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Dear Readers:

As Pittsburgh commemorates its 250th birthday this year, we revel in the continued growth of this once smoky city and celebrate our heritage as the metropolis of the three rivers.

Like a fine cloth, Pittsburgh’s many neighborhoods are integral to its strength and character, woven together to create a unique fabric representative of our rich past and bright future.

Resilient and adaptable, Polish Hill is one neighborhood that has proven to be steadfast, with an ever-changing landscape of faces and places. Despite its population decline, Polish Hill’s commitment to tradition and political importance caught Newsweek magazine’s attention, and a March 2008 article characterized the town’s residents as “a familiar Pittsburgh type … wry, forthright, steel-willed wives of hardworking, shot-and-beer men.”

Students from Dr. Michael Dillon’s Feature Writing class have successfully captured this very attitude. From community garden projects to traditional Polish meals carried down through generations, the following stories glow with entrancing narratives and colorful dialogues, the essence of this hilltop neighborhood.

In the Cityscape section, students explored quintessential hotspots in Pittsburgh, including a happening pancake house in Shadyside, an up-and-coming gallery in Bloomfield, and a distinct fish market in the Strip District. You’ll also find student commentary and unsung hero pieces, and photographs from a wide range of talented students.

Please enjoy this collection of stories, columns and photos, compiled by the very best Journalism and Multimedia Arts students at Duquesne University.

May your travels take you off the Bluff and beyond.

Emily Leone
Editor
Off The Bluff magazine
New Media Center combines student radio and television stations

The first floor of College Hall has taken center stage for journalism and multimedia, as DUQ-TV and WDSR Radio enter their new homes.

Thanks to former journalism student Luke Caulfield and his family's generous $100,000 donation, the Caulfield Digital Media Center was completed for the fall 2008 semester, and dedicated in October.

The television studio features a green screen for sports and weather, a permanent news set for broadcasters, and an interview set which is a multipurpose area for discussion groups, round table, or one-on-one interviews, said journalism and multimedia arts professor Dennis Woytek. Woytek oversaw the project beginning with his very own drawing of what the studio should look like.

The immediate goal of the station is to go live to tape for their broadcasts, which will air on channel 14 on campus.

The station plans to be able to go live for daily newscasts.

Just next to the television studio window, a smaller pane gives on-lookers a peek into WDSR, Duquesne's student radio station. Previously located in Assumption Hall, WDSR is now in College Hall.

WDSR launched on campus Oct. 1, 2008. The Assumption lobby space will now serve as a space for pre-production work and will house the station's immense library of music.

—Abby Krizner

JMA Department celebrates 60th anniversary

On Saturday, Oct. 25, 2008, current students and professors gathered together with alumni to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Duquesne University's Journalism and Multimedia Arts Department.

Emily Leone, editor of The Duquesne Duke, the university's student newspaper, conducted a workshop on the editing, design and layout of the publication.
A second workshop, hosted by Jamey Stewart, general manager of DUQ-TV, allowed alumni to put together a digital broadcast of the television news show.

The open house of the Caulfield Digital Media Arts Center from 11 a.m. until noon allowed alumni to tour the television and radio studios, and be interviewed by DUQ-TV reporters and pose for a photo behind the news desk.

Broadcast and Multimedia Arts professors were on hand to answer questions and demonstrate equipment.

The tour was followed by a pre-game barbecue and the annual Homecoming football game at the newly renovated Rooney Field.

The day wrapped up with a cocktail hour and dinner in the City View Cafe that honored the Journalism department’s accomplishments over the past 60 years.

-Courtney Hribar

Crew travels through American character

In an attempt to raise awareness for conservation efforts, a Duquesne professor and a crew of ten Duquesne students filmed a 35-day, 8,400-mile exploration of America’s unimproved roads.

Spanning more than 20 states and multiple national parks, forests and wildlife refuges, students traveled through parks such as the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma and Badlands National Park in South Dakota.

Journalism and Multimedia Arts Professor James Vota and friend Tim Mastroianni along with their student crew, filmed their motorcycle ride across the nation. From heights of 14,000 feet to 200 feet below sea level, the crew captured footage and photographs to educate the public on ways to experience the secluded parts of the country as well as motivate conservation efforts to keep national treasures flourishing. The crew also traveled to Greensburg, Kansas, where a tornado destroyed the town a few years ago.

Using a first-person focus, the ALT Project captures the personalities of the people who live in more secluded areas of the country, revealing the many unique cultures that make up the American character. The documentary is expected to be a four-hour series that will be pitched to networks including PBS, The History Channel, Discovery Communications, Sony Pictures and various other American and European broadcasting companies.

Funding for the project was provided by several companies, organizations and private donors. Students’ stipends were paid for by the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts.

-Courtney Hribar

Students premiere Pope documentary

The Duquesne University community gathered for the premiere screening of Christ Our Hope: 2008 Pilgrimage of the Pope, a 52-minute news-documentary produced by University students about Pope Benedict XVI’s spring visit to the United States.

Thirteen Duquesne Journalism and Multimedia Arts students made media headlines when they were selected as the only college TV crew to receive the coveted credentials to document the pontiff’s U.S. visit, from April 15-20. They were accompanied by JMA Assistant Professor Dennis Woytek.

Nearly six months later, they shared the results of their once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik attended the screening. In addition, several of the students involved in the documentary shared their experiences in making it.

-Staff
LAST SHIFT, FIRST AID
Desk clerk Donald DiDonato puts students first

By Michael Holovak

Amid the mobs of students staggering back into the dorms at midnight, the loud, coarse conversations outside, the lovebirds and the lusses, there is the quiet presence of Donald DiDonato.

For 26 years, DiDonato has worked as a desk clerk for St. Ann's, Assumption Hall and other dormitories around campus. From midnight to 8:30 a.m., his responsibility is to monitor the students who check in and out of the dormitories, making sure everything is secure and everyone is accounted for.

If you have ever been a freshman resident at Duquesne, you probably have seen DiDonato. If, while scanning in, you didn't have your ID, you probably have talked to him. He can come across as shy. His quiet, delicate demeanor suits his unassuming appearance: An adjustable strap hangs from the eyeglasses perched on his nose, just above his white, slightly unkempt beard. His sweatshirt and work pants befit his workmanlike mentality.

Conversation is an exercise in humility with DiDonato. He carefully places each of his words, and is incurably polite, addressing each person as “sir” or “miss,” unless he knows their name. And though he makes little eye contact when he talks, it's not because he is rude. It is because he always has an important job to attend to: the students.

When it comes to his job, he's anything but shy.

“The people who work here are the first people in and the last to leave,” DiDonato said, his eyes never straying from his work, except when taking note of a student scanning in. As a student bid him goodnight, he replied with a quick “Okay, goodnight!” before return-
ing to his work. Across his desk is a smattering of papers alongside a notepad and a suite of red, blue and black pens to make notes whenever needed.

"The second he comes in he puts out his pens and notes," said Sarah Gongaware, a freshman clerk at St. Ann's. "He's very serious about his work ... he says it's a business. He is always on time and he never misses a shift."

Another clerk, Freshman Erik Gursky, nodded in agreement. "It would be chaos without him," he said.

When DiDonato arrives for his shift, he carries a white canvas bag filled with all the necessities for the job: extra pens and highlighters, extra papers, a couple books and a few tattered prayer cards bundled together by a rubber band that probably was stretched a time too many.

Luckily for DiDonato, the job doesn't change too much. Aside from changes in visitation rules and St. Ann's switch from an all-female to a co-ed dorm, the job is pretty consistent — much like DiDonato. But sometimes even he relaxes the rules just a bit.

"The television is supposed to stay on channel 13, but sometimes, late at night, I change it to the news or listen to jazz," he said, clearly relishing the perks of authority. The only thing that is bound to change is the faces that pass him at night. And one can't see that many people without encountering a few interesting characters.

"I remember one year there was a fire bug," he said. "A young lady kept setting fires to the bulletin board, and students would have to spend half the night outside while the alarms were shut off. The parents were in an uproar." DiDonato takes his glasses off, looks up from his notes and leans forward, his eyes widening while telling the story.

"Then students in other buildings started setting fires too. They thought it was a fad! I knew I was safe, but it was scary."

Before his current job, DiDonato aspired to help people through the priesthood. But when that didn't work out, he found another way to help.

"I have done marriage and family counseling in the past, and I still do it in my spare time," he said while pulling out his wallet. Within, tucked next to a picture of his family — his wife, his son and daughter, and his granddaughter — are a few business cards he hands out to students in need.

Unfortunately, it's hard to do so many jobs at once. DiDonato was devastated when a student he knew died.

"He was majoring in psychology; a nice young man and a friendly fella." The student wanted to talk to him while DiDonato was busy with work.

"He said, 'Don, could I talk to you?'" DiDonato was visibly moved by the memory, and his eyes went back down as he fiddled with the prayer card band. "I told him that I couldn't and I was sorry, but I was so busy that night. Later I asked him if he wanted to talk, but he said nevermind." The student died a week later.

Though it's hard to move on from such a tragedy, DiDonato finds his motivation in the students. If there would be one word to describe DiDonato, it would have to be "caring." He cares about his work, about students and about people in general. He's also a vegetarian and a pacifist; even the little things matter.

"I hope that I help (the students') self esteem. I want a college student's self esteem to go up," he said.

"One night I was working with him, and he told me he spent the whole night trying to figure out how to pronounce my last name," said Chrishele Hruska, a sophomore clerk at St. Ann's.

That sort of student interaction is something DiDonato cherishes.

"I love the spirit of the college student. I could come to work depressed, but a student will come in and say 'Hi Don, how are you doing,' and it's very uplifting. Some people talk about how bad college students are. There are way more good [ones]. I don't know if people realize that."
In a dark, sleepy computer lab at 9 a.m., Journalism and Multimedia Arts Professor Bill Gibbs is barely audible over the hum of computers and the clicking of keyboards and mice.

Later, in his tiny, bright office just a floor above, he speaks intensely of a time when he worked at Montgomery County Detention Center.

He isn’t any louder, but his voice rises and falls with the story — the memory showing clearly in his face.

A boy of 15 or 16, who had recently arrived at the detention center, was banging on the sound system on the ceiling of his cell. Gibbs and a his co-worker went to the boy’s room and told him to stop. A few minutes later, after returning to the security center, Gibbs and his co-worker were racing back to the boy’s room.

“When we got there, we saw he tried to hang himself from the sound system; that’s what he was doing:’

Gibbs’ sharp blue eyes lower to the ground and his voice softens even more.

“So we brought him down and cleared everything out of his room. I sat and tried to talk to him for hours,” he says. “I tried to give everything I could to him, but I just had this feeling of hopelessness, and knew I wasn’t connecting with him.”

He watched the boy sit in silence, refusing to talk for many hours. Eventually the boy crawled under his bed, tears streaming down his face.

“That stuck out in my mind,” Gibbs says. “Because, whatever was going on inside his head, that was the first time I felt I couldn’t reach a person. It was pretty tragic.”

It may seem unrealistic to expect to be able to help everyone, even juvenile delinquents, he comes in contact with, but for Gibbs, anything less would be a failure. His dedication to others is his defining characteristic at Duquesne.

“He’s got students in the office all the time,” says Jim Vota, a fellow JMA professor. “He definitely goes the extra step with students to make sure they understand. More than the rest of us do, that’s for sure.”

Vota would get no argument from Steve Orbanek, a sophomore journalism major who was in Gibbs’ 9 a.m. Media Development class during the fall 2007 semester.

“Every time I needed help, he was there,” Orbanek says. “And he would always go out of his way to say ‘Hi’ to you if he saw you walking.”

Gibbs’ attitude toward his students stems from his concern for them as individuals.

“What I enjoy most,” he says, “is when someone can’t figure something out and they say ‘Can you help me?’ and we work together and figure it out and they get interested.”

His natural desire to help people has driven him since childhood.

“Coming from the family I came from, and working with young people and with troubled people, I just learned you get more when you give,” he says. “I realized people need help.”
Gibbs grew up in and around Philadelphia with his parents and four older sisters. After 12 years of Catholic schooling, he spent one year at Villanova as an English major, and then three at Temple University studying administration of justice and psychology. He continued to live at home, commuting to both schools and working construction in the summer to pay for them. He also coached grade-school basketball, which led to his interest in working with kids.

His last two years at Temple brought him to his first real experience in helping young people, when he began working at the Montgomery County Detention Center. Gibbs continued working there for two or three years after graduating.

When he heard about computer training classes at Penn State University, however, he decided to consider different career possibilities.

"I still had no clear idea of what I wanted to do 10 years down the road," Gibbs says of his decision to pursue his M.A.

He followed some of the other students in his training program to California, where he worked for Mobile Oil as an analyst. He had hopes of becoming a corporate trainer there; but, one day, he realized he was not on the right path.

"I woke up in a hotel room in California and thought 'Life is short. I want to do something that makes me happy.'"

Gibbs put in his month's notice at Mobile Oil that very day. He had decided what made him happy was working with young people, so he went back to Penn State for his doctorate and returned to his job at the detention center.

"I went from working in a corporate environment where everyone was wearing blue suits and red ties — everyone looked the same — to working with homeless kids for six months outside Philly."

This time, Gibbs followed his instincts and pursued a degree that would allow him to teach: a doctorate in Instructional Systems. Then he met Anette.

His father was waiting outside his apartment one day when she walked by. When Gibbs arrived, his father asked him, "Now, why can't you meet a girl like that?" So, he did meet her. They dated for six months before he moved out to Illinois to teach technology and design at East Illinois University.

Anette had been studying meteorology at Penn State and got a job that allowed her to work from home. So, after a year of being in a long-distance relationship, she moved to Illinois and they got married.

That was 13 years ago, but Gibbs still goes into a daze when describing her.

"She's a great partner," he says, a smile taking over his face. He compares his marriage to that of his parents.

"They were married almost 60 years and did everything together. They were soul-mates," he says. "They went through good and bad and everything as a team. My wife and I are kind of like that."

Four years after the Gibbs's married, Lauren was born. Two years later brought Liam.

Though Gibbs was satisfied with the work he was doing at East Illinois, he did not have a tenured position, so he began to look at teaching positions in Pennsylvania, where both his and Anette's parents lived.

Vota was the first person to meet Gibbs from the hiring committee at Duquesne.

"We knew right away," Vota says. "Bill has definitely contributed to the department. He spends a lot of time developing students, more than anyone in the department. He wants to work with people."

JMA professor Dennis Woytek teaches in the same computer lab as Gibbs. He says Gibbs' dedication to his students goes beyond the classroom.

"He'd be the kind of person to go to for any advice, school or personal," Woytek says. "If I were a student, I'd go to him if I was having problems with my boyfriend or girlfriend, and he would give advice like a dad would to a son or daughter."

After a "9 to 5, 5:30, 6" day, Gibbs says he enjoys nothing more than going home to his real son and daughter, Liam, now 7, and Lauren, 9.

Their picture sits on his bookshelf and is one of the few personal touches in his office. Another is a calendar with a beautiful close-up of Lauren.

"I go home and just hang out with my kids until they go to bed. Then I go back to work," Gibbs says.

Though he is constantly working, Gibbs speaks of his job fondly.

"You could find your purpose in life," he says. "But unless you were bringing people along with you, you wouldn't be achieving everything you could."

"Working with young people and with troubled people, I just learned you get more when you give ... I realized people need help."
PARLEZ-VOUS FRANCAIS?
Teaching is a devotion for french professor Margaret Mary Vojtko

By Brittany Brashear

From business to freelance translating to nursing, French Professor Margaret Mary Vojtko has an impressive resume. Her hunger for knowledge has led her to widely varied careers, but her true calling is teaching.

"There's nothing really quite as exciting as seeing a human mind develop," Vojtko says. "Teaching is not a profession or a career. It is a devotion — a dedication. Too many people look upon it as a job, a source of income," she says.

Still, the path that led to a teaching career was long and twisting. When it came time to declare a major as an undergraduate, Vojtko had a difficult decision to make. She had a strong interest in history but a natural inclination towards language. She chose the latter. She decided French would be her best bet because it included not only the study of language and literature, but also history, philosophy, art, and music. While in school, she took the opportunity to familiarize herself with the German and Italian languages as well.

Vojtko has spent a large portion of her working life in the field of translation. She has worked as a freelance translator with a variety of companies, including an engineering firm with interests in Algeria. She also has performed secretarial duties and translations for scientists.

Vojtko has fond memories of the people she's worked with and the communication gaps she's bridged. She reminisces joyfully about the time she interpreted for a Slovak woman at the now-closed Saint Francis Hospital. The woman, who had suffered a stroke, spoke very little English — not enough to explain her condition. Vojtko was brought in to interpret so that doctors could diagnose the woman more precisely and the woman's family could understand her condition.
more clearly.

"I simply greeted the woman in Slovak and her face immediately lit up," Vojtko says with a smile.

Vojtko also worked part time at Carnegie Mellon University's translation center until CMU discontinued the program. Adaptation proves to be a necessity when the demand for language teachers is miniscule.

Rather than waiting out the lull, she instead adjusted in a way most people would consider drastic. She enrolled in nursing school. While still a nursing student, she was called from class to interpret for French engineers who had come to install the first French lithotripter at St. Francis Hospital. The lithotripter was a machine which used ultrasound to pulverize kidney stones and saved patients from painful surgery. Despite this particular need for an interpreter, Vojtko continued working in the medical field until a general demand for foreign language teachers reemerged.

"There's nothing really quite as exciting as seeing a human mind develop."

She's been teaching French at Duquesne for nearly twenty years. Vojtko believes the knowledge of foreign languages is a valued skill. She often speaks about the importance of language because there are many language barriers in the world and poor communication can bring about confusion and contempt. She believes that cultural differences need to be cherished, understood, and respected rather than be scorned because being familiar with other languages and cultures can help alleviate tension and promote world peace.

"What most students don't seem to understand is that English is not spoken everywhere," she explains. "Word choice in diplomacy is crucial." United Nations translators, who must be fluent in several languages, can cause a world crisis if they mistranslate.

Vojtko knows first-hand about the importance of language. She grew up in a bilingual home in a multi-ethnic neighborhood in the Pittsburgh area, a place she describes as "a microcosm of Europe." She spoke mainly Slovak in the home and learned English as a second language. English was spoken between her and the other children in the neighborhood, including her five siblings. She also learned Latin through the prayer books at her church.

Latin has played another role in her life: Vojtko believes in the medieval concept of "translatio studii" - the transfer of learning. The transference of knowledge from one generation to the next is something she learned from a pair of English professors while she was still in college. Professor and distinguished poet Lawrence Lee taught her about Greek poetry in a World Literature class. However, the day came when the class had to move on from Greek to Medieval literature - a subject Professor Lee admitted he really did not enjoy.

So instead of inflicting his "prejudice" as he put it, on his students, he invited colleague Professor Alan Markman - a highly respected medievalist - to lecture to the class. Professor Lee's humility and motivation to provide his students with as much knowledge as possible inspired Vojtko. In addition, Professor Markman's lecture on "Sir Garwain and the Green Knight" is why she ultimately chose The Middle Ages as her area of concentration in school.

The only thing Vojtko can admit to disliking about her profession is seeing a student throw away his or her education.

"It saddens me to see the opportunity students have just being used as an avenue to a high-paying job," she says. While Vojtko realizes that many students are enamored with the idea of having fun at college, she says that "the real excitement should occur between your ears." She believes it's important for students to have a "thirst for knowledge" and a motivation to learn for the sake of learning.

In fact, when she asks her students why they are taking her class, she will not accept the answer "to get rid of a language requirement." The proper verb, she corrects, is "fulfill."
"I do think he comes into people's lives when they need him the most," Woytek said of colleague and friend Mike Clark. In fact, Woytek attributes one of his most life-changing experiences to Clark after the newscaster asked Woytek to film a story with him in Bosnia-Herzegovenia a few years ago.

Today, Clark is a news anchor at Pittsburgh's WTAE-TV Channel Four News. In addition to his job at WTAE, he teaches two anchoring classes at Duquesne University.

And in whatever spare time he has left, he serves local nonprofit organizations.

Oh, and Clark and his wife are also raising four equally-busy kids, ranging in age from 10 to 16.

"It's a difficult challenge to try to be completely focused on each role at separate times," Clark said.

But with all of these different jobs and responsibilities, one has to wonder: who is the real Mike Clark? Behind the cameras and makeup, faculty meetings and speaking engagements, is this seemingly perfect news anchor-turned-professor someone else entirely?

Because of Clark's carefully refined and professional manner, will his viewers and students ever know who he really is?

Is he is the guardian angel Woytek described? The suave Channel Four newscaster with the motionless hair? The friendly professor who breaks into frequent Will Ferrell impersonations? The champion of local charities and Make-A-Wish children?

Or is there a different side to this seemingly genuine family man who does so much?

JMA graduate student Angelica Patterson seems to think so.

"He's still a person," she maintained.

Clark's quirky humor (i.e. telling his students the reason he teaches is because his wife wants him out of the house) and unexpected humility (i.e. his ongoing joke that the only thing he knows about technology is how to spell it) portray his down-to-earth side.

In fact, his classes are fairly informal in comparison to the newscaster attire (full suit and tie) he dons each day for school.

A student runs in late for the biweekly anchoring class. But instead of gloowering from the front of the room, Clark cheerfully greets the student with his
A warm trademark smile and asks if he had trouble finding parking.

Clark’s easygoing nature can sometimes be a flaw in the classroom, however, said Ashley McNally, Clark’s graduate assistant for the past two years. “As a professor, he genuinely wants to help all his students,” she said. But sometimes, they will try to take advantage of his generosity.

So, why would a busy news anchor want to deal with misbehaving college kids in the first place? After attempting a goofy Godfather impression (“I give guidance to the students,” he rasped in a bad excuse for an Italian accent), Clark explained that he never had a mentor or a defined path during his college career.

“I had to find my own way,” he said. So, after his last child began attending school, he inquired about teaching at Duquesne. For the past four years, he’s shared his experience, lessons and advice with his students.

One of his favorite anecdotes details how he boldly broke into the industry as a college-aged reporter.

“I do think he comes into people’s lives when they need him the most.”

“To be a good reporter, you have to put the shoes on of people you interview,” he explained.

And that’s exactly what he did when he was sent to cover a press conference with a man whose wife had gone missing a day earlier. When Clark met him, the man was fully cooperating with the investigation.

But to inexperienced-at-the-time Clark, the man appeared suspicious. So after the other reporters left, Clark approached the man and asked him two seemingly innocent questions: When did he last fight with his wife? And where was his mother-in-law through all of this?

After footage of the man’s inappropriately flippant responses was subpoenaed, Clark wound up in the witness stand at the man’s murder trial, terrified to testify, in what turned out to be one of the most sensational court cases of the year.

Shortly after the trial aired on national television, Clark was hired for his first news anchor job.

Clark isn’t afraid to share some of his most embarrassing on-air faux pas either, including the time he mistakenly called Tammy Faye Baker “Tammy Bay ‘Faker’” or the interview with Richard Simmons during which the health enthusiast demanded to know if Clark was squeezing his buns.

But Clark’s favorite tales are the moving stories of Make-A-Wish children and local charities he has helped to promote via the daily news.

One such story involves Brian, a Make-A-Wish child whose only desire was to see a whale on a whale watch. Clark tells how he traveled to Maine to meet Brian on a cloudy day with no whales in sight.

Clark then tells how his fatherly instincts overtook him at the sight of the sulking boy. Clark hoisted the boy on his back and began to run up and down the beach, pretending to be the jumping whale the boy wanted to see.

But do all the stories and experiences add to the real Mike Clark? Probably not.

His viewers and students may never discover the Mike Clark behind the many roles he plays. Or perhaps the real Mike Clark changes depending on the circumstance or job he is currently fulfilling.

To his viewers, for example, he will always be the polished news anchor with a knack for telling a heartfelt story. To his students, he will always be the reason to stumble out of bed at 8:30 a.m. twice a week. To the various charities and committees on which he serves, he will always be their vital link to recognition.

And to his family, he will always be a father and husband.

But does it really matter who the real Mike Clark is?

Not to Woytek. To Woytek, he’s just content to work, and occasionally grab a cup of coffee, with his guardian angel.
HOT COFFEE, WARM CONVERSATION

Strong coffee, strong personalities percolate at City Café

By Brittany Brashear

“The end is near. Stop using paper cups.”

Today’s quip on The City Café’s storefront chalkboard is neatly printed in vibrant pink chalk. It’s strategically placed on the sidewalk, facing away from Starbucks two doors down the street.

City Café owner Emil Lester is characterized by his down-to-earth demeanor and eagerness to know his customers. There are, however, two things he can’t let cross the threshold of his “European-style” café: lit cigarettes and paper cups.

Emil has little tolerance for smoking, but is absolutely vehement on the subject of paper cups.

“Europeans don’t use paper cups,” Emil says. In fact, when a customer came in with a smoothie in a Styrofoam cup, Emil offered a trade-off. He poured the fruity drink into a glass and threw the offending cup away.

“It doesn’t look good in my place.”

Emil has lived in Pittsburgh all of his 55 years, but has had the café for less than one. Within The City Café, the average person can find the time to sit down, have a hot cup of coffee in a ceramic cup and engage in warm, friendly conversation. The café is right in Market Square, but it may as well be a world away for most people. Most just walk right by on their way to the more familiar Starbucks.

While he doesn’t get as much business as his corporate rival, Emil takes pride in the quality of his customers rather than the quantity. His “regulars” come in almost every day and are known to discuss everything from world religion to “American Idol” to the spiciness of Wednesday’s potato soup.

It doesn’t take much to become one of Emil’s regulars. The intimate setting and sparse traffic keep things personal.

“If you come here more than three times, you’re a
Today, a German psychology student who is in the city for a convention at Carnegie-Mellon is chatting with Charles, who's been a City Cafè patron for nearly 10 months now. Charles is a recently-retired security guard who belongs to the Shaving Mug of the Month Club and refuses to invest in a push-button phone. He is seated at his usual table near the oversized front window, explaining Pittsburgh's role in the French and Indian War to his foreign guest.

Emil is tending to the espresso machine, discussing business ideas with Gary, who is always seated at the bar with a cup of coffee and a bowl of oatmeal. Emil is preparing for his big move from Market Square to 811 Liberty Ave.

"This new place is going to give me a lot more space. Twenty foot ceilings!" Emil says, sizing up the atmosphere of his current location.

Patrons are always throwing ideas at Emil, who hopes to draw in more customers. He usually just shakes his head and casts a thoughtful gaze out the window. The view of the passersby creates a mood change.

"Everyday I watch these people walk by," he says ruefully. "They never come in here." Gary impetuously interrupts: "We hear this over and over. Everyday. We suggest things and he shoots them down!"

Emil claims he's got ideas of his own. "No, no. I've got a great idea for a Cinderella bar. Do you know what a Cinderella bar is? No? That's because I just made it up. It's a coffee bar that serves fancy drinks with no alcohol!"

Banter slows and attention is directed out onto the street again. Passersby glance at the posters in the window, but it's like the café isn't there. Emil has been known to rush into the street to personally invite these browsers in for a cup of coffee. His current regulars all have similar stories about how they ended up here. It starts with a walk past The City Cafè.

Emil stands in the door and says something akin to, "When are you going to come into my shop?" Sometimes it's that easy.

From time to time, there is comparison between The City Cafè and its corporate neighbor. Regulars are always quick to defend Emil's place. The City Cafè has more to offer than hot beverages and biscotti.

"I'm selling conversations. People come in here by themselves, looking for conversation," Emil explains.

Charles takes a break from his discussion about St. Patrick's Day with the German student to jump into this one. "When I first started coming in here, I didn't wanna talk. But in this place ... there's no corner to hide in. You're drawn into the conversation. Places like Starbucks ... nobody's talking to each other."

Not to mention they serve their brew in paper cups.

Emil takes pride in his café and what he calls his whale story. It's more of a pun than a story. Those who have read "Moby Dick" may remember that one of the characters was JJ Starbuck, a man who used to hunt whales.

"Now he makes whales! Get it?"

Emil claims to have written three unpublished novels and has a mental rolodex of slightly abnormal knowledge. Gary has been giving him a hard time because he accepted a strange coin as a quarter earlier today. Emil inspects it. "I want to find out what this is."

Gary is skeptical. "It's nothing. It's one of those things you find in a cereal box."

A few moments pass and Emil has a revelation. He thinks it's a Mexican coin. He points to an inscription on the coin.

"That's Our Lady of Guadalupe."

Meanwhile, a new customer asks one of the younger regulars about how to go about paying for her coffee. "He takes Visa, right?"

"He'd probably take acorns. I think he's starting to use the barter system."

Emil pockets the coin, swipes the credit card and greets a regular making his way into the shop: "Hey, Richard. How are you?"
By Bernadette Smith

Despite the cold February morning air, a line of eager patrons is forming outside of 5527 Walnut St. in Shadyside. Families fresh from morning mass, urban fashionistas and hungover college students are all here for a taste of Pamela's Diner's award-winning breakfast.

From the sidewalk, the double doors leading into the waiting area of the diner look as if they might burst with the bodies crammed inside. As the line outside of the establishment quickly grows from two people to 17 in a matter of minutes, several curious passersby question whether or not the food cooking inside is scrumptious enough to justify the frosty wait. Shadyside resident Judge Christine L. Donohue, 54, has reached her own verdict on the popular Pittsburgh attraction.

"It always takes longer for us to get seated than it does to eat, but it's so worth it," she says.

Former middle-school teachers Gail Klinski and Pamela Cohen opened the first Pamela's Diner in 1980 on Forbes Avenue in Squirrel Hill. The space was originally Poppa Joe's, a 15-cent hamburger joint owned by Cohen's father.

Pamela's opened with only twelve plates on hand, forcing customers to wait in line outside. A few Pottery Outlet sales later, the restaurant secured so many loyal employees and customers, the pair had to open more locations to meet the demand. Today, Pamela's Diner still attracts weekly lines at four other booming locations in the Strip District, Millvale, Oakland, and Shadyside.

Heading up the line this morning is Mark Pilarski, a freshman at Westminster University, who is a regular visitor to Pamela's Millvale location.

He woke up early for one thing: "Mmm... the pancakes," he says as he rubs his belly. Pilarski, 19, is accompanied by his uncle, 55-year-old Neil Pilarski, a Chicago resident and first time visitor to Pamela's.

"I was told this is the best breakfast in town so I had to check it out for myself. It better be worth it," he jok-
ingly says to his nephew.

Inside the double-doors, nearly 30 people flood the small black-and-white checkered floor of the waiting area, tossing aside the concept of personal space. Passing the time with impatient conversation, customers gush over the awards lined up above the cash register that declare Pamela’s the best breakfast in Pittsburgh.

The smell of fresh-brewed coffee and the sound of knives and fork clinking waft out from the dining room to the small entrance to the sidewalk outside. When your name is (finally!) called, jealous eyes watch as you walk through the foyer, where the hostess/busboy, whose name tag reads "CALLIE (NOT PAM)," directs you through the dimly lit dining area.

The closely arrayed tables are all filled with patrons enjoying steaming hot coffee, omelets, and hotcakes so big they hang off the plates. The white brick walls are decorated with a mixture of small black and white abstract artworks and large, charming paintings of colorful breakfast foods such as over-easy eggs with green yolks. Thirteen oddly arranged pictures cover the wall opposite of the bar-like cooking station, equipped with three grills jam-packed with orders.

A soft-spoken waitress takes your order and quickly returns with fresh coffee, served in blue and yellow mugs. The menu, which boasts Pamela’s pancakes as the top ten in the country, includes all the breakfast basics and deli-style lunches.

Barb Busse, a nurse practitioner at Children’s Hospital offers veteran advice: "Get the breakfast special. It’s a lot of food, but it is so, so good. I can’t help myself."

Once you help yourself to some of Pamela’s famous fare, it’s time to make your way back into the crowded waiting room full of jealous gazes to pay your bill.

Not so fast: even in the age of credit cards, Pamela’s still only accepts cash. While many consider this archaic, a large poster behind the register that reads "In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash" hinders any argument from customers.

Pamela’s Diner has built a formidable reputation among locals in its 27-year history. Even as noon approaches, the line outside continues to grow, as does Pamela’s fan base.

Busse, 57, believes it’s the simplicity that will continue to keep people coming back for years to come:

"It’s just basic good food. Period."
STILL A CATCH

A city fixture still reels in the best selections

By Michael Holovak

What hits you first is the smell. It's the distinct odor of things freshly hauled up from the briny depths: tilapia, Mahi Mahi, salmon, cod and assorted crustaceans.

A painted sign above the entrance to the Robert C. Wholey fish market greets you in several different languages — French, German, Italian — but nothing says "hello" quite like the smell. Walk through the two swinging front doors and boom: it hits you like a ton of tuna.

The unmistakable smell isn't the only thing you can't miss at Wholey's in Pittsburgh's Strip District. Since moving from McKees Rocks to its current location at the corner of 17th Street and Penn Avenue in 1960, Wholey's provides its customers with a variety of deals on fishy fare.

At 9 a.m. on a Saturday, the store is already a flurry of sights and sounds: employees in white aprons and Wholey-embroidered baseball caps push around shopping carts, carry bags of ice, shelve and store products.

A barker near the back of the store booms over the P.A: "99 cents a pound on Mahi Mahi! King salmon filets! This is a hell of a buy, folks!" It turns out that today's Barker is Robert C. Wholey, who is personally seeing that his product gets to the customers.

"I do this every once in awhile on Saturdays," Wholey said, tearing open boxes containing frozen filets of fish and hopping over packaging remnants. "For years a man named Ken Thomas did this. It used to be called Kenny's corner. Unfortunately, he passed away recently."

Still, Wholey performs valiantly. Even though he is dressed in black slacks and a nice blue shirt, Wholey rolls up his sleeves as choosy customers file in. The quick-witted Wholey cracks a few jokes with another costumer...
employee as several elderly ladies prod the shrink-wrapped filets.

"There's no need to fight, ladies," he said into the microphone, causing one of the ladies to blush.

It is truly a family affair at Wholey's. Pictures of the late founder Robert C. Wholey holding fish, shaking hands with politicians and working are scattered throughout the store. In the dining area upstairs, newspaper clippings, awards and pictures of brothers Sam, Dan and Jim, and their children, add to the tribute to the Wholey legacy. From its start in 1912 as a small egg and butter store in McKees Rocks, through its move to the strip, to today, it's a Pittsburgh place.

"Ninety-eight percent of our customers come from Beltzhoover and McKees Rocks," co-owner Matt Wholey said. "Pittsburgh comes here."

And it isn't hard to see why.

Inbound customers often file through the front door and gawk at the selection surrounding them. Sure, if you need everyday staples like cod and canned tuna, they have it. But if you're going to Wholey's you should be looking for items beyond the ordinary. Take, for example, the shrimp.

You can get wild-caught (rather than farm-raised), Canadian cold-water-caught, gulf water-caught, pink or grey, de-veined and peeled. Would you like that in small, medium or jumbo? Ask an employee where to find Lund's wild-caught calamari, and he'll point you to the end of the center aisle, right beside the Windsor Bay individually quick-frozen squid rings.

To the right of the entrance is a line of workers behind a long glass case, de-scaling, cutting and placing fish on a bed of ice at the fish counter; on the left is a sushi bar. If you stick around long enough, the smell of fish will fade into the delicious smell of cooking oil from the sandwich stop and deli. Down the center is an aisle of re-packaged seafood and meat, complete with a ridge of condiments to complement the catch of the day.

One glance at the decorations and it's clear that Wholey's isn't trying to fool you into thinking it's something else. A vegan probably wouldn't be comfortable here: to go with the preponderance of meat, large faux turkey and pig carcasses hang from exposed pipes in the ceiling.

Children, however, are delighted by Wholey's atmosphere. They marvel at the electric train that runs on an oval track above their heads. Toddlers are at eye-level with the fish and lobster tanks, and often point and peer at what may soon be on their dinner plates.

What's the attraction for today?
"Striped bass, striped bass, striped bass and ... striped bass," joked Wholey, as he looped around the fish tanks.

But beyond a couple other fancy displays and trinkets like fish nets, lobster traps, oars, fish, a fisherman doll and an animatronic bull, the market is strictly utilitarian. Fifteen gallon ice tubs, topped with shovels, sit caddy-corner from the fish displays to keep the products fresh and frosty. Below, tiny pools of water collect in the cracked, worn and decidedly wet concrete floor.

But Wholey's doesn't have to rely on presentation -- it relies on product and employees.

The employees keep the order in this fish frenzy, and much of that responsibility is on seafood manager John McNally. An employee for 12 years, McNally is in charge of the overall seafood department, including food and pricing.

McNally doesn't really stand out from the other workers, except for his title pinned to his shirt and a noticeable limp from an injured right foot.

"It's from general wear and tear," he said, referring to the rounds he makes daily. It doesn't seem to slow him down much. On a normal day he walks — rather, limps — in at 5:30 a.m. to grab a cup of coffee, and wait for the deliveries.

These trucks drive straight from the docks in Maryland and Virginia, or the supplier in Michigan, and arrive at 6:00 a.m. After he helps unload two or three pallets of fresh fish, he helps stock the freezer and sets up the counter before the market opens at 8 a.m.

Despite the rambling layout and seeming chaos behind the counters, Wholey's is a complex operation. Basically, Robert Wholey said, the inventory either sells or it rots.

"Fish is tricky. It's not soap and light bulbs."
It's obvious what this Pittsburgh shop is all about. Rows of luscious chocolate bars and nuggets gleam under bright lights. From dark brown coffee bean bark to russet-colored peanut clusters, the succulent sweets nestle against each other in ordered rows. Stacks of treats, like cashew meltaways and raspberry truffles line the countertop of the South Side's only full-service dessert cafe, Chocolate Celebrations and the Milkshake Factory.

At one time, sweet shops lined South Side's East Carson Street, says Mark Edwards, the oldest -- and most business-minded -- of the three-sibling team that runs the Milkshake Factory. "In Pittsburgh, this was the place to come to dinner and dessert. My dad always called it 'Eat Street,'" he recalls.

But today, the Milkshake Factory is the only full-service dessert shop on East Carson -- and the only shop that can boast the most abundant array of chocolates in the city, according to Mark.

In fact, the recipes for these tasty treats were passed down through four generations of Edwards family chocolatiers. And Mark swears by the Milkshake Factory's quality: much of the chocolate and milk shake ingredients are made daily in the back of the shop.

Patrons enter the cafe under the red-and-white striped awning, characteristic of so many candy shops and ice cream parlors. But once inside, one can liken the Milkshake Factory's ambience to Andy Hardy meets the Matrix; Archie and Jughead meet the Bionic Man.

The dessert cafe looks like a combination of its predecessor, a 1914 soda fountain in Lawrenceville, and a present-day chocolate factory. Elements reminiscent of century-old ice cream and candy shops, such as the barn-red coffered ceiling and raised wallpaper, are prominent in the shop. But modern elements like the flat-screen television and stainless steel lighting remind bonbon buffs that the Milkshake Factory is still a business.

And yet the traditional knick-knacks and modern flairs serve one purpose: to highlight the primary, and delicious, product.

Mark refers to these modern touches as "recent renovations" made to the 35-year-old shop and talks about his plans to make the family-owned cafe a franchise in the near future.

Mark and his younger siblings Dana and Christian, who grew up working in the sweet shop with their parents, now work together in Washington, D.C., at the Milkshake Factory's sales office.

Mark says he enjoys working with his sister and
brother, who split the workload of the operations and marketing departments.

"When you can trust someone you work with completely, it's the best feeling," he explains.

The Edwards trio, an attractive and fashionably-dressed bunch in their late 20s, devised the redecoration scheme for the dessert shop and currently plan to open another café in the D.C. area. Despite the family's business ventures, however, youngest sibling and Duquesne University graduate Christian claims that the Milkshake Factory is still "a family thing."

In fact, during a quiet evening the day after the store's busiest day of the year (Valentine's Day), the Edwards family sits around the candy shop in the stylized wrought iron chairs positioned at four tiny marble-topped tables, laughing and wolfing down chocolates.

The narrow shop, relatively empty of customers after a busy week, seems filled to capacity with the noisy chatter and laughter of the chocolatiers and their spouses.

The Edwards siblings, who traveled to Pittsburgh to help with the holiday rush, seem genuinely happy to be together in such a delicious location. While engaging in playful sibling banter and teasing, they constantly hug and hold hands.

And, according to Milkshake Factory employee and Duquesne student Stephanie Telep, the trio of chocolatiers is more than glad to extend their familial warmth to others.

"The family is always here, and they treat you like family," Telep says.

The sibling team even consults the two younger employees to see which location they prefer for a new picture. Dana and Sara, Mark's twiggy wife, even gossip with Telep about a new boy she is dating.

As soon as a couple enters the café, Dana Edwards bounds across the shop to greet them. Dana, a short and spunky blonde who constantly bounces around the shop, bursts into a wide grin and excitedly asks a stream of questions: "Is this your first time? What are you looking for? Milkshakes? Chocolate? Do you want to try anything?"

From the back of the store, where they are positioning the new picture, brothers Mark and Christian call out friendly suggestions to try the dark chocolate and coconut truffles.

"I love coming back here," Christian admits with a warm smile as he watches the couple debating between chocolate barks. "I love being here as people come in. It's a fun place to work, and everything tastes delicious."

Though the elaborate chocolate display is the center of attention, the Milkshake Factory also boasts 55 flavors of milkshake. At the soon-to-open coffee bar, two sets of 10 polished coffee mugs are neatly stacked in pyramids next to an immaculate espresso machine.

While Mark, business-minded like always, claims the milkshakes are "the best you'll ever have," it's obvious that most customers make a beeline for the tantalizing chocolate-dipped pretzels and amaretto truffles at the front of the café.

Even a construction worker who passes through evidently can't resist the candies. He reaches over the clear plastic sneeze guard protecting the chocolates to pluck a pecan caramel cluster.

The Edwards family doesn't seem to mind, or maybe they just identify with the handyman's sweet tooth.

Sara is busy telling another customer what luck she had in marrying a chocolatier.

"My friends all asked me if I was in it for the chocolate," she admits laughing. "It's a rough life for me."

The conversation and laughter seem to converge and rise in the petite shop as the family talks with customers and employees.

It's obvious what brought them together.

"Chocolate and ice cream—that is, good chocolate and ice cream—appeal to everyone," Mark says, popping a chocolate-covered peanut butter cup into his mouth.
THAT'S AMORE!
Folino's serves up Italian classics with a side of family tradition
By Brittany Hribar

Hungry for homemade pasta, marinara sauce and slow-roasted Italian dishes? Yearning to unwind after a long day at work in an intimate candlelight setting?

Then detour from the 1950's decor of Tom's Diner and the flashing lights of Young's Tavern and travel to Italy through the front doors of Folino's Ristorante on the South Side.

Soft piano music and the smell of lasagna and meatballs greet patrons at the door, along with ornate glass vases filled with dry pasta. Linda, the hostess, seats her guests at one of only 12 tables on the main floor and personally goes over tonight's specials. She seems to have tried them all, but wants everyone's opinion at the end of the meal anyway. Her raspy voice and wiry gray hair show that she has been working in the kitchen for many years.

Dane Tarbi, Folino's manager, might be one of the few people who knows more about the restaurant than Linda. Employed since the day Folino's opened its doors, he says that the restaurant's charm comes from the domineering and steadfast Italian owner, Penny Folino.

"She reacts very quickly to anything whether it be good or bad," Tarbi says. "She will blow off and up and I will just roll with it. It is never a dull moment."

On any given night, you can track Penny's bright red hair as she zooms through the restaurant handing out dishes and giving orders. As servers from the restaurant pour into Folino's tiny dining area, she is able to balance their concerns while keeping a watchful eye on her patrons. As a crowd starts to build up at the door, Penny helps Linda welcome customers to her restaurant.

A glance over Penny's shoulder to the main wall indicates that Folino's has quickly managed to charm Pittsburghers. Newspaper clippings about the restaurant from the 2007 Readers Choice for Family Owned Business and the two South Side Soup Contest plaques are also showcased in plain frames.

"I was pleasantly surprised," Adam Howe, a 23-year-old graduate student and first-time patron says. "I did not expect it to be so well decorated, and the food was delicious. But if I had to hone in on one thing it would probably be the service. It was phenomenal."

When asked if he would come back, Howe had to first wipe the sauce away from his lips.

"I would absolutely recommend it," Howe says. "I felt like I was so well taken care of."

The cozy dinning room with red, green and cream walls, reminiscent of the Italian flag is decorated with clusters of paintings and four, huge diamond-shaped mirrors. The small black bar and dark tiled ceiling make the room seem smaller and the atmosphere homier. Tables of two or four are filled with couples on dates or groups of close friends.

According to Folino's Web site, George and Anna Young first opened Young's Tavern as the first diner in the South Side in 1925. They purchased the building next door affectionately named the "Dinning Room" (no, that is not a misspelling) a few years later to provide an entrance for women and children that allowed them to bypass the barroom.

Folino's piano player, Andrew Leer, a 22-year-old college student, says that the distinct establishments bring in a diverse crowd.

"One time we got an actor in, and he decided to sing very loud as I played the piano. He made requests all night long and promised to return again."

With talk of building another Tom's Diner in Blairsville and opening another Folino's in the surrounding Pittsburgh area, Tarbi says that the restaurant chain's success is only beginning.

"They are going places," Tarbi says. "It is going to be an interesting ride."
CATHEDRAL OF LEGENDS

By Sarah McBrien

Stepping into the Cathedral of Learning is like stepping into a dark Gothic dungeon.

In the great hall, the ceiling towers four stories above the floor. The tables and chairs are simple and wooden. Enormous black gates separate the first main room from the hallway by the elevators.

In 1921 when John Bowman, the University of Pittsburgh’s 10th chancellor, decided to solve the space shortage on campus, he wanted to build something that would tower over the city so everyone could see the University.

Erin Nichols, 20, of Fort Wayne, says no matter what condition University of Pittsburgh students are in, they find their way back to campus because of the Cathedral of Learning.

It is the tallest academic building in the country. It is the second tallest university building in the world, second only to a tower at the University of Moscow.

“A lot of drunken people come here at night,” Nichols says. “It is the way they get back to Pitt because you can always see it. They just hang around and act like idiots.”

Students may socialize or study inside of the building, but they also take full advantage of the height of the building when they are outside. Donovan says her aunt and her friends used to illegally rappel down the side of the Cathedral from the 42nd floor.

Helen Parks, 19, of Baton Rouge, says there is a less dangerous way to get a good view from high up in the Cathedral.

“Between the 15th and the 16th floors you can go out onto a roof, and it’s a really nice view,” Parks says.

“You’re not really supposed to do it, but it seems like everyone has. And I hear you can crawl out a girl’s bathroom window further towards the top.”

One of the most well-worn rumors about the Cathedral of Learning is that the Nationality rooms are haunted. Some say that an old teacher moves objects around on the first few floors.

David Grusch, 20, of Pittsburgh, is an expert in one particular ghost story about a small girl from Europe.

“There were big wooden supports used in the American Nationality room brought in from Europe,” Grusch explains.

“Apparently the ghost of a little girl came over with some of the material used to build the room. She would leave impressions on sheets or blankets when no one else was in the room.”

Photo by Alex Baratta
A SPELL-BINDING LITTLE SHOP
The occult isn’t so secret anymore, thanks to Hocus Pocus in Oakland

By Maddy Lauria

Occult actually means “secret,” Lucien explains. As the owner of Hocus Pocus, he is not trying to keep his shop a secret, though. It’s an apothecary, albeit a magical one, and a convergence of energies both light and dark.

The fragrances of oils, potions and incenses gently seep out to Meyran Street in Oakland. At first glance, the storefront looks like an Indie rendition of hippie spiritualism. Lucien stands in the shadows, a dark cloak reaching toward the ground. He says he is allergic to ultraviolet lights, but the cloudy sky poses little threat.

Lucien is a pagan with canine teeth that extend slightly more than usual. He is also a high priest in various esoteric religions, including Gardnerian Wicca, a combination of ancient religions that began in the 1940s under Gerald Gardner. He is also learned in Voodoo and Eastern philosophy.

The occult and paganism include “a whole wide variety of paths and religions,” Lucien says.

“Paganism is the belief in more than one god and the worship of that through nature,” he says. But the occult, he explains, “is the secret of practice that has been passed down over the ages of the magical arts.”

As products of pagan families and lifestyles, Lucien and his wife Kali decided to open Hocus Pocus Oct. 13, 1998.

During the 1990s, there was a strange attraction to paganism, Wicca and anything having to do with magic. Lucien credits shows like “Charmed” and movies like The Craft for the influx of followers. While many people were just following a trend, others found their spiritual calling.

Today, shows like these have diminished in popularity, and, consequently, so has the trend to be magical. According to a recent survey by The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, less than 0.3 percent of the nearly 36,000 adults surveyed practice Wicca or paganism.

Nevertheless, business cautiously flows in and out of Hocus Pocus.

The upstairs area of Hocus Pocus is currently closed for renovations. Although there is a magical atmosphere, Lucien cannot sense shoplifters’ malevolent auras. The upper level will have cameras installed so that hexes are not needed to divert the thieves, but for now, it is closed to the public.

Lucien uses the downstairs area of Hocus Pocus for pagan ceremonies. After passing through a tie-dyed sheet, a curtain of floral and musty scents ascend the scant stairs, causing one to inhale deeply and carefully. The Egyptian god of the dead Annubus is there, along with other pagan figures, two lamps and a large candelabrum. A life-sized grim reaper stands in the corner, clutching a rose against a background of red velvet.

The actual rituals vary daily; but for the most part, they consist of cleansing ceremonies to rid the store - and Lucien - of bad energy.

“Banishing is the most common, just to clear the
space out to clear out negative energy,” Lucien says. Banishing is the act of expelling malevolent spirits or energies from an area. He also performs prosperity spells, binding spells and “the occasional revenge thing.”

“I’m a very ritualistic person,” Lucien says. There is an altar filled to the edges with statues of different deities. There are thousands of gods in pagan religions, but Lucien has his select favorites.

Annubus, the guardian of the underworld, is a dark energy that Lucien pays tribute to, but does not worship. Statues of the pagan god are contained in a glass case in the middle of the shop, and have a prominent position on the altar downstairs. Lilith is another of Lucien’s favorites. This Sumerian goddess was removed from the canonized Bible, Lucien says, because her relations with Adam caused the Judeo-Christians to turn her into a demon.

“It’s not that we believe they’re all separate anthropomorphic beings,” Lucien says. Rather, each deity is an aspect of an overall spiritual energy.

“God is in everything,” he says. “There’s a singular source, but every god is a different face of that energy.”

Occult beliefs have an almost transcendental ring to them, as practitioners find energy in everyday occurrences, like wind and fire, along with ancient Egyptian and pagan gods. Nature plays a large role in most pagan lifestyles. Hocus Pocus’ apothecary shows the extent of the spiritual reliance on Mother Earth, displaying an assortment of natural herbs and oils.

Lucien gets many of his products from the United States, but a few are imported. Over the last decade, Hocus Pocus has probably dealt with more than 100 different suppliers and the shop now holds 240 to 250 different types of herbs, not to mention oils, incenses and other magical products.

New practitioners will try to use magic for everything, which Lucien sees as a problem. “Life in itself is magical,” he says. Instead, he advises neophytes only to use magic when they’ve exhausted all other physical possibilities. That’s when it’s time to get metaphysical.

Magic and the occult are actually scientific in methodology, he says, especially in regards to the physical effects of scents produced by natural products.

“Science will eventually prove everything in the occult to be true,” Lucien says. He explains that science already has supported certain pagan rituals, such as aromatherapy, by explaining the effects of certain oils and herbs upon the human body and sensory system.

“It doesn’t make it any less magical,” he says. “It just explains the whys.”

Most, but not all, of the incense, powders and oil blends are made in the store. Hocus Pocus has access to more than 3,000 recipes for oils, powders, baths and sprays.

The most difficult aspect of paganism for many practitioners is balance. Using wormwood with alcohol and heroin may assist in reaching the abyss, a metaphysical plane of absolutely transcendental quality sought by some sects of paganism, but it may also result in death.

“A lot of this stuff is light-hearted and good-natured, but there must be balance,” Lucien says. “Without balance, there is darkness.

“What it’s really about is mastering the darker parts of yourself and not letting them rule you over.”
ART AT THE CORE OF BOXHEART

A Bloomfield gallery pulsates with color images and recreations of life

By Nora Nee

In the heart of Pittsburgh’s Little Italy, Liberty Avenue is home to many eclectic shops. Boxheart is no exception.

Taped to the door, hugging a rigid red EMPLOYEES ONLY sign, is an encouraging quote from Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard: “A society is only as great as its dreams and these dreams are dreamed by artists.”

A bad cover of “Walk Like an Egyptian” can be heard over the speakers hanging adjacent to the florescent lights that bring the artwork to life. The Bloomfield gallery pulsates with color, images and re-creations of life.

Nicole Cappozi, the gallery director, sits behind her desk working on her Apple computer, greeting guests as they arrive. An empty coffee cup and an unopened Quaker granola bar keep her company among the hundreds of pieces of artwork that call this gallery home. Her bumblebee-striped turtleneck hugs her tall, thin figure.

Capozi and her husband Joshua Hogan stumbled on the space that now houses Boxheart after Bloomfield Art Works shut its doors.

“On a whim we just said to each other, ‘Let’s just do this thing,’” she says. “We thought about buying buildings and we looked many places. Our landlord is a little Asian guy who said, ‘Give me some money and you can have this space.’”

Originally opened to showcase the work of regional artists, seven years later, Boxheart is home to artists from all around the world.

“Artists submit their work to us throughout the year and we review them every October,” Cappozi says. “We look for artists who have their s-— together.

“It’s important that we work with a review panel so it’s not just us choosing the artists. We look for works that should be exhibited to the public, not just the ones that are going to make money.”

In fact, Cappozi and her husband don’t make any money if an artist’s work doesn’t sell. And sometimes it doesn’t.

The door opens, causing a bell to sound the arrival of a customer, and two women are swept into the gallery from the unforgiving winter wind, clutching their purses. Cappozi doesn’t stop what she’s doing to wait on them but pauses to help when they inquire about an artist they are looking for. She climbs a ladder and brings down several of that artist’s paintings from a loft above the door.

“What makes this space unique is that idea that it is more consumer friendly,” Cappozi says. “We couldn’t just have a museum space.”

In fact, Boxheart is home to many artists who sell things from jewelry to postcards. Joshua’s abstract paintings sell very well.

“He is the main reason we opened the gallery,” Capozi says. “I stopped creating art when we opened the
gallery. There is a passion for artists to create and when they don't get a chance to do it they go crazy. I just don't have that, I like working with the artists who have that crazy drive and passion."

The gallery resembles a lost universe that draws you in and pushes you to explore. The postcards ask to be read, the paintings interpreted, and the pottery picked up and examined. At first glance, you wouldn't notice the home-like touch the gallery has been given.

"The gallery is always changing," Capozzi says. "It is totally different every month depending on what artists we are showcasing that month."

In 2004, the gallery showcased John Henry Bladder, who encased the whole gallery, including the walls, in black felt. He suspended televisions on the walls with the felt. The televisions showed recordings of people talking about art.

Boxheart lends itself to quirky anecdotes and interesting characters. Nicole and her husband work with the creative mind every day of their lives.

The gallery's mission statement was taken from a 1937 letter that photographer Ansel Adams wrote to his best friend: "Art is both love and friendship and understanding, the desire to give. It is not charity, which is the giving of things, it is more than kindness, which is the giving of the self. It is both the taking and giving of beauty, the turning out to the light the inner folds of the awareness of the spirit. It is the recreation of another plane of the realities of the world, the tragic and wonderful realities of earth and man, and all the interrelations of these."

Placing her hands on her face and smiling Capozzi says, "I can't see myself doing anything else."
Despite a seedy reputation, college students still flock to the Original Hot Dog Shop

By Alex Nseir

More than 20 years ago, Terry Campasano, worked the night shift at The Original Hot Dog Shop, now known as Essie’s Original Hot Dog Shop. On weekend nights, a line would form out the door, all the way down Forbes Avenue.

“It kept the kids alive at 2 a.m.,” said Campasano, daughter of Sid Simon, The O’s founder. The restaurant would become so crowded and full of trash that employees couldn’t make it past the counter to clean up after customers.

“You’d be wading through garbage,” Campasano said.

That’s when Essie’s Original, often called The O, became The Dirty O.

Today, The O is about as clean as any fast-food diner. The rubbish piles are gone, but the orange tables are sticky and the floors are dusty. Located in Oakland on the edge of the University of Pittsburgh’s campus, The O has been a Pittsburgh institution since 1960. The walls are covered in painted menus, neon signs and beer posters. College students sit alongside businessmen in the dimly lit dining rooms with long, cafeteria-style tables.

“It’s the center of the universe,” Campasano said. “It’s every walk of life and that I’m very proud of.”

Campasano, 53, the current manager of The O, has worked there since she was 13. When the restaurant first opened it only had one counter and a small dining space.

“We actually had a cigar box for a cash register,” she said.

The restaurant has since expanded. The O has two food stations to make room for the tractor-trailer load of potatoes they go through each week. The dining spaces expanded as well, and The O opened the Top of the O Bar on the second floor of the restaurant. Campasano recently closed the bar because of patrons’ out-of-control behavior. Now the second floor is strictly for dining.

“I want it to be more family-oriented than wild, wild west,” she said.

Despite all the changes The O has gone through, the menu has remained basically the same. People still flock there to eat the pork and beef O Dogs with massive orders of fresh cut fries, fried in pure peanut oil. Campasano figures that a small order...
of Essie's Original fries can feed two to three people and a large is big enough for up to seven. Customers can also choose from cheese-steaks, burgers, kosher beef dogs, wings and pizza along with hundreds of different kinds of beer that are in coolers that almost completely line the first floor of the restaurant.

In 2005, the Simon family was so frustrated with the way The O was being run that they put the landmark restaurant up for sale. It never sold, and Campasano says that the family is not considering selling it again, despite the fact that business has dropped over the years. “We’re still here,” she said. “We’re not going anywhere.”

The closing of Forbes Field, the addition of dining plans at local universities and increasing competition from cheaper fast-food restaurants in the area have created challenges for The O. “People compete with prices but not quality,” Campasano said. “We’re not willing to sacrifice quality.”

Despite the decline in business, the O is still feeding college students late at night. “(The O has) great drunk food,” said Greg Plundo, 24, of Greensburg.

Plundo, who graduated from Pitt in 2005, noted that the O experience isn’t the same in the middle of the day.

“You go there for lunch and you’re like, ‘Wow, this isn’t very good. Why do I like it so much?’”

While Campasano says that she doesn’t worry about the night crowds, The O does pay a police officer to stand guard during late hours. This gives some customers a bad impression of the restaurant.

Matt Rubbico, 23, is a junior at Point Park and has lived in Oakland for almost two years. Rubbico said that he has seen at least three drug busts at The O.

“Never go inside late at night by yourself,” he said. Plundo agreed that sometimes the customers and atmosphere at The O after the bars let out made him uneasy.

“The on-duty police officer didn’t make me feel too safe,” he said.

Although rowdy patrons may be a problem, The O is a part of Pittsburgh history. The restaurant, which opened shortly before Bill Mazeroski’s World Series-winning home run, has been featured on several television specials, notably by documentary maker Rick Sebak on WQED and another on the Food Network’s program “Unwrapped.”

For Campasano, it is not just the food that makes The O special. “It’s like colors in a box of crayons here,” she said. “Everybody’s equal.”
AFTERNOON
DELIGHT

Move over Dairy Queen. Oakland's
delight is miles (and flavors) above the competition

By Kathy SaeNgian

Ice cream does not discriminate on the basis of age, and neither does Dave and Andy's Homemade Ice Cream parlor.

Dave Tuttle and Andy Hardie decided to open their little ice cream shop in 1983 with the vision of creating great-tasting, inexpensive ice cream for all ages. Mission accomplished. On an average weekend night, hospital work- ers, college students and toddlers stream through the shop, which is situated in the heart of Oakland; it's the only ice cream parlor in the area.

"I wanted to open up an ice cream place here because there was nothing like this at the time, and it was a trend. There were lots of small ice cream parlors in college towns across the country," said Andy Hardie, owner of Dave and Andy's Ice Cream.

Nestled in between a Wines and Spirits and an Eckerd Pharmacy, Dave and Andy's is a haven for any ice cream enthusiast.

The shop looks small from the outside; in fact, it's almost hidden, like a concealed treasure. But after stepping through the doors, patrons are enveloped by a plethora of sights and smells.

The yellow walls of the modest ice cream parlor are not cold, bare and white, like the typical ice cream chain. Instead, murals and photos of smiling families fill the pale walls.

Accompanying the various photographs and cards hang 30-some odd plaques that pay tribute to the great ice cream that is served at this establishment. While most of their awards are hung haphazardly on the back wall, one stands proudly on its own. A large glossy plaque that labels Dave and Andy's as one of the top 10 ice cream parlors in the country from USA Today in 1998 hangs in front of the cash register, waiting to be admired.

Taped onto the windows are poems written by elementary school children that illustrate their love for ice cream . . . and for Dave and Andy's.

With only a couple of rusty milk jugs, in lieu stools, and a small side table, seating is limited. Two red park benches, which are typically outside during the summer, add extra seating in the small creamery during the winter months, but there is still not enough to accommodate the sweet-toothed patrons.

Seating is not the concern of these sugar-craving customers. Ice cream is the main attraction.

"The environment reminds me of a vintage style ice cream parlor straight from
a nostalgic movie. It's small but it's good, that's how family-run shops are supposed to be like," said Roy Carlson, a junior at Duquesne University. 

"If it were any bigger, it would lose its hometown touch which draws people into this place to begin with," Carlson said.

Michelle Ross, a Pitt sophomore, is also a devoted fan.

"I come here for two reasons: it's close and it's good. Do you really need any other reason?" Ross asked after entering the shop with a vibrant group of friends. The chatter about weekend escapades stopped, however, when they realized that tall king would distract them from overflowing ice cream cones.

Alongside the crowd of college students three toddlers sit quietly on the old fashioned milk jugs and are enveloped by college students and business professionals, all holding identically messy ice cream cones overflowing from the top, not the bottom.

A Dave and Andy's staple is the single M&M at the bottom of their homemade waffle cones, which prevents ice cream from leaking out of the bottom.

"It's a nice touch, because your ice cream is meant to be in your mouth not all over your hand. I guess it's ironic that M&M has the same motto," said Jessica Seward, a sophomore from Slippery Rock University. Seward enjoys visiting her friends at the University of Pittsburgh because she loves Dave and Andy's ice cream.

"It's just a shame that there aren't more places that have great ice cream like this." 

There have been over 400 hundred ice cream flavors to pass through the scoops of the small ice cream parlor, 18 are served daily, all are Hardie's own recipes and made on the premise. The flavors range from the vanilla, strawberry and chocolate to the adventurous ooey gooey crispy cake, purple cow and honey apple cinnamon granola.

Although his favorite is the Kahlua cookies and cream, the public's favorite is birthday cake, says Hardie as he cracks eggs into a mixing bowl, making his own cakes. The smell of the sweet ingredients encompasses the shop and the hungry customers.

"Our ice cream does the advertising for us, and we hit every constituency because of it," Hardie said.

The shop provides a strange, yet functional, juxtaposition: It is a destination point for both eager young children as well as college students.

"It's like the perfect place for everyone," Seward said.
**SERVED SUNNY-SIDE UP**

*It's bacon, eggs and a slice of hospitality for Hanlon's diner*

By Brian Tierney

Just follow the signs. Hang a left at the wooden menu — specials for the day are written in chalk: Chicken Broccoli Alfredo, tossed salad and garlic toast for $5.99, if you're interested. Turn right when you get to the translucent glass door at the end of the hallway. Then, wander past the metal staircase.

If the labyrinth leads you astray, listen for the clanking of plates: Hanlon's Café and Coffee House is somewhere close. At lunch hour, everyone who knows, knows the way — it's the spot for some inexpensive noontime grub.

"$3.99, you can't beat it," says Linda Jackson, sprinkling some salt onto her lunchtime breakfast. Her daughter, Amanda, silently scratches at a few lottery tickets.

"Uh, silverware!" Linda kindly calls to the waitress. She prefers her eggs over-easy, with some strips of crispy bacon latticing the plate. "I can't go home and fix it this good and this cheap."

Linda, 49, of Penn Hills, has been coming to Hanlon's since a head-on collision last August brought her to Mercy Hospital for two surgeries. Like most of the patrons, she discovered the place accidentally.

"Actually, my granddaughter spotted it, sitting in the car waiting for my prescriptions to be filled," Linda says. "She saw the ice-cream in the window. I didn't know there was a restaurant here."

It is easy to miss, but only if you ignore the signs. On the ground floor of the M.B. Building, right across from Mercy Hospital on Locust Street, a sign for Hanlon's hangs between two elevators, which normally bring doctors and patients to and from their destinations.

To the right: a waiting area for those patients. To the left: an addition to Hanlon's added in recent years, a small convenience store where hospital workers from across the street can get their coffee, cigarette and lottery-ticket fixes.

Around the corner from the coffee house, another small sign leads the way.

Nothing flashy, nothing fancy: "Hanlon's," with a black arrow pointing left down a hospital-like corridor. Even the wooden "specials" sign tells potential patrons where to place their faith, and their appetites: "follow the signs down the hallway."

But Bob Hanlon has never worried about people finding his restaurant, even if some customers mistake the coffee house addition for the actual restaurant. He relies on informed locals to keep Hanlon's afloat.

"It's not a destination spot, it's more of a convenience spot because of the hospital and Duquesne," says Hanlon, who has owned the restaurant for nearly 12 years.

"I don't think there's many people walking by coming in, I mean maybe at the coffee shop they'll come in and grab a coffee. As for back here, it's definitely hospital workers. That's my bread and butter," says Bob, from the corner of his mouth, before pausing to scratch his right arm, which ends at the elbow.

Nancy Phillips, 61, a cardiology technician at Mercy...
Hospital, has been frequenting Hanlon's for many years.

"When I started at Mercy, everybody came over here for lunch. They have the best food around here," says Phillips. "Everybody knows about Hanlon's."

But, as Bob suggests, most customers don't frequent Hanlon's for its aesthetic qualities. Booths line each wall, separated by enormous, synthetic holiday wreathes that hang on the wood paneling. In the uncovered areas, pastel yellow wallpaper; the dim, uneven lighting accentuating its dullness. Small tables fill the interior of the two rooms, connected by a small passage between the register and an unused server station. The floor, in some spots, is uneven.

Overall, the restaurant resembles a bucolic roadside diner from decades past.

"Like I'm from Virginia, and where I grew up, in the country, [Hanlon's] feels like one of those little mom and pop stores," says Linda, while her daughter continues to scratch lottery tickets, a PA Lotto machine humming behind her head.

"She was supposed to get her dad some lottery tickets for his birthday, but she ended up scratching 'em off and winning the money and going to get more."

In the background, "Sister Golden Hair" plays on the radio, and an older man punches plastic buttons on the poker machine in a corner, stopping periodically to take a drag from one of his Marlboro Light 100s.

But when patrons aren't gambling, they can pay at an old-fashioned, chest-high counter, with a slat behind it that offers customers a peek at the innerworkings of the kitchen. Randomly placed clocks, bulky and oversized, also hang in various locations around the restaurant — simple reminders, for employees, of when the lunch crowd is coming and going.

Joe Lemon, 31, Hanlon's main chef, certainly pays attention to their ticking.

"My favorite time of day is probably right about 2:30, 3:00, quitting time," says Joe, Bob's childhood friend who followed him to Hanlon's when he purchased the restaurant. Someday, he wants to have his own place.

"But I guess the most exciting time of the day would be anywhere between 11 and 1, when most people are in here and all the excitement goes down."

One clock ticks to the right of the kitchen. It's a little after 1:30 p.m., and the lunch wave ebbs. As the sounds of a kitchen at-work yield to the sounds of a kitchen in-repair, Bob scuttles toward his office.

"It's a little crazy for about two hours. It's pretty insane," says Bob, referring to lunchtime rushes. "Then, it slows down like it is now."

A few hot plates to the lingering lunch customers, around the passé '70s J-shaped counter, and he arrives at his destination: a nook in the far corner of the place, littered with almost nothing but receipts and bills.

"I had other friends who were in the industry and they basically all colluded and talked me into doing this," says Bob.

He bought the restaurant after a friend at Mercy Hospital who told him it might be for sale. It needed a lot of work, then, and still does, according to Bob.

"The place totally needs redone. But I'm kinda stuck between a rock and a hard place because I rent and my landlord's in the process of selling the building.

Since UPMC bought Mercy, as well as the building that houses Hanlon's, Bob has heard rumors that his restaurant could soon be a parking lot. But he doesn't seem startled. Whatever the case, Hanlon's is home for Bob.

"Some many peoples have told me about it. 'You better get a plan B.' But I don't have a plan B. I mean, this takes so much of my time that I'll basically sink with the ship."
When Pittsburgh finally awoke from its post-industrial slumber — when anxieties about the city's future crushed its verve — an evolution began, built upon a renaissance of sorts.

City officials, neighborhood leaders and some ambitious citizens decided the future of the "smoky city" relied on advancing Pittsburgh's cultural sensibility: reinvigorating unique neighborhoods, as well as a general "Old World in the 21st Century" ambiance, for the benefit of the city's image.

Yet, as places like South Side, Oakland, Bloomfield, Lawrenceville and East Liberty have blossomed into cultural hot spots, or at least sites of civic renewal, Polish Hill has remained largely ignored by city officials and renovators. It is a small, somewhat-forgotten conclave, frozen in the mythical post-WWII America of butchers and bakers, and mill-town hospitality.

Despite minimal help from city officials, which has left Polish Hill resembling a ghost town trying to rise from a long, dark hibernation, the neighborhood remains rich with undiscovered culture and potential.

Polish Hill boasts one of the oldest and most beautiful churches in all of Pittsburgh, Immaculate Heart of Mary. It is home to the infamous Gooskies, Pittsburgh's unofficial bar of record. And, quite frankly, Polish Hill's 1,500 residents are some of the most engaged and caring in all the city. Many of them are working diligently to resurrect their neighborhood. Simply put, Polish Hill is that rare American intersection of memory and story.

The following special feature attempts to focus on the many facets of Polish Hill, offering insight into one of Pittsburgh's unique neighborhoods.

By Brian Tierney, 2008 SPJ president
WITAMY W POLSKICH GÓRACH: WELCOME TO POLISH HILL

By Angelica Patterson

Although Polish Hill is isolated at the top of a towering hill, it is close to a number of Pittsburgh favorites: the Strip District, Lawrenceville and Bloomfield. In its ethnic heyday, it was a destination itself.

Polish immigrants first settled “Polskie Gory” in the late 1800s. In 1881 alone, it’s estimated that approximately 152,000 Poles immigrated to the United States.

Many residents worked in Allegheny River Valley mills and factories.

They squeezed their homes close together in an attempt to preserve their native language and Polish customs.

The site of the neighborhood was originally Denny’s Far. Later, it was considered to be part of Herron Hill and was home to immigrants primarily from Poland, Germany and Russia.

It wasn’t until the 1940s that the neighborhood was referred to as Polish Hill due to the large population of Poles who had settled there.

The most recognizable landmark, Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, began construction in 1896 and was at the heart of many social engagements. In 1922, the parish had 1,000 families and by 1945, the number had grown to 1,350.

Polish Hill’s attention-grabbing name brought noteworthy individuals to its door.

President Carter made a nationally publicized visit to the neighborhood during the 1976 election campaign.

When Carter came, family businesses were still thriving and the neighborhood grocery sold special meats and candies imported from Poland. Polish language classes were held at the church’s school.

Now, Polish Hill has vacant property, abandoned cars and squatters.

The population of Polish Hill is decreasing rapidly, with just 1,488 residents in 2000, according to a Pittsburgh census. Most people living on Polish Hill have been there for more than 10 years, according to a recent survey by the Polish Hill Civic
Association.

Despite the squatters and abandoned buildings, Polish Hill has the second lowest crime rate in Pittsburgh, according to President of the Polish Hill Civic Association Terry Doloughty, who has many plans to bring the once-thriving neighborhood back to life.

"Community involvement, membership and resource development are the keys to revive Polish Hill," he said. "To be a real thriving community, we need to be invested in Polish Hill."

Doloughty and the Polish Hill Civic Association are trying to revive Polish Hill by bringing in newcomers, providing more opportunities to get involved and improving relationships with city government.

"We are trying to make a partnership with the Strip District and make use of the abandoned buildings," Doloughty said.

"We need to be able to support [residents] with a business district. We have some businesses on Polish Hill, but we need something akin to a general store, a coffee shop, a restaurant, etc."

According to the winter 2007 Polish Hill Civic Association survey, 71 percent of residents would like to have a grocery store on Polish Hill and 64 percent want a restaurant. One percent want a gay bar.

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**Homestyle Polish Cooking**

By Alex Nseir

When preparing to cook for special occasions, Polish Hill resident Joanne Kwiatkowski knows that it's useful to have connections. Pierogies at Easter and Christmas require dry cottage cheese, which is not always easy to find. Luckily, Kwiatkowski knows someone, who knows someone, who can get it from a dairy company.

Making *czarnina* – Polish duck soup – means having a friend of a friend find duck's blood from a local parish. Kwiatkowski's husband thinks that the smell from making the soup is awful, but Kwiatkowski insists that it is only the smell of vinegar used in the soup to which he objects.

Kwiatkowski still lives in the home on Harmar Street where she grew up with her family and five other families. She learned to cook from her sister and her mother who was born in Krakow and immigrated to America when she was young. Growing up, Kwiatkowski watched her mother cook.

"In those days, cooking was simple," she says. "She would cook pork with gravy and mashed potatoes and (the kids) would get the gravy and potatoes and my father would get the meat."

Kwiatkowski still takes their basket filled with ham, eggs, kielbasa, butter, horseradish and salt to be blessed at church on Easter Saturday. "It's everything they want to eat on Easter Sunday morning," said Father Joseph Swierczynski of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Polish Hill. He also noted that eggs represent resurrection, a symbol of Christ breaking out of the tomb, bread represents sustenance and health, and lamb symbolizes Christ.

Church members also prepare about 200 loaves of pascha bread, a sweet bread made for Easter.

For the church festival in Polish Hill, Kwiatkowski helps to make 150 dozen homemade pierogies. The church also sells pigs in a blanket, huluski, kielbasa, hot sausage and polish soups and desserts.

Kwiatkowski believes it is important to pass on recipes and show other people how to make complicated foods like the sweet-and-sour duck soup.

"You need someone to show you how to make that," she said. "Then they can show someone else."

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AN URBAN DESERT OASIS

The Polish Hill community Garden is where residents can clean up their neighborhood just by getting their hands dirty

By Jess Eagle

At the bottom of Wiggins Street, a patch of undeveloped earth surrounded by a wooden picket fence sticks out like an oasis in an urban desert.

The Polish Hill Community Garden is nestled among houses on the edge of a hillside that overlooks the city. A single hand-crafted swing sits slightly left of center among industrial-sized blue plastic barrels, both teetering on mounds of uneven earth. A solitary arched wire stretches over the gate that leads to the ten plots belonging to gardeners from Polish Hill and neighboring areas.

Linda Hite, of Highland Park, stops by the garden a few times a week on her way home from her Downtown office, where she works for the city in residential mortgages.

"It's so emotionally rewarding to play in the dirt," Hite says. "I'm in a finance office all day, so it's a nice balance for me to go out and play in the garden like that."

Hite joined the Community Garden last year growing onions, lettuce, cabbage, winter greens, squash, cantaloupe and various herbs in her plot.

"I worked hard, but it's so much fun and it's so rewarding," she says.

After living in Ohio for most of her life, Hite returned to Pittsburgh five years ago for the first time since growing up there as a child. She says part of the reason she hesitated to move back was the lack of organic foods and outdoor areas in the city.

"Living in the city, I don't have a lot of space to have gardens and flowers and things, so I'm so grateful to have a place that I can go and sit here," says the 50-something vegetarian.

Geriatric psychiatrist Dr. Jordan Karp and his partner, sculptor Paul Bowden, also appreciate the garden's location. Bowden, 49, whose studio is in the couple's house on Harmar Street, usually visits the garden every other day during the growing season.

The Polish Hill residents have grown various vegetables and beans in their plot for five years.

"We like to garden and don't have a very sunny backyard," says Karp, 38. "So this was really conve-
nient and just a block from our house.”

Karp and Bowden also share Hite’s enthusiasm for organic food. Hite believes many Polish Hill residents grew up in big families, many of whom used home-grown ingredients, making a garden possible in Polish Hill despite its urban location.

“They were used to having meals cooked for them from fresh foods, and having grandmas around,” Hite says, who grew up with her grandmother.

In that familial spirit, gardeners all pitch in to improve the garden every year. So far, they’ve added a tool shed with communal tools, a single wooden swing and the large blue plastic barrels of sharable water. They’ve recently added goldfish to the water barrels in order to keep the insect population down.

“There are places that are called community gardens, but ours really is a community.”

In addition, garden members pitch in to keep the soil rich, adding leaves, grass clippings, coffee grounds and compost from their homes, and weeding when necessary.

“There are places that are called community gardens, but ours really is a community,” Hite says. “We do things to enrich space for long term.”

The gardeners also share what they grow with the rest of the Polish Hill community. Polish Hill resident Ron Rizner works at the neighborhood nursing home, John Paul Plaza Senior High Rise, and brings garden vegetables and fruit to the residents there. Gardeners also share their produce with neighbors at community barbecues.

“I don’t think of us as volunteers,” Karp says. “I just feel fortunate enough for us to get a plot.”

Hite says the garden is a form of community-building by nature. She sees herself as a part of Polish Hill despite not being a resident.

“That’s one of the things that’s making it a home-like spot,” she says. “It’s not just a garden.”

FROM THE BOTTOM TO THE TOP

The view from Apollo Street

By Matt Noonan

What brought Mark Knobil and Catherine McConnell to Polish Hill six years ago was their search for a view … and some air.

Driving around the higher points of Pittsburgh, they found a house with an inconspicuous “For Sale” sign at the top of a staircase strangely called Apollo Street.

“There was a little cardboard sign in the window and we said ‘this is the spot,’” Knobil said. The spot is a block off of Bigelow Boulevard, across from an auto parts store and next door to an auto mechanic. In fact, looking out Mark and Catherine’s front door, it’s clear that they are surrounded by large, industrial buildings.

“At first glance it looks pretty horrific, with these industrial buildings across the street,” Knobil said. “They actually block you completely from Bigelow, so it’s nicely isolated. It’s a little Wild West. We’re almost rural.”

The view that brought them to the top of the staircase is the one from their back porch. From the top of the hill you can see parts of Lawrenceville, including the old brick masterpieces that are the Church Brew Works and the Pittsburgh Brewing Co. Beyond that, they have a clear view of Troy Hill, and the outlying neighborhoods that have cut swathes into the valley walls around Pittsburgh.

On one of his days off, Knobil sits at the kitchen table with his back to a fireplace, which he will soon smack his head against. On the mantle are several video cameras. Old 8mms from the 70s

Continued on the next page
'70s and a larger, French-made 16mm, which he still uses as a freelance cameraman.

He calmly discusses politics while waiting for his tea to boil. The sign in his front window, the one on his front stoop and the sticker on his Honda Pilot proclaim that he is a Barack Obama man. With his grey goatee and brushed back hair, Knobil, 56, looks like a hippie who grew up.

As the kettle begins to whistle, the door opens and McConnell walks in. The cat and dog go right to her as Knobil makes his move toward the stovetop. The animals beg for food and after feeding them, McConnell sits down at the table and joins Knobil for a cup a tea.

McConnell is a real estate agent, but is also Vice President of the Polish Hill Civic Association. She became involved in the neighborhood when she moved in, something she has done wherever she has lived, but Knobil doesn’t share her level of civic intensity

"Mark lasted like 10 minutes at the meeting we went to," McConnell said.

McConnell said she has sold 16 houses in Polish Hill in six years. Her role as resident, realtor and vice president have set her on a mission to document the vacant buildings in the neighborhood. She begins to put the number around 60, but it may be higher

"I forget what the count was last, but many more than there should be," McConnell said. "The problem is that there is so little housing stock that is livable, so everything has to be renovated."
"One of my fantasies for the neighborhood is to develop new construction that is modern," McConnell said. "I think we could sell them, there's very little new construction here that's really kind of avant-garde looking, and I think there is a market for it, and people would come here."

One of those avant-garde looking houses is at the bottom of Apollo Street.

The front of Holly and Kevin Sousa's house is painted grey concrete. On the first floor, the two large panes of frosted glass are big enough drive cars through. The reason being is that their house used to be a shingling company, and the room behind those windows was the garage.

Today, the room contains the remnants of an Easter party held a week ago. The room is bare with the exception of two long folding tables with vinyl pastel table clothes, a few folding chairs and an ice chest stocked with Diet Pepsi, but no ice.

The bareness of the room mirrors the upstairs of the house where the Sousas live. A large purple yoga ball is the only thing in the center of their workout room.

The kitchen is equally sparse; it gives no indication that Kevin is a chef. The light colored cabinets and stainless steel appliances against each long wall of the rectangular room give way to an uncluttered runway that leads to a large square kitchen table. With the leaf inserted, it is more than enough space for the four hard plastic chairs for Holly, Kevin, their four-year-old daughter, Sophia, and Holly's 13-year-old daughter, Devin.

The only things on the table are a roll of paper towels, her computer and a set of small speakers playing music from her laptop.

As young professionals, Holly and Kevin are very much the embodiment of the new Polish Hill. Holly, 32, is an emotional support teacher for Pittsburgh Public Schools, and Kevin, 33, is the head chef of the locally renowned Bigelow Grille.

What brought the Sousas to Polish Hill four years ago was the inexpensive property, which was important as Holly continues schooling for her master's degree. When they moved, it was their neighbors at the top of the hill, McConnell and Knobil, who reached out first.

"We went to two Polish Hill pot lucks," Holly said. "They were kind of like the leaders that invited people to these Polish Hill pot lucks."

The Sousas have had no problem fitting in to the neighborhood, finding other young professionals. Holly has thoughts of building a dog park, but at the same time she is aware of the ever-present gap between people new to the neighborhood and those who have been here for decades.

Knobil echoes a similar sentiment.

"People mind their own business. They're friendly, but they mind their own business," he said.

This is where McConnell's other idea comes in. Her plan is to take several vacant buildings and transform them from eyesores to community rallying points by using one building for the artists of Polish Hill, one for old photos submitted by the old guard of the neighborhood, and a third house of photos of all the residents of Polish Hill. The goal is to mesh the old guard with the new faces of the neighborhood.

And McConnell seems like the right bridge.

"I think it could be fun to have a project where some of the old people could have a piece of it and they would be working side by side with some of the sculptors," McConnell said.
SAVING THE HILL

Long-time resident and community fixture Terry Doloughty is putting his soul into saving Polish Hill.

By Brian Tierney

"Playing catch up, today," says Terry Doloughty, stepping out from behind his desk at the Polish Hill Civic Association. He pauses a moment, smiling with a sense of hurriedness.

Tonight, the 11 board members of the Civic Association will hold one of their regular meetings at 6 p.m., and Terry carefully reorganizes a few papers for the group: some readjusted insurance figures and census material. He has spent the early part of Sunday, as he usually does, preparing himself for the next week's duties as head of the association and tucking some personal chores between the cracks.

Since taking over responsibilities as president about a year and a half ago, he has witnessed a boom in membership and spends days and nights trying to increase that number.

Terry's involvement resulted from an unexpected chain of events.

"The floor caved-in [at] the meeting hall, and I have a little bit of fix-it knowledge on everything -- plumbing, carpentry, the whole routine -- so, they asked me to come and volunteer to fix it. I said, 'Sure.'"" At that time, some of the elderly members decided to step down, leaving a vacancy on the board. After accepting an invitation to join as a board member, he quickly rose to vice president. Four months later, following the resignation of the previous president due to health problems, Terry was elected head of PHCA. "And then, poof, I'm president." Up the street at the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a service has just about finished. Stray churchgoers pass the open door of the PHCA and peak in. Terry, 43, grabs a bottle of water and talks of complications with fundraising and of the dedication and diversity of his fellow board members.

He slowly makes his way toward the sunlit doorway, which looks onto Brereton Street, Polish Hill's main thoroughfare.

"Pretty much right here you're at dead-bone middle Polish Hill," says Terry, stepping out onto Brereton. "Even though we don't have any of the businesses left, this is still the main intersection of everything right here."

To the left of the PHCA stands the 100-year-old church; across the street is the plain, brick façade of Sarney's, a blue-collar Pittsburgh watering hole. Terry begins climbing an infamous Polish Hill rise, passing a row of vacant windows, abandoned buildings and the remnants of years gone by.

"Mastowi's Hardware, and the storefronts you see here, they're the last storefronts that are left. Even these buildings were all storefronts, they've all been converted back to just regular homes and apart-
Decades ago, before Polish Hill suffered a business exodus, residents could find everything they needed on Brereton Street. Jerry's Market, owned by Jerry Helwick, was especially important.

Now, Brereton resembles the main street of some fabled ghost-town, a sleepy little thoroughfare, lined with darkened windows, trying to rise from a long hibernation. Mostly, the street embodies Polish Hill's greatest set of problems: getting new businesses to invest, getting people to help reinvigorate neighborhoods and getting potential residents to drop anchor.

"I'd love to see bakeries, I'd like to see a books hop. Love to see the residents that can support themselves in their own neighborhood," Terry says. "So, to that end, we have to find people willing to renovate the old buildings. But we're trying to market that, that we have low property values."

He points to a cluster of buildings farther up the street.

"Abandoned, abandoned, abandoned, abandoned," Terry says.

The PHCA estimates 10 percent of all property in Polish Hill is abandoned or vacant, the result of a lethal combination of factors: fires, homeowners with little or no insurance, irresponsible landlords and unpaid taxes. But Terry believes historical/ demographic dynamics, such as voluntary migration, lie at the genesis of Polish Hill's population woes.

"It's kind of like the suburbs and the car were the two downfalls of Polish Hill," says Terry. "People moved away."

As the modern notion of Americana eclipsed blue- collar living, leaving behind the industrial culture of cities like Pittsburgh, younger generations fled ethnic conclave like Polish Hill.

"Their children ... had the American dream of living in the suburbs," Terry says. "They didn't become the tailor, they didn't become the baker, they didn't become the butcher, they didn't become the candy shop owner. And when their parents aged, and finally passed away, there was nobody to carry on with either the business or the building."

On Paulowna Street, off of Heron Avenue and just around the corner from Brereton, Polish Hill's only school stands like a hollowed-out carcass on some urban pasture, abandoned for nearly a decade. Dedicated in 1888, the Immaculate Heart of Mary schoolhouse once stood as a monument to the neighborhood's ethnic past. In 1979, Terry graduated from the school, one of only 13 to do so.

Just down the road, a large, grassy hill stands between two sets of four-story buildings. Terry stops, slightly winded and squinting to block the slanting sunlight. He smiles.

"This is where I grew up," Terry says, pointing to the 25-foot plot of land where most of his family lived in two houses bulldozed many years ago.

"Never had money, really. We grew up..."
Continued from previous page

stretching macaroni and cheese when you could, stuff like that, like everyone else up here," says Terry, speaking softly.

Some of Terry's ancestors moved to the neighborhood in the 1870s, escaping the Irish Potato Famine that drove many families seeking work and shelter to America.

His mother, Sandy, worked as a secretary, and his grandfather started the PHCA and worked as a fireman for 25 years. But because his mother suffered perpetual health problems, which often left her hospitalized, Terry relied on the people around him, family members and neighbors, to raise him.

"I grew up in my grandfather's house. My great-grandfather's house was behind. The Domoleski's house was here, another four story... We had a little Irish compound," says Terry. "I had the advantage of being raised by great-grandparents, my grandparents and the neighbors. So I was a Polish Hill rehab project."

Across the street from his old homestead stands a red-brick, two-story building, formerly a butcher's shop on the first floor and hair salon on the second. Next door, what used to be a candy shop: the place Terry frequented as a boy, spending the money he earned delivering goods. The old ladies who lived on Paulowna would call up to the house, to his grandmother, to have him go down to Jerry's and pick up their orders.

"So, I would go here, and I would go down to Jerry's and, for a quarter a bag, 50 cents a bag. I would run all over the Hill and deliver groceries."

Paulowna, like other streets in Polish Hill, undulates, a wavelike gauntlet of abandoned houses and old buildings meant to accommodate large, immigrant families of 13 or 14 children or family members. With the post-World War II exodus to the suburbs and, later, the decline of the mills, those houses offered little hope for younger generations, and potential residents. When the Polish Hill census was taken in 1999, 45 percent of the population was 65 or over—dimming prospects that the neighborhood could ever reverse its decline.

The newest census offers more hope, with the biggest population (33 percent) between the ages of 34 and 55. For Terry, though, redemption lies in a willingness to invest in Polish Hill and its distinctive quality; it's greatest selling point against larger sections that have become trendy and have more support from the city, such as Lawrenceville and Bloomfield.

"I think our future is going to be more home ownership," says Terry. "That's going to be the trick, is that if we have local businesses unique to Polish Hill's character, and hopefully it would be a draw from other neighborhoods."

Terry begins the climb toward Herron Ave., waving occasionally at more church goers on their way back from Mass and other residents absorbing the sunny March afternoon.

On weekdays, Terry works for Equiparts, an international commercial industrial plumbing warehouse in Sharpsburg where he has worked since 1991 and now helps to run. After his shift ends at 5 p.m., Terry normally heads to the PHCA and then home.

Residents welcome his enthusiasm, a sign of the potential future. He has tried to organize an "adopt a street" program, in which residents would be responsible for cleaning and maintaining particular roads. And he has held his ear to the streets and listened to what residents want.

"Our survey really came back heavy and said that people want a general store, and they want a restaurant and a coffee shop," says Terry. "Just giving a damn makes a difference."

Terry turns onto Thirtieth Street and eventually loops back onto Brereton, pointing out various neighborhood gems, such as the West Penn Recreation Center and the industrial headquarters for Pepper Sunglasses. Passing the church and crossing Brereton, Terry heads for Dobson, which leads home.

"Polish Hill is a place you stay. There are fancier neighborhoods, there's bigger houses. But the people I work with, that live in O'Hare and Fox Chapel, they paid more in property tax in one year than I paid for my whole house, and they don't even know their neighbors' names. And I might know my neighbors' names, their father, their grandfather, and the people who owned the house before them."

"I've traveled all across the country to work...I've always said, there is something about the earth here. I'll never leave," says Terry. "This is home."
THE HEART OF POLISH HILL

A look into the faces and families that give life to this Pittsburgh neighborhood

By Kelly Horein

Two young boys play with pots and pans in their elderly neighbor's kitchen. A father takes his toddlers to ride their bicycles in a graffiti-covered park. A church congregation oohs and aahs over twin infants after their baptism in the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church.

These are the stories of the families of Polish Hill.

Only 5.4 percent of the area's population is composed of 10 to 14-year-olds, according to Polish Hill's last official census in 2000. Even less of the population is made up of five to nine year olds (4.8 percent) and children less than five years old (4.2 percent).

So what's it like for this tiny population of tiny people to grow up in Polish Hill? Is a region currently trying to regain its footing the best place to raise a family?

City living

Darryl Maalgard first moved to Polish Hill 20 years ago as a student at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh.

"I was 18 and thought I would only be [in Polish Hill] for two to three years," he says. "I saw all these 40-year-olds who lived there and thought, 'Oh man, they're not going anywhere.'"

Now, Maalgard himself is a 40-year-old resident of Polish Hill.

He lives in Polish Hill with his Hungarian wife Jophie and two sons, Zane and Xavier, who are three and two years old, respectively.

And while Maalgard says he likes the neighborhood and has "amazingly built a tight-knit community," he admits he plans on moving his family to the suburbs in a few years.

"I'd like to have a yard," Maalgard says. "And [Polish Hill] is still a little backwards: there's no grocery, convenience store or laundry."

Maalgard also worries about the dangerous elements of city living, such as heavy traffic. The houses are built on top of each other and are located right on the street, he explains.

"Yesterday, I stepped outside to go to my car, and my son followed me out when I wasn't looking," Maalgard says. "That's truly one of my worst fears."

But Maalgard says, he would probably stick around Polish Hill for a few more years if certain problems were fixed.

Continued on the next page
"Someone needs to keep a handle on the graffiti in the playgrounds so kids are not exposed to it," he says.

"It's sad, too, to see all of the broken bottles and condoms lying around."

Maalgard has some fond memories of the area, including trick-or-treating with some of the neighboring families.

"I'd be happy to stay [in Polish Hill] with my kids for four to five more years [if there isn't] a threat to the livelihood of my kids or to myself," he says.

"Good location, affordable housing, nice people"

"It had a lot to do with schools," says Richard Miller of his decision to move out of Polish Hill in 1986.

By that time, Miller and his wife had lived in Polish Hill for 10 years after turning an old butcher shop on Dobson Street into an apartment building.

Once his twins Alexis and Michael turned five, however, he and his wife began thinking about where their children would attend school.

School buses pass through the area and stop across from the Polish Hill Civic Association where Miller used to take the twins to play bingo.

The only school in the area, the Immaculate Heart of Mary School, has been closed for many years.

"We were looking at magnet schools, but having twins, our choices were limited," Miller says. He and his wife wanted Alexis and Michael to attend the same school.

When Miller's aunt asked if he would be interested in buying her Mount Lebanon home down the street from an elementary school, Miller and his family decided to leave Polish Hill.

Years later when Alexis began attending the University of Pittsburgh, she moved back into the apartment Miller had renovated.

She continues to live there today with her twin brother Michael.

"They're both back in Polish Hill for some of the same reasons we were first attracted to the neighborhood: good location, affordable housing, nice people," Miller says.
storefronts so that you could send the kid up the street to get the bottle of vanilla you need for the frosting as opposed to waiting for the one bus that stops at Dobson [Street] to take you to Bloomfield,” Benford says.

Benford sees the number of abandoned and run-down properties in the neighborhood as another concern but admits that her own home, which needs “much work,” is part of the problem.

And while it looks like Donovan will attend nearby Woolslayer when old enough to attend school, Benford and her husband have run into some trouble finding a desirable daycare facility. Options are limited, according to Benford, and the current facility she and her husband use costs more than their mortgage every month.

“That being said, we do like Polish Hill, and I do see some positive improvements happening,” Benford says.

**Comfortable and family-oriented**

Like Miller, Jeff Steigerwalt decided to move out of Polish Hill 16 years ago because of school-related issues.

He and his wife sent their sons, Justin, now 26, and Todd, now 22, to a private school farther away from the neighborhood.

“We loved Polish Hill, and we still know many people there,” he continues. “I’m assuming it’s still the same comfortable, family-oriented neighborhood it was before we moved.”

He and his sons used to walk to the playground several days a week, Steigerwalt says. Today there is also a nearby sports field, open swimming pool and recreation center.

And after dinner each night, Steigerwalt and his kids would visit their neighbors, whom he describes as “grandmothers.”

“They were both well into their 70s,” he says. “So we’d just sit and talk with them.”

If Justin and Todd began to misbehave in the women’s homes, the “grandmothers” would both laugh and refuse to scold the boys, Steigerwalt remembers.

“We’d still be [in Polish Hill] if the school thing had worked out,” Steigerwalt says.

**“Staying here is a big question”**

Writer Suzanne Pace and her husband, photographer Tim Kaulen, have traveled all over the world, and have recently begun to lug a few extra pounds along with them, thanks to their 8-month-old daughter.

“Traveling [in Thailand and Cambodia] with Sophia was very interesting,” Kaulen says. “While carrying her in our backpack, we were very spectacle-like. She drew more attention than I have ever experienced.”

The couple publishes details from their trips and travel advice in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.*

So how does this worldly couple like living in Polish Hill?

Kaulen says he thinks Polish Hill is a good area, even though the past few years have been “the quietest in terms of kids playing in the streets and young family-based lifestyles.”

He adds he wishes he knew more families with children in the area.

And while Kaulen says he and his wife like living in Polish Hill because of its affordability and convenient central location, he admits he would like to see a few staples in the business district. He’s also not thrilled with the “trace of rough and tumble drug culture in the area.”

“[The neighborhood] is not exactly ideal,” he continues. “But certainly not as threatening as a typical urban neighborhood.”

“Staying here is a big question,” he says.

Kaulen’s sentiments sum up the feelings of many Polish Hill families.

“Much as I’m rooting for Polish Hill, I’m a bit torn about [moving or staying],” Benford says. She adds if certain elements in the neighborhood are addressed, she and her family may be more likely to stay in the area.

“It may be that the years we spend [in Polish Hill] turn into more years as the neighborhood and our own home improve,” Benford says.
A LEAKING "VESSEL OF PRIDE"

As business declines, ethnicity is almost forgotten at the Young Men's Polish American Association

By Maddy Lauria

Members may need to pay a $30 fee and have a key to enter, but that's pretty much the only way the Young Men's Polish American Association at the top of Polish Hill stays open. With cheap prices and aging patrons, business isn't exactly booming for the volunteer bartenders.

"It's just dying," YMPAA board member Jim Stawski says.

YMPAA -- pronounce it 'YUMPA,' everyone else does -- used to have an annual picnic, a Christmas party and a Halloween party for the children of the neighborhood, while annually sponsoring and coaching sports teams.

But since the school closed down, there hasn't been much of a response to YMPAA's efforts to help keep neighbors being neighborly. Last year was the first year they did not have the picnic.

"We don't have any functions anymore because nobody ever shows up," Stawski says.

"Old members die away," he explains, "and the younger members move away." YMPAA seems to be a representation of the state of the declining rate of business that Polish Hill faces.

Henry Kwiatek, a former president of YMPAA, notices the differences of the club compared to its "heyday." Known as Jake to the locals, the 91-year-old Pittsburgh native became a member of YMPAA in 1944 when he returned from military service.

"It's not like it used to be," Kwiatek says. "You don't have the Polish people like you used to."

Although Kwiatek noted the increased level of diversity in his Polish hometown, he only sees a small problem with it. He feels that the generations are just different... not as friendly and not as sociable.

Without the Polish tradition defining YMPAA, the ethnicity that once characterized the club has dis-

Photo courtesy Terry Doloughty
sipated. The membership requirement is all that sets YMPAA apart from the other bars in Polish Hill now, Kwiatek says, but he remembers when YMPAA was a vessel of ethnic pride for its members and neighbors.

“When the old timers got together, they spoke Polish,” Kwiatek says. They would also have kielbasa cookouts and enjoy the buttery taste of pierogi seasoned with Polish pizzazz.

Before the old timers gathered at YMPAA for parties, tournaments and camaraderie, the building at the top of Herron Avenue was a church. In 1891, the property was established as the 33rd Street United Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh. Between 1909 and 1910, it switched ownership and became the Polish Singing Society of Pittsburgh. Kwiatek doesn’t remember back that far, he says.

He could reminisce about the weekly or monthly pigeon races his father and older YMPAA members held. They would take their best pigeons 100 miles away, let them loose, time them and then clock the pigeons’ return.

“They were good drinkers, too,” he says.

The YMPAA building that sits at the corner of Herron Avenue and Paulowna Street still echoes an older generation. Woodcarvings of flowers adorn the wall behind the bar of the male-oriented club. In the middle of the elaborate design is a round carving stating the initial organization of the club: May 1, 1924. Beneath the carvings is an array of whiskies and other liquors—all marked with prices—and a cooler full of beer.

The prices are low—$2 for a Yuengling—and Stawski says YMPAA is doing its best to keep them low. Although YMPAA doesn’t receive any type of funding other than membership dues and general volunteerism, Stawski says they somehow manage.

“We just hope that nothing major breaks down,” he says.

Kwiatek remembers when beers were a dime each and the most he paid for a shot was a quarter, though his drinking days are now over.

“I stay home now,” he says.

Even though he is still a member of YMPAA, he says he has not frequented the club in about nine years because of complications with emphysema. When he found out that the club wasn’t able to have the annual picnic because of the lack of response, he didn’t seem very surprised.

“You don’t have people like you had before,” Kwiatek says, explaining that the old members seemed to be more sociable and more willing to get involved with the club and the community. “It was the older people that really took care of this hill.”

A few patrons still diligently go to the bar, and some members volunteer to serve them, Stawski says. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays are generally the busiest days for YMPAA, he says, but 50 patrons is the maximum that Stawski says he’s seen lately.

At the center of the dimly lit club, a regulation-size billiard table keeps the regulars amused. There also is a pinball machine, a jukebox, darts, gaming machines and one of the cheapest cigarette machines in the city.

A 61-inch flat screen television diligently tuned to sports in the true Pittsburgh fashion is one of YMPAA’s last investments. With the poor state of the economy, business decreases and the drink tax, Stawski says that the TV, which is not even a year old yet, was a necessary expenditure. It’s necessary for competition, he explains.

YMPAA isn’t completely up-to-date, though. As Stawski answers one of the few phone calls on a Monday afternoon, he shoots a quick dismissal to a radio station telemarketer. “We don’t even have a radio in here,” he replies. “Go play the juke box,” he says with a sarcastic giggle after he hangs up the phone. His girlfriend, who sits at the bar sipping a beer, laughs as well.

Although women cannot become members of YMPAA, wives and girlfriends are always invited to shoot pool or just drink at the bar.

“We’ve got to still have that male chauvinism in us,” Stawski says as he shoots a coy smile at his girlfriend seated at the bar across from him.

YMPAA members do what they can to keep the club open as a part of Polish Hill’s lingering business dilemma. But with only three bars, YMPAA and a part-time funeral home in operation, Stawski doesn’t seem too hopeful.

“Once we get one business started, it might be a jumpstart,” he said. “But I doubt if I’ll ever see it in my lifetime.”
I'm sorry girls, but the facts all point to the same sad conclusion: Guys have it easier than we do. As if guys aren't lucky enough to forego the "joy" of childbearing, dodge most double-standards, and have better-paying jobs, it also costs less to be a boy.

It wasn't until I moved in with a guy friend that I realized the lack of time and money the opposite sex puts into looking presentable.

Really, a guy can run on basics forever. Those one pair of $250 straight leg Diesel Jeans go with his favorite polos, hoodies, and tees and can be paired with any boots, dress shoes, or sneakers he can imagine. Plus, men's denim is normally so inherently simple, a guy could probably wear the same jeans three days in a row and no one would notice. In fact, I know guys who have done it and prior to their confession, I was completely oblivious.

For better or worse, women's denim is less about versatility and more about style. In addition to the basic straight leg and boot cuts, women chose from trousers, skinny, wide leg, flared, cigarette, cropped, boyfriend cut, and relaxed jeans. Nonetheless, women's jeans are pricey and tend to be more expensive the more elaborate the style. J Brand, the jean label responsible for dressing many celebutants, sells it's most basic cut — the low rise straight leg jean — for $158, but tickets a high-rise wide leg at $238.

Don't let the girls in sweatpants fool you, though:
Girls put great effort and money into their appearance even when sporting that “just rolled out of bed” look. Those Victoria Secret Pink sweatpants seen on nearly every behind on campus go for anywhere between $34 and $48. Uggs, love them or hate them, cost $120 for the most basic pair.

When it comes to women and their shoes, nothing is basic. A girl can never, and I mean never, have enough pairs of shoes. I know girls with four different pairs of what are considered basic black pumps. Each pair has an attitude, a personality, and a message that is unique. To a guy, I’m sure that sounds absurd, but women will pay anywhere from $24 for a ballet flat from Target to $960 on pair of purple sparkly Christian Louboutin pumps.

And it doesn’t end there.

Women carelessly spend millions of dollars every year on the numerous keratinous filaments growing from their body. At MCN Salon, a prestigious salon in the Strip District, a women’s haircut can cost up to $10 more than a man’s. That’s just the cut. Throw in $20 for a shampoo and style service, $75 for a highlight treatment, $20 for eye brow waxing, $60 for a manicure and pedicure, $24 for a bottle of the newest styling crème, and a trip to the salon can cost nearly $300.

Not to mention all the health and beauty products already overflowing in a woman’s medicine cabinet and towel closet. Special shampoos, conditioners, and styling products, hairdryers, straighteners, curling irons, nail care products, lotions, perfumes and make-up spill out of the closet in my hallway every time I open the door.

But really, it’s all in good fun. A guy will never understand the concept of retail therapy. They will never feel the power in putting on a lipstick red stiletto or the confidence hiding in the threads of a little black dress. And let’s face it: they’ll never be as glamorous.

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**Road Rage in the Spiritan Tradition**

A plastic Jesus on the dashboard could benefit these rush-hour drivers, says Christina Smith

In the early morning hours of a Monday morning, students, teachers and workers are trying to make it to campus. Sleep-deprived drivers dreading the upcoming week pile into the Armstrong tunnels, making their way onto Forbes Avenue while balancing cell phones in one hand and coffee in the other. It’s nearly impossible for commuters to travel the short distance across the 10th Street Bridge and through the tunnels in less than twenty minutes, so patience and faith are vital to sanity.

With horns and hollers behind me, I finally make my way to the traffic light at the end of the tunnel, my ticket to freedom from the dimly lit, two-lane passageway out of hell. Three stopping markers all meet at the end of this tunnel for drivers to turn left, bear right, or make a sharp right out of the tunnel.

It is common knowledge to the everyday commuter that the center lane indicates the “bear right turn” out of the tunnel. Yet, as the light changes green and I make my way onto the traffic heavy Forbes Avenue, I am near run off the road by a navy blue Toyota. The car is attempting to cross lanes from the far left to the far right.

With no recognition of the

*Continued on page 53*
DEAD BEAT PRINCE

Kelly Horein wonders: are gallant gentlemen long gone?

Once upon a time, a princess gazed longingly out of her castle window.
She was waiting in breathless anticipation for her gallant white knight to ride up on his noble steed and sweep her off her feet — so she could, of course, live happily ever after.

Much to the princess’ dismay, however, her gallant knight arrived in a battered ‘88 station wagon and sat honking in her driveway until she came out of her castle to meet him.

Her knight — who neglected to open the car door for her — instead crooned, “Hey, baby,” from the driver’s seat while continuing to puff on his cigarette.

The princess tried not to gawk at her knight’s armor (a faded and ripped Tenacious D T-shirt paired with muddy jeans) as she carefully lifted her dress to climb over the mound of empty food containers and coffee cups piled in the front seat.

The princess sat shaking her head in bewilderment: this was one knight she seriously wished would turn into a frog.

Whatever happened to fairytale endings? In a world of random hookups and casual dating, has chivalry been left by the wayside?

Or have the rules of dating merely changed with the times?

Dr. Elizabeth Lindsey, an interpersonal communication specialist at New Mexico State University, writes that dating today is a much less formal, ritualized process than in the past.

“Dating no longer has to involve the process of boy-asks-girl-out, he picks her up at her house, they go out for dinner and a movie, and they exchange a first kiss on the girl’s doorstep,” according to Lindsey.

In fact, many relationships — especially among college-aged young adults — follow a much different pattern.

Samantha Barton, a junior mathematics major at Gettysburg College, met her boyfriend in a pretty unconventional way, but one that’s starting to become part of today’s dating trend.

It was more like boy-meets-girl-at-party, boy-and-girl-get-drunk, boy-and-girl-make-out-in-the-corner, boy-thinks-to-ask-girl-what-her-name-is, and — only then — boy-and-girl-begin-dating, she says.

The roles of women and men in dating scenarios have also evolved since the days of courtship and petticoats.

Today, it’s more acceptable for women to ask men out. And often, men are not expected to pay for everything; the couple will either “go Dutch” or trade-off paying for different outings.

University of Pittsburgh Sophomore Hannah George tells of one dark Valentine’s Day she spent with her boyfriend — ordering Chinese food and watching a Pittsburgh Penguins ice hockey game on TV.

Though Hannah was a little upset about the lack of flowers and candy, she rationalizes that it wasn’t completely her boyfriend’s fault. “We had already talked about it and
agreed we weren’t going to buy each other big gifts or do anything special because we were short on funds,” she says.

The tenets of chivalry seem to have revolutionized as well, according to Engage.com, a popular online dating site. Only 76 percent of women surveyed think the man should hold the door for the woman on a first date.

“Many guys don’t know how a woman will perceive chivalry these days,” Lindsey writes. “They may fear that it will be regarded as insulting [or] non-p.c. by a woman, rather than regarded as gentlemanly.”

Is the increasing push for women’s rights and equality responsible for the change in dating style? And is this why many men no longer feel the need to perform acts of chivalry like flower-buying or door-holding?

It’s still important to act thoughtfully, but the days of “lassoing the moon” for the girl may be over

Before women begin lamenting the entire institution of dating or throwing up their hands at men’s naivety, there are a few easy solutions.

First, make sure your significant other understands whether or not you appreciate traditional acts of chivalry. Either explain to him or clearly demonstrate your preference.

Also, chivalry is out and politeness is in, according to online dating resource, Datelinedating.com. In other words, it’s still important to act thoughtfully and respectfully, but the days of “lassoing the moon” for the girl may be over.

And keeping an open mind is an important principle to remember. Times are changing, and it’s necessary to grow and evolve right along with them.

After all, there’s more than one way to live happily ever after.

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traffic violation just committed, the youthful driver stares directly at me while screaming four letter obscenities through the rosary dangling from his rear view mirror. His temporary insanity nearly causes another accident. The glare burns right through my skin as I continue to make my way to class promptly.

“Have a nice day,” I mouth back, flashing my brightest smile.

I make the right turn into Duquesne’s parking garage on Forbes Avenue and momentarily stop to pull a ticket from the booth. As the parking arm lifts to allow entry, I notice the navy blue Toyota driving up behind me. With the rosary still swaying back and forth from his reckless driving, the young man sips his coffee angrily. Maybe two cups were needed this morning instead of one.

After traveling to the top of the parking garage, I finally find a few spaces located outside in the snow. I shift my Cavalier into park and gather my school bag, cell phone and gloves to brace the cold outside and haul ass to my class in College Hall. As I lock my car door from the outside, the little Toyota whips into the parking space to my left, nearly running me over yet again. I stop patiently and wait for the driver to exit his car.

“Bad day?” I ask.

The disheveled young man in a red Duquesne hoodie and matching sweatpants looks up at me while closing the driver’s side door. His eyes search my face and immediately the car to his right, my little Cavalier.

Upon acknowledgment of his target he nervously states, “Um, no,” as his cheeks begin to redden. It appears as though the gold cross hanging from his neck is strangling his throat as he gasps for words. “I’m just running late,” he adds and scurries past me with books and coffee in hand.

“Well so is everyone else in that God-forsaken tunnel,” I yell.

The devilish red-clad figure storms off with not even a glance back. It is only 8 a.m. and I have already used the Lord’s name in vain.

Thank God I go to a Catholic university where I can pray for forgiveness in front of the crucifixes in every classroom.
HIDDEN IN
PLAIN SIGHT

Life is often right in front of your eyes, says Mike Holovak

After nearly three years of college life, I finally noticed it. Well, actually, I noticed that I hadn’t noticed anything.

After roughly 500 days of classes, papers, notes and computer screen-induced migraines, it finally dawned on me that I rarely strayed away from my daily routine: get up, shower, go to class, come back, work, watch TV, and go to sleep. Instead of bright-eyed and bushy-tailed I was bleary-eyed and Busch-ailed.

Hyperbole aside, I was tired and stuck. Sure, I took the occasional side trip to an off-campus haunt or an on-campus attraction, but the thought that I hardly knew the campus adjacent to the liberal arts building nagged at me. I became so frustrated with my lack of activity that, at the first sight of nice weather, I jumped at the chance to take a real look around campus for the first time since I was a freshman. I did it for the sake of knowledge, my observation skills, and, mostly, my sanity.

First on my agenda was the Rangos School of Health Sciences. Since it is right next to my apartment in Brottier Hall, it was the obvious place to start. Rangos looks like an uninteresting red-bricked building on the outside, so I assumed it would be another ordinary building with side stairwells filled with lines of classrooms. Not so.

The inside is surprising: a relatively open-air lobby laced with steps that cross the levels of the building. Rangos houses group therapy and rehabilitation, and classes were visible through large glass windows. In fact, some of the students are injured athletes, and therefore patients themselves. It was refreshing to see another active learning environment in action that involved a student-to-student interaction that was also real job experience.

Next on my list was Bayer Hall. Aesthetically speaking, Bayer is my favorite building on campus because of its façade of reflective one-way windows in front of the Academic Walk fountain. On the inside, the building looked like what any other structure at a sizable university should — large lecture halls adorned with hundreds of seats.

But what surprised me the most was the second floor, which featured a rock collection that would make a geologist giddy. Inside of four glass cases were minerals, fossils and igneous rocks, complete with description and scientific classifications. Included were incredibly complex descriptions like “Resinous-Copalite mineral” from the Philippine Islands or “orange-yellow Gummit with Uranophane near Grafton center.” I could surely impress someone by telling them about Periarchus lyelli, otherwise known as a sea dollar. Watch out, ladies.

With my ego sufficiently swelled, I decided it was time to take on the largest building on campus, the Richard King Mellon Hall of Sciences. There, I marveled at the natural history-style atmosphere: skeletons of cats, monkeys and alligators; jars of numerous flora and fauna, both living and dead; and skulls of human predecessors like Homo Habilius and Neanderthals.

Science labs were lined with several refrigerators that held scientific materials and tissue samples, and I couldn’t help but crack a mischievous grin at the practical joke possibilities of one conspicuously marked “FOOD ONLY.”

It occurred to me then that my search had suddenly become a quest for knowledge. As an enthusiast of learning (see: nerd), the display reminded me of why I enjoyed this: because it can be fun. After all, when it comes down to any task worth doing, even taking a walk, it’s important to remind yourself about why you do it.
Chanae Vernon, like her predecessors on MTV's My Super Sweet 16, loves one thing in life: money. Her closet is filled with high-end designer bags, her home is a multimillion dollar waterfront estate in a pleasant suburban community. She is chauffeured around in both a Cadillac Escalade and Range Rover, and she admits that when she shops price is not an issue. Spoiled and definitely a daddy's girl, Chanae Vernon lives a life of excess and luxury. She travels on her father's private jet, and, rather than receiving the scooter she requested for her birthday, she got four.

The difference between Chanae and the other "princesses" on the MTV show is that her father is a minister in one of the most underprivileged communities in the state of Ohio. His fortune was made on the minimum wages of his young, low-income congregation.

Renting out the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame was only the beginning for this family. A local and national religious celebrity, R.A. Vernon has become THE rock star minister. Flashy, outspoken, and charismatic, Vernon entertains audiences as if he were a celebrity. Vernon tackles topics, like sex and drugs, other ministers avoid.

It is not uncommon to find Vernon roaming the isles and running back and forth across the large platform stage ranting about "baby mamma drama."

It is easy to become enthralled with the minister's show. Often, distracted by his performance, Vernon has to remind audiences to return to their bibles, rather than allowing them to stare blankly at him. His out-of-the-box behavior and showmanship eventually led to his sermons being picked up and aired nationally on Christian cable stations.

Soon after, Vernon began to morph from rock star minister to Hollywood star. Rather than drive the twenty minutes between services, helicopters were leased to transport the minister from the various church locations within the city. In addition, members were required to provide W2 forms in order to ensure they are donating 10 percent of their pay to church each week.

These checks are necessary, however, to fund the many business ventures Vernon has built, like a community center, bookstore, daycare facility, hair salon, barbershop, and soul food restaurant. As CEO of these businesses Vernon transitioned from minister to businessman. More recently, Vernon has arranged a contract with a publishing company which will add "author" to his growing corporate portfolio.

The Vernon family is no stranger to controversy. In fact, controversy has led to Vernon's ever growing success as a minister. Approximately five years ago, "THE WORD" Church was a group of 150 members who met at in a high school auditorium to praise God. Today, in a new state-of-the-art stadium sized facility, the church welcomes more than 12,000 visitors and members weekly. His growing empire fits squarely into the "mega church" trend that has swept America.

The result? Ministers are being replaced in favor of executives and faith is mass marketed and sold to audiences worldwide. Congregations have become target audiences, and religion a commodity to sell.

The irony: religion is free. Therefore access to it should be free as well. Members of a church should not be treated like cattle to be moved in and out of services.

Church committees and ministers should know members on the sick list. No one should be just another number or paycheck. Ministers of mega churches should focus on bringing souls to God rather than landing a multimillion dollar movie and publishing deals. They should practice humility so that we, as followers, may understand.

Maybe someone should remind the Vernon's of this verse at his week's Bible study.
INNOCENCE LOST

A whistful childhood neighborhood becomes victim to violence and surrenders its past, says Brian Tierney

A successful evening at McKenna's Pub relies on two simple factors: 80-cent drafts of Pabst Blue Ribbon, and a gaggle of drunkards howling their best rendition of The Band's "The Weight." Sometimes, in the later hours, Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" resounds from the jukebox, and patrons teeter on their stools like tops.

For the most part, it's a classic corner bar in a classic city area, northeast Philadelphia, affectionately known as its own little "city of neighborhoods."

But the trick these days is getting there in one piece.

In the past two or three years, the Philadelphia of my childhood has looked a lot less like a "city of brotherly love," where I could grab a coke and a delectable cheesesteak (always onions and Cheese Wiz), and a lot more like something out of Escape from New York.

Since 2000, Philadelphia has experienced at least 300 murders every year. Last year, that number reached 392, only 102 murders less than New York City, a metropolis with a population nearly eight times as large. Philadelphia's 2004 murder rate of 22.4 per 100,000 residents is the highest of the nation's 10 largest cities and ranks third among the 25 largest cities, trailing only the illustrious Baltimore and Detroit.

And despite the fact that murder rates have actually dropped by 34 percent in the city between 1990 and 2004, Philadelphia still rides the caboose when compared to other cities notorious for homicides and crime rates, like New York, which has experienced a 78 percent decline in homicides in that same period.

Having matured in the peaceful section of the city for most of my life, I never worried much about late nights, roaming the streets eager for a little trouble and a lot of mischief; nights at the local pool hall, cleverly named Billiards; nights near the river, sneaking cigarettes at low tide.

Levels of safety could be broken down by region. West Philadelphia meant trouble. North Philadelphia meant possible mugging, or worse. But the northeast — the northeast was always relatively safe.

Now, the infamous Philadelphia violence marches into my neighborhood, adding the pop of gun barrels to the city's general drone.

So, when my best friend called me for our annual Thanksgiving-break carousing and mentioned McKenna's as a potential rendezvous point, my mom threw the switch and let the sirens yelp. She had been hearing, like many of us, clichés about the denigration of our neighborhoods, rumors that do nothing but imbue a general sense of discomfort.

One could ask Damien Holloway, 27, victim number 218 on Philadelphia's 2007 homicide list, if he hadn't been shot and killed around the corner from McKenna's on Tulip Street last summer. Or even 15-year-old Timothy Clark; he died moments before on the same street.

Maybe it was just a case of wrong place at the wrong time. Maybe it was the inevitable misfortune born from a muggy July 13 — a Friday of all days. Or maybe it's that there are too many people with too many guns who are too willing to use them. After all, 80 percent of all homicides in Philadelphia were gun-related in 2007.

Whatever the reason, getting to McKenna's, a northeast neighborhood bar that revels in the shadows that keep it hidden, requires a lantern and your own personal Virgil. And, in a larger sense, negotiating the urban, post-midnight Philadelphia requires something a little less literary: a Kevlar vest.
Off the Bluff is a student-produced semi-annual magazine published by the Society of Professional Journalists and the Department of Journalism and Multimedia Arts. Modus, the Multimedia club, heads up design and production.

Off the Bluff was founded as a newsprint tabloid in 2001; this is the fourth issue to appear in magazine form. Its purpose is to showcase the best student journalism produced in JMA classes. While most campus-focused student articles appear in The Duquesne Duke newspaper, Off the Bluff showcases those stories that fall beyond the purview of the student paper, stories that explore the city, its neighborhoods and its people.

The Pittsburgh Neighborhoods Project that focuses on Polish Hill in this issue commenced in 2006 and focused on the Uptown neighborhood that is home to Duquesne University. Students have already written most of the stories that will focus on the South Side in the next edition of Off the Bluff.

A good many people make this magazine possible. Modus adviser Prof. Jim Vota has challenged his multimedia students to push the boundaries of design. JMA Chair Dr. John Shepherd has provided encouragement and financial support. Dr. Evan Stoddard has generously shared his knowledge of the city with students working on the Neighborhoods Project and Dean Albert Labriola has enthusiastically supported this and other efforts of JMA students to practice their craft and showcase their labor.

Students in Professor Maggie Patterson's courses have contributed stories and their editing talents to past editions. Students in Prof. Dennis Woytek's photojournalism classes have contributed photographs. And many, many students have volunteered their time and talents as photographers and designers.

JMA graduate student Emily Leone served as Editor for this issue of Off the Bluff. Emily, who will graduate in December, is also the Editor of The Duquesne Duke. Emily's skill and work ethic guided this issue – which I consider the best yet – to fruition. She set and made deadlines. She asked for advice when she needed it but was self-directed and took initiative to anticipate and solve problems. And she did all of this while serving as editor of the Duke, completing an internship, working a job to support herself and excelling in her coursework. She was a pleasure to work with – a real pro.

In upcoming semesters, thanks to the technological and creative talents of our students and faculty, Off the Bluff will expand into a true multi-platform editorial product, with a presence in print and on the Web. At the moment, the media business labors under dark clouds, but the talent and ambition of our JMA students tell me it has a bright future.

—Dr. Mike Dillon
Off the Bluff SPJ Advisor