Pedaling for ecology, health
by Jenna O’Brien

Biking Pittsburgh
Trail network expands
by Brittany Hallam

Bicycling has been steadily growing in national popularity for years, and Pittsburgh is doing its part to be a leader in this new transportation trend. As more and more people take up cycling, Pittsburgh environmentalists have become more motivated than ever to preserve and expand the city’s bike trails. If the trend continues, it could help to drastically improve the city’s air quality, and even its environment as a whole.

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy attempts to create new bike trails around the city and preserve the ones that already exist, which are located mainly along the city’s many rivers. In doing so, the group helps Pittsburgh make a name for itself in the age of “green living.”

Jody Wendt, 42, of the Beltline area, did not consider herself an athletic person until she discovered the bike trails.

“When I got on a bike for the first time this summer, I could’ve never imagined the impact it was about to have on my life,” Wendt said.

But she spent the entire summer cycling around the city with friends, exploring the various trails she never knew existed. Before she knew it, she had unintentionally lost the 50 pounds she has been struggling to lose all the time when you bike?”

Who wants to wait on a bus... when you can bike?
-Jordan Bellotti, Point Park student

Last April, Pittsburgh was chosen as one of the best “biking bicycle scenes” by GOOD Magazine. In recent years, many areas have been designated by the city and the bus company started 200 new bike racks, according to Bike Pittsburgh, a nonprofit bicycle advocacy group with more than 900 members. Many of the bike racks feature a unique “Three River” design, which is symbolized by a circle with the three “rivers” running through it. Duquesne University student and bicyclist Dean Catania thinks the city’s commitment to promoting bicycling is “great.”

“Pittsburgh cyclists are not limited to the trails; Pittsburgh is becoming an increasingly bicyclist-friendly community. Recently, a handful of out-of-town entrepreneurs surveyed the city looking for potential locations for bicycle-oriented businesses, such as restaurants, cafes and bike shops. Many of the popular locations include the North Shore, the Station Square Trail, the South Side Trail and the Jail Trail, which passes by the Allegheny County Jail on Second Avenue, a few blocks from Duquesne University’s campus.”

Katie Manjorovic, a 22-year-old Pittsburgh native studying at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio, was surprised when she returned to Pittsburgh following a year abroad in Europe.

“While I was studying overseas, the drastic increase in cyclists in the European nations blew my mind,” Manjorovic said. “I could not believe the contrast to life in Pittsburgh where it seemed there was no one who did not own a car.”

The only thing more shocking to Katie was when she returned home this past summer to find that Pittsburgh had undergone what she referred to as its “European transformation.”

I think it’s a small (mined) world
by Mike Dillon

“Given all the hustle and bustle that cover Pittsburgh, it’s easy to forget that the city is a great place to bike.”

 accord to Bike Pittsburgh, a nonprofit bicycle advocacy group with more than 900 members. Many of the bike racks feature a unique “Three River” design, which is symbolized by a circle with the three “rivers” running through it. Duquesne University student and bicyclist Dean Catania thinks the city’s commitment to promoting bicycling is “great.”

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Job search blues
It's a who-you-know, not a what-you-know world
by Marissa Rosenbaum

A college student looks forward to receiving their cap and gown, a common question arises: “What are you going to do next?” And while some students add the final touches to their résumé and prepare to enter the market, others already have jobs lined up.

For some students, it’s not about having impressive résumés or previous experience, to them, their future depends on their answer to another question: “Who do you know?”

After filling my schedule with more than enough credits to graduate and extracurricular activities that would put the Energizer Bunny out of business, I cringe whenever a classmate smiles and answers, “I know someone.”

And it’s even worse when I need to say, “I don’t know anyone.”

That day came last year during my search for a summer internship. After checking my ideal publication’s website for days, there was still no opportunity to apply. I had been rejected the year before, so I was eager to break in with my new and improved résumé. Assuming I missed the application deadline since it was already March, I sent my résumé and clips via mail to the only mailing address I could find: the president of the publication.

Soon, I received a call for a telephone interview. My hard work had finally paid off. I looked over some common interview questions online before the day of the call, but I wasn’t prepared for the first question I heard.

“So, how do you know the [company] president?” the interviewer asked.

After a surprised pause, I answered: “I don’t.”

Then there was an awkward silence. I was told I was very “tenacious” and that I would receive a call. But I never did.

I guess tenacity only goes so far. Maybe I wasn’t the most “tenacious” and that I would receive a call. But I never did.

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Off the Bluff — possible.

Dear Reader,

In any Pittsburgh neighborhood, stories eagerly reveal themselves to you as soon as you step foot on its streets and begin walking. A narrative with a deeply engraved past, with struggles, growth and distinct characters, rises like a cloud of dirt with each step you take, each building and resident you pass.

The mission of Off the Bluff is to throw you, the reader, into a particular neighborhood and its distinct culture — to allow you to wander back alleyways, open the doors of the buildings that catch your eye and converse with passersby, the residents who know their slice of the city best.

The magazine’s other mission is to get the Duquesne students to wander down from their comfortable Bluff and explore the complexities of a diverse city that was never meant to be a city in the first place, and to unearth the living essences that pulse just below a thin, easily excavated surface. The students from Dr. Mike Dillon’s Feature Writing class made this mission their own for a whole semester last fall. They discovered and present to you what they know is only a mere portion of the North Side’s essence, though it is a sizable and honest portion none the less.

In addition to the North Side Neighborhood Project, this issue also features the works of those students and other Journalism and Multimedia Arts students who continue the theme of brushing off the surface layer to reveal forgotten histories, unsung campus heroes, and the stifled voices of the incarcerated.

Special thanks to Dr. Mike Dillon, Prof. Jim Vota and Mark Magill and the contributing JMA students, whose dedication makes this magazine — and the reader’s journey off the Bluff — possible.

Jess Eagle
Editor
Off the Bluff
JMA students produce documentary about Josh Gibson

By Dacey McGinty

According to the American Cancer Society, 160,390 people were expected to die of lung cancer in 2007. That didn’t stop some women from taking action. Though they had never smoked at all.

In June of 2007, my mom lost her seven-year battle with lung cancer. She was the strongest person I have ever known: the five-year survival rate for lung cancer is 15 percent. My mom beat the odds, but she didn’t beat the cancer. I can’t help but wonder what kind of chance she would have had if her type of cancer had received more attention or more funding.

Lung cancer researchers are certain that this lack of awareness and funding is, in large part, because of the societal stigma that pegs lung cancer patients as smokers who brought the disease upon themselves.

My mom didn’t smoke. In fact, her doctors said her cancer most likely stemmed from the radiation treatment she received for Hodgkin’s disease more than 10 years earlier that warped her cells and made her sick.

Again. Her story is not unique. The fastest growing group of lung cancer patients—one in five women and one in 12 men—have never smoked at all. More than half of new lung cancer cases are in former smokers, many of whom quit decades earlier, and about 15 percent of lung cancer patients have never used tobacco.

In the United States in 2008, lung cancer claimed more lives than breast, prostate, colon, liver, kidney and melanoma cancers combined. It was responsible for one in three cancer deaths and killed an average of 439 people per day.

In the United States, 2008, lung cancer claimed more lives than breast, prostate, colon, liver, kidney and melanoma cancers combined. It was responsible for one in three cancer deaths and killed an average of 439 people per day.

But as cases and death rates for lung cancer continue to rise, is it not at least equally important to pay it some attention as well? Every cancer, disease and cause has a ribbon and a month. Each one has an immeasurable amount of faces, hopes and heartbreaks behind it; it is crucial to recognize that and respond with compassion and commitment. We must take responsibility in launching awareness for lung cancer and for every unnoticed and important disease that takes the lives of our friends and families.

Women need to take lung cancer seriously

Carrying on for Mom

Women need to take lung cancer seriously

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Women need to take lung cancer seriously

In December, I walked across the stage and accepted my diploma from Duquesne University. There is nothing I would change about that day: the excitement, the friends, the family. But as cases and death rates for lung cancer continue to rise, is it not at least equally important to pay it some attention as well? Every cancer, disease and cause has a ribbon and a month. Each one has an immeasurable amount of faces, hopes and heartbreaks behind it; it is crucial to recognize that and respond with compassion and commitment. We must take responsibility in launching awareness for lung cancer and for every unnoticed and important disease that takes the lives of our friends and families.

We will not be able to save every life or shrink every statistic, but the great success of the breast cancer awareness campaign should serve as an inspiration and a reason to spread awareness and increase funding for every deserving disease.

The fastest growing group of lung cancer patients—one in five women and one in 12 men—have never smoked at all.

I learned all too well that you can’t go back, so instead, I intend to go forward. And I hope others will follow, realizing that lung cancer doesn’t just affect smokers, and that every life is worth fighting for. Go forward in realizing that lung cancer spares very few voices to fight back against it, and so we must stand up for those who can’t stand anymore.

Breast cancer has seen such tremendous strides forward because of the support behind it. You can pick up your favorite cereal or pair of jeans, recently branded with the pink ribbon, and all but accidentally donate a percentage of your proceeds to breast cancer research and treatment.

As it is, lung cancer advocates don’t have that luxury. And we won’t until more people gain awareness and show more compassion and effort for this more than worthy cause. We won’t until more people gain awareness and show more compassion and effort for this more than worthy cause. We will not be able to save every life or shrink every statistic, but the great success of the breast cancer awareness campaign should serve as an inspiration and a reason to spread awareness and increase funding for every deserving disease.
When it comes to gifts, some people ask for HDTVs, some for tennis shoes, and many others — including myself — like to include CDs on their list. Unfortunately, it seems like a lot more people are avoiding CDs and going straight for downloaded music.

Atlantic Records reported in 2008 that, for the first time, 51 percent of its profits came from digital download sales. This is a good indicator that compact discs may be on their way out as a popular music format, but why should that happen? Other than perhaps convenience, CDs are a better format for music than MP3 downloads.

Of course, there are technological reasons for buying CDs as opposed to downloading songs from the Internet. Sound quality is a major factor; there is a reason why 300 files fit on an MP3 disc while a CD can only fit 80 minutes.

At the same time, MP3s are not a permanent as CDs. If your computer crashes, you may lose all of your downloaded files. If you back up your MP3s to a CD-R, you may still be out of luck. Although CD-Rs are designed to last 10 to 20 years, the Dutch magazine PC-Active discovered that some CD-Rs that they tested lasted less than two years.

In addition to the technical reasons, there are personal reasons. Imagine that you fire up your computer and log in to the iTunes store to see what’s new. If you go out and buy a physical copy of Sticky Fingers, you will be able to appreciate the music more. The actual process of going out and shopping for CDs is also more fun than downloading them. On a rainy day, going to your local music store is a better way to kill time than a lot of other activities. Going from aisle to aisle can take a long time, yes, but it is almost never boring. You can go in with a specific CD in mind, or you can look around until you find one.

Again, actually buying the CD is more rewarding than just downloading it. If you spend money on it, you will be more willing to give it time to settle in and to actually enjoy it.

Another big factor is the artwork and notes that come with an album. If you download an album, you can also download the album cover. But, it doesn’t look as good as a little square on the screen of an MP3 player. The actual, physical artwork is a better product, if only for the liner notes. All of the lyrics, band photos and the acknowledgements and thank you notes are in one location.

Today, it is easy to click a button and download the entire Rolling Stones discography and then let it languish in the bottom half of your iTunes library, rarely listened to. This is too much music to take in at once.

Reading the random notes is a special treat, actually. The bizarre lyrical extract that comes in the booklet for Nirvana’s Nevermind is a great example.

Finally, taking a CD to the cashier in the store is a great form of interaction. Internet downloading is another way that people now avoid being social. On special occasions, the cashier may compliment your selections. One time, a cashier at Dave’s Music Mine on the South Side noted he hadn’t heard Judas Priest’s Sin After Sin in many years as he was ringing me up. He gave me a pretty solid “Good choice.” You just don’t get that experience online.

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ALT Project documentary trails the Pony Express

The JMA-based ALT Project premiered its second documentary in March. The 70-minute film follows two motorcyclists, including JMA professor Jim Vota, and nine Duquesne students and alumni, along the Pony Express Trail through several western states this past summer.

The ALT Project attempted, on motorcycles and in vehicles, to break the trail record that had been set by a horseback mail carrier during the trail’s use from 1860–1861. 7 Days, 17 Hours. Along the way, they encountered dangerous heat, closed sections of the trail and a gas-station shortage, among other hurdles.

This is the Project’s second documentary film. This summer, Vota will lead another group of students on a new documentary project on the Trans- Labrador Highway in Canada.
When the Pirates were winners

by Dacey McGinty

The only thing that seasoned Pittsburgh Pirates fans mourn more than winning seasons gone by ... the Pirates were winners 7 Exposition FieldCourtesy Pittsburgh Pirates

The revitalized National League franchise won the pennant its first three years, but in 1903, they would be one of the first two teams to play for an even bigger title: World Champions. The first World Series game kicked off at Exposition Park on Oct. 6, 1903, between the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Boston Americans, now the Red Sox. The series, then a nine-game battle, would end in disappointment for Pittsburgh after eight games. Less than a decade later, the Pirates would say goodbye to the weakening wooden benches of Exposition Park and pack fans

Feeling the adrenaline in my veins, I was focused and ready to start the bidding war. I worked my bidding strategy to perfection

I won. My short-lived addiction, however, will be long felt, as the credit card bills won’t pay themselves off. But hopefully by Dacey McGinty

Talk about being late to the party! I just discovered eBay after it’s been online for 12 years! I was looking for a jacket made in Italy. Yes, it had to be made in Italy — they’re the only ones that fit me the way they should! Here in Pittsburgh they are almost impossible to find, only Nordstrom and a couple of expensive boutiques offer these jackets. And, trust me, they’re pricey — often in the $500-plus range. They are also very hard to find online, but eBay has tons of them! eBay is a paradise full of Italian jack-ets, boots, purses — you name it. I was in made-in-Italy heaven. I would spend hours searching for great deals. And, yes, all deals were great. I could not believe my eyes: the jacket’s starting bid was just $9.99. I found myself bidding like crazy, and often overpaying just to get the thrill of winning an auction. I learned to bid effectively after I lost my first auction. I would set my alarm clock to make sure I got to my computer in time, a few minutes before the auction ended. Feeling the adrenaline in my veins, I was focused and ready to start the bidding war. I worked my bidding strategy to perfection, and soon I was winning one auction after another. Surprisingly, after winning several auctions, I wasn’t feeling happy anymore. I was mad at myself for spending money on items I did not need. Instead of giving them up, however, I would make the payment right away — you have to work hard for that positive feedback! In one month, I made 18 transactions. No wonder eBay is the fastest growing company of all time. My bank statement was my wake up call. I panicked. I realized I had become an eBay victim — or addict (I prefer victim). That’s when I decided to sell some of the items back instead of returning them, just as an eBay junkie would. I thought I was going to make some profit. Excited about the dollar signs already floating around my head, I photographed my precious items carefully, capturing all the details of my boots, pants and coats, one by one. I found out it not only takes time, but also a lot of money to put something for sale on eBay. I could not believe how tricky those greedy eBay people were! Every time I posted something for sale, they charged me an insertion fee. Mad about having to waste some cash right up front, I reluctantly convinced myself that it was a fair game, and eBay was great to me again. The excitement was short-lived. I soon realized that eBay charged me 20 percent of the final value of each item I sold, and I was actually losing money! I was furious. As I later found out, eBay has lost a lot of its profitable power-sellers due to the ridiculously high charges. They were also about to lose me! I was done with eBay forever! After sharing my pain with a fellow ex-eBay addict, I decided to quit cold turkey — or right after solving the mystery of a missing purchase. One of the 18 items I bought never arrived on my doorstep. I knew for sure because I checked my front door twenty times a day, on average, for the past month. Don’t judge me for that either; it was like Christmas all year-long! I impatiently awaited the arrival of the “New, made in Italy leather boots, size 8” for the past month, and they finally arrived, sort of. The boots I received were used and stinky — and MADE IN CHINA for God’s sake. They couldn’t even pretend to be leather. That was the last straw. I decided to fight to the end, start- ing with an abundance of messages sent to the con-seller, Paypal and eBay. I also left a negative feedback, which miraculously worked, since the seller wrote me back right away asking me to consider changing it from negative to neutral. Soon afterward, my eBay mailbox was full of emails from other buyers scanned by the same person. I was more than happy to welcome their support.

My name is Joanna, and I’m an eBay-oholic

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My grandmother died on a Thursday night. We followed her to the crematorium. The tattooed mortician looked very bewildered. With the scent of flowers and incense burning my nostrils, I followed my mother as we marched in the funeral procession. My singing eyes recognized the huddled forms of relatives and friends, and I caught sight of my grandmother’s wooden coffin as the pallbearers carried it down the aisle. The monk’s steady voice directed us from ahead of the procession, the clear ringing of his bell interwoven with song-like chants. For an eternity, we moved out of the room and into the hall. We reached a set of wide metal doors which displayed a sign citing California’s laws on the disposal of human remains. The funeral directors opened the doors. My uncle, a heavy-set man, gruffly stated, “I’m cool. I’ll stay out here.”

One second later, I realized where the monk was leading us. Even though I knew, I didn’t stay back. Like a dumbfounded child, I followed. Our footsteps echoed against the clean, linoleum tiles. As we walked, I remembered that people would always say I was a younger version of my grandmother. I would deny it every time. Before the funeral, I knew her as Grandma Ninh who lived in California. She was an anonymous woman who sent me money on Lunar New Year and report card days. She didn’t bake cookies or sew sweaters. She liked to board the bus and hit the slots every Saturday. And so they protested. The economy had been going downhill for several years. The recession was now in its final stages. Companies were letting go of workers and cutting the wages of those who remained. People were not happy. Citizens pointed fingers at one of the biggest U.S. corporations. And Pittsburgh took all the heat.

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No, they weren’t the hundreds of protesters that marched through Pittsburgh, throwing rocks through Panera Bread, PNC and Boston Market windows during the G-20 Summit in September. This riot, in fact, was at least a century ago, when Lawrenceville’s Penn and Liberty Avenues were the site one of the biggest riots in U.S. History. In two days, about 20 died, and 40-50 were wounded.

Ever since the 1877 strike echoes at G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh, the railroad created enemies. Conductors and railroad workers were up in arms everywhere. Citists all over the state were protesting and striking, Blatz said. But the greatest violence bubbled over in Pittsburgh.

According to Blatz, railroad workers and sympathizers boycotted the trains on July 19. Not only did people refuse to ride trains, but workers would not load freight and conductors would not drive them. Soon, hundreds of freight cars were at a standstill, filling up the entire Pittsburgh railroad station, Blatz said.

"PA Railroad didn’t like this situation, but what could they do? If anyone took them out, friends would yell and throw stuff at them. They were intimidated to take the trains out," Blatz said.

Twenty-four hours later, the railroad asked local authorities to clear the tracks. When they couldn’t, the governor called in the State police and National Guard. Cops and soldiers marched on the strikers with guns and bayonets.

According to Blatz, the crowd started throwing rocks, and soon enough, the first shot was fired. By whom, Blatz said, no one knows.

"After the riot, PA Railroad never negotiated with workers, union officials didn’t pick up any power, but the violence of 1877 made people more sensitive of the claims of labor and workers," Blatz said.

Many people, especially the wealthy, became fearful and more aware of the potential power of the working class, Blatz said.

Even though the riots happened 134 years ago, Blatz said that it is not in its final stages. Companies were letting go of workers and cutting the wages of those who remained. People were not happy. Citizens pointed fingers at one of the biggest U.S. corporations. And Pittsburgh took all the heat.

She didn’t like to bake cookies or sew sweaters. She liked to board the bus and hit the slots every Saturday. A grandmother’s story bridges generations. Legacy

by Jennifer Stough

Her best friend’s husband, a South Vietnamese sergeant, died as a prisoner of war in the 1970s. My grandmother returned to Vietnam and used her brother’s — a well-known composer's — influence to move the sergeant’s body from the prison.

Afterward, my grandmother arranged a funeral for him. Several years later, my grandmother’s friend returned the favor; she helped organize the procession at my grandmother’s funeral, which spanned three days.

The chanting ceased. With a tone of finality, the monk nodded at the mortician. His hand pulled down the lever, and the coffin slowly slid into the machine. The door closed behind it with a low rumble. As the casket closed, my grandmother lived in North Vietnam. Being a product of a centuries-old patriarchal society, her father believed his daughter should never be more than an uneducated homemaker. When he caught my grandmother reading a book, he beat and threw her into a river nearby their home.

Two years later, the monk’s steady voice directed us from ahead of the procession, the clear ringing of his bell interwoven with song-like chants. For an eternity, we moved out of the room and into the hall. We reached a set of wide metal doors which displayed a sign citing California’s laws on the disposal of human remains. The funeral directors opened the doors. My uncle, a heavy-set man, gruffly stated, “I’m cool. I’ll stay out here.” One second later, I realized where the monk was leading us. Even though I knew, I didn’t stay back. Like a dumbfounded child, I followed.

Our footsteps echoed against the clean, linoleum tiles. As we walked, I remembered that people would always say I was a younger version of my grandmother. I would deny it every time. Before the funeral, I knew her as Grandma Ninh who lived in California. She was an anonymous woman who sent me money on Lunar New Year and report card days. She didn’t bake cookies or sew sweaters. She liked to board the bus and hit the slots every Saturday. And so they protested. The economy had been going downhill for several years. The recession was now in its final stages. Companies were letting go of workers and cutting the wages of those who remained. People were not happy. Citizens pointed fingers at one of the biggest U.S. corporations. And Pittsburgh took all the heat.

No, they weren’t the hundreds of protesters that marched through Pittsburgh, throwing rocks through Panera Bread, PNC and Boston Market windows during the G-20 Summit in September. This riot, in fact, was at least a century ago, when Lawrenceville’s Penn and Liberty Avenues were the site one of the biggest riots in U.S. History. In two days, about 20 died, and 40-50 were wounded.

These are only estimates,” said Daqueenius University History professor Perry Blatz. “The Pittsburgh Railroad Strike in 1877 was the worst case of mob labor violence in U.S. history.”

The riot, which was part of a national series of unplanned railroad strikes, started in Lawrenceville July 21, 1877. Not only had the biggest railroad company in the country cut wages, but now trains were running in double headers — twice as long with only half the workers to cut costs. Pennsylvania Railroad created enemies. Conductors and railroad workers were up in arms everywhere. Cities all over the state were protesting and striking, Blatz said. But the greatest violence bubbled over in Pittsburgh.

According to Blatz, railroad workers and sympathizers boycotted the trains on July 19. Not only did people refuse to ride trains, but workers would not load freight and conductors would not drive them. Soon, hundreds of freight cars were at a standstill, filling up the entire Pittsburgh railroad station, Blatz said.

"PA Railroad didn’t like this situation, but what could they do? If anyone took them out, friends would yell and throw stuff at them. They were intimidated to take the trains out," Blatz said.

Twenty-four hours later, the railroad asked local authorities to clear the tracks. When they couldn’t, the governor called in the State police and National Guard. Cops and soldiers marched on the strikers with guns and bayonets.

According to Blatz, the crowd started throwing rocks, and soon enough, the first shot was fired. By whom, Blatz said, no one knows.

"After the riot, PA Railroad never negotiated with workers, union officials didn’t pick up any power, but the violence of 1877 made people more sensitive of the claims of labor and workers," Blatz said.

Many people, especially the wealthy, became fearful and more aware of the potential power of the working class, Blatz said.

Even though the riots happened 134 years ago, Blatz said that it is not in its final stages. Companies were letting go of workers and cutting the wages of those who remained. People were not happy. Citizens pointed fingers at one of the biggest U.S. corporations. And Pittsburgh took all the heat.

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My grandmother was only six.

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One of our planes is missing
B-52 seemingly swallowed by Mon
by Sara Gaul

SOUNDS OF A sputtering engine and a plane’s quick descent cut through the cold, snowy air on January 31, 1956. A B-52 bomber fell into the Monongahela River, near where Page’s Dairy Mart is currently located on the South Side. The plane never resurfaced from the murky waters of the Mon — although some say they saw it being pulled out of the river on a foggy, winter night.

Thomas White, Duquesne University archivist, chronicled the mysterious flight of the B-52 in his book, Legends and Lore of Western Pennsylvania. White even attempted to find the missing plane with the B-52 Recover Group, a group dedicated to finding the truth behind the mystery.

Many people believe a government cover-up took place, to hide either the plane’s cargo or one of its passengers.

“I went on a boat with them,” he said. “We used side-scan sonar in the river and haven’t found anything.”

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According to the official crash report, the plane’s crew decided not to refuel in Michigan, thinking they had enough fuel to reach Harrisburg. While flying over Pittsburgh, a major fuel drop forced the crew to radio the Greater Pittsburgh Airport for permission to land. The fuel tanks kept dropping, and the plane continued to lose altitude, so the crew changed routes to the closer Allegheny County Airport.

At the Monongahela, both engines of the B-52 went out, and the plane crashed shortly after 4 p.m. Rescue efforts immediately saved the crew from the freezing waters. Rescuing the plane proved to be a little more difficult.

One night, the search was called off because of fog, but some say that was the night the plane was found and pulled out of the river.

“Supposedly, people cut up the plane and loaded it on barges,” White said.

The plane’s rumored final destination was a military base in Oakdale, Pa. With portions of the crash report still classified and rumors still circulating about the plane’s whereabouts and its cargo, the hunt for the missing B-52 bomber goes on in the cloudy waters of the Mon.

Anyway? Neither of us had the time or patience to give him that much-needed geography lesson.

Although many people don’t actually consider what they’re saying, most Americans are still obsessed with being politically correct. They also happen to be rather insensitive, or at least conveniently sensitive.

For example, I have noticed that wishing someone “Merry Christmas” may be considered offensive if he or she is not a Christian, or does not believe in God. The majority has decided that “Happy Holidays” is a more universally-friendly salutation. And in recent years, Nativity scenes have been banned in many neighborhoods because some members of the community do not believe in the Christmas story.

This political correctness extends to race. In the United States, you are no longer black, but African American. It seems as though, in an effort not to offend minority groups, the opposite has been achieved.

The problem is that many people tend to confuse nationality with heritage or descent. There are many black people in the United States who are neither African nor American. Most black people are of African descent or heritage, which means that one or more of their immediate ancestors (grandparents or great-grandparents) was born in Africa. Nationality, on the other hand, refers to the country to which a person belongs, whether by birth or naturalization.

For example, I am a national of Trinidad and Tobago by birth, and my heritage is African, since my great grandmother’s grandmother was born in Africa and was brought to Trinidad as a slave.

Therefore, if we want to speak demographically, I would be classed an Afro-Trinidadian — or black.

If you identify with a particular group, that is clearly a personal choice. But let’s not re-define words to suit ourselves.

In the “land of political correctness,” it seems as though issues of immigration often fall through the cracks. According to the glossary on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Web site, an alien is “any person, not a citizen or national of the United States.” It may be crucial at this point to also define political correctness.

According to Princeton University’s lexical database of the English language, it is the “avoidance of expressions or actions that can be perceived to exclude or marginalize or insult people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against.” If being politically correct was a test, Homeland Security has failed miserably.

Halloween, 2009, Target stores failed, too. On its Web site, Target advertised an “Illegal Alien” costume, which included a mask of an extra-terrestrial being, an orange jumpsuit and a fake “green card” to carry around for further clarification. Across America reactions were mixed. Some people thought the costume was funny; others demanded Target withdraw it from the website immediately.

Perhaps Target is not held to such a high standard when it comes to judgments of this nature, but why should we expect any better from them? If Homeland Security is setting standards that make it acceptable to refer to anyone not born in the United States as an “alien,” then I suppose we can’t hold the commonman or Target at fault.

I attempt to offend no one, simply to enlighten and educate, and I challenge you to be more cautious and responsible with your jokes and terminologies.
It’s a small (minded) world after all

As an international student living in the United States for the past three and a half years, I have observed and experienced a lot. I have been asked some of the silliest questions: from, Do people in my country, The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, live in houses? and, Do we have electricity and indoor bathrooms? to, Where did I learn to speak English so well? (The fact that it is my first language did not occur to these people.)

Some people also try to tell me where I’m from: “Oh, I knew a guy from Sierra Leone!” a guy outside of a club in West Virginia told my friend and me, when he heard our accents. Reacting with perplexed looks, we told him we were actually from a Caribbean island off the coast of Venezuela, and he went on to inform us: ‘Well, you’re all Africans, anyway!’

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Putting a walk down the Boulevard of the Allies in Uptown feels like walking through a veritable no man’s land. Shattered glass and ripped-up tires litter the sidewalk. Cars mercilessly buzz past as abandoned buildings, and UPMC parking lots fill in the landscape.

Although decrepit and neglected today, this area once teemed with life. A lone building stands as a testament to its neighborhood’s history: The Paramount Pictures building.

The Paramount building — remarkable for its 1920s classical architecture — is located at 1727 Boulevard of the Allies. It serves as the last remnant of the historical “Film Row,” a stretch that ran along the Boulevard of the Allies in the Uptown neighborhood. According to documents from the Historic Review Commission of Pittsburgh, this stretch “provided an important distribution network for the major film studios to reach neighborhood theaters throughout the Pittsburgh region.”

Colombia Pictures, Warner Brothers, Paramount Pictures and Universal Pictures were all there. From the 1920s to the 1960s, Film Row played a fundamental role in making films available to movie-goers all over Pittsburgh.

During this era, cities such as Boston, Cincinnati, Detroit and San Francisco maintained film rows. Because nitrate — a highly flammable chemical compound — was one of the main ingredients used in film storage, film rows were often located in the outskirts of the downtown areas in order to avoid fire damage.

The Paramount Pictures building is the last remaining vestige of any major film studio or exchange in the City of Pittsburgh and the building has lived through over eight decades of company and occupational changes,” said Dan Holland, director of The Young Preservationist Association of Pittsburgh.

“The building needs to be preserved because it is the last of its kind,” Holland said.

Today, all that left of Film Row’s legacy is the Paramount Pictures Building.

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The Paramount Building projects history
Preservationists fight for storied structure
by Tim Vernon
I
n the fall semester of 2009, a student wrote a letter of thanks to Professor Margarita Winikoff. The letter was placed in her mailbox in Des Places Language Center, the same building where Winikoff teaches her Spanish courses at Duquesne University. Just an hour or so prior to receiving the letter, Winikoff had been heading to teach a class when she heard screams coming from the elevator shaft. With a concerned ear, she leaned in to listen.

As it turned out, two students were stuck in the elevator and were sounding the alarm for help as it went up and down the building’s floors with no stop in sight. Winikoff offered some words of reassurance to the students, yelling to them that she was going for help. She called security immediately, but they didn’t come. She called security a second time, and finally they arrived with the maintenance staff necessary to stop the elevator and allow the students to listen.

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She tells her children she is in jail because she was ‘with the devil.’

“I guess you could say that the change was definitely a monumental occurrence. Kathy got rid of all the guys she was involving herself with, stopped using drugs and changed her life forever.”

Harden-Gurske also wants to rehabilitate herself for her children. With tears streaming down her face, she spoke of reforming herself through a rehabilitation program called H.O.P.E. (Helping Open People’s Eyes). H.O.P.E.’s approach, Harden-Gurske said, is to “let God in and accept Him.”

According to Thomas, a good support system boosts the chance of a positive outcome for drug offenders. “Sometimes, these offenders are not ready to take on the responsibility of changing for the better,” she said. “If they do not have a strong support system, such as a loving family and friends, then as a result they are less likely to change for the better and more likely to relapse again.”

While it is up to families to provide that much-needed support, they too may need help. More than 2 million children in the United States have incarcerated parents, and many have lost vital relationships. Amachi Pittsburgh is one program that tries to help fill the void for those children.

Amachi currently mentors 400 children who have imprisoned parents and prepares them for the adversity they will face without their mother or father. Nykia Covington, the outreach coordinator for Amachi, compared the program to Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

“These kids enjoy the same type of activities,” Covington said, “but their behavior may reflect the stress they are experiencing. The kids don’t have their main caregiver; so they may wall-up and be a little bit more shy or act out in school, but that’s why they have a mentor.”

According to Covington, many parents serving time are happy to know that Amachi is working with their children. “A lot of parents are the ones who reach out to us,” she said. “They’re not having a hard time admitting that they need help with their children.”

As is often the case with women who are serving time, Harden-Gurske’s mother has stepped in to care for her children. Harden-Gurske said she is eager to resume her role at home, but not until she is certain she can stay clean.

“I will stay here as long as it takes until she is certain she can stay clean. Kathy repeatedly violated the terms of probation by forging checks to feed her drug addiction. Kathy’s downhill slide accelerated until “her youngest child was diagnosed with Down Syndrome,” Thomas said.

It is not impossible. In the South Hills, attorney and probation officer Kristen Thomas has seen a parent overcome her addiction for the good of her child. Thomas described an ex-probationer, who she called Kathy, who started out with a bad record. Kathy was diagnosed with Down Syndrome, “I don’t want my kids to see me,” said Kathy, a hard time admitting that they need help. According to Covington, many parents watching time are happy to know that Amachi is working with their children. “A lot of parents are the ones who reach out to us,” she said. “They’re not having a hard time admitting that they need help with their children.”

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Eager to get moving after this exhortation, the men divided into three teams. Ernie Bey, the captain of team three, told his group, “If I give these children advice, I get encouraged. When I see people wanting to get out of trouble, I get encouraged. This group is out there to build relationships with all kinds of people, no matter what age.”

We walked down the streets of Wilkinsburg and passed buildings with broken windows and boarded-up houses. The MADDADS greeted people on the street with smiles and kind words. If the people they encountered were unfamiliar with MADDADS, a member would give them literature about the group and talk about the positive things they were doing in the community.

The people who recognized the MADDADS patrol said they were glad to see us. “We are all out here to help each other. These children are our future,” said Rita Smith, a single mother on Center Street. “Just the other day, a man was walking down the street with a gun and I had to go back into my house, so I am thankful for MADDADS,” she said.

MADDADS are not the police and they cannot law-enforcement action. They hope their fatherly presence and concern for young men has a positive effect. “When the youth see us patrolling, they may think twice about exposing themselves to partial dangerous activities,” she said.

Walking down South Avenue and turning onto Wood Street, we stopped at Wood Towers to check on Joan Weathers. MADDADS had recently quieted boisterous activity in Weathers’ apartment building.

“This place is a Garden of Eden right now, considering,” she told the patrol. Sometimes the MADDADS just offer a word of comfort. They assured Mrs. Inez, a former schoolteacher whose window had been broken, that it was probably an isolated incident and that she was not a target.

“I wasn’t fearful after [hearing that],” Mrs. Inez said. By the end of the patrol, MADDADS had not committed any acts of heroism. In fact, they encountered no outright dangers that night, which the MADDADS considered a blessing.

“This program is something African Americans should be proud of,” Bey said. “Today, many African Americans are not consistent in life. They can’t hold jobs and schooling, but MADDADS is consistent.

For some youth, the MADDADS’ amiable faces and kind words may just allow the bewildered passengers out safely. “I went home and never saw the people inside,” Winikoff said, explaining that security arrived when the elevator was still stuck in the basement. “Then, following the time that I went to teach, I found an envelope with a lovely letter inside. The person writing the letter is telling me that she was one of the people caught inside the elevator. She recognized my voice inside the elevator. She said she was concerned for MADDADS,” said Bey.

I tell them not to be shy. ‘La profesora’ makes mistakes... the students can also make mistakes

-Margarita Winikoff

Winikoff teaches her Spanish 201 class.

Students say Winikoff’s most noticeable quality may be her sense of humor and cheerful personality. “I have made many memories at Duquesne for my undergrad, but the memories I will cherish most are sitting in Des Places with Professor Winikoff on Tuesday and Thursday evenings,” Wallace said. “As I continue to pursue a career in education, I hope to be half the teacher as Professor Winikoff and touch as many lives as she has.”

Her coworkers, colleagues and friends describe her as a “first-class lady.” “She inspired me as a teacher, as a person, and as a diplomat,” said Carla Lucente, a Modern Languages professor and co-director of the Center for International Relations.

When Lucente was chair of the Modern Languages and Literatures department, she invited Winikoff to teach at Duquesne. The two met shortly after Winikoff moved to the United States from Guatemala, where she grew up.

“I am very happy that she is still teaching here and, thus, being a role model to our students,” Lucente said.

Winikoff began her teaching career at Carnegie Mellon University, then known as Carnegie Tech, in the 1970s. The students she taught there left a lasting impression on her. “When I began to work at CMU, it was after the movement of the ’60s,” Winikoff explained. “Boys were going around with the big hair... I would get these students, and to me it was a revelation because I learned to admire them, to appreciate them, to love them.”

Winikoff still demonstrates the utmost degree of care and love for her students at Duquesne, going above and beyond the responsibilities of a professor every day. “I feel responsible for my students,” Winikoff said. “They are under my care. That’s not in the contract... but that’s the way I feel.”
German prof pursues, nurtures dreams

by Sara Gaul

James Wehs always wanted a red convertible. When the Duquesne University German professor had his tonsils taken out in 1984, his parents asked him what he wanted to make him feel better.

“Red roadster,” said young Wehs. His parents could only give him a toy version.

Fifty-seven years later, Wehs finally got the real car. In 2009, he bought a red Mercedes Benz convertible. He says students should never give up on their dreams, even if it’s just a dream car. He even used to give one up on his three years earlier.

In 2002, he was struck by a runaway truck on Duquesne’s campus. A truck unloading books in front of the library lost its brakes or he left as a result of the incident. He hit a concrete wall on the corner across from the Health Sciences building, which left him on the ground.

“I’m glad it didn’t happen when I was younger. I would have missed a lot,” Wehs said. “I was 57, so break dancing was out.

After nine months of recuperation, Wehs felt ready to come back to class. Since being a professor does not require a lot of physical prowess, Wehs figured that if he could get to the classroom, he could teach. At first, he used a walker to get around, then a cane. Finally, Wehs could make it from his Mercedes — which he bought with the settlement money he received from the accident — to the classroom without a walking aid.

Students have made it clear that the classroom benefited to the classroom without a walking aid.

“Students feel welcome and comfortable in his classes,” she said. “He’s been welcoming students to his classes since 1973. He began teaching at Chatham University, and from there, went to teach at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and Duquesne. He sees more ambition in the students than Duquesne.

“He is truly concerned with the well-being of his students, both in and out of the classroom. He brightened my day.”

Papincak also likes how Wehs’ teaching includes his own experiences. Wehs wants what students learn in his classes will help them prepare for life beyond the classroom and make them better people. Since Wehs has lived in Germany, he has been able to enrich students’ knowledge by bringing back the country’s culture first hand.

In addition to going back to visit Germany, Wehs travels with his son all over the world, and has visited all 50 states and every continent except Antarctica. His favorite places are Israel, Australia and, most of all, Alaska. For Wehs, visiting Alaska means more than just a difference in temperature.

“I feel like a frontiersman”

-James Wehs

“It is more unique, I feel like a frontiersman,” he said. Wehs is also a huge history buff and baseball enthusiast.

His office wall displays an old German poster with the phrase “Spricht Ball” on it, which is German for “Play Ball.” He says if he didn’t live in Germany for so long, he probably could have played professionally, but quickly adds that everyone thinks that about themselves.

Although his baseball career did not work out, the career he chose did. Flipping through the pages of his résumé and listening to him talk, it is obvious that Wehs is not only passionate about teaching, but also about what he teaches.

Almost everything he has done revolves around Germany or the German language, except for a year as a postman (he was valedictorian of the post office school). Whether it was providing German voice talent and insight for different programs on WDUQ and PBS, or helping to create a German curriculum, Wehs has used his experiences to educate students.

“My heart cries for the kids; destitute families usually have no way of surviving once their primary source of income is taken away due to an incarceration,” Kroll said. “What most people realize is that in addition to any regular income a person might bring home, inmates also lose benefits like social security and other assistance while they are locked up. Sometimes, those benefits are the only thing keeping food on the table for the family.

“We should be doing accurate, in-depth assessments of what needs to happen to prevent a person from coming back to jail or prison,” Kroll said. “And if we do this successfully do that, we need to know what contributing factors exist in each community that led to imprisonment in the first place, and recidivism.”

Today, Kroll is leading the local effort to address the problems more holistically.

“After seeing man’s inhumanity against man in prison for all those years, and the revolving door with inmates returning again and again, I wanted to do something to make a difference in the community,” she explained.

Kroll left the prison system, and after a few related positions, became the director of the Allegheny County Justice Related Services program within the Office of Behavioral Health. (The program was formerly known as the Allegheny County State Parole Program.) For more than 15 years, she has worked to “fix” some of the problems she claims can be at least partially solved with more thoughtful coordination among various assistance programs and help upon re-entry. Kroll refers to the services as “boundary spanners,” bridging the gap between prison and community.

The program involves intensive individual case management, advocacy and financial support for inmates who are being released after “mandatory time.” Kroll has been lauded nationally and featured in many publications for its comprehensive approach and successes.

“We can’t just keep warehousing people, thinking things will change,” Kroll said. “This is a poor use of taxpayer money and doesn’t solve one of the problems in our communities. And that burden on families and communities is heavy.

“My heart cries for the kids; destitute families usually have no way of surviving once their primary source of income is taken away due to an incarceration,” Kroll said. “What most people realize is that in addition to any regular income a person might bring home, inmates also lose benefits like social security and other assistance while they are locked up. Sometimes, those benefits are the only thing keeping food on the table for the family.

“When a parent is absent, children and families do what they can on their own,” Bill DeMasco, executive director of the Pennsylvania Prison Society, said that the desperation is obvious in any number of inner-city communities.

“You have small children growing up without any positive role models, without any viable job opportunities.” DeMasco said, adding that children often drift toward dealing drugs just to bring in extra money.

“I may be painting a stereotypical picture here, but this happens over and over again,” he said. “The inner core of the cities eroding because of some of these problems. The situation is particularly hard on families whose loved ones are serving time in state prisons, which are often hours away.

“One of the biggest problems we hear is that the Department of Corrections will sentence people hundreds of miles away from their homes and families.”

-Mary Graczyk, Families Outside

“One of the biggest complaints we hear is that the Department of Corrections will sentence people hundreds of miles away from their homes and families,” said Mary Graczyk, team leader for Families Outside, a program of Family Services of Western Pennsylvania that provides transportation for visits to state prisons.

Graczyk said the distance creates a disconnect within the family.

“When the inmate maxes out and is released to go home to his family, they don’t know each other anymore,” she said.

“This practice is completely contradictory to study after study in the field that shows connection to loved ones is one of the biggest factors in reducing recidivism.”

While there is research examining the impact of incarceration on an inmate’s family, little has been compiled about the impacts on the community.

“Most of the statistics and tracking relate to what the crimes are, where the crimes occur, sentencing and where a person is serving time, rather than what is happening in the neighborhood in which the offender or victim served,” said Joseph Sabino Mistrick, legal counsel for the Pennsylvania Sentencing Commission.

DeMasco noted that there are costs to communities directly related to the incarceration system that no one thinks about. Specifically, when inmates are taken from their neighborhoods and sent to a facility in a rural community, that neighborhood loses representation and, in turn, loses revenue that is calculated in property tax.

The assumption that incarceration affects only certain “bad” neighborhoods results in policies and attitudes that don’t fix the problems.

“People think it won’t affect them so they don’t demand change, but unfortunately, it’s only a matter of time before we’ll all be affected in some way. We serve communities all over the county, from Bethel Park to Wilkinsburg,” said Gra- zzyk.

Last year, the Families Outside program transported more than 1,000 people representing more than 90 local zip codes to visit loved ones in prison.

“Obviously, there are areas that are harder hit than others, so there will be neighborhoods that feel a greater impact,” said Graczyk, who said that nearly 40 percent of those 1,000 travelers came from Mr. Oliver, North Side, East Liberty and Braddock Hills/Wilkinsburg.

These neighborhoods are often home to abandoned houses, boarded-up businesses and groups of people hanging around outside in the middle of a work day. There are a lot of assumptions surrounding crime, incarceration and why people commit them.

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‘Warehousing’ inmates stirs wide ripples
by Bridget Fare-Obersteiner

Editor’s note: Sociology and Journalism students in the cross-listed Urban Investigations/Investigative Reporting course co-taught by Doug Harper and Maggie Patterson investigate the effects of incarceration on inmates, families and communities. Their entire project, including more stories, photos and videos will soon be available through a link at www.jma.duq.edu.

Pathfinder
Nelson pioneered counseling at DU

When John Nelson started working at Duquesne University as director of the testing bureau, he was in 1974 and still went on to earn a Ph.D. in higher education administration from the University of Pittsburgh. But Nelson doesn’t credit all of his learning to the great minds of his college professors or the authors of the books he read.

“I learn a lot from students. I really do. And just when I think I’ve learned it all, heard it all or know it all, I learn more. I’ve learned more compassion, more empathy, and I hope I’ve gained some wisdom.”

As a licensed psychologist, Nelson said he has easily seen more than 5,000 students individually, but the most gratifying part of his career is not the numbers, but the individual students that he has truly helped.

“The most rewarding times for me are when I see and hear from former clients that have resolved significant issues,” Nelson said.

Throughout his career, Nelson has watched the gamut of psychological issues expand and has worked to increase and prepare his staff as well as adapt his own approaches to best serve the individual personalities and problems that come through his office.

Assistant director of the counseling center Christine Larson began at Duquesne just two years ago, but has already come to appreciate the balancing act Nelson takes on between the needs of the students and of the counseling center.

“He’s very dedicated to providing therapy for the students,” Larson said. “We’re not just sort of putting a band-aid on it; we’re really working on helping them get better.”

Larson said Nelson is also dedicated to expanding and educating the staff, often inviting speakers and providing professional support that allows each counselor to develop areas of expertise. Nelson is also working on building a library at the counseling center for both the therapists and the students.

“Dr. Nelson is usually the first person to get to the counseling center … and he’s usually the last person to leave,” Edwards said. Early on in his career, Nelson said the cases he saw during the day would often follow him home. But in becoming “distracted” over his students’ issues, Nelson realized that he was doing them a disservice.

“You can’t help but be somewhat affected by their stories and their problems and their concerns and their difficulties. But you also have to maintain some kind of balance and perspective,” Nelson reasoned. “Or what can happen is, it’s like trying to save a drowning person and you don’t know how to swim. If you jump in and try to save them … you’ll end up drowning with them.”

Nelson now sees five or six students every day depending on the demand. He said that each member of the staff carries a similar schedule, and they each average approximately 75 students each year.

Even during the summer months, when many students and professors take a break from their heavy loads, Nelson remains hard at work.

Nelson has grown and developed as a psychologist alongside the counseling center he built, but neither is done yet.

“He’s still very sharp, he’s still very astute…there’s a lot of students that are left to be helped for him,” Edwards said. “It’s time he got his due.”
Pittsburgh's North Side is not, strictly speaking, a unified neighborhood. Instead, it is a community composed of a sprawling, interconnected patchwork of neighborhoods whose boundaries are sometimes fuzzy, even to the natives.

That's because the North Side was once a city unto itself. Allegheny City, home to the stately mansions of many early industrial magnates, politicians and lawyers, was incorporated in 1840 and ceased to exist when it was annexed — under protest — by the City of Pittsburgh in 1907.

While the parks and stadiums that hug the shore of the Allegheny River dominate the cityscape, the North Side proper is set back, separated from the river — and the rest of the city — by train tracks and expressways.

In all of its permutations, the North Side has been a canvas for the best and worst of urban planning. Its center is dominated by West Park, a graceful, sloping village green punctuated by a shimmering pond and home to the National Aviary, whose tenants' exotic songs mingle with the sound of streams and traffic. The Mexican War Streets boast some of the finest examples of Victorian architecture in the city and are home to the cutting-edge Mattress Factory art museum.

The North Side is also home to the ill-fated Allegheny Center, a dismal and largely empty urban mall whose construction required the destruction of a thriving neighborhood and whose location serves as another forbidding barrier between the river and the communities that climb the slopes toward the city. Flight to the suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s caused decay in many of the neighborhoods that hug the shore of the Allegheny, especially those that lie between the river and the community composed of a sprawl of communities that climb the slopes toward the east end of the city — by train tracks and expressways.

A new generation of immigrants is remaking the North Side yet again, creating a more modest and humane style of urban redevelopment simply by buying homes and supporting new local businesses.

Author Kathleen George sets some of her mysteries right in the Mexican War Streets where she lives and journalist historian Brian O'Neill, who moved to the North Side when it was more rugged, is now surrounded by neighborhoods whose children play at West Park, walk to PNC Park to watch the Pirates and maybe stop by for a treat — and a chat — with Gus Kalairis, the “ice ball man,” whose cart is a summertime institution on Ridge Avenue.

Gus’s cart advertises that his stand has been serving customers “since your dad was a lad.” And maybe no one has had a better vantage point as the North Side suffered its period of malaise and then started a revival that is a work in progress.

“Before, we’d get business from people just walking through the park,” Gus says. “Now, people drive here from all over. We’re a destination.”

Since theooky building in the early 1890s, little remains of D.L. Clark’s legacy. The bakery, however, commemorates its famous former tenant with a customized cake called “The Northsider” — a quadruple-stacked, yellow cake with peanut butter icing, chocolate syrup and Clark Bar pieces sprinkled on top.

In addition to serving as a neighborhood gathering place, the bakery influences other businesses to migrate to the East Ohio Street district. Years ago, the street was devastated by interstate and highway construction, which tore apart the once bustling downtown of the former Allegheny City.

Since opening in 2004, the Priory Fine Pastries has seen great success. To celebrate, its fifth birthday in November, Master Baker and store manager Darin McMillen unveiled the bakery’s new line of gourmet cupcakes, including such flavors as banana split, black forest, blueberry cobbler, Boston cream pie, peanut butter and jelly, chocolate knockout and rocky road, just to name a few. The bakery also revealed their “colossal cupcake” — a three-pounder that yields roughly 18 regular-sized cupcakes in one.

The Graf family has high expectations that the bakery will not only continue to grow, but will also continue to serve as a beacon for development in the Deutschtown business district.

“We are gratified to have lasted five years in a competitive environment in an up-and-coming neighborhood. We are planning some exciting changes at this benchmark, too,” John said.

“An exciting time for us, and we’re expecting excellent growth in the coming year.”
Littered with vacant buildings, boarded-up windows, check-cashing centers and pawn shops, the gray, seedy sidewalks of the North Side’s East Ohio Street might be the last place you would expect to find a European-style bakery.

The iron grates and “no trespassing” signs on abandoned storefronts, graffiti-covered window wells and shady street corners serve as a message: keep out. The East Ohio Street clientele, lingering in seeming packs, hover just outside the glow of buzzing neon bar signs and make a suit-and-tie businessman question where he should park his Mercedes.

But when Ed and Mary Ann Graf decided to develop Priory Fine Pastries bakery, this is where they chose to put it.

Residents of historic Deutschtown, the Grafs purchased the 528 East Ohio Street storefront in 2003 — formerly an abandoned “Rent-A-Center.” Ed, who was at the time a member of the East Allegheny Citizen’s Council, and his wife, Mary Ann, co-founders of the Priory Hotel and Priory Grand Hall banquet facility, started discussing what types of businesses might help to revitalize the deteriorating neighborhood.

“My parents acquired the storefront on East Ohio Street, which at one time had been a very active business district, but had had its ups and downs in recent years,” said John Graf, Ed and Mary Ann’s son, and current co-owner of the Priory Hospitality Group.

“They were at a party talking with neighbors as to what type of retail the business district could use, and the attendees suggested a bakery,” John said.

Establishing a bakery, however, was no easy task. Before working at Priory Fine Pastries, John had no experience with regard to operating a bakery either. My mom was actively involved in our Priory Hotel business — and before that, a homemaker — and my dad was an executive with Ketchem Communications,” John said.

The Grafs consulted with George Mandl, a retired baker, who had owned a bakery in Avalon. Mandl, who is of Austrian descent, helped the bakery offer German-themed products because their location in Deutschtown is historically home to the North Side’s German, Austrian and Swiss immigrants.

The familiar and unfamiliar faces that routinely crowd the standing room of the bakery are testament to the quality products and family atmosphere...

by Brooke Taylor

Ed and Mary Ann’s son, and current co-owner of the Priory Hospitality Group.

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Mysteries of Pittsburgh
North Side author finds intrigue outside her door

by Brooke Taylor

George’s “day job” currently consists of teaching playwriting and occasionally directing plays at Pitt. She is the kind of woman who offers up not only her home, but the luxury of tea to complete strangers, and who, like thousands of other middle-aged women, enjoys walking (probably with a pedometer) for exercise. George has published a series of four mystery novels, including Taken, Fallen, Afterimage, and, her most recent novel, The Odds — all of which take place right here in Pittsburgh. The mysteries follow the casework and life of Pittsburgh Police Commander Richard Christie and eventually his colleague, Colleen Greer, in their attempts to unravel the makings of murder, drug trafficking and kidnapping in and around the city. In fact, for her most recent novel, The Odds, George didn’t have to go further than her own back yard to find inspiration. A mild-mannered George initially came to pursue a creative writing degree at the University of Pittsburgh — a decision her high school guidance counselor had scoffed at.

“My counselor told me you can’t just be a writer, you have to be a journalist! I had fiction in mind [as a career] at the time…so I did it anyway,” she says, with a smirk that seems to say “I told you so.”

All you have to do is go to the places Kathleen writes about to recognize [them]

-Rege Behe

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Across the streets of Pittsburgh, local and international, come and go to the Mattress Factory. Another admitted, “The Mattress Factory is the only art museum where people can actually have fun.”

Tell us what you think

With the use of Quick Respond, or QR technologies, visitors with EU-capable phones can access the museum’s one-of-a-kind project called MFISCREENmax. Guests can access extra information and communicate Twitter-style with other guests and Mattress Factory staff via MFISCREENmax by taking pictures of the barcodes corresponding to exhibits. The texts are visible, along with the pictures and video on a 42-inch flat screen TV in the lobby.

The visitors’ answers vary: “I really like that the emphasis here at the Mattress Factory is on space and community, and on interacting. It’s not locked behind doors, and, ‘No, you can’t touch. It’s great to have a place that, ‘Yes, you can touch. Please touch. Do touch,’” said a visitor from Scotland. Another admitted, “The Mattress Factory is the only art museum where I actually had fun.”

“My name is Drew, and the Mattress Factory is entirely too scary.”

One couple confessed their engagement to their parents in the lobby.

Another female guest sums up the experience nicely: “The Mattress Factory is a place that I like to go to reconnect with contemporary art. It’s an informal space, however, it is a space where [contemporary] artists and talented people, local and international, come and can interact with art.”

Kathleen George, North Side mystery author

Courtesy of Kathleen George

Pittsburgh Neighborhoods Project: North Side

spring 2010
**Mattress Factory**

**A mainstay of funky North Side art scene**

by Neil McElhone

A research and development lab for art production — or releasing it to the public — is the Mattress Factory. In its 40-year history, it has become known as one of the most important venues for contemporary art in the United States.

With its bare, white-washed walls and stained wood floors now house modern, room-sized installation art — created on site — that is meant to engage the senses. The philosophy of engaging the visitor is nothing new to the Mattress Factory; in fact the museum is recognized worldwide for pushing artistic boundaries in as many ways as possible. The Carnegie Museum displays replicas of fourth-century architecture, the Mattress Factory is Sarah Oppenheimer open a “wormhole” from the fourth-floor to a third-floor window. If the Frick Museum’s aim is "encouraging and developing the study of the fine arts and of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects," then the Mattress Factory’s blog puts their uniqueness best: “Art you can get into.”

**A growing, distinctive collection**

The Mattress Factory features long-term and permanent installations separated by floors and ceilings. Perhaps the most engaging piece is Yayoi Kusama’s Infinity Dots Mirrored Room. Three nude mannequins adorned with pictures and mirrors stand in a room of repeating mirrors, creating a surreal and immersive experience. The art is designed to evoke a sense of confusion and disorientation, challenging the viewer’s perception of reality.

"I was writing other kinds of fiction. One novel I tried to write 13 times — it started as a short story about a 6’2” woman. She was very lousy, and big, and out there, and everyone said ‘Write more of her, we want more!’ But ... I had to keep making up troubles for her to make the novel, and ... they never took." "I decided one summer, ‘I’m sick of this!’ So then I started writing again, and I was just messing around [with the mystery genre]." Pretty soon I had a couple pages, and then 50 pages. I started calling the FBI and police for research ... so then I was writing it." Since then, George continues to write mysteries, earning not only herself, but the city of Pittsburgh and even the North Side, some noteworthy recognition. "Kathleen is very adept at drawing those [Pittsburgh] landscapes and neighborhoods," says Pittsburgh Tribune-Review reporter, Rege Behe. "Her precision ... and ... attention to detail are marvelous. All you have to do is go to the places Kathleen writes about to recognize [them]. She’s masterful at this."

George admits that when it comes to choosing a setting for her novels, Pittsburgh naturally fits the bill. "...The kind of thing I was writing was so specific to place. I could make up a place, or spend a lot of time researching another city, but it just seemed like the characters I was writing about were so ‘Pittsburgh’ to me ... very down to earth ..." George says, "Pittsburgh is where I live, and I love it! So Pittsburgh becomes more and more a part of the books."

"I visualize [the characters] like... the smartest people in America find really impressive, and he just always says ‘you will.’ Masters has similar words of admiration for his wife. "Kathleen works hard. The so-called work ethic, so associated with Pittsburgh ... is taking a second breath for her. I respect that in her very much," masters says. "Often, she’s up [until] 2 a.m., when she finally gets to bed, she’s thinking about the book she’s working on. She’s always thinking about how to improve it."

In addition to her mysteries, George has published several literary works about theater, including Rhythms in Drama, Playwriting: The First Workshop and Winter’s Tales: Reflections on the Novelistic Stage. She has also published several book reviews and columns in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. While George enjoys writing a variety of genres and styles, it is fiction that truly has her heart, and lucky for her readership, it looks like she will be adding another mystery to her series. "... All writing is kind of the same — the problem solving and trying to figure out what will make the reader turn the page — but it’s more fun to write fiction," she says. "I don’t always know what’s going to happen [in my mysteries]. I follow the characters and how their behavior makes the next scene occur; it’s like reading a book, but slower. “Every morning I get up and I’m curious about what happens next ... I’m currently writing fiction at the moment it’s another mystery.”"
P-G columnist touts Pittsburgh’s promise

by Audra Taylor


A
s a columnist for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Brian O’Neill writes about a wide range of topics affecting the Pittsburgh region, from last year’s G-20 protests in Panama and health care reform to the Three Rivers Casino. The columns he has written for the Post-Gazette and the Pittsburgh Press, O’Neill explores Pittsburgh inside and out, acknowledging its strengths as well as its problems. It is a city he loves and which often wishes could get its act together.

“After all we’ve been through in the past 30 years, it suddenly looks like a city that’s trying to figure it out,” O’Neill said. “There are a lot of things I missed about New York. The love theater, the corner bars, the people ... Pittsburgh is a happy medium of what I loved about Virginia and what I missed about New York. When I came here ... [Pittsburgh] was a lot like the people I grew up with, so it wasn’t hard to connect right away.”

But, he said, many residents are unable to see past the city’s negative qualities. “I think that, like a lot of places, we concentrate on problems and try to fix those,” O’Neill said. “And less often do we stop back and look at what we have. The thing I’d like people to get is that this is really a city worth caring about, and we have too much good stuff to toss it away.”

The truth is that Pittsburgh has a lot to offer, O’Neill said, but it is important to recognize that the city’s unique problems require different answers than one might expect. “The city and the people in the city have done a lot of things right,” he said. “The big point [of my book] is that the political structure is set up for an economic system that no longer exists.”

But O’Neill has hope that Pittsburgh may eventually discover the answers to these problems. “People focus on the city as being the problem, but the state is the big problem,” he said. “There’s always jabber about city-county consolidation but it’s going to take something different than what they did in the American west. Here in the city is ...”

The Allegheny County population so they won’t have all the votes ... but maybe we’ll be the ones to figure it out.”

For Heckman, cooking, serving and offering a meeting place for the community is an act of love and charity. The restaurant is nonprofit. “I don’t take a salary, and I probably won’t take a salary. I made due with pretty little. I’m 51 years old and life is economically. It’s become a really good gathering spot, mixing place within the neighborhood.”

The restaurant has the welcoming feel of a church. The moment patrons enter, an old train station bench welcomes them in the entrance hallway. The kitchen is open and customers are free to come and talk to the cooks or just listen to sounds of a busy kitchen at work. “Everyone [in the kitchen] talks, from the dishwasher to the cooks, to the sandwich makers ... it’s all open. It makes it easier for someone to help and really forces teamwork and camaraderie,” Grondziowski said. “But it’s also ... very nice when you see guests you’re serving. Sometimes it’s difficult, but that’s what we wanted, a family atmosphere.”

Aside from its role as a social gathering place — the shelves are packed with games such as Chinese Checkers and children’s puzzles — there’s no such thing as a good restaurant without good food. Bistro to Go offers a variety of food based on world traditions with an improvisational twist. “If someone comes in and says, ‘Hey, I don’t make it with a twist of Bistro,’ said Grondziowski. In order to honor the diverse tastes of their diverse customers, Bistro to Go’s menu is constantly changing. There is no single predominating style of cuisine. Greek, Asian, Hispanic, American — all rotate through the menu. The common denominator is that all of the dishes are homemade and hearty. “We’re in a culture where we hear about eating healthy all the time, but we have lifestyles that are quick and busy,” Heckman said. “People want to [eat healthy] but don’t have time. We provide a place where the two collide.”

Heckman said she cooks as if she would cook for a family. “If someone called me up and said, ‘Hey, I want to eat lasagna next week,’ I’d say ‘OK’,” she said.

For Heckman, cooking, serving and offering a meeting place for the community is an act of love and charity. The restaurant is nonprofit. “I don’t take a salary, and I probably won’t take a salary. I made due with pretty little. I’m 51 years old and life is short. If I can make a difference and help other people, I will,” she said.

That motto has worked for her. In June, the restaurant will expand next door. The new renovations will feature an open-air front, a banquet room that holds seventy-five people and a “Bistro Southern Soul Food.” With the expansion, Heckman said that they will accommodate more customers, which will help build relationships. “It’s a place that captures a void in people’s lives,” she said.
Dok Harris learned tolerance on the Mexican War Streets

O n a cold, October morning in a coffee shop in Pittsburgh’s North Side, weeks before Franco-Dok Harris lost the 2009 Pittsburgh mayoral race to incumbent Luke Ravenstahl, local residents gather for a rally to support an unlikely candidate to be the next leader of their city.

Harris, a North Side native and the son of Pittsburgh Steelers’ legendary running back Franco Harris, arrives without bodyguards, wearing a University of Pittsburgh baseball hat and jeans. After mingling with supporters, returning a few text messages on his iPhone, and grabbing a cup of coffee, “Dok,” as friends call him, wants to get a misconception out of the way.


Dok grew up in the North Side, and it’s obvious that he still feels comfortable here. He says his childhood here has taught him a lot and shaped who he is today.

I live in the country now, and I can’t fall asleep unless I hear the noises of the city

-Dok Harris

“Everyone sat on their steps and drank beer at night, and it was never weird for me to go and talk to them,” he says.

Living on the North Side taught him to have tolerance from a young age, he says. “I lived in a very mixed community. There were a lot of gay and interracial couples in my neighborhood, and it was never weird to me,” Dok says. This tolerance did not come to him by accident. Growing up with a famous father, he was taught to give back to others. Dok has fond memories of selling fruit bars at the regatta every summer and volunteering at the Salvation Army every Christmas.

He misses the small neighborhood he grew up in, and says he always felt safe living in the city.

“I live in the country now, and I can’t fall asleep at night unless I hear the noises of the city,” he says.

Franco Harris Sr. glides through the rally, beaming from ear to ear with immense pride for his son and excitement for the future of Pittsburgh.

“A year from now, I would like to see a new mayor in office, getting things started, unlike Ravenstahl did. I think Dok can do this,” Harris Sr. says. “We live in a city that has had many fonts, and we’ve lost touch with this recently. We need someone who can bring that back.”

Dok shares a similar disappointment with Pittsburgh’s recent lack of leadership. “This city is filled with world-class leadership, from our labor unions to our top universities. I want to bring that back into the forefront,” Dok says.

The last time he saw this type of leadership in Pittsburgh, he says, was with Mayor Bob O’Connor.

“He wore Pittsburgh on his heart and his sleeve. His love for this city was untouched,” Dok says. He also admires how O’Connor interacted with the people of Pittsburgh.

“He was someone you could talk to without a bodyguard hovering nearby,” he says.

Dok has apparently taken a few lessons from the late mayor, because his supporters say similar things about him. Quality White, self-employed business man on the North Side, supports Dok because he is easily approachable.

“Dok cares about the little guys that Ravenstahl overlooks,” White says. “He went to the sidewalks and asked the people what they cared about. Ravens- tahl didn’t do that.”

He also supports Dok’s stance on city violence.

“Right now, the only ones getting rich in this city are the cemeteries. We need to stop that and give these guys a chance to grow up,” says White.

White also likes that Dok wants to focus on small businesses and making them visible again.

“We don’t live in L.A.” White says. “Pittsburgh has always been about two things: small businesses and the Steelers.”

Bistro to Go clerks Cynthia Shea and Kendrick Brown. Photo by OTB Staff.
Johnny Angel surrounded by a halo of memories

by Dacey McGinty

“It was beautiful,” Jack remembers. “I used to stop there every day, and he was a very kind old man. He’d let me pick a pear or take a tomato or whatever. And everyone loved him.”

Jack laughs, remembering his “goldmine” side business of selling Mr. Camino’s vegetables along his paper route. He remembers one day of business, in particular. “I was kneeling in his yard, picking whatever it was, and his granddaughter walked by. And I said, ‘Mr. Camino, when I grow up, I think I’m going to marry your granddaughter.’ And he slapped me behind my ear and he said, ‘Johnny, you little devil, you think you’re an angel. Get out of my yard!’”

He made it out of the yard, but he kept the name, and he came back for the bill.

“The following year, we were going in the studio and I needed a stage name and I chose Johnny Angel because of that,” Jack laughs. “And I’ve been married to his granddaughter for 37 years.

“She’s the best cook I know,” chimes in Larry Brophy, an old friend and fan of Jack’s.

Jack and Larry laugh about being Irish with a talent for performing. They sit at a table at Atria’s on the North Shore, surrounded by walls covered with musical memorabilia. A sparkly, pink suit jacket is encased among instruments, newspaper articles and pictures.

The walls largely serve as a tribute to Johnny Angel and the Halos. It makes sense; Jack’s got an in with the owner. Jack became a partner in the restaurant chain when Pat McDonnell bought it from the original owners in 1998. In 2001, the PNC Park location opened, complete with a unique neon logo and another neon sign directing patrons to the “Johnny Angel Lounge.”

“They were going to build this one just for me and this was going to be mine, and I ended up being a partner in all of them,” Jack says.

“But this one is definitely different founded in 1848, would eventually become the spectacular, colorful Grand Hall of today. A grand skylight dome brings natural light into the room and the elegance of the Grand Hall to life.

McGlothlin, who previously served as night auditor, front desk associate and assistant manager of The Priory in his 14 years of employment there, remains a dedicated member of the hotel family. He also worked in operations for Sheraton Hotels and Resorts, but insists that the “one-on-one customer service” at The Priory trumps the big-name hotels in many ways.

“We know everybody here by name that comes here on a regular basis,” he says.

During the G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh last September, The Priory welcomed some very special guests. “We were completely booked during the G-20 Summit,” McGlothlin says. Some of The Priory’s visitors included foreign correspondents and former CIA director Gen. Michael V. Hayden, a Pittsburgh native.

The hotels beginnings were a bit humbler. According to McGlothlin, in 1888, The Priory was added to the church to provide a home for the Benedictine priests of the parish. Nearly a century later, in 1981, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation closed the church and made plans for it to be demolished in order to make room for I-279 construction. “[They] fought the city for zoning for 20 years,” McGlothlin says.

The church was spared when the highway plans were moved 48 yards over. Graf then bought the church in 1984 and began restoring and renovating The Priory in April 1986.

“Everything was converted over in 1986,” McGlothlin explains. “Everything was de-sanctified.” Today, The Priory is a fully functioning 24-room hotel that has gained accolades locally and nationally. Its accommodations include a complimentary continental breakfast, a shuttle service, and an outdoor courtyard where patrons can enjoy complimentary wine.

Visitors can confidently agree that when it comes to relaxing getaways, The Priory puts Pittsburgh on the map.

The Priory Hotel

“Tons of return guests book for the rest of the year for football and baseball games,” McGlothlin says. To conclude the tour, McGlothlin shows one of the guest rooms. A beige comforter with an ornate design covers the bed and provides a focal point for the room. The room is adorned with flowing, cream colored curtains. McGlothlin says some of the decor was found in antique shops, others simply bought at department stores and added to the rooms. The attention to detail in each room, from the embroidery on the pillow cases, to the immaculately devised color schemes, embodies a unique aura of elegance and class.

By the end of the tour, it is clear that The Priory may very well be one of the best-kept secrets in Pittsburgh. This hotel provides a charming, picturesque atmosphere that no Hilton or Marriott can match.

From its historic roots to its prime location on the culturally rich North Side, visitors can confidently agree that when it comes to relaxing getaways, The Priory puts Pittsburgh on the map.

“We offer a level of personal service that larger facilities can’t,” Graf says. “[If] you’re here, you get a distinct Pittsburgh experience.”
Stately Priory Hotel draws visitors

by Audra Taylor

Nestled on a quiet corner on Presley Street on Pittsburgh’s North Side, The Priory might appear to be just another quaint little hotel. On the contrary — the former monastery-turned-classic-turn-of-the-century-European-style hotel is one of Hotels.com’s “Top 10 Hidden Gems in the World.”

According to John Graf, part owner and director of operations at The Priory, the hotel outshines its competitors in several ways.

“The building itself is not something that can be recreated today,” Graf explains, noting the 14-foot-high ceilings and craftsmanship of the hotel’s interior. “[A]d there’s the history; the space here has served as a monastery for over 100 years.”

Graf describes The Priory’s ambiance as comparable with that of a late 19th century English manor. The building is remarkably preserved, and its interior is decorated with fine antiques that create a warm and comfortable setting.

A visitor’s mere presence in the hotel lobby seems to disrupt the calming silence of The Priory premises. Although quiet, the atmosphere of The Priory Hotel is welcoming. A guided tour with General Manager Tam McGothin begins with a visit to the hotel’s exquisite Grand Hall, which is located in an adjoining building, where many formal events — from weddings to banquets and formal receptions — are held each year.

The Grand Hall stands in the former St. Mary’s German Catholic Church, and is complete with breathtaking stained glass windows and towering Corinthian-style columns. The magnificence of the Grand Hall serves as a testament to the prestige of those who have been affiliated with its transformation. Andrew Carnegie donated half of the funding necessary to purchase a new grand organ for the hall in 1905. This organ stands atop the loft in the back of the Grand Hall, presenting a magnificent sight for visitors.

The St. Mary’s Parish, which was

...than the other six. Part of the concept of this one was...you could have a great meal, great conversation and great entertainment. Jack says the lounge has hosted some of the world’s best musicians and that the Halo family even graces the makeshift stage.

Larry points to his favorite seat in the whole place, upstairs where he can see all the performers, including customers that Jack invites to sing on Thursday nights in honor of an old Irish tradition.

“There’s a taxi driver that comes in here that has a lovely voice,” Larry says, laughing. Long before entering the restaurant business, Jack debuted as a drummer for the Cordells, who produced their first record under Steel Town Sound Records when Jack was 15. He officially traded in his paper (and vegetable) route for paid gigs, the first of which was a YMCA dance in Bellevue.

“We made, I think it was $3 a guy,” he says.

“Really?” Larry asks.

“I’m pretty sure it was $3 bucks, or $3.50, something like that. And I made over the years, Johnny Angel and the Halos,” Jack says.

Johnny Angel and the Halos have

...a hit.

By the mid-1970s, Johnny Angel was

...Johnny Angel and the Halos.

took my girlfriend, who later became my wife, down to Pizza Villa and spent $2.50 of my $3.50 on pizza and Pepsi. And I still have that first dollar framed,” Jack says, chuckling.

That must have been 1966, he says.

“Things were starting to change,” Jack explains. “Pittsburgh was known as the soul, rhythm and blues town. But when the Beatles broke in, it started to change and you were getting some rock and hard rock.”

The nine-piece horn band started to adapt, doing renditions of Joplin and Cocker with horn influence.

They changed the name of the Cordells to “Herman’s Marching Band.” The band dispersed in 1969, and Jack and a few others became part of a hard rock band called “Harombee.” The end of “Harombee” found Jack as a member of “Easy Street” and “Killjoy” until he rejoined a few of the original guys to form a lounge act called “Higher Up.”

As the music and members surrounding Jack’s career continued to change, one thing remained.

“Through all these bands, we did a skit called Johnny Angel and the Halos,” Jack explains. The skit was reminiscent of Jack’s days singing on the basketball court with band mates Gary “Bubba” Daley and the other North Side guys. By the mid-1970s, Johnny Angel was a hit.

“Everybody knew us at that point. We grew and a lot of the old members from the Cordells came back with us and we just went as Johnny Angel and the Halos,” Jack says.

“Over the years, Johnny Angel and the Halos became a staple in Pittsburgh,” Jack says, remembering performances with the Temptations, Four Tops and the Beach Boys.

His proudest moment came nearly 30 years later, when Mayor Luke Ravenstahl declared March 14, 2006, “Johnny Angel Day.”

“We still perform,” Jack says, pointing to a glossy promotional photo of him and his seven band mates. “All these guys are still with me.”

Johnny Angel and the Halos have stayed close to home, despite offers to move elsewhere.

Jack says the city, particularly the North Side, is just too much home to him to leave behind.

“I will never, ever leave the North Side,” he says.

He gets lost in nostalgia, remembering trips to Downtown in the street car, the Garden Theater, the YMCA program that meant a free lunch with chocolate pudding and, of course, taking pictures of each other sitting on the brass deer in West Park.

“If I could play in any city, I’d pick this one,” Jack says simply. “When Pittsburgh hugs you, they hug you hard and they don’t let go.”
In Florence, they have tiramisu; in Paris, they have Crème brûlée; but Pittsburgh’s North Side boasts a sweet treat that beats them all: ice balls.

Gus Kalaris, the man behind Gus and Yia Yia’s famous ice ball stand, is known throughout Pittsburgh for this frozen delicacy. On an especially warm October evening, he takes orders from a line of customers. A small crowd gathers around Gus’s cart in North Side’s West Park.

“Two orange and watermelon ice balls, please,” Gus says, “and we’ve sold just three items: ice balls, peanuts and popcorn.”

Well, everything but the prices have stayed the same. “We used to sell ice balls for 15 cents when we first started.” Now they’re a whopping 75 cents.

Gus’s father bought the business in 1934 for $175. When Gus turned 8, he started helping his dad.

“My dad taught me to pick up the ice over the snow, and to keep the area clean,” Gus recalls.

His father died in 1951, and soon Gus took over the business. Gus’s business model didn’t change, but the North Side community certainly did.

“It was a different story in the pre-World War II days,” Gus explains. “No one had automobiles. Mostly local people used to sell ice balls for 25 cents, Brown said."

In the mid 1950s, many inner-city residents that once lived in the North Side fled to the suburbs. Gus estimates that 60 – 70 percent of his current business comes from three or more miles away.

“Before, we got business from people just walking through the park. Now, people drive here from all over. We’re a destination,” he says.

More than just a destination, Gus’s ice ball stand serves as a Pittsburgh landmark that has a wide variety of devotees and regulars.

“We get junkies, cab drivers, winos, legislators, mayors, people from all walks of life come here. Some people come here every night. We start making their order before they even get here. Like her."

Gus points to a woman in her early 40s. She delicately enjoys what looks like an ice ball without any syrup.

“She asks for one cup of plain ice everyday!” says Michael, one of Gus’s workers. “Every day she gets the same thing.” Other customers prefer buying in bulk.

“Last week we had an order for 50 ice balls. A guy from Plum comes down here with a cooler,” Gus says matter-of-factly. “He freezes them when he gets home. He only eats one or two a week; he kind of ration them out.”

For Gus, loyal customers are the norm, not the exception. “We provide good service, and we have a good product,” he says. “We also have a following.”

A strong customer following has kept this family business going for 85 years. That’s tough for any business to accomplish, let alone one located on the North Side. Hit hard by depleted property value and failed urban renewal projects in the 1960s, the North Side has never fully recovered.

Gus stayed open for business throughout all the turbulence, offering his staple menu of treats no matter what happened. The community responded by coming back day after day.

“Right next door to the Garden was a restaurant called Gus’s,” Brown said. “We would go get a couple hot dogs, and then watch a movie.”

During the ’50s and ’60s, the Garden was just one of three neighborhood theaters in central North Side. After movies debuted Downtown, they would come into the neighborhood theaters for a second run. Kids could watch a movie for 1.3 cents and adults for 25 cents, Brown said.

And the theater was only one part of North Avenue. Brown remembers when people from the North Side didn’t have to go Downtown for anything — everything they needed was in their neighborhood. Restaurants and stores lined North Avenue and Federal Street, a couple clubs resided in West Park, and streetcars ran through central North Side.

“They are making a coffee house so I can have the honor of being served a Crazy Mocha. But an electrical contractor working on the renovations knows the main clientele of the coffee shop is going to come from the ‘professional business up the street and the hospital.” The regular denizens of West Street don’t seem too interested in the coffee selection Crazy Mocha offers. And Brown agrees.

“They are making a coffee house so I can have the honor of getting a 54 cup of coffee,” he said. It’s hard to argue that central North Siders need a caramel latte to start their day. In fact, Federal Street already has a coffee shop, JR’s coffee shop, a hometown business that survived the first round of urban development. It’s a busy place, and its clientele have been going there for years.

It is the same place JR’s that is the place central North Side used to be, and it is development like Crazy Mocha that signals to the place developers want the area to turn into. Brown is aware of things change, coffee shops come and go, but when important cornerstones in the community change into shopping malls and porn theaters, it is obvious what will happen to the neighborhood.

“I’m not a person who is against change, everything changes, ‘cept for the raindrops in the sky and the hummingbirds will sing,” Brown said. “But change seems to mean eliminate here.”
Community renewal sprouts at Garden Theater

by Sara Gaul

The movies posted on the marquee at the Garden Theater represent the neighborhood surrounding it. Before 1970, the marquee would not even have touted Frankenstein — owner Bennett Amdur thought the movie was too off color. After his death, the theater changed hands and, by 1973, the marquee invited passersby to check out Deep Throat.

Attendance at the North Avenue theater jumped from 30 to 300. It was almost as popular as when the theater first opened in 1915. But the popularity did not help the neighborhood thrive as it did when Amdur owned the theater, instead the neighborhood’s 300 guests aided in the deterioration of the neighborhood.

Of course you don’t want a porn theater in the middle of a business district. ... [It was] bringing down the block.

-Tom Hardy

But the new pornography theater was just one symptom of a bigger ailment. Urban developers overtook the North Side to develop highways and shopping malls in residential areas, which they hoped would give the neighborhood more life. Contrary to the developers’ intentions, however, the changes often empty houses, many of them with drywall-covered floors — either litter or a homeless person’s bed. Boards that cover ground-floor windows of the theater are painted green, yellow and pink, and provide the only color in an otherwise gloomy area.

“That block has been in bad shape for 15 years,” Hardy said. “[Amdur’s] theater just couldn’t make a go of it anymore.”

People vs. Development

Older community members have experienced it all. They remember what it was like to have a neighborhood theater right in their backyard. They remember what the block was like. And they remember the theater changing everything.

On a sunny afternoon, Walter Brown, 64, sits down on a porch stoop with a pack of Pall Malls to relive the history. He has lived on the North Side all his life, and only left a few times after high school, once to fight in Vietnam. The North Side he remembers is one where outsiders didn’t have to worry about venturing into the neighborhood from across the river — even if the colors of their clothes were “red, blue, green or orange.” Parents didn’t have to work two jobs to make ends meet. And kids had a place to go after school instead of a street corner.

Realtor has a lot for sale

North Side residential real estate consists of a mixture of small clapboard crack houses, projects, pretty-on-the-outside, but bad-on-the-inside Victorian townhouses, and used-to-be-$1-million mansions, many of which are now owned by institutions.

It seems that one realtor has a monopoly on these properties. His name ornaments all of the Howard Hanna “For Sale” signs. Karl Owens, 40 plus, slightly balding, pulls a business card out of his Louis Vuitton wallet.

It is a rainy evening on a cold October day, and Owens takes huge steps as he walks briskly down a sidewalk that has fall-colored leaves glued to its surface, heading toward one of his 40 listings.

“There are 17 neighborhoods in North Side, and this one is the most influential and wealthy neighborhoods of them all.”

The skeptic might recognize that this is something real estate agents everywhere always say. Not surprisingly, Owens does not stop there.

“It truly is the best location in Pittsburgh; it really is better than Shadyside and Squirrel Hill.”

His words are hard to believe, as both Squirrel Hill and Shadyside are among the most expensive and sought after styles, including Victorian, and pride themselves on having the lowest crime rates in Pittsburgh. Owens, however, does not consider his neighborhood dangerous, and repeats a tune that everyone in the surrounding area seems to sing when asked about the crime rate:

“It is a very calm place; I’ve lived here for 10 years, and I never had any problems.”

Two young moms with their toddlers running around invited drug dealers and gangs into the area, not families and children. “It’s a bigger ailment. Urban redevelopers overtook the North Side block,” Hardy said. “Amdur’s theater changed hands and, by 1973, the marquee invited passersby to check out Deep Throat. Attendance at the North Avenue theater jumped from 30 to 300. It was almost as popular as when the theater first opened in 1915. But the popularity did not help the neighborhood thrive as it did when Amdur owned the theater, instead the neighborhood’s 300 guests aided in the deterioration of the neighborhood.

The intersecting streets are empty after the women and their neighbors head for dinner, and kids disappear. Only a few people walk down them, and the impression of a great location ends as fast as it began. Just down the road, the neighboring streets feature much smaller, often empty houses, many of them with drywall-covered windows.

“Mine was a little bit more expensive,” Owens says, nodding at his Victorian mansion — “in the upper $800,000 range.”

The prices of houses like this Victorian mansion could easily sell for $2 million in a better location — they are diamonds in the rough. No other location in Pittsburgh offers such property treasures like this one with price tags this low.

Owens’s mansion is breathtaking, with its marble entrance, high tin ceiling with gold crown moldings, heavy wooden floors, ornamental wallpapers, multiple fireplaces and wood carved walls. The lavashness of this place is overwhelming. It feels like the house has its own soul, or maybe it is haunted.

“Haunted? Not that I know of,” Owens says. “I lived in three haunted houses. I could tell; they have a very strong energy about them.”

Owens is ceasing how much history many North Side houses witnessed over the last 150 years, it seems to be possible. And the house does have a unique atmosphere.

“I see movement in the corner of my eyes, and my animals always stare at one place by the window,” he admits.

He does not elaborate as his next appointment calls, and he storms out the door and jumps into his company-marked Mercedes. The North Side real estate market treats him well, and he is not afraid to admit it.
Pastor's congregation flocks to the North Side

by Neil McElhone

Pastor Blaine Workman

Photo by OTB staff

P

astor Blaine Workman walks through the double-doors at the Allegheny Center Christian Alliance's Union Hall on a beautiful Sunday morning and is greeted graciously. Known affectionately as Pastor Blaine, or simply Pastor, it takes him nearly 10 minutes to walk the two dozen steps from the entrance to the elevator. Everyone wants to shake his hand and say hello, which is not unusual. The surprise is who is lining up to shake hands with Workman.

“When I get here, the congregation was about 400 people, and almost none of them were from the neighborhood,” Workman says. “Just suburbanites, white folks and white hair.” That description hardly fits the crowd gathered in the Union Hall for an after-service luncheon.

Workman is the administrative pastor at ACAC, the behind-the-scenes conductor to an evangelical locomotive that has grown larger and larger in its 23-year tenure. While churches across the region have struggled with diminishing attendance, ACAC has seen its congregation grow significantly not only in size, but also in communal footprint.

This weekend, Workman expects more than 3,000 parishioners to attend six services held in the sanctuary or chapel.

“We want to bring people together from all walks of life, and I think you really get that here,” Workman says. “I think people come here to see God’s work in bringing all these people together, and they think, ‘This is what it’s supposed to be like.’”

Workman’s conclusion may be right on the money. A quick glance into a Sunday service shows some 700 people of varied ethnic backgrounds, ages and social statuses.

A variable melting pot of Pittsburgh’s North Side. So what is bringing all these people to church?

“We’re teaching people’s lives in real ways — health, finance, and faith,” Workman says. “And it’s in the community.”

ACAC’s mission statement is “Following Jesus in Diverse Community,” an appropriate objective for a faith community in a neighborhood already teeming with diversity. Under Workman’s tenure, ACAC runs a slew of ministries and programs to benefit the neighborhood, its members and the community. Ministries for children, young adults and families work to improve one’s relationship with God, complement development programs, counseling and global missions extend past the sanctuary walls.

But doing God’s work isn’t always easy in a neighborhood like the North Side.

Finally, the man walked out to his car and returned with a .45 automatic. He said he didn’t need to press the button this time. Mullin knew the guy — everybody knows everybody, he says — so he took the bullets out of the gun while the drunken man scrolled through the tunes to find his song one last time.

Mullin remembers pressing the button and reveling in the glory of getting the last laugh.

That is, until he heard gunshots and shattered glass.

“You think I only carry one clip?” the guy asked.

Mullin didn’t have any music for a while, but he and the guys had one more story to laugh about on the weekends.

Some things at Mullin’s have never changed.

“Being that we’re all retired, time’s on our side now,” Westman says. “Irish,” sit across from each other at a table by the window, laughing to himself since he already knows the punch line.

“I liked working better,” Irish admits in his quiet, thick Irish accent. “I sold the chair, I sold the table, and sold the hat,” Westman says, laughing.

“Jimmy, they’re nuns! What’re you nuts?” Mullin asked him later. “They were up there having a party in the parking lot,” Mullin says. “We weren’t businessmen. We’d buy beer for $10 and sell it for $7,” Jimmy Westman says.

“We weren’t businessmen. We’d buy beer for $10 and sell it for $7,” Jimmy Westman says.

“We were all Teamsters... This was the unofficial union hall of the North Side,” Mullin explains.

And the North Side had a lot of unions.

“Eighty percent of the unions in this city have or had a North Side office,” Mullin explains. Even now, lawyers and judges and anyone with a campaign sign are likely to make their way down to Mullin’s Diner at some point. Or, they stop in for a beer.

Jimmy’s brother, “Big Cat” Pat Mullin, brought the bar to life recently, opening every Wednesday through Saturday night. On Sundays, the diner opens bright and early, but there’s still enough beer for the football games.

The Irish

In the old days, Sundays were partially reserved for meetings of the American Irish Republican Army (AIRA), since its official club on Penn Avenue closed.

“We wouldn’t let the girls in. We’d buy beer for $10 and sell it for $7,” Jimmy Westman says.

Westman and Jimmy Gallagher, who goes by the nickname “Irish,” sit across from each other at a table by the window, just like they do every week.

“Being that we’re all retired, time’s on our side now,” Westman laughs.

“I liked working better,” Irish admits in his quiet, thick Irish accent. “I didn’t do that much work; I was a driver.”

Irish and Westman talk about the big game coming up on Saturday — Notre Dame versus Pitt — and the tailgate Mullin’s will have in the parking lot. They might go, they decide, since it’s been such a warm November.

“That’s an age thing, huh Jim?” Westman asks. “He’s thinking about the cold.”

Talk of the AIRA and a Notre Dame tailgate doesn’t seem the least bit out of place here. The seven stools that line the width of the building face Progress Street.

The entrance to Mullin’s is double glass doors, covered in announcements and promotions, which face the corner where the diner sits. The building stretches down Chesbro Street, with six windows and a steel back door. A couple windows and the width of the building face Progress Street.

Westman says he set up outside around 10 a.m., wearing a straw hat he had left at the bar another night. Some of the movie crew came by to ask if the joint was open. Westman said sure, they could have whatever they wanted to drink. He served them shots that filled up half of an 8-ounce glass.

“They were up there having a party in the parking lot,” Workman says. “They put it away, we had a good day.”

Mullin came out and asked where his table had gone. Westman, a richer man now, pointed up to the crew in the parking lot.

“I sold the chair, I sold the table, and sold the hat,” Westman says, laughing.

“Some of the things,” Westman trails off, “I’ll tell ya...”

And he will. Any one of the guys at Mullin’s will. All you have to do is stop in.

Every time we’d get drunk, we’d remodel the bar.

-Jimmy Mullin

One Saturday...

Mullin would tell whoever left last to lock up, but they usually didn’t need to. The Clown, a bar regular who lived in Monroeville, spent most of his nights curled up on top of the bar.

Some of the other guys would pull a few tables up next to the heater and spend the night sometimes, too, Mullin says.

“Once, Mullin remembers checking on Westman and finding him talking to Sister Michelle O’Leary, the grand marshal of the parade, and two other nuns.

“They got money!” Westman replied.

“Jimmy, they’re nuns! What’re you nuts?” Mullin asked him later.

“They got money?” Westman replied.

“One Saturday...”

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“They got money?” Westman replied.
Blue Collar  
*Jimmy Mullin’s joint a gathering place for cops, workingmen*

**Jimmy Mullin’s Diner** sits on the corner of Progress and Chestro on the North Side, opposite the run-down Allegheny Playhouse and the scrap yard owned by George Warhola, Andy Warhola’s nephew.

Two police cars are parked outside, but that’s not unusual for a Thursday morning. Inside, three police officers share coffee and breakfast next to a family with two toddlers. Men in suits and retired union workers share tables, coffee creamers and stories.

**THE GENERAL**

The statue known as The General guards the door of Mullin’s Diner, just like he has since the early ’80s. “He’s my only loyal employee,” Jimmy Mullin says. “Shows up every day.”

Mullin, who bought the building to open a bar in 1978, met The General at Meadows Race Track after a photo-finish race left Mullin out of the money. “They out and out robbed me,” Mullin says as he recounts the day. So he returned the favor. “I put my arm around it and I just walked it out,” Mullin says.

At first, The General stood outside the bar to let everyone know that it was open, but the neighboring North Side bar owners never let him stand guard for long. “I’d come down late at night, The General would be gone,” Mullin says. “We’d have to ride around and find the freakin’ General. They’d take him in — give him a bath and so on.”

They tried to move his post to the roof, but the weather got the best of him, Mullin says. “He’s been rebubbed and beat up” — much like the bar itself.

**We weren’t businessmen.**

*We’d buy beer for $10 and sell it for 7.*

---

**Jimmy Westman**

**THE CHANGES**

A 1993 flood ruined the original wooden building, and after failed attempts to stay open, Mullin rebuilt and reopened it as a diner. That wasn’t the first time the building had seen changes.

“Every time we’d get drunk, we’d remodel the bar,” Mullin laughs, pointing to the different places in the building where the bar stood through the years.

They went through a couple heaters and jukeboxes, too. When winter hit the bar and there was no furnace, Mullin went across the street to the scrap yard and George Warhola gave him a blowtorch. Problem solved. “We had it sitting in the hall blowing heat,” Jimmy says. It worked fine, until it caught the attention of two firemen friends.

“You’re gonna blow the freakin’ North Side up,” they told Mullin, “Get that out of here!”

Mullin assured them he would take care of it, but the firemen decided it was best handled more formally.

“We were shut down for a while, so we came up with a new plan: we got space heaters.”

The old jukebox sat in the back, and there was a button behind the bar that skipped whatever song was on. One night, Mullin kept pressing the button to reject a song that one man insisted on playing.

**Pastor Blaine Workman**

*Once our children’s ministry sent the kids home with a task for the week: construct a practice golf hole in the backyard with your father and practice.”

It was meant to get the kids to spend time with their dads.

“At times, it was a failure. We’re talking about the city, not everyone is blessed with both parents and a backyard. Some of the kids had no idea what golf was,” Workman says. “We had to change the curriculum.”

ACAC also collaborates with community development programs, and offers counseling and global missions.

Groups such as Light of Life and L.I.V.I.N.G. Ministry give food, shelter and clothing to homeless in Pittsburgh while passing along God’s word. The North Side Christian Health Center, which provides primary health care and non-medical social services to unemployed and working families living in North Side neighborhoods, was started 15 years ago with Workman and the ACAC’s support.

**I think people come here … and they think, ‘This is what it’s supposed to be like.’**

---

**Blaine Workman**

*We send missionaries to countries in Africa to work with orphanages because it’s so dangerous for children there, especially young girls,” Workman explains. “The journeys are so powerful, especially on young people. They feel like Publisher’s Clearing House by giving a child a blanket.”

Amy Benn went on a short-term mission trip to Kenya, where she and her husband worked in a hospital. She said she was touched by the faith of those she met. “[T]hese people wear their love for Christ on their sleeve. You hear it in the greetings; you see it in their churches; you feel it in the easy friendships that are made.”

“Close to home, Workman is working to clean up the North Side’s image. In 2009, he approved the church’s purchase of an area bar that he calls a nuisance bar. Leonard Butler, who owned the property called Rebel’s Bar, told the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review he was glad to sell the property and that, “the drugs are ridiculous down there, I can’t deal with it anymore.”

Workman saw another opportunity when Nikki Heckman, a member of the Christian Alliance’s food service operation came to him with an idea for a restaurant. With the help of Pastor Blaine and ACAC, she opened Bistro-To-Go on the North Side’s East Ohio Street.

We tell the Pittsburgh Business Journal, “I wouldn’t have done it without the church.”

Whether extending a helping hand to the needy in Africa, or eyeing commercial real estate, Workman works his hardest for what he feels is a better community.

“I’d rather put money toward ministry before mortars,” he says.

And supporters are lining up to thank him.

“We have people moving back into the city to be closer to the neighborhood; they want to be a part of what’s going on here,” Workman says. “I think that really speaks to how people feel about what we’re doing.”
For the birds
Erin Estell is friend, guardian to aviary’s penguins  
by Jennifer Stough

The bold-faced words National Aviary stand out on the black background of Erin Estell’s hooded sweater as she sits on the edge of a trickling fountain outside the building’s entrance.

Starting with his one good eye, Barkley the Eastern Screech Owl silently watches from his perch on Erin’s gloved index finger. Although he’s just slightly larger than a softball, Barkley’s presence silently demands attention, which passing visitors are more than willing to give him. As the little bird casually observes his audience with his piercing green eye, his handler narrates the story of how he became a well-known resident at the National Aviary on North Side.

“We don’t know how it happened, but he lost the sight in one of his eyes in the wilderness,” Erin says. “He spent time at other conservatories before coming here. Now, he’s the ambassador for his species; we take him to schools for presentations.”

Bird handling is only one of Erin’s responsibilities as the Assistant Director of Animal Programs and the spokesperson for the National Aviary. She also works with administrators and staff members to coordinate interactive programs, supervises the construction at the Aviary, and visits schools with some of the Aviary’s residents, like Barkley.

A bell softly jingles as Erin walks through the door into the Aviary to put Barkley back in his exhibit. The warbled greetings of Zane and Earl, two Gray African parrots, respond from down the hall.

A group of teenagers crowds around the cage and encourages Zane and Earl to speak. An elderly couple walks past them and stops at an exhibit housing stellar sea eagles, whose white feathers carpet the ground of their home. Standing on a grounded branch like a pair of proud emperors, two bald eagles in an outside exhibit watch the curious visitors.

Erin pushes open a door located to the right of the bald eagles and steps outside to the African Penguin exhibit, whose construction she supervised. A small horde of teenage boys...
At the age of 65, Marirose Radelet does more than most 30-year-olds. Radelet has lived on the North Side for more than 37 years, and she has been active in the region since she moved in. Living in the Mexican War Streets neighborhood, has helped her to appreciate both the camaraderie that exists among her neighbors and the feeling that the neighborhood exists on its own.

“I was always involved because I couldn’t keep my mouth shut,” Radelet says. “I want to make a difference, and I can.”

Her daughter, Sara Radelet, says that her mother always tried to get her and her siblings involved.

“There’s been a lot of community involvement since my parents moved in,” she says. “It’s how we were all brought up.”

In 1981, Radelet founded the Central North Side Reading is FUNdamental (now Pittsburgh Reading is FUNdamental). She got the idea from a neighbor who sat on her front steps and read books to neighborhood children. She later asked the kids to bring their own books to read, but she found out that many of them did not have any books of their own. Radelet was able to take her neighbor’s idea and put it to action.

“Sometimes I am a mother and an athletic trainer. She enjoys working as a trainer for North Side football programs, but she says that the program has to deal with the harsh reality of its inner-city location.

Pittsburgh Neighborhoods Project: North Side

Activist fights for forgotten

by John Bojarski

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Crusader fights to restore neighborhood’s luster

by Sara Gaul

About 40 years ago, 12-year old Michael Glass walked into Olga Snyder’s Bookstore at 1107 Federal St. in the North Side looking for a part-time job. He worked there for four years cleaning the store for 25 cents an hour. Now the store is gone, the building remains vacant, and the thriving Federal Street of the ’60s is lined with boarded-up buildings and run-down shops.

When Glass left Pittsburgh after high school, he left a booming neighborhood. When he came back to Pittsburgh in 1995, the North Side had drastically changed. “Federal Street, North Avenue, and Brighton Road corridor were all young metropolises,” Glass said. “I came back and it was dead.” Now Glass, 56, works to bring back the glamour of the North Side. His daily job is executive director of Northside Common Ministries, a small nonprofit food pantry and men’s shelter. He also serves as a co-chair at Pittsburgh UNITED, an organization designed to ensure that communities prosper from development around them.

And, if that’s not enough, he is the spokesman for Northside United, a subsidiary of Pittsburgh UNITED, and the spokesman for a North Side Community Benefits Agreement (CBA). A CBA would give the North Side community a chance to influence development around them.

Glass says development is not a bad thing, especially when it’s on a grassroots level, like building coffee shops or museums. Development should enhance the livability of the community and benefit the people living there, he said, and CBAs should be attached to development.

“On Saturdays, as a kid, I used to go to the Aviary,” Glass said. “The Aviary, the Children’s Museum, the Mattress Factory… these add to the community.”

A high school friend and a colleague, Will Thompkins, worked with Glass on many of the same North Side projects for the past five years. Thompkins is the community outreach director for the Pittsburgh Project, a nonprofit focused on young people in the community. He said he knows Glass will do anything to help.

“He is enhancing the quality of life for everyone,” Thompkins said. “He is a respected individual in the community.”

Many of Glass’ projects focus on development in the community because he saw two development projects that uprooted families around him, and he does not want that to happen again. The first project, the Urban Renewal, forced his own family to move from their house. In 1964, plans to demolish the Manchester section of North Side circulated. More than 500 old buildings and homes would be torn down and replaced with newer homes, offices and a shopping mall called Allegheny Center, according to an article published in the Post-Gazette in 2000.

Glass, a third grader at the time, and his family lived in Manchester. One of the last families forced to leave the area, they watched their neighborhood fall down around them.

“I remember men, fathers in the neighborhood being just angry,” Glass recalled, “angry at how this was being done to them.”

The shopping center now resides where families once lived, children once played and adults once worked. In a neighborhood where kids would walk to school and adults would walk to work, a whole lifestyle was uprooted by development.

I remember men, fathers in the neighborhood being just angry, angry at how this was being done to them.

-Michael Glass

The development along the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers, an area that is part of the North Side but is referred to on highway signs as the “North Shore,” mirrors the Urban Renewal. Through the building of stadiums and a casino, thousands of people were displaced and a community was destroyed.

“The North Shore brings a positive economic impact, and I am pleased it brought jobs…” Glass said. “I am displeased that they took something from us and has given us almost nothing in return.”

It is important for Glass to help form a community where people want to live and raise their children. Glass and his wife Carolyn believe the North Side is a good place to raise a family. Although they did not raise all of their 10 kids on the North Side, they are raising their youngest there now.

“We have a very busy family life, with two children with profound disabilities and two elementary school-age children,” Carolyn said, “but since we’re a partnership, I’m able to be home when he’s not.”

With all the community work he does, it is almost like Glass has 11 children. And he attends to the impoverished areas of the North Side like he would a sick child.

From Glass’ office at Northside Common Ministries, he can throw a stone and hit the North Shore, with its big businesses and thriving economy. If he throws a stone in the opposite direction, he could hit his beloved community, which is stricken with poverty and virtually no business.

“The absolute disparity in wealth is frightening and sad,” he said. “The arch-rivalry [between the North Shore and the North Side] is an unfortunate result of developing land between the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers. Focus was on what can we do to build economy. They absolutely disregarded neighborhood.”

With 18 different neighborhoods, the North Side is a diverse place. And Glass tries to represent that in his projects.

“He is looking at representing classes, diversities,” Thompkins said. “Michael’s style, Michael’s passion is just that, whether he is in the North Side or not.”