

the Bulletin

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Finish line ahead: 'Garfield Highlands' housing development

By Joe Reuben *Bulletin contributor*

Garfield - After seven years of planning and continuous problem-solving, the residential project known as "Garfield Highlands" is finally nearing completion.

Gatesburg Road Development, a company based in State College, PA, partnered with the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) in building 25 single-family, rental homes spread across 10 different blocks in Garfield.

Andy Haines, a vice-president with the development firm, recently told *The Bulletin*: "It's been a long, sometimes difficult road to get where we are today. But we're happy that the finish line is in sight, and that people could be moving in as soon as mid-January."

The project, which entailed assembling
See **Garfield Highlands** | page 2



ABOVE: Garfield neighbors and BGC staffers help TreeVitalize experts plant trees at Healcrest Green, where goats maintain the grounds by grazing on a variety of invasive plants. See more of the arboreal action on page 11. Photo by Vania Arthur.

Volunteers grow Bloomfield tradition, serve hundreds on Thanksgiving Eve

By Alan Guenther *Bulletin contributor, BGC Board Member*

Bloomfield - More than 200 people enjoyed the 49th annual Thanksgiving Eve dinner, served by "Friends of Albright Church," on Wednesday, Nov. 22.

"They're all saints," said Randy Fehl, 68, about the volunteers who served the holiday meal. A retired landscaper living in Wilkinsburg, Fehl said this was the fourth year he had attended the dinner.

In an interview with *The Bulletin*, he passed along his verdict on the turkey, yams, green beans, and bread piled high on his plate: "Delicious!"

According to her mother, six-year-old Corrine Schubert was so hard-at-work with dessert service that a guest asked if she ever smiled.

"Of course! But I am taking my job tonight very seriously!" Corrine responded, according to her mother, Jessica Palitti, one of the volunteer servers.

Adrienne Schubert, eight years old, said she can't wait to serve the meal next year. Six-year-old Bridget Bevan drove with her parents all the way from Delaware

See **Albright** | page 4



ABOVE: State Rep. La'Tasha D. Mayes (at left) makes a donation to the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) during the 'Aggie Awards' luncheon on Friday, Nov. 3. Read more about the BGC's annual fundraiser on page 3. Photo by Heather Mull.

- PAGE 5 -

GARFIELD COMMUNITY FARM
EMBRACES WINTER SOLSTICE

'CELEBRATION HALL' RECASTS
OLD LARIMER SCHOOL BUILDING

- PAGE 10 -

Garfield Highlands *continued from page 1*



ABOVE: This 'Garfield Highlands' double house is in the 200 block of North Aiken Avenue. Photo by Rick Swartz.

29 different parcels, features 11 two-bedroom homes and 14 three-bedroom homes; these dwellings are intended for households of two or more people, none of whom can have an annual income that is greater than \$65,100 (for a family of five).

"These limits are set by the PA Housing Finance Agency," Haines related. "We are benefiting from the allocation of federal tax credits that the agency awarded us in 2021, after three tries."

The tax credits are being purchased by a private investor, who will then contribute roughly \$7.5 million in cash to the project, according to Haines. Those funds will not have to be repaid because the investor will enjoy the use of the tax credits for the first 15 years of the development.

Haines went on to say that three of the homes are reserved for people whose annual income is \$18,080 or less (for a

family of three). Another 12 units have to be leased to households at 50% or less of median income for the region, and the remaining 10 homes for those at 60% or less of median income.

Rents will range from \$201 to \$1,073 per month for a 2-bedroom unit, and from \$985 to \$1232 per month for a three-bedroom home. Tenants who have rent subsidy vouchers from the City's Housing Authority will be able to utilize them in paying their monthly rents.

In addition to the tax credits from the state agency, the City's Urban Redevelopment Authority chipped in with a \$1.25 million loan, and the BGC is making a \$590,000 loan to the project from a grant that it's scheduled to receive from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh.

That award was originally announced in December of 2020, an indication of how long it has taken Gatesburg and the BGC

to reach this point in the project.

Mistick Construction, based in the city's Northside, actually broke ground on the development in March, months before the two partners had wrapped up the purchase of all of the targeted lots, according to Haines.

"Of the 29 parcels, 28 had to come through the City of Pittsburgh or the Urban Redevelopment Authority. The process started out fairly well in 2016," Haines explained, "but as time wore on, it became harder and harder to move the properties to the stage where the City could give us clear title. In fact, we came close to having the project collapse altogether last year when one lot got lodged in a dispute (before Common Pleas Court) over who the rightful owner was."

Citizens Bank provided a construction loan to the project, which will be repaid from cash that the tax-credit investor provides to the project. In addition, Dollar Bank sponsored the grant award from the Federal Home Loan Bank, which comes from a pool of funds made up of annual contributions from the banks themselves.

Haines said that, in year 16 of the development's lease-up, the tenants occupying the 25 homes at that time will have the opportunity to purchase their homes "at a price well below what it cost to build them."

"I'm not sure I'll be around to see that," Haines predicted, "but that one-year window for tenants to buy their homes is set in stone. I'm excited for those who will take advantage of that opportunity to become homeowners." ♦

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BGC receives big check at 'Aggie Awards' luncheon

By Pamela Schön Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Perspective/Downtown - If you didn't attend the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation's (BGC) annual "Aggie Awards" luncheon, you missed a wonderful and uplifting event at the Omni William Penn Hotel on Friday, Nov. 3.

The BGC honored four powerful and inspiring women who have given so much energy to the local community. Anqwenique, Heather McElwee, Sheila Ali, and Janera Solomon have taught us all to lean in while doing the work, and to encourage others as we do it.

The highlight of the luncheon was our keynote speaker, State Representative La'Tasha D. Mayes, a trailblazer in Pennsylvania politics and the first woman to represent House District 24, which includes Garfield and the Penn Avenue corridor.

After delivering words of encouragement about the work that we do, Rep. Mayes presented the BGC with a check for \$20,000.

This generous gift came as a surprise, not only to those in attendance, but also to Executive Director Rick Swartz and the entire BGC staff. We are grateful for our representative's generosity and support, and we're already thinking of how we can best support the community with this donation.

Thank you, Rep. Mayes, for your commitment to Garfield!

The luncheon, which represents a large part of our local fundraising efforts, relies on the support of many organizations that sponsor the Aggie Awards.

Thank you to our 2023 sponsors: Beacon Communities, LLC; Highmark; Giant Eagle Foundation; Mistick Construction; UPMC; The Learning Place; Duolingo; PNC Bank; BOOM Concepts; Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh; Wagner Agency, Inc.; Module; Bridgeway Capital; First National Bank; Flaherty & O'hara; PJ Maloney; Goehring, Rutter & Boehm; Pedantic Arts Residency; Opportunity Fund; Pittsburgh Glass Center; mossArchitects; Sitko Bruno, LLC; Morningside Church Of God In Christ; Gatesburg Road Development; Children's Home Of Pittsburgh; Compass Real Estate; Two Frays Brewery; Citizens Bank; and Trace Brewing. ♦

BELOW: Luncheon guests listen to State Representative La'Tasha D. Mayes' keynote speech. The Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation hosted its annual fundraising event at the Omni William Penn Hotel on Nov. 3. See more of the action on page 7. Photo by Heather Mull.



the Bulletin

Serving Pittsburgh's East End neighborhoods since 1975

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

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

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Thank You!

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Albright *continued from page 1*

County - six hours in cold, steady rain - to help stock the tables with pumpkin pies and clean coffee mugs. She served beverages and took away dirty dishes, said her mother and father, Megan and Andrew Bevan, who also helped serve dinner.

Cecil Foreman, 69, who lives in East Liberty, said he had been coming to the Thanksgiving dinner for about three years, after retiring from working at Shadyside Hospital as a housekeeper.

“The people are good. The food’s good,” he said with a smile as he prepared to hoist a piece of juicy turkey on a fork.

The Annual Albright Community Thanksgiving Eve Dinner has evolved over the years. It started as a Boy Scout project 49 years ago and has continued every year since. Through a Go Fund Me drive, organizers raised more than \$5,000 this year to make the meal possible, said organizer Lindsay Patross, who started as a volunteer dishwasher eight years ago and hasn’t missed a dinner since.

Guests from all walks of life enjoy the food, said Patross. Neighbors, college students, unhoused residents - all are welcome to participate in the spirit of the holiday.

The Albright Church building, on the corner of Centre Avenue and South Graham Street, has recently been purchased and renovated by Arch Masonry & Restoration (headquartered on Dargan Street in Bloomfield), Patross said. The new owners are hoping that a nonprofit group will use the space. For about the past 15 years, Albright has hosted the dinner in the fellowship hall of the First United Methodist Church, whose pastor, Tracy Cox, welcomed the guests and servers.

Abass Kamara and his family have worked to make the dinner possible for more than 30

BELOW: Volunteer event organizers Abass Kamara (left) and Matthew Conti reflect on their successful teamwork. Photo by Alan Guenther.



ABOVE: Neighbors gather for tasty turkey and side dishes during the annual ‘Friends of Albright Church’ dinner on Wednesday, Nov. 22. Photo by Alan Guenther.



ABOVE: Randy Fehl (at right), a retired landscaper living in Wilkinsburg, prepares to enjoy Albright’s free holiday meal. Photo by Alan Guenther.

years. For him, as chair of the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, he believes it’s important to fight food insecurity in Pittsburgh.

Back on the serving line, David Kadosh, Heidi O’Connor Garth, and her daughter, Kennedy, were dishing up the green beans and sweet potatoes. Kadosh, who lives in the city’s Greenfield section and is a liability claims advisor for FedEx, said the meal was a way to “put some smiles on some faces.

“It’s rewarding,” he said. “It’s nice to give back. I’m very fortunate and very blessed.”

Said Heidi Garth: “We do it every year. It’s a nice way to start off the holidays. It’s great to see all these people, so nice, so warm and happy.”

Reach Alan Guenther at guenthera30@gmail.com. ♦

- see more photos on page 14 -

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Embracing the season: Winter Solstice celebration at Garfield Community Farm

By Stephanie Bell *Garfield Community Farm*

Insight/Garfield - As winter winds weave their way through the landscape, Garfield Community Farm (509 Wicklow St.) extends a heartfelt invitation for all to partake in a Winter Solstice celebration on Thursday, Dec. 21, from 5 to 6 p.m.

An astronomical event marking the shortest day and longest night of the year, the Winter Solstice carries a significance that transcends cultural boundaries.

It symbolizes the rebirth of sunlight, symbolizing hope and renewal as the days gradually lengthen. This celestial occurrence has been celebrated throughout history as a moment of transition - a turning point that resonates with the cyclical nature of life.

At Garfield Community Farm, this celebration takes on a deeper meaning, emphasizing the interconnectedness of nature and community.

The free event will commence with a guided meditation, inviting participants to reflect on the symbolic significance of the solstice. It is a time to embrace the stillness of winter, acknowledging the introspective beauty that the season offers.

A candlelit walk through the farm grounds

will encapsulate the essence of the Winter Solstice. Illuminated by the soft glow of candles, participants will travel from darkness to light, mirroring the journey of the sun during this pivotal moment in the Earth's orbit through the solar system.

Beyond this celestial spectacle, the event fosters a sense of community. In the spirit of the season, a communal bonfire becomes the focal point, offering warmth and a space for sharing stories.

The tradition of roasting "s'mores" not only provides a delightful treat but also serves as a reminder of the simple joys of togetherness, even in the coldest of seasons.

Garfield Community Farm's Winter Solstice celebration is more than just a seasonal gathering.

It provides an opportunity for everyone to connect with nature's rhythms, and with each other - and it underscores the importance of mindfulness, reflection, and community-building.

Join us as we celebrate the Winter Solstice, a time-honored event that invites us to embrace the beauty of the changing seasons. ♦



ABOVE: Visitors commune with the changing seasons during a Winter Solstice celebration at Garfield Community Farm (509 Wicklow St.). This year, the free neighborhood event is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 21, from 5 to 6 p.m. Photo courtesy of AJ Monsma.

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Year in review: Assemble programs back on track in 2023

By Alex Bastianini *Assemble*



ABOVE: Kids enjoy collaborating on projects at Assemble (4824 Penn Ave.), where program attendance levels have increased throughout 2023. Photo by Alex Bastianini.

Perspective/Garfield - As the end of 2023 is quickly approaching, Assemble is looking back on an incredible year.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic three years ago, Assemble has been struggling to bounce back to pre-pandemic attendance.

While the pandemic stirred countless struggles that persist in education, 2023 marks not only a partial recovery in attendance, but also proof that we can all bounce back from difficult times stronger than before.

For everyone here at Assemble (4824 Penn Ave.), this has been a positive year,

full of recovery and collaboration. Our 2023 impact report indicates there was a sharp decline in participation in Assemble programs in 2020, but that attendance figures are now nearly restored.

While the recovery process has not been easy, our off-site programs - which surged to new heights in 2021 - set a new attendance record this year.

A special “thank you” goes out to everyone who continues to support Assemble.

Through financial support, the STEAM education organization has been able to bring on Finance & Operations Manager

Alonso Diaz; Adult Learning Coordinator Evelyn Lienhard; Off-Site Curriculum Coordinator Veronica Green; Assemble’s first full-time teacher, Zim Syed; and Ramp-Up coordinator Emily Armstrong.

Program attendance, especially for our in-house programs, remains in recuperation. However, off-site programs are enjoying growth that surpasses the past two incredible years. Also, thanks to Evelyn Lienhard’s hard work, adult programs have grown significantly.

In addition, Assemble is actively building community by teaming up with Legacy Arts Project, Creative Citizens, and Associated Artists of Pittsburgh. Together, the four woman-run nonprofits are dedicated to creating equitable access to arts and education for each of their communities.

In 2023, Assemble has benefited from partnerships with the generous grantors at R.K. Mellon Foundation, PWC, Tides Foundation, and Arconic Foundation.

Working with the Equity Impact Center, Assemble has embarked on a contract to begin the ideation process for the Center for Teaching Artists, as part of the organization’s 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

Backed by funding from the Heinz Endowments and the Claude Washington Benedum Foundation, Assemble has been able to help teach young professionals how to screen-print and customize clothing during the Duolingo “Creator Day.”

Assemble has also shared its pedagogy and teaching techniques at development sessions with Andy Warhol Museum and Carnegie Art Museum staffers.

Assemble is able to enter the second year of the Ramp-Up fellowship - funded by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, thanks to Partner4Work - even though the 2020 pandemic marred the initial strategy to introduce the fellowship for aspiring teaching artists.

After several challenging years, Assemble is excited to thank everyone who helps support its mission: building confidence through making and giving everyone the tools needed to create a brighter future.

As a friendly reminder, Assemble’s transformative work would not be possible without help from incredible community members like you. If you are interested in donating to Assemble, please visit [Assemblegh.kindful.com](https://assemblegh.kindful.com). ♦

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ABOVE: Accomplished vocalist and arts educator Anqwenique, of BOOM Concepts, takes a moment to recognize the city's emerging artists while accepting her Aggie Award on Nov. 7.

BELOW: BGC Board President Jarnele Fairclough accents the festivities with a smile, and her custom decorations, next to a sketch of the late Aggie Brose.



ABOVE: Aggie Award winners gather with friends and family for a 'victory portrait' at the Omni William Penn Hotel.



ABOVE: Sheila Ali, pioneer of the Irma Freeman Center for Imagination, takes home a 2023 Aggie Award.

BELOW: Sean Beauford, who works in community engagement for Duolingo, listens to Rep. Mayes' keynote speech.



Bloomfield Garfield Corporation's Annual Winter Coat Drive

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Neighborhood FOCUS

Back to square one: Zoning Board rejects 'Bloomfield Square' proposal

A Message from the Bloomfield Development Corporation

Bloomfield - In early November, the Pittsburgh Zoning Board of Adjustment issued its decision regarding Echo Realty's proposed development of 4401 Liberty Avenue [the former ShurSave store, and current site of Community Market].

With the rejection of the requested variances, the site's future remains uncertain. As an organization, Bloomfield Development Corporation (BDC) envisions a Bloomfield where everyone can build a home, a business, and a future. Here at BDC, we are concerned that the zoning board decision makes that vision harder to accomplish.

The inclusion of a grocery store was, and continues to be, a top concern for BDC. We were thrilled to get a commitment about including a new grocery store at this site, as part of the development proposal put forth by Echo Realty. Previous development proposals included no grocery store due to uncertainty about the viability of a new grocer at the site.

Our primary concern going forward is whether Echo would still see the viability of a full-service grocery store at this site without the accompanying residential density that would have added a significant customer base [living above the store]. Grocery stores, like any business, require a strong base of local customers. The unfortunate reality is that the current grocery store property was developed for a neighborhood that had three times as many residents as Bloomfield does today.

'Given this decision, we are uncertain what options Echo Realty may consider for development, or how long the Community Market will continue to operate.'

Bloomfield needs housing, particularly affordable housing. Thanks to the Inclusionary Zoning overlay that BDC fought for, this proposal could have significantly increased the number of income-restricted, affordable units available in the neighborhood.

The proposal would have also added a significant number of units that could alleviate pressures elsewhere in the neighborhood, where a growing number of households competes for a stagnant housing supply.

From 2010 to 2020, the rate of increase in Bloomfield households significantly outpaced the rate of increase in housing units (9.19% and 5.24%, respectively). As the City of Pittsburgh Housing Needs Assessment notes, market-related vacancies are at their lowest point since 1980, and multifamily rentals dominate the future housing need in the city.

We offered our support to the proposed development as an economically viable project that could serve the needs of Bloomfield residents. A community process [from 2018 through 2019] led to residents and stakeholders developing models for the site that closely mirrored what Echo Realty proposed - with elements such as the inclusion of a grocery store and affordable housing.

- continued on next page -

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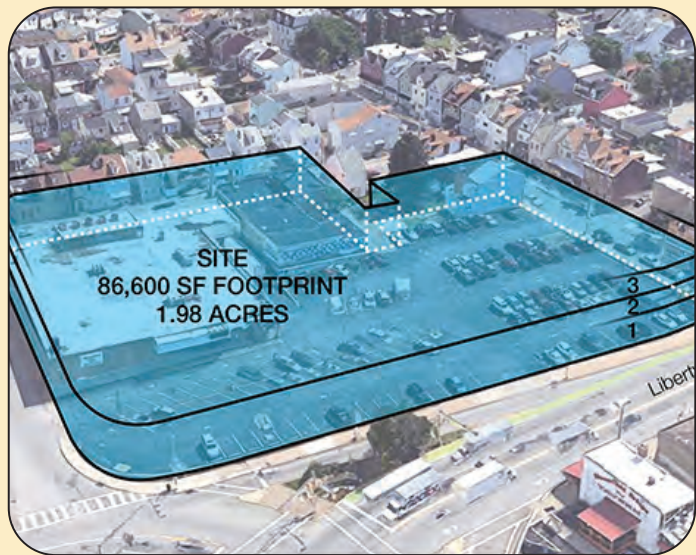

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for the latest neighborhood information and community updates.

BELOW: A rendering of Echo Realty's proposal for 'Bloomfield Square' at 4401 Liberty Avenue. Graphic courtesy of the Bloomfield Development Corporation.



- continued from previous page -

Echo further agreed to the various conditions we placed on our support in order to better address concerns raised by some of the more than 150 residents who attended our two community meetings in July.

These conditions doubled down on the highest priorities - with requirements to deepen affordability by accepting Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, and to coordinate supplemental grocery access during the construction period. Additional conditions would have led to further investment in pedestrian and traffic safety that would have supplemented the City's investment.

For the first time in several decades, more people want to move to Bloomfield than leave it. As a walkable, transit-rich neighborhood with popular small businesses, this does not come as a surprise.

Limiting new development hinders economic growth for our small businesses, displaces low-income residents (who are outcompeted for existing units), and continues the exclusionary practices that originated in redlining and continue to echo in our exclusionary zoning code.

Rejection of this proposed project means 25 households that could have moved into new affordable units may not be able to move to Bloomfield at all, and more than 200 households who may be interested in moving to Bloomfield are left to compete with existing residents rather than considering this site as their future home.

Unlike previous proposals for this site, Echo Realty owns the property outright, meaning that they are unlikely to fully walk away from the site. Given this decision, we are uncertain what options Echo Realty may consider for development, or how long the Community Market will continue to operate.

We look forward to further community engagement around the site as possible alternative development concepts are proposed. Although if Echo identifies a "by-right" development option, there is unlikely to be any required engagement or ability for conditions to be placed on the project.

As more information and updates become available, BDC will continue to provide updates in *The Bulletin* as well as on our website (bloomfieldpgh.org) and social media pages. ♦

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'Celebration Hall' turns vacant Larimer School into neighborhood hub

By Elizabeth Sensky East Liberty Development, Inc.

Larimer - In community development, the focus is typically on fixing the essential things like crime, housing, main streets, or infrastructure.

A topic like joy rarely enters the discussion, but a new development in Larimer is seeking to change that.

By prioritizing community joy and connection, the folks behind the "Celebration Hall of Larimer" are out to change the narrative - and the quality of life - in one of Pittsburgh's long-overlooked communities.

Renovation of the Larimer School

The story starts with the Larimer School, a historic neighborhood landmark that remained vacant on Larimer Avenue for more than 40 years.

Community members, led by Larimer activist Ora Lee Carroll and the Larimer Consensus Group (LCG), had long advocated for a reuse of the building that could benefit the neighborhood.

Despite their efforts, the very scale of this task made it nearly impossible to approach - until the \$30 million Larimer/East Liberty Choice Neighborhoods grant was awarded in 2014.

The grant funded a four-phase development project that includes: the construction of a new 3-acre park (at Station Street and Larimer Avenue) in East Liberty; the Cornerstone Village Apartments; and Cornerstone 3 Apartments (49 majority-affordable apartments built along Larimer Avenue).

The final phase - transforming the school into 35 affordable apartment units - was completed by McCormack Baron Salazar. But even with all the phases completed, there remained the question of what to do with the school's empty gymnasium and auditorium.



ABOVE: The exterior of 'Celebration Hall of Larimer,' site of the former Larimer School gym & auditorium. Photo courtesy of ELDI.

A place to convene the community

"We asked the community [members] what they wanted to see, and they said they wanted an activity center where people could come together," said Donna Jackson, executive director of LCG. "When the Homewood Coliseum closed, there was no place in the area to have an event. So we said, 'let's bring people back to Larimer to enjoy themselves.'"

That's when Jackson got connected with Joe Bute, co-founder of the food development nonprofit Food21.

Since late 2019, they have been working to help repurpose the Larimer School's gym & auditorium into a community event center and meeting space - complete with a full-service catering kitchen, and a separate demonstration kitchen.

"The pieces really began to come together," Bute explained. "The way the building is laid out, we saw that one side of the space could serve as a formal event center with a full-scale commercial catering kitchen attached to it. And then, on the other side, which was the old gymnasium, we could have a demonstration kitchen and a community engagement center. The idea is that guests can use the entire building for an event, or you can have two things happening at the same time."

Flourishing Communities, a community organization dedicated to improving health & well-being in Larimer, has signed on to manage programming for the demonstration kitchen and community engagement center.

Celebration Hall will function as the organization's primary venue for nutrition

education, food preparation, and meal delivery to those in need. The programming will be designed not only for adults, but also for local youths interested in the culinary arts.

On the other side of the space, ELDI spin-off and economic justice nonprofit Catapult Greater Pittsburgh will manage the catering kitchen, which will offer a unique opportunity to Black-owned caterers and event businesses who often find themselves shut out of existing event venues. Graduates of Catapult's Culinary program, a food incubator for minority entrepreneurs, will be added to an "approved vendor list"; Celebration Hall guests will choose vendors from this list when they rent the space.

"We want to make sure that when people have events at the Celebration Hall, whichever caterer they choose, the food will be delicious," said Catapult Executive Director Tammy Thompson. "At the same time, we are removing the main barriers for up-and-coming caterers. They don't have vans yet. They don't have a staff yet so, by them just being on that list, they can walk into the Celebration Hall, bring one or two crew members to help them, and do the job. That's what we are all about—giving people intentional, creative opportunities to grow their exposure."

In the meantime, architectural designs have already been completed by Moss Architects, and the space's brand identity was developed by Taiece Brooks, of Brooks Branding.

"One of the main goals of the project is to create a fresh atmosphere for the community that is warm, happy, and inviting,

without being overly formal or stuffy," said Darren Lloyd, associate principal and vice president at Moss Architects.

The design scheme abstractly borrows many of these elements and introduces them into the spaces via paint colors, acoustic wall panels, and other accents.

Brooks recognized the importance of communicating lightness and joy through the logo and brand design - incorporating playful elements, recognizable shapes, and a vibrant color palette.

She also worked to ensure that the branding resonates with community members.

"I conceived a visual identity that embodies the same versatility as the Larimer community itself," Brooks said. "The design exudes a sense of freshness and modernity while also evoking a touch of familiarity and nostalgia, mirroring the transformation of the Larimer School building."

- continued on page 15 -

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Garfield neighbors plant seeds of change at Healcrest Green

Memory & photo by Vania Arthur Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Garfield - While most folks remember Nov. 7 as just another Election Day, we look back with fond memories of “the day we planted trees at Healcrest Green.” Over the past year, Healcrest Green has undergone many changes - from continued maintenance of the trail, to a revamping of the shed, to the planting of 38 trees.

During the Election Day tree-planting, Garfield neighbors joined members of TreeVitalize to add seven more trees to the mix. Lining the trail, these trees (ranging from Oaks to Eastern Rosebuds, and Peaches to Plums) carry the promise of a beautiful canopy come springtime. ♦



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Christmas has a different meaning to everyone, and that meaning can change from year to year, depending on what fate has brought your way. For some, it has been a year of prosperity... for others, it has been a year of loss. Fortunately, time has a way of healing, and letting us go forward—to celebrate again. Whatever the year has brought your way, we want you to know our family’s thoughts are with you.

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Local artists to exhibit works for Miami Art Week

A Message from BOOM Concepts

Miami - BOOM Concepts presents accomplished visual artists Camerin "Camo" Nesbitt and DS Kinsel, in their first collaborative exhibition, at "Red Dot Miami" - a distinguished, gallery-only, contemporary art fair held in conjunction with Miami Art Week.

Red Dot Miami, recognized for curating outstanding contemporary art since 2006, provides a global platform for artists to reach diverse audiences.

Represented by the Pittsburgh-based galleries BOOM Concepts and Most Wanted Fine Art, Nesbitt and Kinsel are joined by sculptors Shawn Farester and Jason Saur to complete the exhibition. Be sure to visit this collection of paintings and sculptures [at Booth 601 in the Mana Convention Center] during Red Dot Miami.

Kinsel, Saur, and Nesbitt will also engage in a week's worth of art actions as part of BOOM Concepts' Activist Print Paint Past (AP3) Temporary Public Art Program.

The Pittsburgh-based artists have toured their "BOOM x MWFA" Art Car across Dade County - with its last stop (on Dec. 10) a featured pop-up exhibit at the Museum of Graffiti. The team has also been invited to create a collaborative mural during the Wynwood Mural Festival.

BOOM Concepts embodies the spirit of innovation and creativity, making it a value-aligned partner for this groundbreaking exhibition and temporary public art action.

Nesbitt - a designer, muralist, and painter based in Pittsburgh - utilizes his eye-catching designs and signature camouflage motif to create spaces for new voices. He produces high-end products through brand collaborations and unique commissions.

Nesbitt specializes in creating signature artifacts and memorable keepsakes for patrons of all ages.

A talented, award-winning cultural agitator, Kinsel brings "Brain Bone Blood" - a collection of artifacts exploring abstracted anatomy, jujivism, and the amalgamation of identities - to Red Dot Miami. Bold brush strokes, text-based patterns, and intense surface texture are key features of the paintings.

Raised in both derby garage culture and contemporary art circles, Saur creates transformative sculptures from crashed cars, merging chaos and beauty. Punctuated by an olive branch and dove motif, his work champions resilience and renewal amidst destruction.

A decorated army veteran and founder of Most Wanted Fine Art (MWFA), Saur has earned numerous accolades - including a "40 under 40" award from Pittsburgh Magazine - over the years. ♦

BELOW: The fruits of an artistic collaboration between Camo Nesbitt and DS Kinsel, to be exhibited during Miami Art Week. Image courtesy of BOOM Concepts.



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Monday, December 25 at 11:30 a.m.

JOIN THE WEST PENN HOSPITAL PATIENT SAFETY COMMITTEE

West Penn Hospital [WPH, 4800 Liberty Ave.] is looking for community members to be a part of the Patient Safety Committee meeting; you cannot currently be employed by Allegheny Health Network.

The purpose of the committee is to provide oversight and management of the patient safety plan and ensure the hospital meets the patient safety requirements outlined in the Joint Commission standards and the Pennsylvania Medical Care Availability and Reduction of Error Act (MCARE).

The Patient Safety Committee's objectives are to promote change; show leadership, and maintain staff awareness of patient safety, by identifying safety issues; implement best practices that are user-friendly and data-driven; support actionable plans; reduce and eliminate medical errors by identifying problems and implementing solutions that promote patient safety.

We ask community members to commit to attending a monthly meeting, either in person or via Microsoft Teams, and help WPH ensure alignment with the Patient Safety Committee's purpose.

Information shared at the committee meeting is confidential [and protected from disclosure, except as otherwise permitted under Pennsylvania's Peer Review Protection Act, Patient Safety Work Product, and the MCARE Act]. Committee members will be obligated to not disclose any information. If you are interested in joining this committee, please contact Jacqueline Drahos (Jacqueline.Drahos@AHN.org).



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ABOVE: Bloomfield's iconic Halloween parade captivates audiences on Liberty Avenue. The Bloomfield Citizens Council, which organized the Oct. 26 festivities, would like to thank local businesses & organizations for supporting this annual celebration. Photo by Linda Vacca.

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Albright *continued from page 4*



ABOVE: Volunteers stand behind the food they have prepared, ready to serve their neighbors as part of a 49-year, Thanksgiving Eve tradition on Wednesday, Nov. 22. Photo by Larry Rippel.

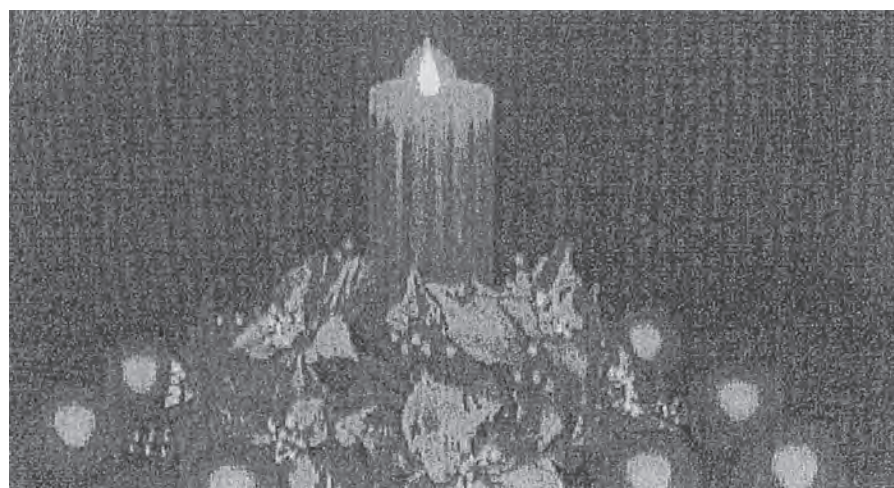
BELOW: Among the servers are (left to right) Corrine Schubert, 6; Adrienne Schubert, 8; and Bridget Bevan, 6. Photo by Larry Rippel.



BELOW: Lindsay Patross, who got involved as a dishwasher eight years ago, now helps organize the annual event. Photo by Alan Guenther.



ABOVE: Cecil Foreman digs into seasonal flavors. Photo by Alan Guenther.



During this Holiday Season, more than ever, our thoughts and prayers turn to those who have lost a loved one this past year. We are lighting a candle in our funeral home in remembrance of all the families that we have been privileged to serve. And it is in this spirit that we simply, but sincerely say... May the Peace and Joy of the Christmas Season be yours throughout the New Year.



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Celebration Hall continued from page 10

Ensuring neighborhood needs are met

The Celebration Hall aims to accommodate a wide range of events and functions, from wedding receptions and seminars to movie nights, free community lunches, indoor markets, and beyond.

Everyone involved in the project knows how crucial it is for the space to be representative of, and serve the needs of, the Larimer community.

“It’s really important that we’re making sure this is a community asset,” Thompson noted. “It can’t just be about generating revenue for us or the caterers. It’s got to be something that’s benefitting the long-term residents of Larimer as well.”

As the Larimer neighborhood experiences a steady uptick of investment and support - including a recent Community Benefits Agreement pledging investments in jobs, homeownership, and public infrastructure - Bute and his partners see the Celebration Hall as a catalyst for future growth and development.

“In the grand scheme of things, it’s almost like, why are we talking about celebrations when all of these other hard things are happening in the community? And that gets to the root of how I believe people think about people in poverty - that they don’t deserve to celebrate,” Thompson explained. “But it’s the exact opposite. People need a space that represents hope. To me, the Celebration Hall is a representation of going beyond survival mode. Now we’re talking about people thriving, and when people are thriving, that’s something to celebrate.” ♦

- CORRECTION -

Last month, we led a story [about ULEAD] with a misleading ‘neighborhood tag.’ While the Sts. Peter & Paul Church is part of the Larimer community, it’s actually located in East Liberty, very close to the neighborhood fault line. We apologize for any confusion. Thanks for understanding!

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‘Snow Angels’ program: Mayor Gainey calls on residents to help neighbors in need

A Message from the City of Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh - The City is excited to announce the official launch of its 2023-2024 “Snow Angels” program. This program pairs community volunteers with seniors, and residents with disabilities, who need assistance shoveling and salting their sidewalks & walkways throughout the winter months.

“We frequently talk about how we make our city safe and welcoming, and the Snow Angels program is a vital service for our neighbors in need,” said Mayor Ed Gainey. “As we launch the 2023-2024 Snow Angels season, I am calling on our residents to volunteer to become a Snow Angel - to ensure that seniors and Pittsburghers with disabilities can continue to thrive during, and after, winter weather events.”

Data from past years shows the number of neighbors in need of assistance far surpasses the number of volunteers who sign up in many areas of the city.

This year, the City is working to develop new partnerships with community-based organizations, youth sports leagues, faith-based groups, and local employers to close this gap in several communities. Those neighborhoods include Beechview, Brighton Heights, Brookline, Elliott, Greenfield, Homewood (North, South, West), and the Hill District.

The Mayor’s Office is excited to continue its tradition of bestowing the Golden Shovel Award on the neighborhood with the most volunteers. Last year, the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation accepted the award on behalf of area volunteers who heeded the call to help their neighbors in need.

The City of Pittsburgh is encouraging all residents to volunteer as Snow Angels this year. Along with fostering stronger community relationships and relieving some of the stress that comes from winter weather events, Snow Angels makes Pittsburgh’s sidewalks safer for those who are regularly outside during inclement weather - like postal carriers, firefighters, and police officers.

“Our city is full of generous people, and I am so thankful to the youth groups, sports teams, and community organizations that have already answered the call,” Gainey continued. “For those who have thought about volunteering, I encourage you to visit our website and sign up today. Your work as a Snow Angel is an important step in building a city for all.”

City residents are encouraged to learn more and sign up to volunteer at pittsburghpa.gov/snowangels. Neighbors seeking services, as well as volunteers looking to provide those services, may register for the program by calling 311 - and contact the Snow Angels Program directly at 412-255-2626 or snowangels@pittsburghpa.gov. ♦



ABOVE: Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey (at right) awards golden shovels to local community groups, saluting efforts to grow the ‘Snow Angels’ program last winter. Community Engagement & Planning Specialist Carlee Benhart Kukula (second from right) accepted the award on behalf of the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation. Photo courtesy of the City of Pittsburgh.

Mary's Bar, community groups forge agreement on live performances

By Rick Swartz *Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation*

Garfield - Two community groups have reached an agreement with the proprietor of Mary's Bar (5128 Penn Ave.) that will set terms & conditions for the bar's live performances. Mary's will open for business in the Penn Avenue corridor in early 2024.

The agreement, which comes on the heels of a public meeting held in late October, addresses concerns that neighbors have raised about noise and crowd management related to the late-night shows to be featured at Mary's.

Penn Avenue had a long history of nuisance bars in the district, extending back to the 1970s. A number of these bars were shut down after residents and community groups organized to either close them, with the help of law enforcement agencies, or buy them out between 1985 and 2008.

Laura Longenecker, Mary's proprietor, answered various questions from the 30 attendees at the meeting - sponsored by the Friendship Community Group (FCG) and the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) - and noted that a poorly-managed establishment is not in her best interests, either.

The venue will seat up to 50 people in the tavern's main room, which will feature a stage, as well as 10 more people at the bar.

The state liquor control board has already approved the transfer of a liquor license to the site on Penn Avenue. In early October, the city zoning board held a hearing on Longenecker's request for a "special exception" - which is required, under the local zoning code for a neighborhood commercial district, when a restaurant plans to offer live entertainment.

"I've spent the better part of three years investing a great deal of time and resources, and making Mary's into what I hope will be an asset to the business district," Longenecker confided. "I can't afford to squander all of that by not being an attentive and responsible

owner once we've opened. I want the community to be proud of the fact that we're here, and not regretting it."

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) Longenecker has executed with the two groups states the bar will operate from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m., Monday through Saturday.

The performances, primarily live music and drag shows, will run from 8 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. on most nights. On Sundays, the establishment will open for an early brunch, and close at an earlier hour.

One meeting attendee asked if crowds would become a problem as patrons gather outside the building, perhaps jostling to get in or blocking the sidewalk for passers-by. Longenecker said that tickets would be pre-sold for live performances in order to lessen the likelihood of people showing up and not being able to get into what will be a relatively small venue. She also promised that security personnel would work to keep order outside the premises, and let waiting patrons know when shows have been sold-out.

Longenecker said she has not installed any sound-baffling equipment, but will be mindful of the noise levels for shows and other events.

"We're not going to have a rear entrance to the bar out of respect for the residential area behind the building," she said. "I know the Waldorf School is across Coral St. from my place, which is why I'm delaying the bar's opening time until 5 p.m."

The MOU does provide for the FCG and BGC to sit down with Longenecker from time to time - to see how Mary's is faring, and what problems, if any, might arise from its operations. ♦

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