave.) owner Elsa Santos serves fresh cuisine native to the Azore Islands [just like she is] at the Bloomfield Saturday Market. Santos and other local entrepreneurs took advantage of the Bloomfield Development Corporation’s 2019 program highlighting the neighborhood’s brick-and-mortar establishments at the weekly market. Photo courtesy of Christina Howell.

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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS 2020 Community Happenings

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### State of the Neighborhood Community Meeting



6pm-7:30pm

TUESDAY

Feb-18, 2020

June 16, 2020

Oct 20, 2020



### Penn Ave Reconstruction Phase 2

11am-Noon

THURSDAY

May 7, 2020

Aug 6, 2020

Nov 5, 2020



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May 16, 2020

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September 19, 2020



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**5149 Penn Ave, PGH PA 15224**

**412-441-6950 x 17**

# Neighborhood FOCUS

## From 'Gardens' to 'Cornerstone': new affordable housing in East Liberty

By Elizabeth Sensky East Liberty Development, Inc.

**East Liberty** - During an October ribbon-cutting, East End residents and community leaders celebrated the completion of the second phase of Cornerstone Village Apartments, a 150-unit apartment complex across the street from Target. The development's first phase involved the construction of 85 units located in various buildings in the Larimer and East Liberty neighborhoods.

With an additional two phases in the works, the complex will provide a total of 334 homes and apartment units when all is said and done; most of the units will be made affordable, with about 20% designated as market-rate.

According to Kendall Pelling, Director of Land Recycling at East Liberty Development, Inc. (ELDI), "this expansive development didn't just pop up overnight."

The journey, he explained, started back in 2005 with another complex, East Liberty Garden Apartments, which occupied the same plot of land. At the time, the complex was in the early stages of foreclosure and, without many options left, Mr. Floyd Coles, the lone remaining member of the East Liberty Gardens' Board of Directors, approached ELDI to help save the property.

**BELOW:** Cornerstone Village Apartments, a new affordable housing complex in East Liberty, has been in the works for over a decade. Photo courtesy of Zillow.com.



*"This expansive development didn't just pop up overnight."*

- Kendall Pelling, ELDI

"Working with the local HUD office, ELDI took over management of the property with the aim of stabilizing it for current tenants and guiding its long-term redevelopment as an affordable place to live in the neighborhood," Pelling said.

To this end, ELDI staffers began working with the apartment tenants and Board members from the Gardens' founding organizations: East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Eastminster Presbyterian Church, and the Kingsley Association. Stabilization included tasks such as repairing sidewalks and lighting, setting up an on-site office, and addressing a \$500,000 water bill.

By 2007, the property had been stabilized and made financially sound, thanks in no small part to its newly active Board. Working together with the local churches, the Board helped build a new playground and hosted a Christmas party for the tenants. Still, this did not change the fact that the building was past its useful lifespan and its future, as well as that of the tenants, needed to be addressed.

Enter the Choice Neighborhoods grant. By 2010, the long-divested neighborhood of Larimer had been trying, unsuccessfully, for years to secure redevelopment grants.

After several failed attempts at securing funding, community leaders decided to tackle the \$30 million Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant with the help of many partners, including the City, the Housing Authority, ELDI, and others.

The Choice Neighborhoods grant is a highly competitive federal grant that demands a one-for-one replacement of existing affordable housing, in addition to creating mixed-income housing, while also providing resources for "people" and "neighborhood" improvements.

- continued on next page -

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In order to qualify for the grant, however, a neighborhood needed to have a minimum number of public housing units - and Larimer was still far from meeting that requirement.

"When ELDI came together with the Larimer Consensus Group and other stakeholders, we determined that East Liberty Gardens could be the key to helping Larimer meet the grant's requirements," Ted Melnyk, ELDI's director of Family, Community & Social Equity, said, "while also safeguarding the Gardens' 127 units of affordable housing."

The grant has since spurred multiple phases of mixed-income development in Larimer and East Liberty, including the Cornerstone Village Apartments.

As reported [on Oct. 10] by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: "The housing authority worked with HUD and the city's Urban Redevelopment Authority to pour \$1.3 million into improvement of facades and interiors of some 100 existing homes. That helped to convince residents that they'd be part of the neighborhood's revitalization, rather than being left behind, [Caster Binion, executive director of the housing authority] said."

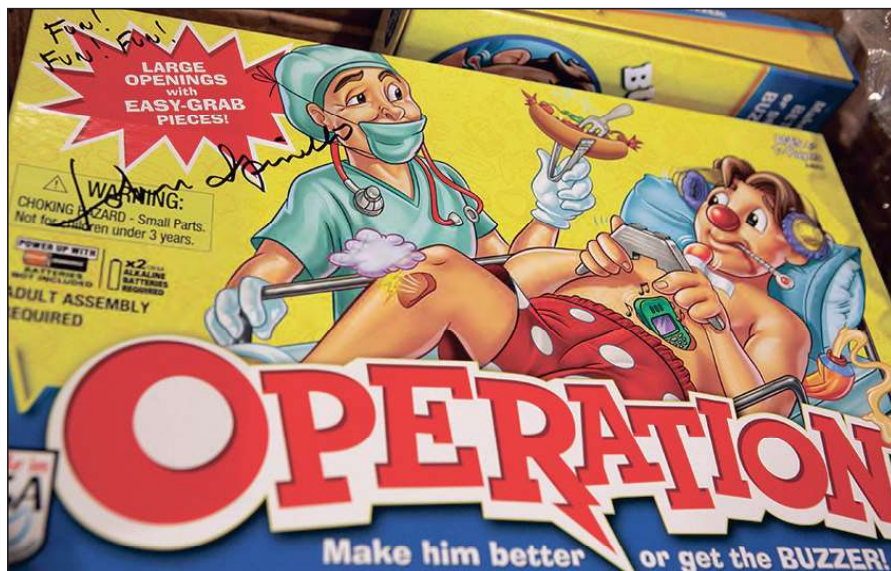
Throughout the redevelopment process, the Choice Neighborhoods team worked to ensure a positive relocation experience for the Gardens' tenants by assigning them case managers and guaranteeing them a residence in the new housing developments.

Nearly two-thirds of these residents have secured units in the new Cornerstone Village Apartments, many of them now living just one block away from their former homes.

The Choice Neighborhoods development's final phases (3 & 4) are currently underway and expected to be completed in 2021. A total of 99 units will be made available via the rehabilitation of the historic Larimer School, as well as new construction on a Larimer Ave. site.

To learn more, visit [eastliberty.org](http://eastliberty.org). ♦

**BELOW:** Signature editions of the "Operation" board game, autographed by game creator John Spinello, were donated to the "Child's Way" day-care program at Children's Home of Pittsburgh in Garfield on Monday, Dec. 23. Photo by John Colombo.



**ABOVE:** Braedon (left) and Hailee (right) join their mother, Lisa Spinello, in gifting autographed board games to children on Dec. 23. Photo by John Colombo.

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Stem cell recipient

# Pittsburgh Fitness Project's healthy eating priorities for 2020

By Matt Mrazik, RD Pittsburgh Fitness Project

[Editor's Note: Thanks to Matt Mrazik, a registered dietitian at Pittsburgh Fitness Project, The Bulletin would like to spotlight some healthy eating priorities for the New Year. Located in the Lawrenceville Shopping Center (5500 Butler St.), Pittsburgh Fitness Project is an exercise facility that offers health & wellness options to local residents. Visit [pittsburghfitnessproject.com](http://pittsburghfitnessproject.com) or call 412-782-5438 to learn more.]

**Pittsburgh** - Got any resolutions around diet and food? Sure, we all have them. Want to know how long they last? Well, on average, by Jan. 12, most people will ditch them and move on. There is some good news, though, because about 10% of people that make resolutions do keep them!

At those rates of success, is it even worth enduring this ritual each year? For most folks, probably not. But there is a better way! When it comes to food and eating, I know you're doing something that works for you. As the new year begins, take some time to reflect on that and write them down; even one is a place to start. After you have identified some of these mindful habits, turn them, and maybe a few from our list here, into your New Year priorities.

## 1. Practice mindful eating

Taste and appreciate your food. Think "table/plate/chair" for every meal. Fewer distractions make for less consumption, too. This may also assist with portion control, weight management, and possibly even digestion - all important factors for long-term health.

## 2. Cut back on sugar, even just small amounts at a time

This is a process, but once you start, you'll realize that you don't need as much of it as you once thought. Pro tip: if sugar is on the table, remove it. For the ubiquitous sugary drinks and sodas, you can work to replace these with water or - my favorite - seltzers; mix several flavored ones together for a taste sensation.

## 3. Save booze for the weekend

Lots of empty calories, and maybe some poor decisions as well. Skip out on alcohol during the week; save that special glass of wine or craft beer for the weekend.

## 4. Get into meal prep and food logging

You are the expert on you. Weekly meal prep & planning can help you eat better while saving money and time. Fun fact: people that log their meals and snacks lose twice as much weight as those that don't. Think "when you bite it, write it!"

## 5. Balance those plates

When you fill your plate, start with the veggies/produce, making sure they take up half the plate or more. Then add your lean protein and some high fiber carbs.

## 6. Eat out less often

When we don't cook or prepare, we lose control. If you do, check out the restaurant's menu ahead of time and to plan for a healthier selection. Sometimes having a light snack at home before heading out will do the trick.

## 7. Eat beans every day

Beans can help reinvent your diet and add years to your life. There's a reason why the world's longest living people love legumes, the food group that includes beans, chickpeas, and lentils.

So, there you have it: Simple, specific and, even just in small amounts, beneficial. Here's to a healthier you in 2020! ♦



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## 2019 BGC Holiday party: in pictures



**ABOVE:** Santa poses with another young visitor, who presented a full wish-list, during the BGC holiday party on Friday, Dec. 13. Photo by Andrew McKeon.

**AT RIGHT:** The seasonal tunes of Christmas abound as Paris Wright (center, playing piano) entertains the crowd. Garfield neighbors joined together on Friday, Dec. 13, to celebrate the holiday season with a festive party in Garfield. Photo by Andrew McKeon.



**BELOW:** An expert juggler from the 'Zany Umbrella Circus' (left) trains possible proteges on Friday, Dec. 13. Photo by Andrew McKeon.



**ABOVE:** Neighborhood volunteers pose for a photo during the BGC's holiday party on Friday, Dec. 13. Photo by Andrew McKeon.

## City expands Xmas tree recycling program

By Timothy McNulty *City of Pittsburgh*

*Pittsburgh* - Last year, the City of Pittsburgh's Christmas tree recycling program hosted ten drop-off sites, collecting more than 21 tons of trees.

This year, the Forestry Division and Bureau of Environmental Services [within the Department of Public Works (DPW)] will collaborate to host twelve drop-off sites that will remain open through Jan. 26.

The program empowers residents to have their live trees recycled rather than sent to a landfill, which is what happens when trees are placed at the curb. The trees collected this winter will be chipped into pine mulch and made available to the public for free this spring.

The tree recycling program dovetails with the city's Climate Action Plan, which defines milestones toward zero waste goals. The city's Cable Channel (youtu.be/6Rgr1dQ1u6E) created a brief public service announcement to remind residents that all ornaments, netting, tinsel, and tree stands must be removed before the tree is dropped off.

Three DPW sites are available year-round for yard debris (including tree) drop-off, from 8 a.m.-1 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Residents may call 311 or visit [pittsburghpa.gov/dpw/xmas-tree-recycling](http://pittsburghpa.gov/dpw/xmas-tree-recycling) to utilize a map and find the most convenient drop-off location.

*[The DPW site located closest to The Bulletin's coverage area is:*

*Homewood West / 2nd Division of Public Works / N. Dallas & Hamilton Aves.*

*Other drop-off sites - open 24 hours-a-day through Jan. 26 - that are located in/ around The Bulletin's coverage area include:*

*Friendship / Baum Grove Parklet / 400 Roup Ave. (off Fairmont Ave.)*

*Highland Park / HP Volleyball Court Parking Lot (approx. 151 Lake Drive)] ♦*



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# Commission on Human Relations develops new map to visualize housing trends

By Elizabeth Sensky East Liberty Development, Inc.

*Pittsburgh* - Researchers have often wondered what they might be able to accomplish if, instead of just analyzing housing trends through studies and reports, they could see a visual rendering of how issues like discrimination and displacement play out over the course of a city’s history.

In partnership with Carnegie Mellon University’s CREATE Lab, the city’s Commission on Human Relations (PghCHR) aims to turn this pipe dream into a digital reality by creating an interactive housing map of Pittsburgh. The idea for the new tool was sparked by Teireik Williams, a community research journalist at the CREATE Lab, during a PghCHR fair housing event in April 2019.

“In conversation with [Williams], I realized that we’d never pursued a data-driven effort to identify areas where we should do outreach, an effort to truly understand housing problems in Pittsburgh holistically,” Megan Stanley, PghCHR’s executive director, said.

Instead of studying one point in time, or just one problem at a time, Stanley and her colleagues wanted to use the data in a new, more comprehensive way - to look back at the history of housing in Pittsburgh, compared to what we see now, and study many related issues at once to get a clearer picture of the local housing patterns.

“I think data has traditionally felt inaccessible to a lot of people,” Stanley explained. “Even when you have access to it, which is rare, you get large spreadsheets and you really must have specialized knowledge of how to analyze that data. Thanks to Anne Wright, our project scientist, we can see the data visualized on a map where you can zoom in and out, play it together as an animation, and see change on the map over time. This adds so much richness to the data points – ones that we had before, but did not know how to interpret.”

CREATE Lab’s digital map is called “EarthTime.” In the case of this project, it is customized to display housing trends, but it has also been used to visualize issues like climate change and the gender pay gap. The map layers housing data, from sources like County records and the U.S. Census Bureau, over images of Pittsburgh captured by NASA satellites between 1984 and 2016.

Williams’ work with PghCHR involves making sure the data is telling a story; text boxes pop up on the map to explain the context behind what is being seen.

“He helps bridge the gap between data and lived experience,” Stanley explained, “to tell the story of what those dots on a map really mean and how things like displacement or segregation in a neighborhood might affect someone.”

Stanley and other Commissioners see endless applications for the map: city Council members could use it to understand how development may impact their districts; grassroots organizers could use it for conservatorship projects; and residents could use it to better understand housing policies and related issues in their communities.

Of the \$100,000 that PghCHR receives every year from the City’s Community Development Block Grant, \$20,000 is being used to develop the tool. Commissioners hope to be finished with a beta version by April 2020, planning to unveil it at a public event where people can test the map out on a tablet or laptop and then directly provide feedback.

Stanley said they want to hear from residents, advocates, developers, and housing professionals in order to figure out what the tool got right or wrong – and to learn what other data people want to see.

After that, she estimated, they will need another six months to expand the visualizations and add more powerful narratives to the renderings.

“In the end, though, I don’t know that this project will ever be ‘done,’” Stanley admitted. “Data is always changing and evolving, and I hope we can continue this work well into the future.” ♦

# Volunteer Voices: Robert Harris

Interview by Jason Walter Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

*Garfield* - Robert Harris, an AARP volunteer who works with clients at the Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center (ENEC, 5321 Penn Ave.), has a knack for communication - and lifting people’s spirits.

It helps that he also has a real knack for whistling; Harris can be heard whistling tunes up and down Penn Ave. Naturally, he is wonderful at manning the front desk at the ENEC. He makes a wonderful Santa Claus, too.

But Harris also has a background in accounting and is very handy with computers, often assisting clients with online job searches and helping edit their resumes.



**ABOVE:** Robert Harris, costumed as St. Nick, at the BGC holiday party on Dec. 13. Photo by Andrew McKeon.

**Bulletin:** When did you first begin volunteering?

**Harris:** “It started almost 50 years ago during my time with the Gamma Phi Delta fraternity, which is based in Lincoln Park, in Penn Hills. Bernard Morris was the spark that started my fire for helping individuals.”

**Bulletin:** How did you end up playing Santa Claus at holiday parties?

**Harris:** “Because of my daughters, who attended Lincoln Park elementary, about 12 years ago I started dressing up as Santa for their holiday parties.”

**Bulletin:** What motivates you to stay involved?

**Harris:** “My compassion for the public and community has always motivated me. I grew up in a church, so my family was always helping in the community.” ♦



## Hiring Event

### Thursday, January 9th

### 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

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# LOCAL REAL ESTATE BLOTTER

- Bloomfield, Friendship, Garfield, East Liberty, Lawrenceville, & Stanton Heights -

Real Estate Sales (for the month of November 2019)

Compiled by Lillian Denhardt, RE/MAX Select Realty

## Bloomfield

4774 Liberty Avenue Associates LP to East End Real Estate LLC at 4774 Liberty Ave. for \$335,000.

Gary Lance Lugar to Jing J Ou at 442 S. Pacific Ave. for \$166,600.

Joseph F & Danielle T Varrati to Mumbling Joe Properties LLC at 242 S. Mathilda St. for \$240,000.

Kfir Eyal to Benjamin C Blanchard at 4025 Woollayer Way for \$295,470.

Lidia Sciulli to Natalie J Polk at 423 S. Evaline St. for \$330,000.

Richard J Vernon to John Leventis at 5111-5113 Penn Ave. for \$99,000.

Rose Ann Lombardo to Joshua Steven Sailor at 5006 Cypress St. for \$73,000.

Stephen W Ryms to Jason Tracy at 182 42nd St. for \$184,574.

Traffic Effect LLC to Joseph A Bellissimo at 4021 Woollayer Way for \$280,000.

Tricia L Burmeister to Helen E Hendricks at 5010 Friendship Ave. for \$270,000.

## Friendship

No sales to report.

## Garfield

3 Penguins LLC to James P Sheets at 5210 Dearborn St. for \$27,500.

James P Sheets to Araucaria Properties LP at 5210 Dearborn St. for \$44,000.

Mao & Mao LLC to Caitlin Marie & Lewis Charles Gilday at 5520 Black St. for \$333,750.

Mao & Mao LLC to Mary Ann Grant at 5522-5524 Black St. for \$195,000.

Thomas Camille to P D Investments LLC at 4762 Kincaid St. for \$120,000.

Urban Redevelopment Auth of Pittsburgh to Module Development LLC at 5454 Black St. for \$22,500.

Urban Redevelopment Auth. of Pittsburgh to Module Development LLC at 5456 Black St. for \$1,500.

## East Liberty

Alfred Galindo to Evanscarter LLC at 500 Mellon St. for \$140,000.

Christopher Leventis to Azadeh O & Nathan Sawyer at 6107 Stanton Ave. for \$548,000.

Michele Adair to NCRC Housing Rehab Fund LLC at 538 N Negley Ave. for \$68,000.

Kabana Properties LLC to Samantha Mccarley at 315 N Beatty St. for \$450,000.

Quality Home Investments LLC to Keith J & Theres S Payne at 515 N Saint Clair St. for \$485,000.

Steven I Canton to Traffic Effect LLC at 731 N Euclid Ave. for \$210,000.

## Lawrenceville

360 Ocular LLC to Amelia Hays Osterman at 324 45th St. for \$323,000.

Brigitte Mary to Eli C & Catherine E Kochersperger at 5270 Holmes St. for \$149,000.

Carmine C Laughlin to Ncra Housing Rehab Fund LLC at 5302 Holmes St. for \$146,000.

Casey Droege to Philip J Cwynar at 300 57th St. for \$203,000.

Daniel J Simmonds to Timothy S. Sherer Jr at 311 Service Way for \$203,000.

John E Porter to William H Simpson Jr at 186 46th St. for \$479,900.

John M & Joanne Barricella Yalch to Ilan Biala at 223 40th St. for \$358,500.

Jordan Gray to Caroline N. Damon at 312 44th St. for \$320,000.

Keith J Kochert to Denise Cognac at 226 Fisk St. for \$310,000.

Kevin P & Adriana T Doyle to Jesse N. Johnson at 520 54th St. for \$268,000.

Kristian Robert Fazio to Pembroke Properties LLC at 911 Mccandless Ave. for \$115,000.

Lawrenceville Sunrise II LP to Andrea Gyarmati Csendesne at 264 39th St. for \$245,000.

Louis Carter LLC to Carlo Berardelli at 173 36th St. for \$362,500.

Mary Jo & Myra Moczulski (Trustees) to Katherine Mason at 347 Fisk St. for \$315,000.

Matthew J Stark to Ann L & Michael E Wright at 3929 1/2 Woollayer Way for \$208,000.

Ming Tse to Joshua & Brigitte Stroup at 5118 Natrona Way for \$200,000.

Monica S. Meehan to Nicholas L & Courtney N. Augspurger at 5241 Stanton Ave. for \$344,100.

Nesby LLC to Ryan L Ostrom at 217 38th St. for \$730,000.

Quality Home Investments LLC to Peter G Elers at 3819 Liberty Ave. for \$417,500.

Ruth Ann Lawton to Yalin Zhong at 331 44th St. for \$215,000.

Stanley Tylak to Greater Pittsburgh Real Estate Services LLC at 243 42nd St. for \$150,000.

Steel Town Properties M3 LLC to Douglas Zhong at 137 44th St. for \$499,500.

Stephen Stanek to Coen Real Estate Holdings 2 LLC at 4749 Plummer St. for \$200,000.

## Stanton Heights

Abbas Al & Hana Abuzaid Gasas to Zaka Algasas at 1407 Hawthorne St. for \$0.

Mandi Campbell to Adriane Larussa at 1018 Oranmore St. for \$1.

Mary Louise Conley to Rae Lynn Dukovich at 1023 Downlook St. for \$1.

Nicholas Gastaro to Alix Stein Levy at 1365 Hawthorne St. for \$243,000.

*This column uses data from Allegheny County that contains occasional errors (sale price, owners' names, etc.). We strive for accuracy every month so, if something looks off, please let us know.*

*For questions, comments, or just to chat about real estate in our neighborhoods, feel free to email Lillian at [lillian@agent-lillian.com](mailto:lillian@agent-lillian.com) or call 412-335-6068. ♦*



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## Local Events Classes Gatherings Fundraisers

### Sorry, but we do not accept listings by phone.

The Bulletin Board publishes listings of volunteer opportunities, free or low-cost events & classes, fundraisers, and services that are of particular interest to our neighborhoods. Listings are published on a space-available basis; we cannot guarantee placement or thorough edits of any listings. **Announcements for the February 2020 edition are due by Friday, Jan. 17.** Please submit listings using the online form at [bit.ly/bulletin\\_submit](http://bit.ly/bulletin_submit).

#### JANUARY 6 - MONDAY

##### GARFIELD

### 'Bantha Readings'

The Bantha Readings is celebrating one year of community-building through poetry and prose on Monday, Jan. 6. Join us at Bantha Tea House (5002 Penn Ave.) for an evening of live art by some of Pittsburgh's best voices in the city. The Bantha Readings encourage a diverse range of voices. Our goal is to provide a forum for writers to share their work with a live audience. Suggested donation is \$5.

##### LAWRENCEVILLE

### Cabaret Open Stage

Tunes from The Great American Songbook at Hambone's (4207 Butler St.). Join us every Monday night for Cabaret open mic - with accompanying jams from terrific musicians like Nancy Leff, Ronni Weiss, & Ian Kane. Bring your instrument, voice, and/or sheet music. This event is family-friendly - and free. Look for @HambonesPittsburgh on Facebook for more info.

#### JANUARY 9 - THURSDAY

##### GARFIELD

### Hiring Event

On Thursday, Jan. 9, Kydz Careers will be with us [ at 5321 Penn Ave. in Garfield] to hire child care aides, asst. group supervisors, group supervisors, and child care directors. Applicants must be 18+ years of age, and able to pass both a background check and drug test. For more info, visit [enecpittsburgh.org](http://enecpittsburgh.org) or call (412) 362-8580.

#### JANUARY 11 - SATURDAY

##### EAST LIBERTY

### Homebuyer Workshop

Want to own a house but do not know where to start? The free homebuyer workshop on Jan. 11 provides a comprehensive overview of the home buying process. Denise Bunker and Natalya Pinchuk, real estate agents with Keller Williams Pittsburgh East, explain what to expect and share information about down payment assistance grants, including the NeighborhoodLift (up to \$17,500) and City of Bridges buyer-initiated program (up to \$30,000). Workshops take place at the Carnegie Library's East Liberty branch (130 S. Whitfield St.), meeting

room #2 on Saturday, Jan. 11 and Jan. 18, from 1 - 2:30 p.m. Please RSVP for this event at [11january.eventbrite.com](http://11january.eventbrite.com) or [18january.eventbrite.com](http://18january.eventbrite.com).

#### JANUARY 12 - SUNDAY

##### UPTOWN

### Warm Clothing Drive

HackPGH and Uptown Partners are hosting a Warm Clothing Drive and Swap at 1936 5th Ave. on Sunday, Jan. 12. Hot beverages, baked goods, and reusable bags for clothing will be provided. We need: new or gently used clothing that is clean and in good condition; outerwear such as coats, gloves, hats, and scarves; indoor wear such as socks, sweaters, and pants; and volunteers to gather and sort donations. Please PM us on facebook (@HackPgh) or email us at [Info@HackPittsburgh.org](mailto:Info@HackPittsburgh.org) with any questions.

#### JANUARY 15 - WEDNESDAY

##### LAWRENCEVILLE

### Free Lecture: Life and Legacy of Henry Phipps

The Lawrenceville Historical Society will host Rose Hydeman, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens docent and local historian. Hydeman will discuss the life and legacy of Henry Phipps - from his childhood years to his business relationships with Pittsburgh industrialists and his grand gift of the conservatory and gardens to the city of Pittsburgh. This free event takes place on Wednesday, Jan. 15, at 6:30 p.m. at the Carnegie Library (279 Fisk St.).

#### JANUARY 19 - SUNDAY

##### LAWRENCEVILLE

### 'Bingo Bango' @ Spirit

It's bingo - but kind of, not exactly. Free to play and lots of prizes to win. Drinks to be drank, food to be fed from 6 - 8 p.m. every Sunday in the Lodge (242 51st St.).

#### JANUARY 20 - MONDAY

##### GARFIELD

### Community Celebration @ PGH Glass Center

Celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

**BELOW:** Dr. Staci Flint (left) greets PGH Police Officer Jeff Crawford with holiday spirit at the Zone 5 PGH Police Open House on Dec. 14. Photo by Barry Werber.



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# Volunteer Opportunities    Announcements    Shout-Outs

## Services    Open Calls    Classifieds

at Pittsburgh Glass Center (PGC, 5472 Penn Ave.) on Monday, Jan. 20. Learn about glass and enjoy hands-on activities. Help us mosaic on our new "Free Library" - an artwork that will be installed outside of PGC during Spring 2020. Glassblowing and flameworking demonstrations will be ongoing throughout the day. Free kiln-fired pizza will also be available to those in attendance.

### CITY-WIDE

#### Call for Proposals

Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG) seeks presenters for the 10th Annual Community Development Summit. Topics including but not limited to: challenges and opportunities faced by people of all races, genders, and backgrounds. Some key topic examples: redlining, race equity, gender equity, blight, diversity, inclusion, women, disability, cultural diversity, public transit, affordable housing, human rights, and more. Email [m.daniels@pcrg.org](mailto:m.daniels@pcrg.org) for event details.

**JANUARY 23 - THURSDAY**

### GARFIELD

#### Homebuyer Education Workshop

This Homebuyer Education Workshop covers everything you need to know about purchasing a home, from credit to closing. It features presentations by loan officers, real estate agents, home inspectors, and insurance representatives. Completing the class fulfills the education requirement of homebuyer assistance programs such as NeighborhoodLIFT ([neighborworkswpa.org/lift/lift.html](http://neighborworkswpa.org/lift/lift.html)). For \$75, the package includes this Saturday workshop, three counseling appointments (in-person or virtual), and a tri-merge (or "three-bureau") soft credit report. The workshop will take place at the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation's Community Activity Center, (113 N. Pacific Ave.) on Jan. 23. Lunch will be provided. Please visit [nwwpa.force.com/nwwpacft](http://nwwpa.force.com/nwwpacft) to register. Fees may be waived if one's household annual income falls below 200% of Federal Poverty Level.

**JANUARY 28 - TUESDAY**

### LAWRENCEVILLE

#### Public Safety Meeting

Join us on Tuesday, Jan. 28 at 6 p.m. at

the Carnegie Library in Lawrenceville (279 Fisk St.) for a Lawrenceville-wide public safety meeting. All are welcome. Light refreshments provided. Meeting is wheelchair accessible. For free childcare, questions, or accommodations, please contact LU at 412-802-7220 or [info@LUnited.org](mailto:info@LUnited.org).

**JANUARY 30 - THURSDAY**

### LARIMER

#### Nonprofit Info Session

PULSE is hosting a Prospective Nonprofit Partner Info Session for nonprofit professionals to network and learn more about partnering with PULSE for a year of service. The info session will take place on Jan. 30, from noon to 1 p.m. at Habitat for Humanity of Greater Pittsburgh (6435 Frankstown Ave.). ♦

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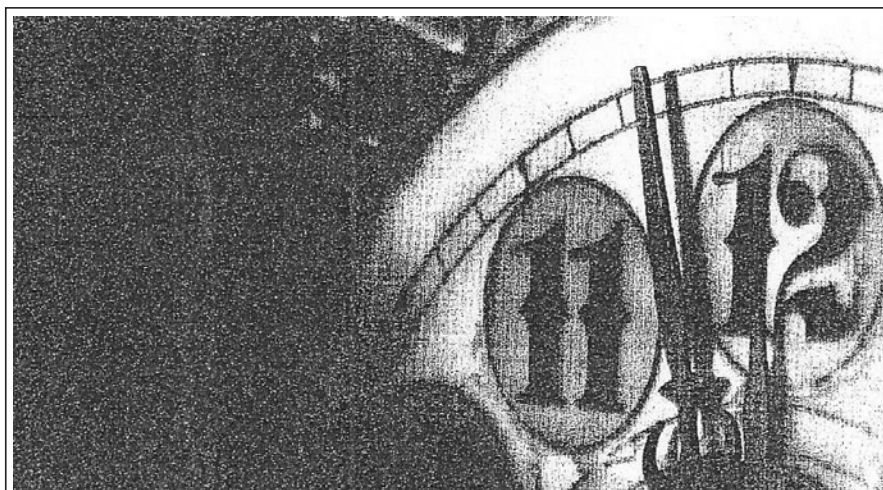
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## Fashion designer's journey leads to 'Brown Sugar' boutique on Penn Ave.

By Christine Bethea *Bulletin contributor*

*Garfield* - TaRonda Brown, who owns a clothing boutique at 5114 Penn Ave. called "Brown Sugar," has always maintained a keen eye for fashion.

"I kept my Barbie dolls well past the age that most girls give them up," Brown recently told *The Bulletin*.

For years, she turned ruffled socks, scrunchies, and other accessories into high-end fashion for her dolls. Brown's parents were very supportive of their daughter's artistic talents. Although her father, who works in the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Athletics, had always hoped his daughters would all move toward sports, the arts won out for his daughter TaRonda.

"I credit Mom for trying to figure out where my creativity was going," she said.

One summer, when Brown's grandmother gave her a sewing kit, she began making clothing for people - not just dolls anymore. Brown's sewing skills increased to the point that her mother invested in private lessons with Jean Scott, a former home economics teacher at Peabody High School, who ran a business designing prom gowns.

Scott taught the young pupil a lot about design, and also marketing as Brown

helped solicit gown orders from students. Working with prom gowns, she was able to learn how the garments were cut for the best fit.

Brown worked with Scott until 2006, when she graduated high school and enrolled at Kent State University to study fashion merchandising. At college, her enthusiasm melted into disappointment because the faculty members were pointing students towards careers designing for chain stores - instead of pushing them to become entrepreneurs.

Brown soon left Kent State and returned to Pittsburgh, determined to make her dream come true. Along the way, she made several side steps, attended CCAC, and worked odd jobs at restaurants and cafés.

In her spare time, the young entrepreneur did "pop-up shops," selling her original designer clothing in various makeshift settings.

"Doing a pop-up can be brutal," Brown said. "After completely transforming a space to suit your needs, you may have to break it all back down again in three days or less."

When Instagram came on the scene in 2010, she embraced it as a low-impact

alternative to physical pop-up shops, albeit one with a great potential for growing her customer base.

Once Brown's fashion designs started getting attention from media outlets like VH-1 and popular reality shows like "Love & Hip Hop," her sales skyrocketed. She realized the business was quickly outgrowing its headquarters in her home.

As she was driving past Garfield one day, Brown saw a storefront at 5114 Penn Ave. that seemed like it could suit her needs as a boutique space. Upon making some inquiries, she was told that the storefront might remain a barber shop.

"I told them, 'no, it's mine,'" Brown recalled with a chuckle.

In making the transition from online to "brick and mortar" retailer in January 2019, she got a little help from her friends and family. The name "Brown Sugar" was contributed by a cousin, and her friends helped lay flooring and hang the black crocodile wallpaper in the new space.

Brown hired professional photographers and models to create new fashion ads for her store. She was flattered, and slightly annoyed, when the Brown Sug-

**BELOW:** Brown Sugar boutique (5114 Penn Ave.) in Garfield, will celebrate its first anniversary in January. Photo courtesy of Christine Bethea.



ar ads got so much traction that some of the models were signed by New York fashion agencies. But, as Brown is quick to remind herself, celebrity connections are always good for business.

"When [celebrities] post pics of themselves wearing my clothes," she said, "what follows is almost overwhelming!"

Brown Sugar will host its first anniversary fashion show in January. For more info, follow the boutique on Facebook (@shopbrownsugar). ♦



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