

the
Bulletin

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*Serving Bloomfield, Friendship, Garfield,
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**Garfield Highlands
rental development
headed for April
ground-breaking**

By Rick Swartz

Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Garfield - In late December, the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) acquired the final land parcel needed for a \$10 million rental housing development, planned for scattered sites in Garfield.

The parcel in question, on the corner of N. Aiken Avenue and Rosetta Street, had been in the city's possession since 1985, when it was taken for unpaid real estate taxes. An objector emerged last summer to contest the sale, claiming that the city was not the rightful owner, according to court documents.

Rather than risk having the lot remain tied

See **Community Briefs** | page 2



ABOVE: Dancers perform a tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. at East Liberty's Kelly Strayhorn Theater. Learn more about the MLK Jr. Day celebration, titled "The Audacity to Believe," on pages 5 & 15. Photo by Delaney Greenberg.



ABOVE: Glassblowing artists Julian Maturino (left) and Jarrod Futscher perfect their craft at the Pittsburgh Glass Center's (PGC) Garfield headquarters. Under new limelight from a hot Netflix series, PGC plans to expand its Penn Ave. facility in order to better serve local artists. Read more at right, and on page 6. Photo by Alan Guenther.

**Glass Center builds on Netflix fame,
plans to expand Penn Ave. facility**

By Alan Guenther *Bulletin contributor*

Insight/Garfield - The Pittsburgh Glass Center (PGC, 5472 Penn Ave.) is about to build on its newfound fame and fortune.

The fame, as many well know, came when PGC was featured, throughout multiple seasons, on the popular Netflix series, *Blown Away*, where artists competed for \$60,000 in prize money and a chance to showcase their unique and colorful glass-blown art.

For those unfamiliar with the show, it is a tense, red-hot competition that focuses on artists being pushed to their limits.

On Friday, Feb. 3, at 6:30 p.m., everyone will

get a chance to meet the top three finalists from Season 3 of the Netflix series. At PGC headquarters, the artists will be available to answer questions and sign autographs for an exhibition called "Undefined."

The opening is scheduled to feature the following artists: MiNHu Su England, John Moran, and John Sharvin [spoiler alert: one of the three won the Netflix grand prize money]. Other artists will also be on-hand to stage glass-blowing demonstrations.

More information about the exhibition

See **Glass Center** | page 6

Community Briefs *continued from page 1*

up indefinitely in legal proceedings at Common Pleas Court, the BGC and its partner in the “Garfield Highlands” project, Gatesburg Road Development out of State College, PA, paid \$5,000 to the objector to withdraw her claim.

Judge John McVay, Jr. then issued an order of court, clearing all liens and encumbrances still on record against the title to the property, so that the city’s sale to the BGC could be completed. Only a state judge like McVay has the authority to do this.

Now, Garfield Highlands can move toward a projected Mar. 31 closing on the financing that has been put in place. The development will consist of 25 single-family homes located in the 5300 blocks of Kincaid and Hillcrest Streets; the 5300 and 5400 blocks of Rosetta Street; and the 200, 300, and 400 blocks of N. Aiken Avenue. Construction could begin by mid-April because all of the city approvals are in place for the project, according to Andrew Haines, a vice-president with Gatesburg Road Development. Mistick Construction, Inc. of the city’s North Side is slated to be the general contractor.

Several of the new homes will be reserved for families who have been, or are experiencing homelessness. Rents for all of the homes must be affordable to households with incomes of 60% or less of the median income for the Pittsburgh region. Tenants living in the units in the 16th year of lease-up will be eligible to purchase their units.

For further inquiries on the project, interested parties may contact Linda Fulmer at 412-361-4462.

Developer presents plans for new homes on Wicklow Street

Community members met on Jan. 23 with the architect hired by a private developer who wants to build five townhouses on six lots in the 400 block of Wicklow Street in Garfield. John Watson of Desmone Architects presented plans for the development via a Zoom meeting hosted by the BGC.

The project would feature three-story units with driveways leading to integral garages.

Each house would consist of three bedrooms and three full baths. There would also be the potential for a fourth bedroom - in place of a family room on the first floor behind the garages. Watson, the project architect, was the only person available to discuss the development. No one from the property owner, 419 Wicklow LLC, was present on the call. Watson could not share specifics as to final sales prices for the homes.

The site sits on a steeply-sloped street, and concerns were raised by community members attending the meeting about the potential for stormwater runoff once the tree canopy covering the site has been cleared. Watson said he did present a plan to the city zoning office to curb runoff during construction. However, any plans to limit runoff after the project has been built were not outlined during the meeting.

- continued on page 12 -



ABOVE: Five townhomes planned for construction on the 400 block of Wicklow Street. Rendering prepared by John Watson of Desmone Architects.

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CCRP student spotlight: Anthelena Jones-McLeod

By Judy Lubarski Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Garfield - Anthelena Jones-McLeod (Lena) is the youngest of 5 children whose family tree runs deep in Garfield.

Her grandparents were from Garfield, and her grandfather served on the original board of the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC).

"Lena" started her scholastic career at the age of 4 - at Sister Thea Bowman Catholic Academy in Wilkinsburg, where she consistently made the honor roll until her transfer to Arsenal Middle School in Lawrenceville. In 2019, when Lena was in eighth grade, she was invited to join The National Youth Leadership Program.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 reared its ugly head and the world went on lockdown. This did not halt her academic advancements, though, as she continues to maintain her good grades and honor roll status. Lena continued her studies, while sheltered in place, until she could return to brick & mortar schooling.

She is also a 3-year member of the 2022 high school championship Obama Lady Eagles. Lena continues to make honor roll, and has been invited to join the University of Pittsburgh's Minority Engineering Program. She has worked as a summer camp counselor with the Neighborhood Learning Alliance in Garfield.

A member of the National Society of High School Scholars, Lena is currently

participating in the BGC's College & Career Readiness Program - where she has been able to take driving classes, work paid internships, and receive one-on-one mentoring. She completed her internship with the Pittsburgh Junior Police Academy this past year, and is now considering interning with Animal Friends.

Lena is now reviewing the many college recruitment letters, which she receives almost daily, while also pursuing interests in the field of Forensic Pathology. ♦



ABOVE: Lena Jones-McLeod (left) graduates from the PGH Junior Police Academy. Photo courtesy of Judy Lubarski.

the Bulletin

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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; these monthly meetings are open to the public. For more details, email Pam@Bloomfield-Garfield.org.

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

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County Controller promises action to notify families when a prisoner is hospitalized

By Alan Guenther *Bulletin contributor*



ABOVE: During a meeting on Jan. 9, Tim Stevens (back to camera) of the Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP) confronts Allegheny County Controller Corey O'Connor (beneath the flag) about inhumane conditions in the county jail. Photo by Megan Kerr.

Perspective/Pittsburgh - Allegheny County Controller Corey O'Connor continues working on ways to notify families whenever a jail resident is hospitalized for a serious injury. O'Connor serves on the county's jail oversight board.

Originally, he promised that families would be notified whenever a prisoner [of Allegheny County Jail (ACJ)] was taken to the hospital for any "unscheduled" visit. O'Connor made the promise during a Jan. 9 meeting with 13 advocates for jail reform.

After the meeting, and after conducting further research, O'Connor discovered that such a motion was too "unclear" to be implemented, according to the attorney for the Controller's Office, Ankur Sakaria. Instead, the County Controller is now working on a motion that will notify families whenever prisoners are hospitalized for "serious" illnesses or injuries.

Sakaria relayed this news in a follow-up Zoom meeting on Jan. 27 with Tim Stevens, chair of the Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP) and myself, representing the Pittsburgh Peace Is Possible Coalition. Sakaria said that O'Connor hoped to introduce the revised motion at the next Jail Oversight Board (JOB) meeting on Feb. 2, if board members can agree on the wording of the motion.

The need to notify families of serious injuries or illnesses came to a head last fall, in an incident highlighted in a letter [written by Stevens] to the JOB.

"According to Janelle Tipton, she was not notified that her son had been taken to Allegheny General Hospital, and that he had major surgery, until three days later, on Sept. 19," Stevens wrote. Janelle Tipton said her son, Aaron, had his arm broken by guards as he was handcuffed, while naked, in the jail.

"The fact that he has a rod and several screws in his arm certainly seems to indicate that something very serious occurred," Stevens wrote. He has asked that O'Connor and other JOB members conduct an investigation of the incident and report their findings at the Feb. 2 board meeting, which was to be held at 4 p.m. in the Allegheny County Courthouse. During the Jan. 27 meeting, Sakaria said that the revised motion currently being considered would have required the jail to notify Aaron Tipton's family about his broken arm.

The activists who met with O'Connor on Jan. 9 discussed 18 other reforms that they said were necessary to improve what they contend are cruel and inhumane conditions at the facility. While in ACJ's custody, 17 prisoners have died since March 2020. Among the reforms requested:

- Eradicate the roaches in the jail's kitchen.
- Provide translation services for people entering the jail, so their medical histories and their list of life-sustaining medications can be understood.
- Provide details of an audit, which O'Connor said he plans to conduct, to find out what happens to the children of incarcerated people.
- Fix broken cameras in the jail that are supposed to monitor guard behavior.
- Stop using SWAT teams in the mental health units of the jail.
- Stop strip-searching children, who continue being housed with adult prisoners since Shuman youth detention center closed in 2021.

During the meeting, Leah Kozak, of the Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN) asked about the status of a \$700,000 plan to rethink and redesign the jail.

The goal of the plan, announced in July, would be to reduce the jail population to between 500 and 1,000 people - a sharp decline from the current jail population of about 1,500 people.

Advocates present at the meeting included Tim Stevens of B-PEP; Brandi Fisher and Jesse Wozniak of the Alliance for Police Accountability; Beth Schongar and Jo Schlesinger of the Quakers; Roy Blankenship, Jr. of B-PEP; Tanisha Long of the Abolitionist Law Center; Will Anderson of the Peace Is Possible Coalition and the Pittsburgh Black Caucus; Joshua Friedman of Bend the Arc; Megan Kerr of Peace Is Possible; Minister Ella Scales and Kozak of PIIN.

The Jail Oversight Board meets at 4 p.m. on the first Thursday of every month.

I attended the meeting as the co-convenor of the Quaker Working Group Against Racism and the Pittsburgh Peace Is Possible Coalition. ♦



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85

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In 2021, we witnessed how staffing transitions and fluctuations in the employment market effected the ENEC's structure and focus. 2022 served as a year where we truly tossed ideas at the proverbial wall to see what would and wouldn't stick. We are excited to build on these programming transitions over the next year, and hope that you will join us as part of the next stages of the ENEC.



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East Liberty community honors life, legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.

By Carlee Benhart Kukula Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation



ABOVE: Performers honor the life of Martin Luther King Jr. at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater on Monday, Jan. 16. Photo by Delaney Greenberg.

East Liberty - Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) staffers joined local community and arts organizations to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater (KST, 5941 Penn Ave.) on Monday, Jan. 16.

The celebration, titled "The Audacity to Believe," incorporated festivities like screen-printing at BOOM Concepts' photo station, bracelet-making hosted by the BGC, and hands-on ceramics from the Union Project, as well as themed activities from the Latino Community Center and Assemble. Attendees were also treated to performances by the Hill Dance Academy Theatre, Alumni Theater Company, K-Theatre Dance Complex, and Jacquea Mae.

Dozens of families brought their kids to enjoy arts & crafts in the lobby, and take in the wonderful performances - warm alternatives to the 24-degree weather outside that night. Check out more of the festivities on page 15. ♦



ABOVE: KST's executive director, Joseph Hall (left), joins State Rep. La'Tasha D. Mayes in celebrating MLK's legacy in East Liberty. Photo by Delaney Greenberg.

BELOW: Kids partake in local arts & crafts offerings during the MLK Jr. Day celebration, "The Audacity to Believe," at KST. Photo by Delaney Greenberg.



Glass Center *continued from page 1*

can be found at pittsburghglasscenter.org/events/undefined. If you miss the artists in person at the opening, their artwork will remain on display until July 30.

According to Heather McElwee, the center's executive director, the Netflix show sparked a surge of interest in PGC's classes and studio space. Construction is scheduled to begin next month on an ambitious expansion of its glass-blowing art studios and other public spaces.

A few months later, construction will commence on a nearby commercial building at 5431 Penn Ave; construction at both sites should be finished by mid-2024, according to McElwee, who says the center has raised \$10.8 million of the \$15 million required to finance the expansion.

"We had been planning for the expansion pre-*Blown Away* fame, because we were seeing a lot of demand for our classes," she said.

The Center offers a wide range of classes and activities for school children, and for adults who are curious about melting glass and turning it into beautiful art.

Others, McElwee explained, use the furnaces to create a special gift for a loved one.

"We do a lot of different things in this building. We are focused on teaching people about glassmaking," she said.

The center offers classes for people who have never tried glassblowing before - those who want to come in with their friends or family and make items such as a paperweight, a pumpkin, or a flower.

PGC also offers studio space for 50 professional artists who moved to Pittsburgh to rent the furnaces so that they can earn a living by making glass art, exhibiting in galleries, and selling exquisitely beautiful and personal pieces, many of which are on display in the center.

The expansion will serve both serious craftspeople and those who are just curious about a process that combines the roaring heat of a furnace with the gentle touch of an artist. It will allow the center to add more studio space, create a retail store, and allow addi-

tional room for community programming.

Group classes and individual sessions are available, and studios for the professionals will be expanded, McElwee said. But, when the construction is finished, members of the public who just want to walk in and create something on a whim will be also able to use an expanded public area.

For years, McElwee noted, the Center was better known worldwide than it was in its hometown of Pittsburgh. Thanks to an extensive marketing campaign, the Center is determined to be better-known, and even more accessible to local residents, than ever before.

From September through December of 2022, more than 450 Pittsburgh sixth graders have come to the Center for a hands-on experience as they toured the facility, McElwee said. Another 900 students are expected to visit the facility between January and May.

The hope, of course, is that as the children have fun working with glass, they will go home and tell their parents, who may want to return and sign up for classes. Registration fees are as low as \$35 and numerous scholarships are available.

For more info about making glass or visiting the center, call 412-365-2145 or visit pittsburghglasscenter.org. ♦

BELOW: Heather McElwee, executive director of the Pittsburgh Glass Center. Photo courtesy of Alan Guenther.



ABOVE: Rendering of the PGC expansion, featuring a new Penn Avenue façade. Graphic by Indovina Associates Architects.

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Fundraising fireworks: 'Night at the Races' brings community together in Lawrenceville

A Message from the Lawrenceville Fireworks Committee



ABOVE: The "Night at the Races" fundraiser event in Lawrenceville. Photo courtesy of LU.

Lawrenceville - A beloved annual tradition has returned to its usual spot on the community calendar for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

"Night at the Races," a fundraiser for the 77th annual Lawrenceville Independence Day Celebration hosted by the Lawrenceville Fireworks Committee, was held on Saturday, Jan. 21, from 6:30-10:00 p.m. at the Teamster Temple in Lawrenceville.

The community was clearly eager to return to the January tradition, as the event sold out in advance and attracted over 200 residents and supporters to raise revenue for one of the City's longest-running fireworks displays.

For a \$20 entry fee, guests enjoyed numerous activities including a bar, buffet, various games of small chance, and social opportunities for new and old residents alike.

The main attraction, of course, was the horse races: guests bet on 10 races throughout the evening - choosing between horses and jockeys who were colorfully renamed by Lawrenceville sponsors and luminaries - and then loudly cheered on their preferred steed as an announcer called the race "live."

The evening's capstone was with the final event, in which tables competed against each other to "buy" and name a horse for the last race. The event ran smoothly thanks to the help of countless volunteers.

"It was a fantastic event, and a great job

done by all our volunteers," said Mickey McGrane, a longtime member of the Lawrenceville Fireworks Committee.

"It was the first time since the pandemic that everyone was feeling good again to be together, as a community," he said, "and raise funds for the fireworks."

Funds were also raised through sponsorships, with many local elected officials supporting the cause. This year's event was generously sponsored by Senator Jay Costa, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, State Senator Wayne Fontana, Mayor Ed Gainey, City Councilwoman Deb Gross, KEPTCO, City Controller Michael Lamb, County Controller Corey O'Connor, Teamsters Local 249, and County Treasurer John Weinstein. Races were also sponsored by

County Councilwoman Liv Bennett, Edward Borkowski, the Law Office of Casey P. Mullen, 10th Ward Democratic Committee, Allegheny County Sheriff Kevin Kraus, Rep. Sara Innamorato, AOH Division #23, and Senator Lindsey Williams.

"The Lawrenceville fireworks celebration is an example of how good things come when all members of the team pull together - including volunteers, the community, the sponsors, and our political leaders," said Dan Devinney, another longtime member of the Lawrenceville Fireworks Committee.

The committee recently lost one of its leaders, Jim Foley, whose memory was honored throughout the night. Proceeds from the event benefit the Lawrenceville Independence Day Celebration, an all-day, family-friendly tradition, which includes a highly-regarded display by Zambelli Fire-

works. The remainder of revenue needed for the event will be raised through sales in the "Fireworks Program Book," in which local businesses and organizations can sponsor an ad. This year's celebration is scheduled for Saturday, Jul. 1, in Arsenal Park; the rain date is Sunday, Jul. 2.

Given the ongoing renovations to Arsenal Park, the committee anticipates some activities, including the launch site of the fireworks, to be modified to accommodate construction needs. More details will be shared with the community this spring.

The Lawrenceville Fireworks Committee is an all-volunteer group that puts together "Night at the Races" and the Lawrenceville Independence Day celebration; it is fiscally sponsored by Lawrenceville United (LU). Any inquiries may be directed to LU at 412-802-7220 or info@LUUnited.org. ♦

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Neighborhood FOCUS

East Liberty fixture: Ace Lock keyed into five decades of change

By Elizabeth Sensky *East Liberty Development, Inc.*

East Liberty - As the founder and owner of Ace Lock (5964 Baum Blvd.), Sandra Hunter has been a key member [pun intended] of the neighborhood's business community for the last 48 years. Born and raised in East Liberty, she has not only lived through the neighborhood's storied evolution - from the "Urban Renewal" days all the way into its ongoing revitalization - but also successfully adapted her business to stay in tune with the changing times.

East Liberty Development, Inc. (ELDI) recently sat down with Hunter to learn more about Ace Lock, and her journey as an entrepreneur.

ELDI: *Could you tell us about the history of Ace Lock?*

Hunter: "I started the business in 1975 with my ex-husband. We started off doing locks and keys at my mother's house, and then we gradually moved along and got a garage. My sister had been in a car accident so, one day, when I was taking her out for a stroll in her wheelchair, I came across an empty storefront [on Baum Blvd.] in East Liberty. I thought, 'Wow! That would be great.' I had grown up playing 'store,' and I just thought it would be really nice to have a storefront. We inquired, and the rent was \$275 a month, which was like a fortune to us at that time, but we decided to go ahead and take the plunge. That's how we ended up getting started in East Liberty. To this day, we still have a shop that's quite busy. We need two full-time techs in the shop to take care of our commercial and residential customers. We also have seven trucks that travel to businesses and residences - to do everything from working on locks to cameras to access control, etc.

After a period of time, we took on more space because we were growing, and we were going to remodel one of the offices up on the second floor. We talked to the landlord, and he told us he was thinking of selling. We didn't have the down payment at that time, so he took back the mortgage, and we were able to buy the building. We became the owners around 1981. That was another big move, and we just kept taking a little more space in the building; it has nine units. Right now, we have four of those that we use as our own offices. It was really great being the owners of the building because we had confirmed space. We didn't have to worry about

somebody coming in and saying, 'I'm going to raise your rent, or I'm going to put something else here.' So, we had that advantage. When my husband and I separated, I became the sole owner of Ace Lock - and have been for around 35 years now."

ELDI: *Why did you choose East Liberty?*

Hunter: "I grew up in East Liberty. In fact, we were raised in the East Liberty Presbyterian Church. So, we have a lot of ties throughout the community. We wanted to be in East Liberty for a number of reasons. I had mentioned that my sister was in a serious car accident, with my brother having suffered fatal injuries. So, there was care that was needed there, and my mother lived in Shadyside at the time. We had our roots here. I don't think we really looked anywhere else. We were happy with the [5964 Baum Blvd.] location, and that's where we stayed."

ELDI: *Do you remember what East Liberty was like before Urban Renewal?*

Hunter: "Oh, yes. East Liberty was a thriving business community. As kids, our mom and neighbors would take us down to East Liberty and we would go window

- continued on next page -



ABOVE: The front counter at Ace Lock (5964 Baum Blvd.), a business that has adapted to market change, at the same address, for nearly 50 years. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Sensky.



BELOW: Sandra Hunter founded Ace Lock in 1975, when East Liberty was still feeling the side effects of the city's Urban Renewal efforts. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Sensky.



- continued from previous page -

shopping, from store to store. At the end of it, if we were good kids, we would get some kind of treat from Isaly's, which was the go-to place for ice cream. So, East Liberty was a thriving community until the redevelopment came in, and it just wasn't successful."

ELDI: *What do you think of the changes that have taken place in the neighborhood over the past 20 years?*

Hunter: "It's really good to see. In the past, sometimes it was hard to attract staffers. East Liberty was not considered to be a safe place, and some job applicants did not want to work in the neighborhood...I remember offering an administrative position to an applicant. She and I were excited about her joining our team. The next day, she called and said she would not be accepting the position. Her husband did not want her to work in East Liberty. I reminded her we escort staff members to and from the parking lot, but her mind was already made up. I remember the frustration that I felt because it was challenging to recruit and retain good people. Once East Liberty had improved its reputation as a safe area, it became easier to hire. I always thought that East Liberty was a great area. We're centrally located. We're not that far from downtown, Shadyside, Fox Chapel, and all these other neighborhoods are within a short drive. So, we took advantage of that fact and were able to build up a solid business."

ELDI: *Have you noticed a change in business over the last 20 years?*

Hunter: "I think it's really great to have all these new businesses close by. When we

'We've gone through a lot of different changes over the years, and I'm sure that we'll need to continue making changes.'

- Sandra Hunter, Founder & Owner, Ace Lock

first became tenants in East Liberty, there was almost nothing here. Now, we have high-tech businesses and a lot of restaurants. It's been really good from that perspective. Mostly, business has picked up. We have really great staff - some of which have been with us for 30 years, so they're really good at what they do - and people keep coming back and referring us to new people all the time. That's been a huge benefit."

ELDI: *What's next for Ace Lock?*

Hunter: "The business has been functioning for a long time and, over the years, we've had to make changes. That's how you stay successful in business. You have to keep changing as things change around you. One example is automotive lock service. Automotive lock service was a major revenue source for our business. As automotive locking systems became increasingly electronic, it was clear this would be a dealer service only. We had to plan for that part of our business to be reduced and eventually eliminated. We started providing commercial & residential electric locks, access control, and CCTV. That is a major revenue source for our business now. So, we've gone through a lot of different changes over the years, and I'm sure that we'll need to continue making changes. You can't stay in one place. You have to keep moving along." ♦

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Driving force: Garfield musician Frzy races into demolition derby world

A Message from Most Wanted Fine Art



ABOVE: Frzy, who is no chicken, learned how to drive demolition derby cars in the MWFA Stock Car Class, led by pro derby driver Jason Sauer. Photo courtesy of Nina Gibbs.

Garfield - The Emmy-winning musician, Frzy, is now crashing his way into a new field as a demolition derby driver. The longtime Garfield resident has always been a fan of demolition derby, but when “Pittsburgh’s Best DJ,” T.J. Harris, introduced him to professional derby driver Jason Sauer, the idea of becoming a driver really kicked into full gear.

Frzy’s announcement coincided with “Frzy Day” [Jan. 11] in the city of Pittsburgh.

In 2021, Sauer created the “Most Wanted Fine Art” (MWFA) Stock Car Class to help level the playing field in what began as a working-class sport, but has since become increasingly expensive and exclusionary. “When the sport started, anyone with a car could get in on the fun,” Sauer explained, “and I wanted to bring that feeling back.”

The MWFA Class now operates in more than ten cities, and the list is growing. Frzy is set to drive in four MWFA Stock Class derbies this year - including a race on Jul. 1 in New Alexandria, PA; and another on Sept. 3 in Stoneboro, PA.

“I hope we can bring two different cultures together to celebrate art and demolition,” Frzy said, “showing that two things you never thought could come together - ‘Hip Hop’ and ‘Derby Life’ - can not only work, but become one. I want everyone to witness cars crashing, and worlds being built.”

To learn more about the MWFA Stock Car Class, visit mostwantedfineart.com. ♦

Assemble hosts ‘6x6’ art show

By Dale Gaddes *Assemble*

Garfield – This month, Assemble (4824 Penn Ave.) is trying out a new kind of art show. On Friday, Feb. 3, as part of the Un-blurred festivities on Penn Ave, the arts & technology nonprofit organization will open its doors from 6-10 p.m. to host its first annual “6x6” art show.

Members of the community, including local artists, Assemble supporters, employees, and kids have been busy creating 6” by 6” pieces – to be displayed at Assemble and sold for \$25 each. This show’s prompt, which was left open to interpretation, was “Space.”

“Space” will also be the theme for Assemble’s annual fundraiser, the MakerDate Auction, scheduled for Sept. 9 at the Union Project in Highland Park. The proceeds from the 6x6 show will directly support Assemble’s free programming in Garfield.

Assemble is home to a wide variety of programs for both kids and adults, including free STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) afterschool activities, summer camps, day camps, 21+ nights, as well as programs in schools and organizations across the city.

Beyond raising funds for the organization, the goal of this special 6x6 art show is to celebrate creativity while building connections across the community. The show’s opening is free for all to attend, and open to all ages.

Everyone is welcome to stop by on the evening of Feb. 3 to check out the artwork and participate in fun activities while enjoying some snacks and drinks. Please contact Assemble’s executive director, Nina Barbuto (nina@assemblepgh.org), with any questions or visit assemblepgh.org. ♦

BELOW: Visitors admire the works on display at Assemble (4824 Penn Ave.) in Garfield. Photo courtesy of Dale Gaddes.



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Environmental Charter School to host Virtual Career Fair

By Deana Callipare *Environmental Charter School*

BELOW: *Environmental Charter School staff members gather outside the school's main entrance. Photo courtesy of Deana Callipare.*



Garfield - The Environmental Charter School (ECS, 5525 Columbo St.) will host its fourth annual Virtual Career Fair on Saturday, Mar. 4. Preparing to welcome its first 12th grade class in the fall, ECS seeks highly dedicated individuals to fill a variety of positions, and support the district's mission of growing citizens, for the 2023–24 school year.

The ECS Virtual Career Fair provides applicants with an excellent opportunity to meet staff virtually, learn more about the school and its culture, and ask questions prior to the interviewing process. It gives ECS staffers a chance to explain its background to job candidates, which can help them determine if ECS offers the right fit for their career goals.

"When I attended the ECS Career Fair, one of the things that stood out to me the most was the school's value in educating the whole child," Jessica Segal, a K–2 School Social Worker, noted. "This value has been highlighted every single day since I started working at ECS."

The Virtual Career Fair also prepares participants for a day in the life of an ECS staff member as it highlights the organization's mission, values, and student-faculty relationships.

"The first thing that drew me to ECS was that I felt welcomed right away," Mara Steinmetz, current 8th Grade ELA teacher, said. "I participated in a career fair, and since that day, I have felt nothing but support."

ECS's progressive education approach values faculty collaboration and "systems thinking" while modeling environmentally- and student-focused education. Every aspect of the organization and program is designed - and continually refined through several professional development opportunities - to ensure student success that follows the school's guiding principles of "catalyst, character, collaboration, and commitment."

"I was able to participate in professional development opportunities months before starting my position," Steinmetz explained. "Through those opportunities, I met other team members and support systems [staffers] throughout the district while also learning what to expect during the school year."

In addition to professional development opportunities, ECS offers competitive compensation packages, paid time off, and enrollment preference for staff members' children. Staff members have flexibility in pedagogy, but are also provided resources to build on student knowledge and education.

"I really appreciate the curriculum that is provided for us," Steinmetz said. "It gives me the power to teach students things that are important to me but there's still an education structure for me to give students learning opportunities that they will be able to carry throughout their lives."

ECS provides opportunities, with internal professionals as well as external community partners, to aid staff members' professional and personal growth.

To hear more ECS staff stories, apply for a position, or register for the ECS Virtual Career Fair (by Thursday, Mar. 2), log on to ecspgh.org/careers. We hope to e-meet you at the ECS Virtual Career Fair on Saturday, March 4, at 9 a.m. ♦



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Community Briefs *continued from page 2*

While Watson acknowledged that a zoning board hearing would be needed to secure a variance from the normal sideyard setbacks that are required between the homes, John Axtell, a member of the BGC's housing & land use committee, pointed out that the zoning for the site is for detached houses, not townhomes, as were being proposed. Axtell said that would also necessitate a use variance.

A second community member on the call asked if the curb cuts on Wicklow could be eliminated, and vehicle parking made possible behind the homes instead. Edlam Way, a public right-of-way, runs behind the site, but is not a paved surface.

Watson said he is concerned that vehicles using Edlam would face a steep slope coming off of Columbo, and that the city would not be quick to clear heavy snowfalls from the alley were it to be paved.

He showed a drawing, stamped by the city's Dept. of Mobility and Infrastructure, approving the curb cuts for the driveways in front of the units.

A third community member asked if windows could be added to the side of the building facing Columbo Street, which is now designed to be a blank wall. Watson said he thought that change might be feasible.

Watson said that a timeline for the project likely will take the developer into early 2024 before a ground-breaking could occur, assuming all the city approvals are in place.

City loses bid to exempt its properties from conservatorship actions

Judge John McVay, Jr. of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas handed down a decision in January, ruling that properties in the city's possession could be subject to petitions asking that a private or nonprofit entity be appointed the conservator for vacant homes or lots that are deemed by the court to be blighted and a threat to the public's safety.

The ruling means that hearings can now move forward on petitions filed against 21 vacant, city-owned houses and lots in Garfield, along with another 50 city-owned lots in the Larimer neighborhood.

The petitioner in Garfield will be Rising Tide Partners, Inc., a nonprofit which has established a steering committee of community members to guide its activities

In Larimer, East Liberty Development, Inc. (ELDI) is the petitioner, partnering with the Larimer Consensus Group. John DeMarco, an assistant city solicitor, argued in the judge's chambers that the state Treasurer's Sale Act, which enables the city to seize tax-delinquent properties, supersedes the state's conservatorship law.

Wayne Cobb, an attorney for Rising Tide Partners and ELDI, made the case that there was no provision in the conservatorship law to exempt municipalities from the law's intended effect, which Cobb said is to remediate blighted property; Judge McVay ultimately came down on the side of the two nonprofits.

The city solicitor's office has appealed Judge McVay's ruling to Commonwealth Court.

City unveils new subsidy program for first-time homebuyers

The city's Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) is now accepting applications from first-time homebuyers [seeking to purchase homes within the city limits] to take advantage of a new grant program that would reduce the amount of any loan they acquire from a conventional lender.

The URA is collaborating with the city's public housing authority in order to put homeownership in the city within reach of a greater number of lower-middle class households. The Authority is drawing upon \$15 million, which the city is receiving in American Rescue Act funds from the federal government, in making grants of up to \$50,000 to income-eligible homebuyers.

Generally, most homebuyers will have to show annual incomes of less than \$60,000 per year in order to qualify, unless there are more than 3 members to their household.

The city Housing Authority can then add to the pot by making a zero-interest loan of up to \$40,000 to an eligible buyer; the loan might be deferred in its repayment until the buyer sells the home at a later date. Together, the grant and loan could mean a reduction of as much as \$500 or more in the buyer's monthly mortgage payment on a home selling for \$195,000, based on a current lending rate of 6.5% over a 30-year repayment term.

The conventional lenders participating in this program, which is called "OwnPGH", are Dollar Bank, Slovak Savings Bank, and First Commonwealth Bank. Further information is available on the URA's website (ura.org). ♦

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

Real Estate Sales for the month of November 2022

Compiled by Lillian Denhardt, Residential Realtor

Bloomfield

C2 Capital Associates LLC to Blair R Michele at 4707 Carroll St. for \$379,900.

Derek J Kuykendall to Anase A N'Gadi at 3917 Liberty Ave. for \$287,400.

Edward C & Deborah S Young Nebel to William James Marshall at 111 Pearl St. for \$275,000.

Frances M Sciuolo to Sweet Properties LP at 215 1/2 Pearl St. for \$160,000.

Frederick J Treusch to Steven M Diberardino at 325 West Penn Pl for \$325,000.

Harold W & Janet Agnew to Pijush & Bharati Paul at 5137 Woodworth St. for \$250,000.

Joanne Huber Sciuolo Trustee to Sand Holdings One LLC at 321-323 Gross St. for \$717,900.

Megan E Guidone to Iko Zack Niu at 4824 Sciota St. for \$150,000.

Monique Ledonne Jeletic to Gary B & Katherine C Long at 4706 Lorigan St. for \$55,000.

Richard J & Rosalie Larus to Brennan Capital LLC at 326 Cedarville St. for \$175,000.

Robert J & Sandra L Gross to Matthew P Haller at 4041 Liberty Ave. Unit 302 for \$385,000.

William I Bruni to Gwendolyn Tran at 4054 Cabinet St. for \$104,460.

Friendship

Mark Franklin Minnerly to Fairmount Emory LLC at 134 S. Fairmount St. for \$1.

Bhopper Singh & Moninder K Rangi to Samuel R Heaps at 238 S. Aiken Ave. for \$560,000.

Garfield

City of Pittsburgh to Nicholas & Angela Bland at 0 Kincaid St. for \$201.

City of Pittsburgh to Nicholas Loewen at 0 Rosetta St. for \$200.

Jason David Demarchi to 5001 Penn LLC at 5001 Penn Ave. for \$1.

Frank McKeithen to Mario Johnson at 5450 Rosetta St. for \$5,000.

East Liberty

Baris Budak to TBA Realty LLC at 320 N. Euclid Ave. for \$1.

Benjamin W Helbling to Peter Carragher at 5642 Rural St. for \$145,000.

Carnell M Roberts Jr. to Nga Thi Nguyen at 414 N. Beatty St. for \$165,000.

Carolyn M Hilliard to Investments LLC O'Neills at 611 N. Beatty St. for \$350,000.

East Liberty Partners LLC to 735 N. Beatty LLC at 735 N. Beatty St. for \$435,000.

Louis Scampone & Rosa Scampone Asset Protection Trust to Collins Holding LLC at 709 Collins Ave. for \$500,000.

Lawrenceville

A2 Holdings LLC to 3615 Butler LLC at 3615 Butler St. for \$1,100,000.

Adam C Wilberger to Whitney Amanda Alford at 5324 Kent Way for \$324,450.

Addison Hu to Adriane Pacella at 424 Fisk St. for \$215,000.

Anna Elizabeth Bakeman to 217 42nd Street Property LLC at 217 42nd St. for \$1.

Anthony Disalvo to Amanda Huminski at 110 57th St. for \$48,000.

Barbara MacQuown to James Edward Shephard at 265 Main St. Unit 2 for \$350,000.

Carlton Court Development LLC to Hazel-field LLC at 4203-4207 Butler St. for \$1,185,000.

Cassie M Mader to Kathleen Grandfield at 113 45th St. for \$320,000.

Darin McCurry to Bear Brick Properties LLC at 256 46th St. for \$130,000.

Deborah A Cherillo to Eric M Pollino at 4245 Dunkeld Way for \$160,000.

Dorothy Ujcic to Venus Homes LLC at 5404 Natrona Way for \$149,900.

Douglas R Adams to George Stagani at 325 Main St. for \$220,000.

Gregory Utz to Keen Origins LLC at 373 Main St. for \$140,000.

Ian G Walmsley to Zhang Ronglia at 5148 Carnegie St. for \$370,000.

Joseph Sadoski to Nicholas Willems at 192 46th St. for \$379,900.

Karen Flynn Berinsky to AKK Holdings LLC at 611 Kendall St. for \$110,000.

Karen S Urbanek to David A Morrison at 162 39th St. for \$310,000.

Katherine Stein to John M MacQuown at 3451 Ligonier St. for \$403,500.

Lawrenceville Lofts LLC to Stephan Bergmann Johansen at 3725 Butler St. Unit 406 for \$429,600.

Morghan D & Terri L Pattison to Rongjia Zhang at 5415 Carnegie St. for \$310,000.

Robert J Todd to HMT Holdings Revocable Trust at 5122-24 Natrona Way for \$47,300.

Scott Rice to Isaac Ani at 3950 Cabinet Way for \$85,000.

Sheila Ramgopal to Michelle Lia Iglesias at 5428 Butler St. for \$450,000.

William T Cahill Jr. & Mary Louise Cahill Revocable Living Trust to A&S Home Ventures LLC at 5614 Donson Way for \$155,000.

Stanton Heights

Andre L & Kimberly A Henderson to Adrian & Danielle Redman at 19 Fairfield Ct. for \$262,500.

Ashley A Mangone to Marika Stephens at 1414 Simona Dr. for \$242,500.

Dawn M Posey to Kaitlyn Ann Carey at 1109 Premier St. for \$205,500.

Jamy P Rankin to Thomas P & Dirienzo at 1136 Brintell St. for \$375,000.

Michael A & Janice M Caputo to William Cole Bush at 6410 Adelphia St. for \$520,000.

RDH Investments LLC to Kristn L Diquollo at 4305 Upview Ter. for \$300,000.

Thomas W & Beverly M Hector to Nasha LP at 4324 Coleridge St. for \$120,000.

Tomas A Castillo to Tatiana A & Leah K Pomerantz at 1505 Trinity St. for \$270,000.

This column, which uses data from Allegheny County's online portal, contains occasional errors. If something looks off, let us know.

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History Center celebrates Black History Month with special programs

By Brady M. Smith *Senator John Heinz History Center*

Strip District - The Smithsonian-affiliated Senator John Heinz History Center (1212 Smallman St.) interprets and preserves Black history and heritage year-round, through a variety of events and exhibitions curated by the museum’s African American Program.

In recognition of Black History Month, the African American Program of the Heinz History Center will present two free programs in February.

On Wed., Feb. 15, as part of the *From Slavery to Freedom* film series, “Torchbearers” will be live-screened from 5:30-8:00 p.m. Virtual visitors can enjoy a free, online screening of the film, which revisits Pittsburgh’s struggles during the golden era of civil rights and introduces many of the people who lit the way for the generations that followed.

The documentary includes rare archival footage and a score by Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Emmai Alaquiva. Featured interview subjects include Reverend Leroy Patrick, Alma Speed Fox, Professor Larry Glasco, and other trailblazers who risked everything to change a city and a country.

Narrated by journalist Chris Moore and produced by veteran producer Minette Seate, “Torchbearers” is a celebration of lives driven by a greater purpose.

After the screening, Moore and Seate will discuss the making of “Torchbearers” - and its implications for understanding the African American experience in Pittsburgh. The film screening is free, but advance registration is required.

The *From Slavery to Freedom* film series is presented by the History Center’s African American Program; it is supported by Highmark and Allegheny Health Network.

The Center’s ninth annual Black History Month Lecture, “The Black Fives: The Epic Story of Basketball’s Forgotten Era,” will be held on Friday, Feb. 17, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Visitors are welcome to discover the lesser-known history of Black basketball’s trailblazing teams, players, and coaches at the History Center.

This in-person program will be led by Claude Johnson, founder of the Black Fives Foundation. Johnson has spent decades researching Black basketball history, and its impact, for his book, *The Black Fives: The Epic Story of Basketball’s Forgotten Era*.

Johnson will discuss the history of legendary teams from Western PA, including Pittsburgh’s Monticello Athletic Association, Scholastic Athletic Association, and the Loendi Big Five.

Johnson will sign copies of his book following the lecture, and answer any audience questions. This is a free in-person event, but advance registration is required. ♦

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Remembering my chance encounter with Franco Harris in Bloomfield

By Maggie Jones *Pittverse Magazine*

Bloomfield - My exciting Little Italy Days encounter began with me walking to Liberty Avenue last summer. I wasn’t expecting to meet someone so special, a Pittsburgh legend who gave me his autograph that day.

It all started with the annual bocce tournament that I watched in Bloomfield, where I encountered an honorable person who was willing to sign his name for me.

It was Franco Harris, who was looking forward to the 50th anniversary of the Immaculate Reception in December of that year. I said, “Hi, I work for Pittverse Magazine - 100% written by adults with autism - and I have autism.” He was happy to give me his autograph.

Months later, on Dec. 20, 2022, Franco passed away. In his honor, I wrote this article to all of Pittsburgh and the world that knew him. This man loved to give back to the Pittsburgh community, and he left a legacy that we will never forget.

My dad used to see Franco riding his bike in the 70s, going up Liberty Avenue on his way to work. He even stopped one time and said “hi” to my dad.

Franco’s play that day - back on Dec. 23, 1972 at 3:32 p.m. - is still known 50 years later, and will be for generations to come, as the Immaculate Reception.

We in the Pittverse community honor his legacy.

God bless Franco Harris #32 - and here we go Steelers! ♦



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Scenes of celebration: MLK Jr. Day at Kelly Strayhorn Theater

All Photos by Delaney Greenberg



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Kelly Strayhorn Theater presents ‘Neighbor to Neighbor’ exhibition

By Liz Rudnick *Kelly Strayhorn Theater*

Insight/East Liberty - Kelly Strayhorn Theater (KST, 5941 Penn Ave.) is proud to present “Neighbor to Neighbor,” a visual art exhibition that will be displayed in the historic KST lobby from Feb. 11 through May 27.

The exhibition will open at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 11. Presented in collaboration with BOOM Concepts, it will challenge viewers to consider the possibilities around equitable, active neighboring. The participating artists - Takara Canty, Sophia Fang, atiya jones, Maggie Negrete, Jameelah Platt, and Danielle Robinson - have created a beautiful community landscape by bringing together works that visualize ideas around active neighboring.

The works are inspired by the KST space, the institution, the building, the neighborhood, the city of Pittsburgh, and the neighbors all around us. Bringing together a diverse range of visual strategies, Neighbor to Neighbor includes text, collage, portrait, dynamic pattern, and abstract mapping styles.

The exhibition considers the fact that all people are neighbors - in the sense that everyone exists and grows nearby, adjacent, and close to each other - ideally thriving in the world together; it's impossible not to engage in the identity or act of the neighbor if you are existing here, now, in this world. In another, more literal and localized sense, “neighbors” are the main participants in the ecosystem that is the neighborhood.

The goal of a neighborhood - to reach a positive and healthy state - relies on the collective ability and intention of each person within it. The health of the neighborhood is a reflection of each neighbor's ability to empathize & engage with, and help each other. Encouraging the existence and growth of “the other” (your neighbor) and understanding how that encouragement can bring benefits back to the individual, is the keystone of an equitable neighborhood. It's underscored by the conviction that we can all grow together, with each other, without holding each other back.

“I believe that equitable, active neighboring means creating a space where all take part in the business, social, and entertainment aspects of community. Acknowledging people's basic rights to impact, helping shape what is happening in a neighborhood, and setting up scaffolding opportunities for that to happen,” D.S. Kinsel, cofounder of BOOM Concepts,

noted. “For individuals and organizations alike, it is simple acts of kindness and leadership that encourage a positive and improved quality of life.”

This exhibition occurs at a vital moment in the story of KST's neighborhood, East Liberty, the health of which is often measured alongside its axis of economic growth.

What happens when we check-up on our community from a different perspective? When we ask: “Do I know my neighbors' names? How do I extend care to them? How can we better rely on each other?”

The answers to these questions reveal a more complete picture of the neighborhood's health than any picture of new developments or hip restaurants coming to East Liberty.

So, what can each of us do to build stronger, more equitable neighborhoods?

“Day to day, this means a variety of actions and engagements that always consist of somebody sacrificing or donating knowledge, time, or money,” Kinsel explained. “It looks as simple as free tax services, shoveling snow for neighbors, childcare scholarships, youth sports coaching, businesses hosting community celebrations, mutual aid initiatives, clean green spaces, and contracting local creative talent across expertise.”

The six works included in Neighbor to Neighbor, alongside others, were originally displayed together as part of the Rotunda public art project [curated by BOOM Concepts in collaboration with the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation and The Rotunda Collaborative] at 327 N. Negley Ave. in Garfield. The artworks are no longer on display at this location.

For full season details, KST's COVID policy updates, and to purchase tickets, please visit kelly-strayhorn.org. ♦

March Bulletin Deadline: Wednesday, Feb. 15th

Bulletin advertising info available at bit.ly/bulletin_ads

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