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**Chill Local**



**A taste of Autumn traditions**

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**Community**



**Mt. Airy rises against ZBA practices**

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## Fall for the Arts returns, a tradition intact

by April Lisante

This fall, as life in our area gets back to a new normal, one of the surest signs is the return of the Fall for the Arts Festival this coming weekend.

On Sept. 26, Germantown Ave. from Rex to Willow Grove Aves., will once again be closed to traffic for the 36th annual festival that draws thousands of guests and dozens of artists, sculptors, potters and jewelry designers to a tented celebration on our cobblestone street.

With 100 vendors expected this year, including more than fifty new artists, the festival will also feature the return of family activities, live music, and foods from several participating restaurants. The return to the traditional format is a welcome and exciting harbinger of fall.

"This is a great Chestnut Hill tradition and our longest running event," said Chestnut Hill Business District Executive Director Philip Dawson. "We hope people come out with their families to support" the vendors and event.

Last year, the festival was not held at all due to COVID-19 restrictions. It was a break in tradition and a jarring disappointment for locals who con-



Fall for the Arts festivalgoers will find that the original tented format has returned, with just a few tweaks. All guests strolling the Avenue will be required to wear masks, since there will be an abundance of foot traffic. Guests will also be asked to wear masks in shops as they walk in and out. (Photo 2015)

sider it, much like Eagles football, the quintessential kick-off to the fall season. The annual spring Home and Garden Stroll did take place in May of this year, but the event was truncated to feature a strolling walk down Germantown Ave., which was not shuttered to traffic.

This year, Fall for the Arts festivalgoers will find that the original tented format has returned, with just a few tweaks. All guests strolling the Avenue will be required to wear masks, since there will be

an abundance of foot traffic. Guests will also be asked to wear masks in shops as they walk in and out.

Tents will be jammed with arts and crafts to peruse and to buy, with artists on hand to give demonstrations and to talk about their wares. Some artists will offer plein air painting demonstrations as well.

Many of these artists are returning vendors, who are excited to be back. Maura Matthews, who paints Wisahickon landscapes, has been

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## Sept. 9th Home Delivery Delayed

Home delivery of the September 9th editions of the Chestnut Hill Local and the Mt. Airy Local has been delayed by a yet undetermined problem in the bulk mail processing center in Philadelphia.

The staff at the Local became aware that the delivery delay was, in fact, a problem on Friday, September 10, when we discovered that the local post offices, including Market Square in Chestnut Hill, had not received the papers for local carriers to deliver to homes. As of Monday, September 13, Market Square post office still has not received the 9/9 paper.

**This problem is not with your local post office nor your local carrier.**

This problem is not with your local post office nor your local carrier. They cannot deliver what they don't have. This is a processing and delivery issue in the bulk mail processing center, where we are required to deliver our papers for mailing.

A representative from the bulk mail center has confirmed that the papers were received on the evening of Tuesday, September 7 and is investigating the situation. No resolution of the issue has been communicated as of press time.

Single copy issues of the Local were distributed, as usual, to local businesses on Wednesday, September 8. Subscribers are welcome to stop by and pick up the 9/9 paper at the Local's office at 8434 Germantown Avenue. All subscribers also have access to the e-edition - a full digital replica of the print edition - on [www.chestnuthilllocal.com](http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com). If you have any questions or have problems logging into your digital subscription, please email us at [circulation@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:circulation@chestnuthilllocal.com) or call 215-248-8813.

We apologize to our readers for this delivery problem. We will continue to work with the post office to improve its service to our readers.

## Chestnut Hill resident celebrates new bookstore opening

by Barbara Sheehan

"The Bookshop" is a 2017 film starring Emily Mortimer as a 1950's young widow who decides to open a bookshop in a small coastal town in England. Despite some powerful opposition, she succeeds in bringing the love of books to local residents.

This week marks the opening of "booked" at 8511 Germantown Avenue, the fulfillment of a long-held dream by its owner, Debbie Gress Jansen, who worked for many years as a teacher at Springside Chestnut Hill. Unlike Emily Mortimer's character, Gress Jansen faces no opposition from locals. This community is full of bibliophiles, and hers will be the first store for new books in Chestnut Hill since 2010, when Borders Bookshop closed its doors.

The new store will join a handful of existing independent



A new bookstore, "booked," opened this week at 8511 Germantown Avenue.

bookstores in Northwest Philadelphia and build upon what appears to be a positive trend for booklovers. The popular Big Blue Marble bookstore in Mt. Airy opened its doors 15 years ago, followed in 2017 by Uncle Bobbie's in Germantown, which has also built a loyal following. Newcomer Hilltop

Books, a secondhand bookstore on Bethlehem Pike which opened in April, is also attracting local interest.

Now Gress Jansen is adding to the mix with a storefront on Germantown Avenue. "It's been a lifelong dream of mine," she said. "I've had a strong rela-

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**THE RETURN OF TUESDAY NIGHTS AT THE MOVIES**



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Woodmere Art Museum

# Chestnut Hill Hospital treating 15 COVID-19 cases. In July, there were 2.

by Kate Dolan

**C**ovid-19 Update - Chestnut Hill Hospital Hospitalizations

The Chestnut Hill Hospital is currently treating 15 patients for COVID-19. Friday morning, September 12, three of those patients were in the Intensive Care Unit.

Two of the patients in the ICU, which has a total of 14 beds, are on ventilators. Additionally, one death was reported for September 10. In the year and a half since March 1, 2020, the hospital has discharged 1,153 Covid-19 patients and there have been 213 mortalities.

The Delta variant caused a surge in cases around the city in July and August, with Philadelphia hospitalizations doubling several times,

leading to mask and vaccine mandates.

"Chestnut Hill Hospital does not evaluate the epidemiology of COVID on an individual case basis," said John Cacciamani, MD, geriatrician and President and CEO of the hospital, answering questions via email. "We receive updates on the regional cases that indicate that most new infections are the Delta variant. Treatment is the same."

The total 15-patient count is an increase at the hospital from nearly three weeks ago. On August 23 the number of patients for that 24-hour period being treated for COVID-19 stood at eight, with one in the ICU. That same day, there was one mortality.

A month before, on July 23, when a reported 55 patients were

being treated in the city's hospitals in total, two were at CHH and the ICU didn't have any COVID-19 patients. On June 23, four patients were being treated for the virus at CHH and zero were reported in the ICU.

Citywide, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health reported that 195 patients are being treated in Philadelphia hospitals for the virus as of September 9. Springfield Township, Montgomery County, reports 68 cases since mid-July, and no deaths.

At Philadelphia's Covid-19 press update on September 9, Acting Health Commissioner Dr. Cheryl Bettigole expressed some optimism as to the latest numbers and indicated that the summer's surge may be showing signs of stalling.

"There is some evidence that we might be reaching a peak in new cases and hospitalizations," Bettigole said, reporting that the average new cases per day are down. Last week, the city was averaging 307 new cases per day. On Thursday, it was down to 282. The percentage of tests coming back in the city as positive is also down, dropping from seven percent on August 23 to five percent September 9.

Of the 70 tests reported at CHH for September 10, four tests came back as positive and 66 as negative.

Bettigole also announced progress on the vaccine front at the press briefing, saying that city data shows "an uptick in the rate of new vaccination in the past few weeks."

## Crime Report: September 6-12

The following crime report is for crimes reported in Chestnut Hill and Mt. Airy for the two-week period between September 6 and September 12. Some dates earlier than the current period took place at that date and reported after the fact.

### Chestnut Hill

**Sept 9 Theft from Auto.** A woman returned to her car, parked at Wissahickon and E. Northwestern Aves. to find her vehicle window broken and her EZ Pass stolen.

**Sept 11 Theft from Auto.** A woman returned to her car, parked in the 100 block of W. Northwestern Ave. to find her rear passenger-side window broken and purse missing. One of her cards was used for \$500 in purchases at a Game Stop.

**Sept 11 Theft.** When a moving company delivered her furniture to a residence in the 100 block of W. Evergreen Ave, two 24" tvs were missing.

### Mt. Airy

**Aug 29 Robbery.** An altercation outside an apartment complex in the 600 block of W. Cliveden resulted a man and woman being maced, and the man's car being stolen. The assailant dropped her phone before she drove away.

**Sept 3 Aggravated Assault.** After a dispute over a parking space in the 200 block of W. Walnut Lane, one party threw a soda can at the other, resulting in six stitches over the left eye.

**Sept 8 Theft from Auto.** An employee parked at her place of employment on the 700 block of W. Allens Lane returned to her car to find her front windshield broken. Her keys, wallet, \$350 in cash and purse were taken. Estimated total value \$780.

**Sept 10 Robbery.** A woman was sitting in a car in the 100 block of E. Mt. Airy when an assailant approached and threatened her with a gun. Her phone, \$15 in cash, and and assorted items were taken.

**Sept 11 Theft from Auto.** A man discovered two men in his driveway at Lincoln Drive and McCallum St. removing the catalytic converter from his wife's car. They escaped with the converter.

**Sept 12 Theft.** A woman was watering her lawn in the 6900 block of Henley St. when a man walked past her into her open garage and removed a bike, riding it away.

**Sept 12 Theft from Auto.** A woman parked her car at Valley Green Rd. and Wolcott Dr. and went for a walk on Forbidden Drive. When she returned, she discovered her rear window broken, Her purse was missing, containing cards and \$80 in cash. Estimated total value \$100.

If you have been a victim of a crime and would like services or support, call Northwest Victim Services at 215-438-4410. For more information about crimes in your neighborhood, call the 14th District Headquarters at 215-686-3140.

## Happening Locally

**F**riends of the Wissahickon Valley Park. After years of increasing demand for more restroom facilities in the park, FOW is beginning the next stage

of a long-term project to meet current needs and to help plan projects over the next 10 years, as well as secure funding for the restrooms and additional maintenance staff.

Join the virtual Master Restroom Plan Public Meeting on Sept. 21 at 6 p.m. to hear new developments and help shape the installation of new restroom facilities. Project consultants will share proposed options for restroom locations, in addition to the data FOW has collected to date from park-user counters and responses to the community-wide survey. Members of FOW staff and board, as well as officials from Philadelphia Parks & Recreation will be on hand to answer questions.

Go to the FOW.org to register for a zoom link.

### Fringe at the Circus Campus

The Sculpture Gallery is ready to exhibit in the sanctuary of the beautiful Circus Campus in Mt. Airy. Meet with the curator: your benevolent, charismatic guide who will help you figure out who gets to be included within the artwork and tailor the show for your ideal experience. Every show will be a little different based on the audience's choices, featuring cir-

cus acts in the air and on the ground.

The cast consists of three major players: Greg Kennedy, the founder; Zak McAllister, the prodigal student; and Brynna Raine, basically everything else. Innovative Juggler is a group of artists dedicated to creating kinetic sculptures that exemplify astounding human feats. Don't let the word "Juggler" deceive you, this company is not known for throwing and catching balls; their objects travel in much more complicated ways through space and time.

Greg Kennedy, former engineer & Cirque du Soleil featured artist, has been developing original forms of manipulation for over 25 years. Zak is an award winning juggler who uses clever playfulness in the unorthodox use of everyday objects. Brynna is an all around creative, establishing structure to the team and grounding them to performance instead of just math and physics.

Now through September 26, as part of the citywide Philadelphia Fringe Festival. Circus Campus, 6452 Greene Street. Proof of vaccination is required to attend this event. Masks must also be worn for the duration of the performance.

## Living Better, Growing Together

Here, we grow!



We invite you to learn more about a community that delights in blending fun, personal interests and care for one another. Experience countless smiles and unmatched joy from residents that embrace and encourage growth at every stage of life.

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## Woodmere Art Museum

## FALL 2021



**Tuesdays, September 28 -  
December 7**

**7:30-9:30 pm (doors  
open at 7:00 pm)**

**\$5 suggested donation**

On Tuesday nights, Woodmere's main gallery is transformed into an intimate setting for screenings of rare and underseen films as well as classics. Tuesday Nights at the Movies is presented with the Chestnut Hill Film Group and sponsored by the *Chestnut Hill Local*. For more information visit: <https://woodmereartmuseum.org/experience/programs/movies-at-woodmere>

**SEPTEMBER 28  
FURY  
(1936 / 92 MINUTES)**

A lynch-mob comes after wrongly accused Spencer Tracy in Fritz Lang's powerful and potent first American-directed movie. Co-stars Sylvia Sydney.



**OCTOBER 5  
BLONDIE JOHNSON  
(1933 / 67 MINUTES)**

Joan Blondell fights Depression-era harassment, government indifference, and poverty by turning to crime, romancing hood Chester Morris, and climbing the underworld ladder to Boss status.

**OCTOBER 12  
BEING THERE  
(1979 / 130 MINUTES)**

Peter Sellers is uproarious in his final film performance—director Hal Ashby's dry, political comedy about a simple-minded gardener who only understands life from what he sees on television yet becomes a media guru. Co-stars Shirley MacLaine, Jack Warden and Melvyn Douglas.



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**OCTOBER 19  
THE MODEL AND THE MARRIAGE  
BROKER  
(1951 / 103 MINUTES)**

Beloved character actor Thelma Ritter gets a rare star turn in George Cukor's comedic jewel. She's a down-on-her luck notary turned matchmaker of lonely-hearts and losers. Zany interactions with model Jeanne Crain ensue.

**OCTOBER 26  
TAKING OFF  
(1971 / 93 MINUTES)**

Buck Henry and Lynn Carlin butt heads with the inexplicable trends of the 1960s as they search for their runaway hippie daughter in this hilarious, off-beat, counter-culture comedy time capsule. Director Miloš Forman's first English-language movie, co-written by playwright John Guare.

**NOVEMBER 2  
THE TAKING OF PELHAM ONE TWO  
THREE  
(1974 / 104 MINUTES)**

A subway car is taken hostage and held for ransom in this intense and thrilling drama from director Joseph Sargent. Starring Walter Matthau, Robert Shaw and Martin Balsam.

**NOVEMBER 9  
THE BLUE DAHLIA  
(1946 / 100 minutes)**

An unfaithful serviceman's wife is murdered as war-traumatized veterans haunt the shadowy streets of California in this archetypal film noir. Alan Ladd, Veronica Lake and William Bendix star in an original screenplay by Raymond Chandler, directed by George Marshall.



**NOVEMBER 16  
SALMON FISHING IN THE YEMAN  
(2011 / 107 minutes)**

British fisheries expert Ewan McGregor is asked to realize a sheik's unlikely vision of bringing the sport of fly-fishing to the desert. He finds an unusual ally in the British Prime Minister's press secretary, Kristin Scott Thomas.

**NOVEMBER 23  
PINOCCHIO  
(1940 / 88 MINUTES)**

Disney's animated classic about a living puppet who, with a cricket as his conscience, must prove himself worthy to become a real boy. Projected on 16MM film

**NOVEMBER 30  
THE 39 STEPS  
(1935 / 86 MINUTES)**

Civilian everyman Robert Donat is on the run from a sinister ring of international spies and seeking to clear his name in director Alfred Hitchcock's espionage classic.



**DECEMBER 7  
THE CAT AND THE FIDDLE  
(1934 / 88 MINUTES)**

Sassy Pre-Code musical romp (with its final reel in three-strip Technicolor) featuring composer Ramon Novarro frantically trying to juggle leading ladies Vivienne Segal and Jeanette MacDonald on his way to opening night. Co-stars Frank Morgan.

## OPINION

## Arnie



## Our mission, your input, my promise

Chestnut Hill is such a special place. The buildings, so distinct and interesting, seem to have been grown from the ground they sit on. The leafy streets connect it to the beautifully forested park that cradles it. The central business corridor, so lively and pleasant to walk along, is a place where people from all walks of life come together. Mt. Airy, too, has irreplaceable charm, and it brings its own special character to the commercial strip that links the two neighborhoods.

No wonder so many interesting and accomplished people have chosen to settle here.

I started out in the trade at a small weekly newspaper not much different than this one. It was there I learned that the job of reporting is much more than just writing stories about whatever may have happened that week. It requires paying close attention to what people really care about, engaging with the full range of personalities that populate the community, and uncovering truths about how they all interact with one another. To be effective at this, you

need an inquiring mind, and ability to synthesize conflicting facts and confidence in your own judgment. A robust sense of humor helps, and so does a healthy dose of humility.

Several weeks ago, this paper ran an editorial describing its mission this way:

*The role of a community newspaper is multi-faceted. We have a responsibility to inform our readers and provide reliable, factual reporting. We shine a light on issues that are consequential to the common good. We serve as the moderator for the public discourse and strive to reflect the diversity of voices in our community. We are the promoter of local organizations, businesses, causes and events. We entertain and engage with stories of remarkable community members. Every week, we try to reflect and encourage the connectivity that is the bedrock of a strong, vibrant, and successful community.*

I intend to live up to that mission. And I am asking you to help me. I will need your input and your perspective, because my job is not to have all the answers. It is to listen and be open to what I don't yet understand.

In return, this is my promise to you: I will be curious, open-minded and interested in your point of view. I will seek your opinion and value it. I won't wait for news you care about to come to me. I will instead go out and look for it. In the coming weeks and months, I will be reaching out to introduce myself to as many of you as I possibly can. If I haven't met you already, I hope to soon.

I also invite you to come to me with ideas for stories you think our paper should cover.

You can find me the old-fashioned way, and stop by our office at 8434 Germantown Avenue. (We ask that you are vaccinated or wear a mask when you come in.) You can also reach me at: 215-248-8802, [carla@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:carla@chestnuthilllocal.com), Twitter: @TheCHLocal or Facebook.com/ChestnutHillLocal.

Last, and perhaps most important: Our first responsibility is to get the facts straight. As journalists, we strive to ensure that everything we print is accurate and true. Still, we are human and we will make mistakes. When we do, please let us know. You will not be bothering us or hurting our feelings. You will be helping us make your paper the best it can be.

I look forward to working with you to nurture this newspaper that serves you, our readers, and this wonderful place we all call home.

Carla Robinson  
Editor

## This fall, a bounty of business and things to do in Chestnut Hill

by Philip Dawson

This year more than ever, the arrival of fall is welcome and refreshing for Chestnut Hill's Business District. For shoppers and visitors, the season brings comfortable outdoor temperatures and a variety of activities that make the area a perennial leisure destination. For small business owners, meanwhile, the end of summer vacations and return to school normally herald the start of a strong period that lasts through December. While the vagaries of the pandemic are still playing out economically, there continues to be reason for cautious optimism, and the time is right to double down on shopping small and local in the months to come.

This summer, I shared with our Business Association a report on shopping trends drawn from smartphone location data in Chestnut Hill. The results clearly showed the sharp downturn in business that the pandemic occasioned, followed by a gradual recovery that resulted in the Business District matching typical summer foot traffic levels by July 2021. While some new

restrictions have taken effect in Philadelphia since then, it seems that the overall recovery has kept up its steam. This past weekend, it was heartening to see the neighborhood's commercial corridor come alive through the trifecta of Second Saturday, the annual Warehouse Sale, and The Clover Market, the latter two of which returned for the first time since 2019. Like many events, these attract a healthy mix of neighborhood residents and visitors from other parts of the region, creating both a short-term increase in business and building Chestnut Hill's tourism draw. Less visible to the general public, but equally important, has been the rebounding of commercial occupancy in the District. I've always observed that Chestnut Hill was fortunate to have weathered the pandemic better than many other Philadelphia neighborhoods, enjoying a continued influx of new businesses that almost exactly kept pace with those regrettable closures that took place during that period. Even so, the departure of businesses that were both beloved and highly-visible made it plain that we were not completely spared from the down-

turn. Within the past 6 months, however, there has been a noticeable cascade of signed leases—two new restaurants, two new home design stores, two new bookstores—as well as expansions of established businesses like Cure De Repos and Kilian's, and groundbreaking for two new construction projects that will contain commercial space. This growth reveals an optimism on the part of entrepreneurs, and a continued appreciation for the enduring strength of Chestnut Hill's commercial corridor that bodes well for the future.

Looking ahead in the coming months, we prepare to officially inaugurate autumn with the return of the Fall For The Arts Festival—the District's longest-running event—for its 36th year. With remarkable visiting artists, displays from our own boutiques, delicious outdoor dining, Makers Village demonstrations, live music, and family fun, the festival constitutes a welcome return to a favorite local tradition. This October, we are proud to renew our support for the Chestnut Hill Conservancy's Night of Lights, which has continued to grow in reach as more people dis-

cover the fascinating history of this community. This year, Chestnut Hill's shops and restaurants will complement the series with later hours and specials on Fridays: October 8 and 15. Finally, we anticipate the return of a more traditional holiday season as Circle of Trees, Small Business Saturday, and Stag & Doe Nights beckon shoppers back to Philadelphia's most charming urban village. I look forward to seeing you on the Hill!

## Letters

If you wish to respond to any of the letters or articles that you've read in the *Local*, please e-mail the editor at: [carla@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:carla@chestnuthilllocal.com)

## Policy Statement

It is the policy of this publication to anticipate community problems and prepare public opinion for their solutions, to review community problems as they arise and to present possible solutions, and, with the help of expert opinion, direct community thinking toward a solution consistent with local tradition and the best forward-looking interests of Chestnut Hill.

It is the policy of the LOCAL to publish all responsible points of view on issues presented in our paper. Unless otherwise expressly indicated, the opinions and points of view expressed in this publication are those of the individual writer who shall be identified by name.

Positions presented or adopted by the Community Association or its board of directors on any matter will be expressly identified as such.

All letters addressed to the LOCAL must be signed and must include an address and a verifying telephone number. All letters must not exceed 300 words.

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Full guidelines available at [chestnuthilllocal.com/about/](http://chestnuthilllocal.com/about/)



The Fall For The Arts Festival returns for its 36th year, making it the District's longest-running event.

 **Chestnut Hill Local**

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Chestnut Hill Local  
Board of Directors

## Ellen Badger

[Ellen@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:Ellen@chestnuthilllocal.com)

## Joel Barras

[Joel@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:Joel@chestnuthilllocal.com)

## John Falco

[Johnf@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:Johnf@chestnuthilllocal.com)

## Mark Keintz

[Mark@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:Mark@chestnuthilllocal.com)

## Terry Mutchler

[Terry@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:Terry@chestnuthilllocal.com)

## Richard Snowden

[Richard@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:Richard@chestnuthilllocal.com)

## Bob Warner

[Bob@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:Bob@chestnuthilllocal.com)

## Don Veon

[don@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:don@chestnuthilllocal.com)

**Publisher:** John Derr

**Editor:** Carla Robinson

**Assistant Editor:** Walt Maguire

**Marketing/Circulation Manager:** Leisha Shaffer

**Features Editor:** Len Lear

**Advertising Sales Representative:** Leslie Cerf

**Production Manager:** Blaise Brugger

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# What others called waste, I played with on Saturdays

*How getting down to nuts and bolts helped me lose my mindset, Part one.*

Finnegan's Furniture Store in Darby, PA, seemed hardly the place for mind expansion when I went to work there at 18. In fact, there was little room for expansion of any kind. Every piece of space was crammed with used furniture we'd carted away from the exploded lives of the post-war working class. Deaths, divorces and sudden departures had provided the stock that filled the store to its 20-foot ceiling.



When Mr. Finnegan – Harold – was out and I was in charge (at \$1.00 an hour, twice my Fitzgerald Mercy Hospital kitchen rate as a pot washer/tray boy) and free to explore the narrow aisles, I'd pass in never-satisfied wonderment through stacks of dining room tables three to four high, next to piles of sky-reaching chairs made of wood, then chrome, then leather; next the living room armchairs, all like varied beasts in zoo cells; then turning a corner: rows of end tables, book cases, round stools, whatnot shelves; and next: standing carpet rolls, mattresses, bed springs and frames and headboards of every kind. Turning the next corner, under the large window stood the marshalled squads of carpet sweepers, vacuum cleaners, food-mixers, toasters and other appliances.

Most specially, I remember the memory cartons. On a quiet Saturday afternoon – looking twice since I'd never asked "may I?" – I'd open an unexplored cardboard box of personal items – "go-alongs" from someone's home to the store. Inside, I'd find stationery boxes and powder puffs, expired drivers' licenses, rosaries, employee badges, tarnished clay marbles, bobby pins, bullets, a four-leaf clover embedded in plastic – emptied-drawer stuff like that. Inside the stationery box were stamp-canceled envelopes containing handwritten letters and photographs. Some of the letters were romantic, exciting a young man's heart; some boring. Some sad. Too often sad. Like a picture of a man with a soldier's cap, chatting away, waiting for war's end. Such a photo was sometimes paper-clipped to a single-column news notice of his death. Maybe a black-bordered funeral card too. The end. Of the story. I looked up the first time I read one like that, wondering which table or chair, or rug even, had been his stage props.

After a while I'd wondered if it mattered. Does it ever matter in any junk store? Matter, when it all washes up in a twisted post-flood heap? Matter when offered in a resale pile to the next generation? Especially when, this time around, the seekers come in this store because they can't afford new? Oh yes, Darby, old Darby, my Darby, the Darby of my mind, where the debris of lesser lives, first useful, then turned "retro" and went on to be displayed in millenials' apartments.

That was Revelation Number One. The books I was reading in freshman year college had inclined my mind in such a way

that opening a dusty box of letters and photos, in a quiet, empty junk store, on a quiet fall afternoon, was like reading a novel. A person's life could be reconstructed by knowing the things they'd touched.

That's as much as I, at eighteen, could fathom. I did not know then that the stories I wrote in my head about other people's lives reflected how limited my own small world was. Darby: small world. Irish: small world. Catholic: smaller. 20th century white male: way small indeed.

THEN ONE DAY: Mr. Harold Finnegan snuck up and caught me dawdling in a story box. I sensed him and turned and looked up. Solemn as a betrayed confessor, he said, in his long-suffering tone, "Follow me." He went downstairs to the basement, where all the tools, and parts of tools, and things you use with tools, were stored. Everything was stacked in piles, like upstairs, but the bits were smaller and far more numerous.

Next to the staircase, three fat cardboard fiber barrels with steel rims, stood open, filled to their lips with nuts, bolts, screws, and



washers of every kind, size and pedigree. An unsorted, randomness. A demonstration of the common sense that ran cold as mold in thrifty Finnegan's blood. Everything in his world was possibly worth a penny or two, and in the 52 years he'd lumbered the earth, Mr. F had picked up every stray bolt he'd found, and pocketed it till day's end and dropped it into a catch bin. The three barrels each stood 35-inches tall and 24-inches wide. Maybe 20,000

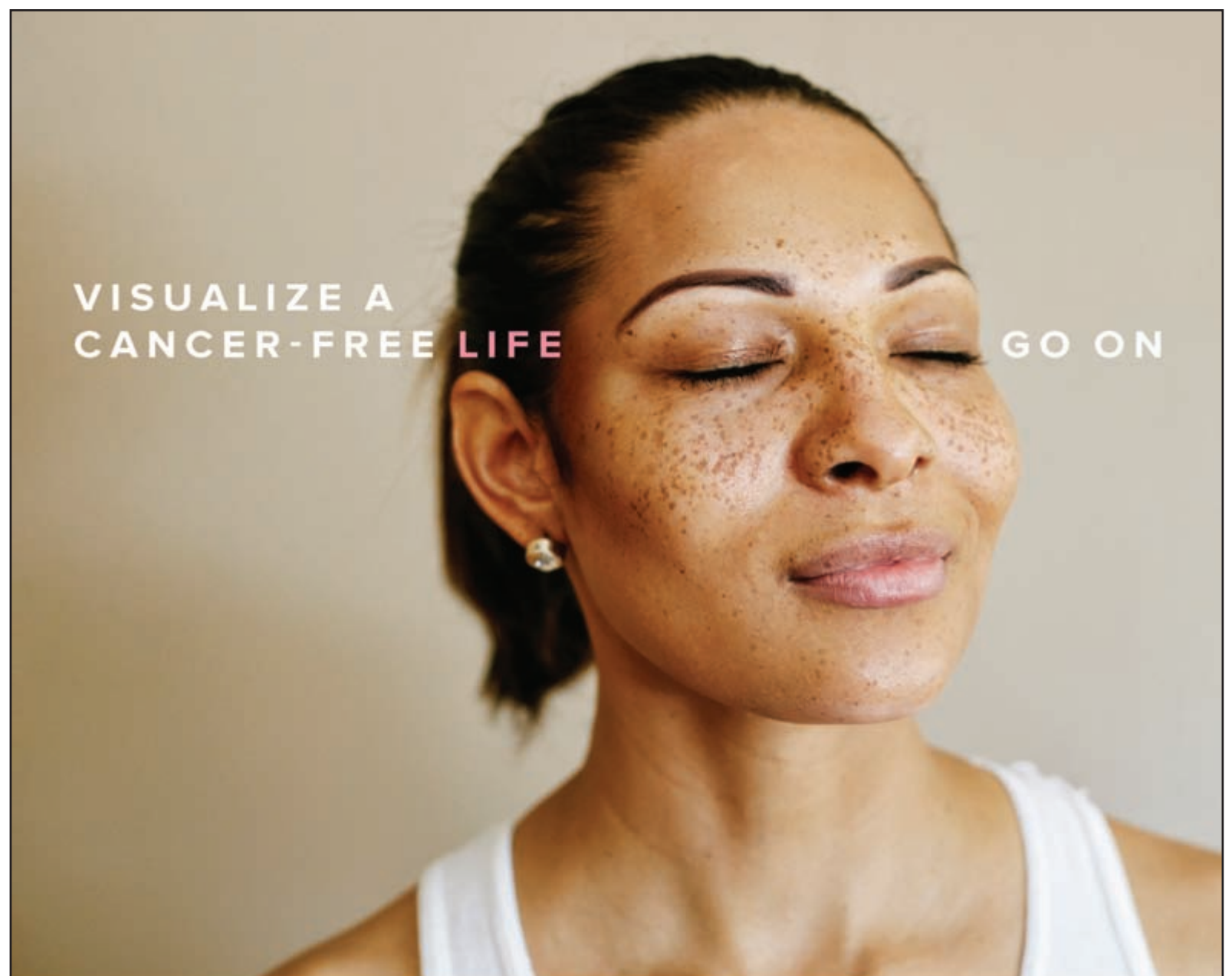
bits of steel and brass squirmed tight inside.

I'd seen these bins every time I'd gone down there, but until that moment they'd seemed like stagnant pieces of stage scenery, like stale cacti on a western movie set. I waited to learn my fate. Big Harold picked up a handful and balanced them in his palm, then sighed, and dropped them back. Perhaps wanting to wreak universal order from our local chaos, perhaps hoping to

slow down my growing enchantment with stories, he turned to me and said, in his slow, sad, baritone, "I'd like these sorted out. You might as well start now." And up he went.

Why me? I wondered. But at that moment some unused gates in my brain shuddered and opened, throbbing for what might come next. I felt strangely happy down there, alone and eager in the gloom.

*Next: Part Two, the conclusion..*



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# Haws Lane development plans changed Monday after Springfield Township Planning Commission hearing

by Barbara Sheehan

A request for a zoning variance to build a residential development on land zoned for institutional use at 380 & 402 Haws Lane took an unexpected turn when the project was dropped Monday, ending months of debate.

Despite the date for the Springfield Township Planning Commission meeting being both Rosh Hashanah and the night before the first day of school, the Administration Building parking lot was full by 6:50 p.m. on September 7. Approximately 40 residents filled all available seats, in addition to six planning commission members and a commissioner, Township staff, and the presenters. The only COVID protocol in place was a stipulation to wear masks, with no requirement for social distance or vaccination status.

The agenda was a zoning variance to build a townhouse development on 380 & 402 Haws Lane in Flourtown on land zoned for institutional use. The proposal was originally presented in April. Since Chairperson Amanda Helwig had a kindergartener at home who would start school the next morning, she said she hoped for a shorter, rather longer, meeting. About an hour into the session, it did not seem likely that Helwig would be able to tuck her kindergartener in that night.

The project was presented by Chris Canavan, President of W.B. Homes, Inc. and Brian Halligan of MEH Investments & 380 Haws, LP, partners in the planned development. Halligan laid out some of



The Springfield Township Planning Commission heard the residents' views about the Haws Lane townhouse proposal at their in-person meeting on September 7.

his options for the property: selling to long-term care, assisted living, or behavioral health facilities; selling to the Township for preservation; or working with Canavan on a residential development of townhouses. Since he was not happy with the offers for the institutional uses, and the Township chose not to purchase the property, the townhouse development seemed like the most promising option. Implementing that plan would require a zoning variance.

The 4.79-acre Haws Lane tract is located between Erdenheim Elementary School and Harston Hall, a senior living facility. A trail behind the property leads to Springfield Township High School. A recent visit to the site revealed several brick buildings that appeared to be residential. There are also some businesses listed at 380 Haws Lane's "Main Gatehouse," including Traditions of Springfield and KNAG Properties, LLC. The property is largely left wild, with a driveway intersecting it from Haws Lane to Harston Hall's parking area. On the grounds that day were eight or

nine cars parked in the back near the woods; several looked as if they hadn't been moved for some time. Old-growth trees border the property.

Canavan's presentation included slides of the two draft plans for the Haws Lane tract. Both proposed 36 total townhouse units, a reduction from the original 41. The second draft displayed more decentralized green space. In response to neighbor's concerns, Canavan had contracted with a certified arborist who will provide a comprehensive report on the health and wellbeing of the trees on the property.

The price of homes would be in the range of \$500,000 to \$600,000 and have a one- or two-car garage, plus parking spaces for two cars. He said that the amount of parking spaces required would be less than what was needed for an assisted living facility, and that the traffic flow would be about the same. A storm water run-off plan would improve conditions not only for their property but would positively affect area properties as well. He indicated that he would

be open to modifying plans in response to the Commission's recommendations.

He posed the following question to the audience. Would they prefer an institutional or a residential development at the Haws Lane site?

Most speakers presented objections to the plan. Many cited increased traffic and lack of parking on Haws Lane. Others were concerned with storm runoff, citing recent storms that hit the area hard. Many hoped that the Township would attend to environmental concerns and urged them to consider all ongoing proposals in terms of the climate change crisis. Others wanted to protect the old-growth trees on the property.

Some residents indicated a preference for a residential use of the property. Others were concerned that the cost was too high for young families. Some objected to a new development so close to the elementary and high schools.

Residents' comments continued until about 8:40, when Mark Panacale, the staff liaison, reported on 24 emails he had received from residents who could not attend that night. The comments were very similar: the use of permeable materials for the paved surfaces, reducing the number of homes to 20, or opening the space up as an environmental education center.

As for members of the Planning Commission, Gerry Quill was not opposed to residential development on that tract. Robert Gutowski wanted to make sure that the exemption, if granted, would only apply to this site and

not affect other developments in the Township. Helwig was concerned about the switch to residential use when the original plan was to develop for institutional use but was pleased that the planners decided to hire an arborist. She also expressed a preference for single-family homes. Angela Murray spoke about the need for affordable housing in the township but noted that this property was not appropriate due to the cost and the lack of public transportation.

The Planning Commission closed with a decision to meet and decide on a recommendation in time for the Board of Commissioners' October meeting.

On Monday, Brian Halligan, owner of the Haws Lane property, issued a statement that the residential plan had been abandoned. "Based on the feedback we have received from neighbors," Halligan said, "we will be pursuing the by-right option of institutional use on the property and the townhouse plan is not being submitted for further consideration." Halligan wished that the neighbors had supported the townhouse plan as the best use for the property.

Referring to the current residences on the property, he said that they were there long before he bought it. "The underlying zoning is institutional," Halligan explained. "anything in that zoning is permitted for new construction."

Minutes and an audio recording of this meeting are available at the Township website <https://springfield-montco.org>.

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# LUPZ approves Shawnee townhouses, with conditions

by Walt Maguire

The Chestnut Hill Community Association Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee meeting on September 9 was devoted to reviewing plans for a development of eight townhouses at 8201 Shawnee Street.

The plans had been submitted in 2012, but the project did not start until this year, and has undergone modifications to the original plans by Runyan & Associates. No variance had been requested, so no LUPZ approval was required, but since the plans had been on hold for several years a review of the latest modifications had been requested.

Richard Snowden, of Bowman Properties, said his partnership decided to sell townhouse blocks on Shawnee Street at the end of 2019 to the father and son team of John and Scott Mayer. "We've sold it," said Snowden. "And our interest going forward is really to make sure that the Runyan-McCoubrey design is executed."

Runyan & Associates closed in 2019, but architect Jean McCoubrey is still a consultant on the project.

The property was subject to the community development agreement negotiated in 2011 and 2012. Additionally, embedded in the sale agreement were further restrictions that it be built according to the Stan Runyon and Jean McCoubrey designs. "We have worked with the major interests over the last year and a half to reach a plan that is satisfactory to the Mayer's and the Bowman Property interests," said Snowden. "The project team that



LUPZ approved the plan for 8201 Shawnee Street, conditional on the submitted final drawings and a report on compliance with the dimensional and massing standards.

was in place when we owned the property has been replaced with the exception of Stantec, one of the engineers." Bowman Properties is managing the project as a consultant to ensure adherence to the original community development agreement, including the design restrictions embedded in the sales agreement. "Bowman will stay involved during the construction project to make sure that the design, as reached in that conclusion, occurs the way we had originally planned it back in 2012."

The 2012 community agreement was divided into parcel A, which is the Fresh Market building facing 8208 Germantown Ave., and Parcel B, the land facing Shawnee. The LUPZ review was about the dimensional mass-

ing standards on Parcel B: a maximum height 38 feet measured at the average sidewalk grade along Shawnee to average of pitched roof of each townhome; maximum of four stories; and a setback from Shawnee street 16 feet from the property line. Walls, terraces, balconies, fences, bays, other architectural elements and landscaping are permitted to be in front. There would be two sections, four units each, with a driveway opening onto Hartwell Lane.

The footprint of the houses is smaller than what was presented in 2016. John Mayer explained that the revised plans reduce the building footprint almost a third, adding a rear deck and reducing the rear courtyard. The interior design has changed, but the

LUPZ committee was mainly concerned with the exterior and its relation to the neighborhood.

Much discussion was on building materials. Mayer emphasized Wissahickon schist will be used, not veneer. (Materials were not part of the 2012 agreement, but Mayer said they wanted to align with the committee's standards as much as possible.) There would be a limited homeowners association, primarily covering snow removal and trash. Another concern of the committee was whether these would be for rental investment or homeownership; Mayer and Snowden confirmed the intention was ownership.

Mayer also apologized for pouring the foundations two years before the rest of the construction, pointing out that the con-

struction industry largely shut down unexpectedly in 2020.

Larry McEwen, LUPZ co-chair, cited an earlier comment by fellow co-chair John Landis that the design is "a very rich and sophisticated design." "For me," McEwen added, "it reminds me of a sort of a grouped arrangement of mini Hill houses, Charles Rennie Mackintosh inspired." (MacKintosh had a reputation for early 20th century Arts and Crafts architecture.)

The committee in general felt the plan was favorable, but there were some questions based on outstanding concerns from the original review, such as parking, and some of the described modifications that were not reflected in the newer drawings. Snowden pointed out the color scheme in the renderings looked lighter, and some of the materials indicated in the plans had already been changed. The committee's main question was whether the plans still lined up with the existing building permit.

The motion was to approve the current plan, conditional on the submitted final drawings and a report on compliance with the dimensional and massing standards. There was an additional recommendation that the consistent maintenance of the facades be made part of the transaction deeds that run with the property.

Mayer said a revised permit was in process but admitted that not all the renderings were up to date and said refreshed material would be delivered within a week.

The drawings and documentation can be reviewed at chestnuthill.org.



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## Opposition to Zoning Board Practices grows in East Mount Airy

by Patrick Cobbs

East Mt. Airy is booming with development, but much is the kind locals don't want. The kind that makes long time residents feel pushed out. Susan Nam thinks this has happened because the city Zoning Board of Adjustment has spun out of control, allowing too many projects that do not conform to existing zoning.

To fix this, she has formed a fledgling coalition of more than 20 Registered Community Organizations from across the city to demand that Mayor Jim Kenney revamp the ZBA.

The ZBA considers requests by developers for variances to zoning laws. To give local context and promote compromise, the ZBA requires developers to meet with RCOs before any variance request.

But the RCOs signed onto Susan Nam's letter feel the ZBA has stopped listening to them.

Residents and activists met on Slocum Street Sept. 12, between the Pleasant Playground Recreation Center and 6717 Chew Avenue, the site of an embattled 33-unit apartment project that the ZBA approved in June over extensive local opposition, to highlight the new coalition.

They picked the spot because it symbolizes a loss of local control over life in East Mt. Airy to the ZBA and the developers it supports. Neighbors have argued that the large proposed development by Audax Builders of Doylestown so close to the park, playground, recreation center, and public pool will diminish the park experience for users and could even be dangerous.

But after months of discussions and demonstrations within the neighborhood, and two months of



From left, Wai Lee Chin Feman and Nick Tonetti of the Philadelphia Liberation Center, Mt. Airy resident Evonne Tisdale, and EMAN Communications and Marketing Director, Linda Bell, met with a small group Sept. 12 between the Pleasant Playground Recreation Center and 6717 Chew Avenue, a site of a controversial proposed development, to highlight a new call to reform the city's Zoning Board of Adjustment.

testimony to the ZBA in which neighbors and Bass showed evidence of these claims, the ZBA approved the project anyway.

Neighbors were stunned. So was Bass. She has filed an appeal to the ZBA decision in Common Pleas Court, joined by East Mt. Airy Neighbors and the Pleasant Advisory Council.

Bass said she supports this call for ZBA reform because a similar lack of regard for local concerns from the ZBA throughout Northwest Philadelphia is taking a toll.

"I think that there have been a number of decisions that have left the Eighth District perplexed," she said. "It makes the community feel that their voices are not heard and their participation is not taken into account."

Other parts of the city are feeling the problem too—in nearly identical terms.

"It feels like the RCOs and the neighbors are not being heard," said Nicole Koedyker, executive director of the South of South Neighborhood Association in

Center City, one of the signatories to the letter.

In the last several years, every development project that her group has opposed, the ZBA has approved, she said. It has left her and many others disheartened.

"I think that we've seen a lot of neighbors start to lose hope with the community process," she said. "No matter what our position is, the ZBA seems to approve projects."

For a while, she thought only her group was being ignored by the ZBA, but the letter from Susan Nam showed her the experience was much more widespread.

On Sept. 9, EMAN also voted to lend its support to the letter.

"There are people throughout the city addressing the same issues," said Linda Bell, chair of EMAN Communications and Marketing at Sunday's demonstration.

Bell claimed that more than 200 variances have been granted by the ZBA recently between

Germantown and Chew Avenues, and that these decisions have served to overburden the area by adding density to what is already the densest part of East Mt. Airy.

The letter accuses the ZBA, which is politically appointed, of being too cozy with developers and accuses ZBA Chair, Frank DiCicco, of badgering and bullying neighbors and RCOs during hearings. It also claims that the Zoom-era ZBA practice of screen surrender to developers' lawyers creates an unfair advantage for the applicants when they are in conflict with local voices.

The result of these and other repeated actions by the ZBA, according to the letter, is that local interests routinely get trampled, even when zoning law is on their side, and local people, who are often under-resourced, are over-burdened with legal and procedural demands.

Among the reforms the letter calls for are: new board members, holding some hearings during

after-work hours, and a citizens oversight commission.

In what appeared to be a joint response from the ZBA and the Office of the Mayor, Deputy Communications Director, Kevin Lessard, wrote:

"Due to ongoing litigation, we're unable to comment on some of the specifics you've outlined in your questions. However, it is important to note that the Board, while appointed by the mayor, is independent, quasi-judicial, and not under the City's authority. RCOs with concerns are encouraged to contact the Inspector General or the Ethics Department directly to make a complaint, or file an appeal to the Court of Common Pleas if they feel a decision was made in error and are party to a specific case."

DiCicco did not respond to a request for comment.

Halfway through the rally on Sunday, Susan Nam's husband and three young children came out of the playground and down Slocum, past the activists, waving, on their short walk home.

When they got there, they would have encountered another proposed large development awaiting variances, one that had planned to construct a narrow driveway to multiple new homes only a foot or two from their front porch and door. It's a project that, if it goes through, will have a huge impact on their lives.

Frustration and rage at this loss of control was what motivated Susan Nam to write her letter and bring together this new coalition of neighborhood groups. Hope is what keeps her going.

"It's such a human-level thing," she said. "I really don't want this to be about us against them. That's an old way of thinking, but it does seem that we need to force ourselves in the conversation."

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Owner Debbie Gress Jansen just opened booked, her new bookstore at 851 I Germantown Avenue.

## Chestnut Hill resident celebrates new bookstore opening

(Continued from page 1)

relationship with books my whole life.”

Gress Jansen has stocked the shelves with books of general interest, bestsellers, latest books off the presses, nonfiction, cookbooks, and “a fairly robust selection of children’s books.” She will also carry notecards and stationery.

On Sunday mornings, folks can pick up a newspaper, such as the New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, Wall Street Journal, or the Financial Times, plus the Chestnut Hill Local. She will also carry a limited selection of magazines, such as the New Yorker, Yolo, and Wm Brown.

“My hope is that people will find this is a place to just be with books,” she said. “and that it will serve as a little community gathering place.” The store will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday.

Amy Wilson, Executive Director of Hilltop Books on Bethlehem Pike said she thinks the new store will help sales for everyone and hopes to plan some collaborative events with Gress Jansen. “We are excited to think about Chestnut Hill as a destination for booklovers, giving readers multiple options for buying books from independent stores,” she said. Hilltop, which opened in April of 2021, offers a broad selection of second-hand books that have been donated by patrons who support the Chestnut Hill Branch of the Free Library.

Sheila Avelin, owner of Mount Airy’s Big Blue Marble Bookstore at 551 Carpenter Lane, said independent bookstores like hers have been gaining market share since the pandemic began in 2020. She cites the closure of the Barnes and Noble’s Willow Grove store as an impetus for shoppers looking for new options.



The children’s section is called the Stewart McGregor Grove. Stewart and McGregor are the middle names of Gress Jansen’s two children.

“We are seeing a trend of the Northwest being a good place for people to come looking for books,” she said. “This is a good moment - people are highly aware of local businesses, and there is a global awareness that we want to shop locally,”

Big Blue Marble is Queer-owned and managed; the store strives to represent all its customers. Based on staff expertise, it

has an especially strong inventory of poetry and science fiction and is well known for its children’s collection.

Uncle Bobbie’s Coffee & Books, a Black-owned bookstore and cafe located at 5445 Germantown Avenue, has become an important anchor for a commercial revival in Germantown since opening its doors in 2017. In addition to selling books, the store also produces a podcast featuring interviews with authors of books that the store would carry, mostly having to do with the Black experience. The store also includes selections from other underrepresented groups, such as the LGBTQ and LatinX communities.

General Manager Justin Moore affirmed that an independent bookstore is an important part of any community. “We obviously love the idea of more independent bookstores opening in Philadelphia,” he said.

As a new bookseller, Gress Jansen said her favorite thing to do is to match people with books they would enjoy, and she is “over the moon” about being able to do exactly that in her new store. The store is scheduled to open on Thursday, September 16.

## Fall for the Arts returns, a tradition intact



(Continued from page 1)

a participant since 2009. Last year, she missed being on the Hill for her annual artistic showcase. This year, she plans to show festivalgoers how she does one of her palette knife paintings with a live demonstration.

“I am so excited it is happening!” Matthews said. “I’ve been doing it for so many years that it is part of my fall rhythm. I’m really excited it is back.”

The festival will also feature some new artists and vendors this year, including Mercedes Dennis, an assistant manager at Kitchen Kapers who spent part of the pandemic launching her own online thrift store called Purpose Purchase thrift (purposepurchase.com).

Dennis will have a spot at the festival this year to showcase some of the fun fashions she has curated on her site, including clothing, jewelry and shoes. All of her items are donated, and her vision is to create a community resource where everyone from teens to parents can buy affordable, high-end goods.

“I’m super excited to participate,” Dennis said. “I hope to get new clients, and people who didn’t know I existed online. I’m about recycling and reusing. It’s super affordable for teens and

parents.”

Just outside the tented area, the family zone is also returning, with kids’ activities at the PNC Bank Orange Lot on the 8300 block of Germantown Ave. Live music will fill the streets, with two stages set up at Bethlehem Pike and Germantown Ave., featuring music from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. A variety of performers including Classic Rockers, City Rhythm, the Dukes of Destiny and the Arlene Hilton Jazz Quartet are all slated to play.

Restaurants are also getting in on action, with the Chestnut Grill and McNally’s offering outdoor dining areas, and The Fresh Market hosting beverages and a kids’ pumpkin decorating station.

Weavers Way Co-op will have grab-and-go foods and drinks and Stateside Vodka, Philly’s own vodka producer, will man a booth at Germantown Ave. and Gravers Lane with seasonal cocktails and bottle sales.

And what would the festival be without Old Fashioned KettleKorn? The beloved booth will be back at the corner of Southampton and Germantown next to the Christ Lutheran Church.

Now we know it’s really fall. For more information about the Fall for the Arts Festival 2021, go to [www.chestnuthillpa.com](http://www.chestnuthillpa.com) or call 215-247-6696.

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# Mt. Airy classes for older folks are a real stretch

by Len Lear

Think you are too old to exercise? Popular Mt. Airy fitness trainer Yvonne Ferguson-Hardin is out to convince you otherwise with Mt. Airy Learning Tree's "Stretch 4 Life for Seniors" classes starting Sept. 20 at Grace Epiphany Church, 224 E. Gowen Ave. (She also teaches Fergie's Bootcamp starting Sept. 18 at Northwestern Stables, 120 W. Northwestern Ave. It is an extreme workout with push-ups, running, climbing, jumping, burpees, etc.)

Ferguson-Hardin, mid-50ish, has been teaching these classes for the senior citizen community through MALT (and other centers) for more than six years. The West Mt. Airy resident, who owns and operates Fergie's Instructional Training (FIT) at 47 High St. in Germantown, usually draws 10 to 20 participants per class in smaller locations and up to 50 in larger locations.

"Stretch 4 Life" is provided in two levels. Level 1 is in a chair for exercises and standing for the balance segment only if the participants are comfortable. Yvonne explained last week, "This class was designed to enable anyone, regardless of age, disability, size or gender, to be able to participate. The goal is to educate with regards to easy, safe and practical ways to get the benefits of exercise while



Starting Sept. 18 and continuing for five sessions, Ferguson-Hardin will be leading "Fergie's Bootcamp", an extreme workout with push-ups, running, climbing, jumping, burpees, etc.

in a chair. Knowing how to do the exercises reduces excuses and enables movement possible to fit into any schedule daily. Level 2 is conducted also on a mat on the floor with more supported and unsupported balance exercises.

"Stretch for Life" is conducted to slow, soulful gospel music. Many of the positions transition slowly and methodically like a blend of modern dance and yoga, focusing on the breath, inner peace and reciting empowerment phrases to fuel ability. Focus is also given to the smaller joints (ankles, wrists, fingers) and self-massage to enhance circulation. Through the history of the "Stretch" classes for seniors, the mean age of participants has been 70-95.

Before the pandemic Yvonne's Mt. Airy fitness training business had contracts with several area nursing homes and senior citizen centers in addition to numerous at-home personal training clients. "I had to take a long, hard look at my business model and figure out how to re-invent it and make it work during a time when I no longer had customers willing to attend large indoor or outdoor exercise groups," she told us in an earlier interview.

As a British-born (Jamaican heritage) young woman, Hardin moved to the U.S. in 1987 and immediately found that consuming increased portion sizes and the variety of super-rich foods caused her to gain unwanted weight. Des-

perate to lose the extra pounds, she joined Bally's Holiday Fitness Center, and after being introduced to aerobic classes, she became an aerobics instructor.

Hardin taught many classes in various areas such as Montgomery County and Philadelphia in clubs such as The Bodyshop in Horscham, The Sporting Club in Center City and Riverside Aquatic Club on the Main Line. She decided to return to Temple University, where she gained degrees in Therapeutic Recreation and Physical Education/Health Sciences. Hardin also married and had three daughters. After being a full-time supervisor in various wellness facilities and long-term care homes for a few years, she

returned to fitness 100 percent in 2009, creating her business, Fergie's Instructional Training.

According to Ruth Joray, of West Mt. Airy, who has taken exercise classes with Yvonne, "She is a positive, affirmative inspiration who has made a difference in my life ... She is determined, generous and truly works in support of her clients' health and well-being. She brings out physical ability and endurance I had thought was long gone!"

The benefits of "Stretch 4 Life," according to Yvonne, include the reduction of stress and the relief of depression and anxiety, better flexibility, improved range of motion, better coordination, posture and control while walking, possibly even improved digestion and circulation and lower blood pressure (due to more oxygen to the brain and vital organs).

Yvonne also posts invitations to free classes on Facebook, and she has free classes on YouTube.

"Stretching is a gentle form of exercise but conducted incorrectly like bouncing or jerking or overstretching when the body is cold can cause discomfort," said Yvonne. "To prevent injuries and muscle damage, remembering to warm up is key."

For more information: [transformurlifetoday.com](http://transformurlifetoday.com) or [facebook.com/transformurlifetoday](https://www.facebook.com/transformurlifetoday). Len Lear can be reached at [llenlear@chestnutlocal.com](mailto:llenlear@chestnutlocal.com)

## Hiller shares 'miracle' that ended decades of pain

by Len Lear

Nicole Rodriguez should be on the Ellen and/or Oprah TV shows. She has just the kind of compelling "miracle cure" happy-ending story that almost every sentient, empathetic being loves to hear about and maybe even vicariously experience. How many millions of people have suffered with chronic, almost unendurable pain and have tried to treat it with over-the-counter pills, prescription drugs, internet and cable TV advertised "cures," but the only people who wind up feeling better are the ones selling the pills and the "cures?"

"I lived with chronic back pain for 20 years," said Rodriguez, a Chestnut Hill area resident for most of her 49 years, "and it even got worse after I was in a car accident in 2011 on Columbus Boulevard near Queen Village. Deepak Chopra said that chronic pain is the most significant disability of our time. I tried Cortisone injections, prescription pain medicine, physical therapy, knee sleeves and so many other things, but nothing helped. Whatever relief I ever got was temporary."

Rodriguez graduated from Springfield High School and Temple University with a B.A. in psychology and an M.A. in dance education. She taught dance at several area schools and danced professionally with regional dance troupes. She also taught in several area elementary schools for 10 years, but she injured her knees dancing and "was decimated by chronic pain, even after I stopped dancing."

Nicole finally had arthroscopic surgery on her right knee, "which wasn't helpful at all ... and then, inexplicably, the pain shifted into my low back. I hadn't had any acute injury to my back, but now I had a ton of back pain."

Acupuncture helped somewhat, but then Nicole had a bad fall on a freshly mopped floor in a



Nicole Rodriguez. (Photo by Len Lear)

restaurant, and she had to be carried out of the restaurant by paramedics. "It all impacted my ability to participate in recreational activities or do much of anything physical. The pain, my limitations and the side-effects from the meds made for a really lousy quality of life."

After the car accident, Nicole could no longer drive a car for five years or return to work or even carry a purse or bag, and had difficulty preparing her own meals. She was divorced and living alone at the time, so her father would regularly come over to do chores, even scrubbing floors and cleaning the bathroom. "I lost much of the fine motor control in my hands and had to use dictation software because I could no longer use a pen or pencil without making the pain worse."

Nicole even developed ankle pain that got so bad that she would take a bus just to avoid walking a couple of blocks. She went to five different neurosurgeons, some of whom suggested cervical fusion, but "I did not want to go that route." Nicole wound up on disability for a few years and feared that she would never be able to work again. Finally, after 20 years of unrelied suffering, Nicole met a woman at a fitness club in center city in 2016 who suggested that she go to a non-traditional, holistic "posture alignment therapist" in Fort Washington.

"For the first time, something actually worked," insisted Nicole. "It was not overnight; it was gradual, but the more I got the therapy and did the exercises, the pain got less and less. It was a miracle! I was eventually able to live a nor-

mal life again, and today I feel better than ever!"

Nicole was so thrilled to be pain-free that she underwent training herself to become a therapist, using the therapy that relieved her pain. Called the Egoscue Method, it was founded by a military vet, Pete Egoscue, in the 1970s and is now considered by practitioners as a way to treat chronic musculoskeletal pain attributed to workplace and sports injuries, accidents, aging and other conditions. The treatment consists of a series of stretches and exercises that "essentially correct the misalignments in the musculoskeletal system of the body and help restore the body's innate symmetry and balance." Unlike chiropractic treatments, it is hands-off.

Nicole's "posture therapy" center, "Pain-Free Philly," is located at the Montgomery Integrative Health Group, 1108 East Willow Grove Ave. in Wyndmoor. Her journey to a pain-free life is chronicled in a just-published book, "How Did I Not Know About This? Becoming Pain-Free Through Posture Therapy," by Grace Lambert, a therapist and posture alignment specialist.

There are 20 reviews of Nicole's therapy online, all five stars. A typical one from Nick Rubin of Elkins Park, says, "Words can't really do justice to the level of individual care and intelligence Nicole puts into her craft ... I worked with her weekly for two months in hour-long sessions. Each session was a joy ... Since my treatment, I've been completely pain-free in my pinched nerve, I went hiking in Iceland for a week without any hiccups, and I'm well on my way to playing competitive sports again."

Rodriguez also has a Mt. Airy Learning Tree talk scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 30, 7 p.m., at the United Lutheran Seminary, 7301 Germantown Ave.

For more information: [painfreephilly.com](http://painfreephilly.com) or 267-888-2242.

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# Local group fosters cultural Judaism

by Kristin Holmes

Sarah Gentry says she didn't intend to raise her two children to be Jewish. It just kind of happened.

The Mount Airy social worker grew up as a Catholic. Her mother is Jewish and Gentry's husband was raised as a Quaker. That mixed bag of traditions coupled with an ambivalence about organized religion meant Gentry never felt spiritually at home.

But then she stumbled upon Jewish Children's Folkshul & Adult Community, a Chestnut Hill-based group for whom the Almighty is optional. "I loved that they embraced quirky religious families," said Gentry, who joined the group nearly 15 years ago and enrolled her two children in its school.

That's how Gentry, along with her family, came to sit proudly at Germantown Friends Meeting earlier this month on Rosh Hashanah, the start of the Jewish High Holy Days which end tonight with Yom Kippur, as her son Miller Gentry-Sharp, now 17, delivered a presentation about the group that had given her children their Jewish identity. And Beth Margolis-Rupp, director of Folkshul, which means the people's congregation in Yiddish, hopes that more families find this kind of community through the group's eclectic approach to Judaism.

Jewish Children's Folkshul & Adult Community is a secular humanist Jewish organization that aims to transmit values of social justice and human responsibility while cultivating a strong Jewish identity. A connection to God is not required, said Margolis-Rupp, who lives in Chestnut Hill.

The more than 75-year-old group offers weekly Sunday School at Springside Chestnut Hill Academy for youngsters in pre-K to 12th grade. Students learn Jewish history, values, traditions and holidays. Nearly 50 students are enrolled in the school, and 70 people are members of the organization, traveling from the five-county region and South Jersey to attend programs.

For adults, Folkshul hosts film screenings, speaker series, local outings, board-game events, exercises classes, and study groups. The community celebrates holidays, including Passover and Rosh Hashanah. Its Yom Kippur observance is scheduled for 3 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 16, at Germantown Friends Meeting and will be available virtually. A celebration of the harvest holiday Sukkot is planned for 10 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 19, at Fort Washington State Park.

Humanistic Judaism celebrates Jewish life while foregoing appeals for divine intervention, instead putting "faith in human reason and human power as the best vehicles for improving the world," according to the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

About 1.5 million of the nation's 5.8 million adults who identify as Jewish say they are Jews with no religion, according to "Jewish Americans in 2020," a study released earlier this year by the Pew Research Center. Those respondents say they are atheist, agnostic or have no religion, but consider themselves Jewish by culture, ethnicity or family background.

In the Philadelphia region, about 30 percent of area's 308,700 Jewish adults identify as ethnically or culturally Jewish, while 66 per-

cent say they are Jewish by religion, according to "Community Portrait: A 2019 Jewish Population Study of Greater Philadelphia," which was commissioned by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia.

All are welcome at Folkshul, which has 50 members and represents families that may be "culturally Jewish, agnostic, atheist, spiritual, self-identified Jewish, Jew-ish, Jew-curious, in an interfaith family, LGBTQ, leaving Judaism, returning to Judaism" and more.

The group started as a Sunday School over 75 years ago for families affiliated with the Workmen's Circle, a Jewish fraternal organization many of whose members supported Socialist politics, Margolis-Rupp said. Similar schools established throughout the city became a way for Jews to

"hold onto their Judaism without a synagogue," she continued.

Richard Frankel of Chestnut Hill grew up in a Jewish household but drifted away from the faith as he got older. He realized that what meant the most to him about Judaism was not the religion, but its values, history, and commitment to social justice. For Frankel and his family, Folkshul proved a perfect match.

"We wanted something where our children could learn to develop a Jewish identity but that wasn't kind of God-focused or as ritualistic as other places," said Frankel, a law professor at Drexel University who describes himself as "more on the atheist side of things."

At Folkshul, Katie Forest, the community's life cycle officiant, helps families such as Frankel's craft personalized events such as

weddings, baby-naming ceremonies and funerals. Forest also oversees the community's B'Mitzvah program, a coming-of-age ritual for 13 year-olds. Students and their families select a topic connected to Jewish life, study it for a year and then make a presentation to the community about what they've learned. Students considered topics including the Holocaust, Folkshul's history and Jewish holiday songs. They can also study a portion of the Torah for their project, but in a way that's different from traditional Bar and Bat Mitzvahs.

Decades ago, Leah Siemiarowski Wright was a Folkshul student. She is now the group's programming director.

"Folkshul instilled in me a sense of tradition and a way to continue what my foremothers had done, but in my own way," said Wright,

of Havertown.

For Miller-Sharp, Folkshul has been the key to his Jewish identity. "If it weren't for them, I probably wouldn't have any sort of regular Jewish culture and ideas," he said.

Miller-Sharp is now a teaching assistant at the Sunday School, which was forced to go virtual during the pandemic. Folkshul leaders created a series of regular online offerings, mailings and outdoor events to keep members engaged through the quarantine.

Participation had stalled, but membership is now increasing. Margolis-Rupp is hopeful that an end to the pandemic will continue to boost attendance.

"We are small because we are unknown," Margolis-Rupp said, "but we are in the right place at the right time – and doing the right things."

# Clover Market return draws crowds



The Chestnut Hill Business District was pleased to resume its long-running partnership with The Clover Market for the first time since the pandemic, the first since 2019, nearly a hundred vendors filled Highland Street and a connecting lot. The seasonal open-air market is a perennial favorite of Chestnut Hill's fall event calendar that brings thousands of visitors to enjoy our distinctive shops and restaurants, while exploring some of the region's most unique artisanal vendors. This year's market featured a curated selection of vendors with antiques & collectibles, vintage jewelry & clothing, handmade items and original art. Live music, free kids' crafting, and food trucks made the scene complete..

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# With a late surge, GA boys top Hun in opener, 4-2

by Tom Utescher

After several early soccer scrimmages for each side, the boys of Germantown Academy and visiting Hun School met for their first official game of 2021 last Friday in GA's Carey Stadium.

The host Patriots controlled most of the play in the first half, but several missed scoring opportunities meant that they only held a modest 1-0 lead at half-time. The Hun Raiders seemed transformed early in the second half, mustering more energy than their hosts and seizing a 2-1 lead in less than five minutes. The first marker for the visitors from Princeton had come on a penalty kick, and midway through the second half Germantown junior Eli Torrey answered this goal in kind to tie the match at 2-2.

That score was still on the board as the clock dipped under two minutes remaining, and it appeared that the game was headed for overtime. In the end, GA solved Hun's defense and senior Christian Combs scored twice in the final 79 seconds, giving the Patriots a 4-2 victory.

Combs came away with a hat trick, having also accounted for the Germantown goal in the first half. In the GA cage, sophomore keeper Josh Bouchard made eight saves.

"This was a good stepping stone going into next week, when we play two tough out-of-league teams," remarked Kurt Wetzel, who is beginning his fourth season as GA head coach. "I think there was some tension building late in the game with the game still tied, but in the end we were able to settle down and just play. We had unselfish goals today; the players trust each other."

The Patriots' Combs, a striker, is one of the three GA captains this season, along with classmates Sean Lipschutz (midfield/forward) and Connor Wetzel (a defender and the son of Coach Wetzel). They started against Hun School, along with fellow seniors Jacob Lee (defense) and Brett Rabbiner (midfield).

Four juniors started in last Friday's opener, Torrey (midfield), Colin León (midfield/forward), Jack Strauss (defense/midfield), and Nick Venziale (midfield/forward). Goalie Bouchard was joined in a starting role by sophomore classmate Roan Harrington (defense/midfield).

GA was clearly a smaller team physically than Hun, and the Patriots definitely appeared quicker in the first half. Most of the time, they moved the ball effectively with short passes, keeping it on the ground.

Germantown attacked early and earned the first corner kick of the bout, sending the ball a little too high out in the box. León and Combs made promising runs, but León fouled a defender and then Hill goalie Ayden Isbirian came out of the cage to stop Combs' charge.

A little after GA's Torrey sent a shot over the visitors' crossbar, Bouchard came out of the goal at the other end to grab one of many long tosses made by Hun's throw-in specialist.

A strong high shot by GA's Lipschutz bent back Isbirian's fingertips but then hit the crossbar. On the other half of the field Rabbiner, defending on the right



Hun School's Alex Torres (right) is determined to beat GA senior Sean Lipschutz to a 50/50 ball. (Photo by Tom Utescher)

wing, and Lee, in the middle, were doing a good job of foiling offensive forays by the Raiders.

It was still 0-0 as the clock cut into the final 10 minutes of the first half. Well on the outside on the left flank, Combs settled the ball, sized things up, and then blasted a shot high into the right side of the visitors' goal. GA was on the board with 6:27 remaining.

From the middle, a shot by sophomore Ryan Szczepkowski sailed above the Hun goal and through the football goalposts behind it, and soon the half ended with Germantown still holding a 1-0 edge.

Wetzel related, "At halftime, all three of us [coaches] reminded them that it was only 1-0, and they were going to make adjustments. The challenge was to not sit back on our laurels. We should have had a few more in the first half, but we didn't finish."

Meanwhile, the Hun players were admonished by their leaders for being outlasted and outplayed by the Patriots in the first half. The Raiders had a different look as the second half began. They sped up their game, used their height better on balls in the air, and used their strength when contending for possession on the ground.

Wetzel said, "You could hear their coach: 'High press, let's go!' They changed their format and they matched us up and started

playing physically. I think we got back on our heels a bit, and we weren't talking."

Awarded a penalty kick with just four minutes and one second elapsed, Hun senior Osman Bayazitoglu converted just inside the right post to tie the game. Bringing the ball in along the right endline, the Raiders had junior William Zeng score about a minute later to go up 2-1.

The visitors would control much of the play awhile longer but they would never garner a third goal, thanks in part to solid play by GA's young goalie, Bouchard. After a bit, the vigor Hun displayed at the outset of the second half faded somewhat as the Patriots stepped up in response.

With 22:12 left to play, the hosts pulled even at 2-2 when Torrey took a penalty kick and scored on the left side.

In the last quarter of the contest some yellow cards were handed out, but there were no situations that really got out of hand.

In fact, Coach Wetzel remarked on the de-escalation of an encounter between Hun's Aden Spektor and his own Eli Torrey. The two players became entangled and ended up on the ground, but the athletes chose not to let the plot take a more contentious turn.

The GA coach commented, "Their young man was a class

act, offered his hand to our guy to help him up. They showed each other respect, and went back to the game. For me, those things can be more important than the 'W.'"

Still, the tie score remained on the board as time ticked away.



GA senior Brett Rabbiner heads the ball away from the goal after Hun School sent in a corner kick from the right. (Photo by Tom Utescher)

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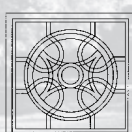
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## SPORTS

## SCH boys fall to tough upstate soccer squad

by Tom Utescher

If you didn't glance at the scoreboard and simply watched the ebb and flow of action in last Saturday's soccer game at Spring-side Chestnut Hill Academy, you might have been a little surprised at the 3-0 final score. That was the official outcome, though, as the lads of visiting Parkland High School capitalized on three first-half scoring opportunities and the host Blue Devils were unable to ruffle the net at the other end of the pitch.

"In the first half, they really only had three good chances, and they had three good finishes," noted sixth-year SCH head coach Brian Zalasky. "That was tough to recover from, but I thought we stepped it up at the end of the first half, and then played a 0-0 second half."

SCH slipped back to the .500 mark, having overcome Germantown Friends School back in the season opener on September 3. Parkland (from just north of Allentown, PA) moved into winning territory at 2-1. The Trojans play in the large-enrollment public school category in the PIAA, and have made many state tournament appearances. Their head coach, Patrick Birns, coached at Delaware Valley High School in Milford, PA, when SCH's Zalasky played there.

The Spring-side Chestnut Hill program graduated eight players from the 2020 squad, several of whom had been on two championship teams in both Inter-Ac League and PA Independent Schools competition. A few hours before game time last Saturday, it was learned that two experienced players on the current squad would miss the game as they began COVID quarantine.

Zalasky admitted, "That put us in a weird headspace before the game, and we had to rejigger things at center back and center mid. We were jittery early in the game."

The Blue Devils started Ben Rodgers in goal, with fellow senior Moje Badejoko in front of him on defense and their classmate Sean Stackhouse in the midfield. Jameson Callas, Danny Heep, Christopher Metsikas, Ryan White and Colin Woehlcke were the junior starters, and the sophomores who began the game are Zayd DeVeaux,



Controlling the ball on the left wing, SCH sophomore Zayd DeVeaux (right) senses the approach of a Parkland defender. (Photo by Tom Utescher)

Abdoul Diallo, and Joseph Nelson. Nelson has arrived from the U.K. as a new SCH student this fall. Back in 2019, the Blue Devils' Stackhouse went abroad to play for a club soccer academy at Fleetwood in Lancashire, England.

Prior to the start of Saturday's game the playing of the National Anthem was followed by a minute of silence to honor the victims of the 9/11 attacks, including 1994 Spring-side School graduate Johanna Sigmund.

Spring-side Chestnut Hill found itself trailing a little less than three minutes into the match, as Parkland's Will Wagstaff drove the ball in from 11 meters out a little left of center in the box. The Blue Devils made their first trip across the Parkland 18 about nine minutes in.

Later on, SCH's Metsikas fired a hard shot from the middle of the box that was deflected wide to the right of the cage by Parkland goalie Matt Link (eight saves). The ball could not have followed the trajectory it did if Link had not touched it, but the officials stupefied onlookers by calling a goal kick instead of a corner.

The transition sequence for Parkland that followed led directly to the visitors' second goal, scored from close range on the left by Zack Reighter with 22:10 remaining in the first half.

When Reighter scored again with 10:39 to go, the game's final score of 3-0 was up on the board. The Blue Devils generated a number of attacks in the last 10 minutes of the half. On one of them, a hard-hit shot from the right by Heep angled a little outside of Parkland's far post. He was active along the right wing all day.

The Devils had another scoring chance early in the second half, when they were awarded a kick a

little above the 18 on the left. The shot by the Devils' Woehlcke smacked off the face of a defender in the Trojans' wall, and the net result was a do-over. Heep took the shot this time, and after the ball skirted the right side of the wall it was scooped up by Parkland's keeper, Link.

For the start of the second half, the host team had eighth-grader Cole Carberry in goal, a young talent who had arrived at SCH a year earlier.

Zalasky described his performance as "impressive for a guy his age. You have to respect his attitude and his ability to handle a high-pressure situation in his first varsity game."

After a good deal of possession time by the Blue Devils through a lot of the second half, Parkland made a push down the stretch to try and add to its three first-half goals. Carberry made both standing and diving saves back-to-back on one sequence with about eight minutes remaining, and later on he leapt up to deny the Trojans on a strong outside shot.

Zalasky commented, "In the second half we had some great glimpses of our guys keeping possession and getting into their attacking third."

The Blue Devils' boss will be assisted once again by assistant coach Tom Stackhouse (Sean's oldest brother), who is now starting his ninth season with the SCH varsity. A new member of the staff, Mike Bray, is not new at all to Zalasky; they grew up playing youth soccer and high school soccer together. Bray played college ball at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. When he moved to the Philadelphia area recently, Zalasky was quick to reach out and bring him on board.

## New look for Mount field hockey on field and sideline

by Tom Utescher

Mount St. Joseph Academy has graduated several strong classes of field hockey players in a row. The program took quite a hit last spring, when seven seniors snagged their diplomas and four of them headed off to Division I college programs.

Another change for the 2021 Magic is the arrival of a new head coach, Kyra Castano. The product of one of the traditionally strong scholastic programs in the Wilkes Barre area, Coughlin High School, she went on to play at St. Francis University in western Pennsylvania. She graduated in 2018 and did some coaching around Wilkes Barre for several years.

There is some continuity on

on the JV squad.

The varsity roster recently announced by Coach Castano actually list more seniors than last year's, 11 in all. In addition to the five already named are Mackenzie Craig, Ella Keifner, Jane Mezzanotte, Lauren O'Malley, Skylar Vacca, and starting goalie Alyssa Brachielli.

Junior Nora Haney will also play in goal for the varsity, and the other 11th graders (besides Loomer) are Lauren Dachowski, Aisling Scibelli and Julia Solecki. NFA alum Kyle and Caitlin Keough are the two sophomores on the roster.

The Magic made their Athletic Association of Catholic Academies debut last Tuesday against visiting Merion Mercy. Until this season, the Golden Bears were



Mount St. Joseph's 2021 field hockey captains are (from left) seniors Devon Lasky, Ashley Timby, and Katie Convey. (Photo by Tom Utescher)

the coaching staff with varsity assistant and JV head coach Christina Black, a former goalkeeper for the MSJ hockey team (Class of 2014).

Leading the team out on the field are three senior captains, Katie Convey (who has committed to Colgate University), Devon Lasky, and Ashley Timby. Convey is a graduate of Norwood-Fontbonne Academy, as are team members Campbell Donovan and Olivia Cook (both seniors), junior Devin Loomer, and sophomore Grace Kyle. Another Norwooder, Ramsey Tabor, is a goalie

coached by Penn Charter alumna Gretta Ehret. Ehret is now a volunteer assistant coach at her collegiate alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania.

Last Wednesday at the Mount it would've been strange if the visitors hadn't scored in the first quarter of the league opener, since they spent much of the period swarming the shooting circle in the Magic's defensive end. By the end of the quarter, Mallory McHale and Kelly O'Connor had given Merion a 2-0.

The two ends of the field were better balanced in the second stanza, when the Mounties played much better.

Unfortunately for the locals, they would not score here or later on in the game. Things could've been much worse if not for strong play throughout by Brachielli, who came away with 12 saves.

The Magic spent much more time on offense in the second quarter, but they did not visit Merion's circle very often, and the half ended with the visitors still up 2-0.

As the second half began, the Golden Bears looked to recapture the dominance they'd displayed early in the game, and in round three they doubled their lead thanks to strikes by Kasey Knapp and Moira Vaughn.

Mount St. Joseph made the first rush of the fourth quarter, but midway through the period Merion Mercy posted its final goal of the day, with the credit going to Brynn Donnelly. In the final five minutes, the Magic pushed into the Merion circle and earned several penalty corners, but no goals resulted from this, and the Golden Bears ambled off with a 5-0 victory in the Catholic Academies opener.

**Good Neighbor Day!**

The health of our friends and neighbors is very important to us! Join Roxborough Memorial Hospital and the Roxborough Memorial Hospital School of Nursing for Good Neighbor Day on Thursday, September 30, 2021 from 9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

The event promises something for everyone—Free admission, door prizes, health screenings, flu shots, and refreshments.

Flu vaccines will be given from 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. To register for your flu vaccine, call (215) 487-4458

Senior Expo hosted by State Representative Pamela A. DeLissio, featuring state, county, and local governments, and non-profit agencies.

The event will be held at the Rector Street Parking Lot.

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4. Tear this page out, color/draw/paint your design, and drop it off at our offices at 8434 Germantown Ave or at our Fall for the Arts booth.
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## The root of Fall food traditions: an ode to corn

Fall foods are the best. Earthy, comforting, and hearty only scratches the surface of this culinary season. Soups, stews, roasts, and nutmeg and clove-infused desserts are all on our to-eat list right about now.

To be honest, September had barely arrived when I hit Starbucks for my PSL and made plans to head to Linvilla Orchards in Media for my annual apple cider doughnut haul. I even made the trip to Trader Joe's in search of their heavenly annual canisters of pumpkin oatmeal cookie mix.



### Food For Thought

by April Lisante

But there's another local fall tradition that celebrates one of the most staple autumnal foods: Corn. A delight for the senses and an immersive experience for both history buffs and those who love all things gustatory, it's also a timely tip of the hat to the origins and sustainability of our foods, at a time when we are all a lot more conscientious about where and how we derive our meals.

This weekend, the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania offers an ode to



Guests can watch and interact with a tour guide as corn kernels are ground to make cornmeal in live demonstrations that take you back to the good old 19th century. (Pictured: Guide Craig SanPietro.)

vested corn. On Sept. 19, the Arboretum will celebrate the historic Springfield Mill with a fun public event for food fans of all ages, called Mill Days at Bloomfield Farm. Guests can watch and interact with a tour guide as corn kernels are ground to make cornmeal in live demonstrations that take you back to the good old 19th century.

The Springfield Mill is the oldest mill of its kind from the 19th

century in our area, and it is one of the reasons the Morris Arboretum is on the National Register of Historic Places. The mill has been functioning since 1854 and it is open this fall to the public, to give a firsthand look at how farmers made their crops into essential flour for bread. From 1 to 4 p.m. that day, you can take a trip through time to see how farmers brought their corn to the mill when the fall season arrived.

It's taken a lot of love to keep the old mill running just off of Northwestern Ave. on the banks of the Wissahickon. The mill sits just a stone's throw from the arboretum, across Northwestern Avenue in Flourtown on Bloomfield Farm, parts of which were originally built in 1761, including a stone Miller's Cottage, one of the oldest structures at the Arboretum. Visitors get up-close with a one-

(Continued on page 20)



Amber Orion returns to Allens Lane Theatre in "The Secretaries."

## 'Blistering satire' of sexism coming to Allens Lane

by Rita Charleston

The year is 1994, and the small town of Big Bone, Oregon, much like David Lynch's "Twin Peaks," is filled with secrets. Every month a lumberjack disappears, and some say they've all been killed by a cult of murderous secretaries. Patty Johnson is the new girl at the Cooney Lumber Mill, and she quickly finds herself in the midst of a mystery.

"The Secretaries," written by "The Five Lesbian Brothers" and directed by Josh Hitchens, is part of the 2021 Philly Fringe Festival and is the first production of the year from Allens Lane Theater. It will be performed outdoors each Friday, Saturday and Sunday from Sept. 17 through Oct. 3.

Amber Orion plays Dawn, a secretary known as the "office lesbian." According to Orion, who also takes the role of Buzz, one of the "sensitive" lumberjacks, "This play is an absolutely blistering satire that is, sadly, as relevant now as it was 27 years ago. It's about the absurd cultural expectations of women and the deeply idiotic ideas a lot of men have about what women do when they're not around. There isn't a single part of it that isn't still a totally fair shot at society's depiction of and treatment of women. And yet it's so brilliantly written that there's something funny on literally every page."

Orion grew up in South Jersey, and admits she grew up loving the theater. "I was drawn to acting ever since elementary school when one of my teachers gave me a part in a play. Later, that led me to study theater at the College of New Jersey, which I did for a couple of years before mov-

(Continued on page 20)

## Tuesday Nights At The Movies returns to the Woodmere

by Zoe Gray

The magic of movies returns to the hill this September, with Woodmere Art Museum once again opening up their gallery to screen classic films with the 49th season of Tuesday Nights At The Movies, presented by the Chestnut Hill Film Group.

"Movies are special," says Ralph Hirshorn, member of the Film Group, "and they need to be appreciated in the way they deserve." This has been a difficult task over the last year and a half, with audiences forgoing theaters for the comfort of their own homes. With the convenience of streaming services' new simultaneous online releases of movies, it begs the question: why go out to see movies at all?

Hirshorn, a Chestnut Hill native with experience in the film industry, has answers. After winning a Screen Producers Guild Award in college, Hirshorn got a contract with Columbia Pictures and moved out to Hollywood to work behind the scenes, as an assistant director and screenwriter. After his father's death, he moved back to Philadelphia, taking on the family business – insurance – and developing its entertainment section. His passion for film stayed with him his whole life, and he helped create the Philadelphia Film Festival and Yale film series.

Now he's back here in Chest-



Spencer Tracy in "Fury" (1936).

nut Hill, working tirelessly to instill in his community the same love of movies that he's always carried with him.

"If you want to see a movie, see it in a movie theater," says Hirshorn. Movies weren't made, according to him, with the expectation that you view them from your couch. They're meant to be seen in the dark, on the big screen, with your phone off. They're meant to be totally immersive. They're also meant to be seen in community, with an entire theater of people jumping at the same scares and crying at the same epic loves and losses.

Like most communal activities, Covid made this an impossibility. In an effort to work around this public health crisis, film studios became media companies. You can now watch the latest Marvel movie on opening weekend from your computer in bed.

But this pivot to online releases hasn't been without its detractors, with Scarlett Johansson suing Disney for breaching their contract by releasing the film "Black Widow" simultaneously for streaming. Ralph Hirshorn, too, thinks that seeing movies in-theater is still the way to go, especially now that vaccines are available

and health and safety practices are in place.

His favorite example of the importance of seeing movies in theaters recalls Alfonso Cuarón's film "Roma." Most people who saw it in theaters, when it was released in 2018, gave it rave reviews. It went on to critical acclaim, winning three Academy Awards that year. But most people Hirshorn talked to who had watched the movie at home didn't even finish it.

Now that movies are back, the Chestnut Hill Film Group's Tuesday Nights At The Movies are ready to bring that immersive, community-oriented experience to Chestnut Hill, with safety measures like mask requirements and distanced seating. The Woodmere Art Museum hosts Chestnut Hill's largest screen, with a beautiful projector and a classic 1.33:1 aspect ratio that harkens back to the old days of cinema.

The first movie on the docket is "Fury" (1936), a film that was not chosen intentionally for its relevance to contemporary struggles but that, like so many classic films, connects in striking ways. Films range from the classic to the contemporary, the musical to the dramatic, the familiar to the obscure. The members of the Film Group's committee, all specialists in different time periods or genres of movie, come together to select films for the season.

(Continued on page 19)

# AVA returns in-person with New Artists Recital

Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts, America's only full-scholarship post-graduate school devoted solely to the instruction of professional singers, returns to "live in-person" performances Tuesday & Thursday, Sept. 21 & 23, at 7:30 p.m., with its annual "New Artists Recital." The concert will be directed and accompanied at the Steinway by senior vocal coach Jose Melendez. It will take place in the Helen Corning Warden Theater at AVA's center city campus, 1920 Spruce St.

The season continues with the annual "Giargiari Bel Canto Competition" Friday, Oct. 15, at 7:30 p.m. in the Kimmel Center's Perelman Theater. The concert will be directed and accompanied at the Steinway by Danielle Orlando.



"We have extremely devoted and loyal patrons and donors. They stepped to the forefront and continued their support of AVA. In fact, many increased it," said Vice President & General Manager Scott Guzielek.

Manager Scott Guzielek added, "We had a very strict COVID safety plan in place before we allowed any students or faculty or staff into the building. Of course – we wanted to have lessons and coaching in-person, but we had to make certain that we were carefully limiting the number of people allowed in the buildings at any one time. I would say that less than 50% of our instruction was in-person."

Referring to AVA's weathering the financial implications of the lockdown, Guzielek pointed out, "We have extremely devoted and loyal patrons and donors. They stepped to the forefront and continued their support of AVA. In fact, many increased it. And foundations also remained onboard. And, fortunately, our investments also came through."

The season is sure to be enthralling – all the more so since it will be possible to enjoy it "live" and "in-person." Now here's a bit of a wish or two for the 2022-2023 season: Why not a Gilbert & Sullivan operetta – I've always loved *The Pirates of Penzance* – or a classic Broadway musical – just think of those young voices singing Lerner & Loewe's *Camelot*. And just imagine the audiences that could be introduced to AVA, particularly during the summer tourist season in Philadelphia.

For more ticket information visit [www.avaopera.org](http://www.avaopera.org); for more information regarding safety procedures and requirements contact [info@avaopera.org](mailto:info@avaopera.org).

You can contact **NOTEWORTHY** at [Michael-caruso@comcast.net](mailto:Michael-caruso@comcast.net).

**Note-Worthy**  
by Michael Caruso  
[mjcjsb@aol.com](mailto:mjcjsb@aol.com)



"A Celebration of Opera," features the third act of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, the second act of Puccini's *La boheme*, and ensembles from Lehar's *The Merry Widow*, Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman*, Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. Performances are scheduled for Nov. 12 & 13 at the Perelman Theater, Nov. 14 at Lehigh University; Nov. 20 in Bucks County; and Nov. 30 at the Haverford School's Centennial Hall on the Main Line. Christofer Macatsoris will

conduct.

Pyotry Ilyich Tchaikovsky's masterpiece, *Eugene Onegin*, will be presented in a semi-staged piano production Jan. 22, 25, 27 & 29, 2022, at AVA, sung in Russian with English supertitles. Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon* will receive a full-staged piano production Feb. 19, 22, 24 & 26 at AVA, sung in French with English supertitles.

"Jubilate!," a concert of sacred music, is scheduled for March 19 at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, Bryn Mawr, and March 20 at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity, Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia. David Lofton will conduct.

Giacomo Puccini's beloved *La*

boheme will be performed fully staged with orchestra April 30 and May 3, 5 & 7 at AVA; May 10 in the Haverford School's Centennial Hall; and May 14 in Bucks County. Sung in Italian with English supertitles, Christofer Macatsoris will conduct the AVA Opera Orchestra.

The season will come to its conclusion with the annual "Farewell Recital" for graduating students May 13 at the Church of the Holy Trinity, Rittenhouse Square. Jose Melendez will direct and accompany at the Steinway.

Commenting on the size of the student body for the 2021-2022 academic year, President & Artistic Director (and longtime East Falls resident) K. James McDowell

said, "We're starting the year with 24 singers. That's on the lower-than-usual side for us, but it's possible that we'll be adding on a few extra singers as the year progresses. The pandemic lockdown has understandably lowered the number of young singers auditioning."

AVA continued to offer smaller-scale "virtual" performances during the 2020-21 season. COVID-19 restrictions will be in place for all "in-person" performances this season.

"We were extremely careful during the lockdown," McDowell pointed out. "As a result, no one on staff and none of the students were infected at AVA."

Vice President & General

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# Live theatre returns, slowly and carefully

by Clark Groome

Irving Berlin famously wrote “There’s no business like show business, like no business I know. Everything about it is appealing. . . . There’s no people like show people. They smile when they are low.”

After 17 months of no live theater, and thousands of show people out of work, theater is gradually beginning to return to productions that people can attend in person rather than online.

Locally, many professional theaters are reopening their doors. It won’t happen all at once, and there will still be a lot of theater online for the next few months. It is, however, an encouraging time for Philadelphia-area theaters, artists, and audiences.

I’ve talked to 13 theaters, a small fraction of the area’s professional companies. For some, seasons have been set. For a few, plans are still being made. All of what follows is as accurate as possible as we go to press, but could change, depending on the state of the pandemic. All require audiences to wear masks and provide proof of vaccination, except where indicated.

**Bristol Riverside Theatre** is the first to open. It starts its five-play season on Sept. 21 with the musical “Murder for Two.” It’ll run through Oct. 10. (brtstage.org – 215-785-0100)

Next up is the **Walnut Street Theatre** production of Larry Gallagher’s “Beehive – The ‘60s Musical,” which opens the theater’s five-show season Sept. 28 to Oct. 31. One of the effects the pandemic has had on the Walnut, according to Producing Artistic Director Bernard Havard, is to reduce the length of each show’s run by two weeks. Two of its pro-



Joe Kinosian in Murder for Two which opens at the Bristol Riverside Theatre Sept. 21. (Photo by Joan Marcus)

ductions – “Disney’s The Little Mermaid” (Nov. 16-Jan. 2, 2022) and the season-ending “On Your Feet” (April 12-May 29) – have two-week extensions built into their runs. (walnutstreettheatre.org – 215-574-3550)

The **Wilma Theater** opens its three-play season on Oct. 5 with “Minor Characters: Six Translations of Uncle Vanya at the Same Time.” The show runs through Oct. 24. The seating capacity of the theater has been reduced from 300 to 150. There will be a digital version, details of which are still being worked out. (wilma-theater.org – 215-546-7824)

“Hamilton” returns to the **Academy of Music** on Oct. 20, where it will play until Nov. 28. It is the first show in the 13-show Broadway Philadelphia Season at the **Kimmel Cultural Campus**. In addition to the shows at the Academy of Music, other productions will be mounted at the Forrester Theatre and the Merriam Theater. (kimmelculturalcampus.org – 215-893-1999)

**Theatre Exile** opens its three-play season Oct. 28 with the world premiere of Makasha Copeland’s “Extreme Home Makeover.” It will play through Nov. 21. (theatreexile.org – 215-218-4022)

From Nov. 11 to Dec. 5 “The Garbologists” by Lindsay Joelle will be the opening production of the three-play season at **The Philadelphia Theatre Company**. The productions all take place at PTC’s Suzanne Roberts Theatre where reduced capacity is planned for the mezzanine. (philadelphia-theatrecompany.org – 215-985-0420)

At Malvern’s **People’s Light and Theatre Company**, “A Christmas Carol” will run from Nov. 21 to Jan. 2, 2022. According to Rose Devine, People’s Light’s Director of Marketing and Communications, only 50% of the seats will be sold. While masks and vaccinations will be required for adults, kids under 12 must have proof of a negative COVID test. (peopleslight.org – 610-644-3500)

Act II favorites” will be on stage in “Really Good Things” from Nov. 30 to Dec. 30 at **Ambler’s Act II Playhouse**, the first offering of its five-play season. The theater has released the following statement: “Our staff is all fully vaccinated, we are employing recommended practices in our lobby, Box Office, administrative offices, and theatre, and we will definitely have a stated mask and vaccination requirement policy before the season starts. We are in the process of planning the best way to communicate this information to our patrons and guests.” (act2.org – 215-654-0200)

Both **The Arden Theatre** (ardentheatre.org – 215-922-1122) and **Lantern Theater Company** (lanterntheater.org – 215-829-0395) won’t begin their regular seasons until January.

Arden will open Jan. 13 with the first production of its five-show season, Tennessee Williams’s “A Streetcar Named Desire,” which will run through Feb. 13. The mask and vaccination proto-

cols are still to be determined.

Lantern plans to mount a Dec 3 to Dec. 30 production of local actor Tony Lawton’s adaptation of “Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol” at the Proscenium Theatre at the Drake. Its regular four-play season, back home at St. Stephen’s Theater, opens with Lynn Nottage’s “Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine,” a Philadelphia premiere that will run through Feb. 20. Masks will be required and proof of vaccination.

According to Producing Artistic Director Jen Childs, 1812 Productions has a goal to have something running in December but they just don’t know where it will be or when it will open. (1812productions.org – 215-592-9560)

**Mt. Airy’s Quintessence Theatre Group** is currently working on bringing its home, the Sedgwick Theater, into compliance with protocols required by the city, the CDC, and the theatrical unions. Artistic Director Alexander Burns is hoping that the work will be done in early 2022 and that a season might begin in February. In the meantime, they are planning to produce at other locations during the fall but the details are not yet set. (quintessence-theatre.org)

Norristown’s **Theatre Horizon** hopes to be back on stage sometime early next year. (theatrehorizon.org – 610-283-2230)

While the upcoming Philadelphia theater season is still a work in progress, the prospects for productions with live audiences is very positive.

So, to quote Mama Rose from Jule Styne and Stephen Sondheim’s magnificent “Gypsy”: “Curtaun up! Light the lights! We got nothing to hit but the heights! . . . Everything’s coming up roses for me and for you!”

## Tuesday Nights At The Movies returns

(Continued from page 17)

“They’re good films, and they deserve being seen,” says Hirshorn. Compared to 50 years ago, there are very few retrospective theaters left in the country. Tuesday Nights At The Movies keep the tradition alive and strong, and they place an emphasis on accessibility.

Tickets are donation-based, with a \$5 recommended donation. Some inveterate audience members give larger, more generous donations, and some without means attend for free. Regardless, all are welcome. The location is accessible to neighborhood moviegoers, but is also close enough to the train station to be walkable for those coming in on public transportation.

The program’s “whole appeal”, Hirshorn stressed, “is community”. The Woodmere’s doors are open to both returning members and

new audiences that desire that familiar cinematic, immersive experience after a long year and a half of streaming movies at home.

Any interested in attending a

movie at Woodmere, starting with the season’s opening film “Fury” on September 28th, can RSVP by emailing rhirshorn@gmail.com.



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### The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke

<p><b>ACROSS</b></p> <p>1 Street fleet</p> <p>5 1999 film, “10 Things I ___ About You”</p> <p>9 Norwegian king</p> <p>13 Excel shortcut</p> <p>14 Roswell sightings</p> <p>15 Barn topper</p> <p>16 Stomach lesion</p> <p>17 Oscar, for one</p> <p>19 Place for petunias</p> <p>21 News media</p> <p>22 Notability</p> <p>23 Hearing range</p> <p>25 Hog the mirror</p> <p>27 Puzzling problem</p> <p>31 Ind. neighbor</p> <p>33 Gary who portrayed Churchill</p> <p>36 Dinner, e.g.</p> <p>37 ___ terrier</p> <p>39 Hightailed it</p> <p>40 Past or present, in grammar</p> <p>41 Anagram for “cone”</p> <p>42 Energetic person</p> <p>44 Barely manage, with “out”</p> <p>45 Phonograph feature</p> <p>47 Large-eyed primate</p> <p>49 Hand over, as for sale</p> <p>52 Big bash</p> <p>55 MGM opening?</p> <p>58 Kind of drill</p> <p>60 Mistaken</p> <p>62 Cordial flavoring</p> <p>63 Gets ripe</p> <p>64 Rihanna nickname</p> <p>65 False gods</p> <p>66 Turn’s partner</p> <p>67 Smart-___</p> <p>68 Zebra feature</p>	 <p>Copyright 2021 by The Puzzle Syndicate</p>
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<p>2 Crook’s helper</p> <p>3 Milwaukee player</p> <p>4 Like bad losers</p> <p>5 Agriculture</p> <p>6 Pitt flick, “Burn ___ Reading”</p> <p>7 Pond hoppers</p> <p>8 OH time zone</p> <p>9 Paycheck fattener</p> <p>10 Behind schedule</p> <p>11 Picnic pests</p> <p>12 Bank charges</p> <p>13 Hand-warmer</p> <p>18 Familiar with</p> <p>20 Film spool</p> <p>24 Farm female</p> <p>26 Long, long time</p> <p>28 Baby Boomer or Millennial</p> <p>29 Mardi Gras wear</p> <p>30 Safe, on board</p> <p>31 Clickable image</p> <p>32 Track assignment</p> <p>34 Word before and after “oh”</p> <p>35 Tylenol, e.g.</p>	<p>38 Disaster-aid group</p> <p>40 Jones who sang “It’s Not Unusual”</p> <p>42 Cubby hole?</p> <p>43 Waiter’s handout</p> <p>46 Crazy as a ___</p> <p>48 Kenya’s neighbor</p> <p>50 Go bad</p> <p>51 Get used (to)</p> <p>53 Cotton thread</p> <p>54 High cards</p> <p>55 Vegan no-no</p> <p>56 For that reason</p> <p>57 Half of seis</p> <p>59 Badly injure</p> <p>61 Historic time</p>
--	---

**Answers to Last Week’s Crossword:**

S	N	O	W	P	U	T	T	S	O	D	D	S
H	O	N	E	A	P	A	R	T	R	E	A	L
R	O	A	R	R	E	M	A	R	K	A	B	L
U	N	L	E	A	R	N	P	O	I	N	T	E
G	E	L	C	O	D	A	L	O	G			
	F	R	E	T	F	A	L	S	E	T	T	O
S	P	O	O	R	C	R	E	E	K	R	A	P
L	A	U	D	S	H	I	R	R	M	A	R	A
A	P	R	S	P	I	C	Y	P	E	N	A	L
B	A	S	I	L	I	C	A	C	O	N	S	
	N	A	N	N	O	E	L	V	A	N		
H	A	S	H	I	S	H	C	L	O	S	E	L
A	C	C	E	N	T	U	A	T	E	P	R	I
R	E	A	R	E	L	D	E	R	A	S	A	P
E	D	G	E	R	U	S	T	Y	M	E	S	H

# The root of Fall food traditions: an ode to corn

(Continued from page 17)  
thousand-pound mill that grinds corn using an electric pump. It used to be that water from the mighty Wissahickon powered the workhorse, and in the old days, Wissahickon Valley farmers would bring their crops in to the mill to have them ground into flour.

"It is the oldest complete mill from the 19th century," said Morris Arboretum Director of Education Bryan Thompson-Nowak. "This is where all the farmers would come. People can see where farmers would drop their crops, and how you turn plants into food. We are talking about wagon loads."

When you witness the mill grind the corn, you can imagine what a lifeline it was for area farmers. The kernels drop, the wheels turn, and the powdered corn get sifted into a pan for the finale. It's a great way to show children where food really comes from. They'll also learn how Flourtown was a wheat market, and how the mill powered timber cutting and other machines critical to agricultural development.

"It's a labor of love to keep it running. This is an amazing way to show off a piece of history," he said. "We put a lot of work into getting it up and running."

And yes, it is perhaps one of the most unique, local fresh-air activities to do with the family this fall to get back to basics after a tumultuous year.



The mill has been functioning since 1854 and it is open this fall to the public.

"It's a connection with all the things we lost touch with," he said.

While the tour used to end with some fresh corn muffins guests could sample, organizers have scaled down the event because of Covid, and are not making the take-home treats at this time. The Arboretum was kind enough to share the signature recipe with readers, however.



When you witness the mill grind the corn, you can imagine what a lifeline it was for area farmers.

**Springfield Mill Corn Muffins**  
1 cup stone-ground cornmeal  
1 cup stone-ground wheat flour  
1 Tbsp. baking powder  
½ cup granulated sugar  
1 tsp. salt  
1 cup whole milk  
2 large eggs  
4 Tbsp. melted butter  
¼ cup Morris Gold Honey or maple syrup

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a large bowl (one with a pouring lip is best) mix cornmeal, flour, baking powder, sugar and salt. In another bowl, whisk together the whole milk, eggs, butter and maple syrup. Add the wet to the dry ingredients and stir until just mixed.

Pour into muffin tins or a cake pan. Use muffin papers or spray the tin. Bake until golden brown on top and done in center. Cooking time and temperature may depend on pan. Small muffins can bake in less time than large muffins or sheet cake.

Recipe courtesy of the Morris Arboretum.

If you want to witness some history, Mill Days at Bloomfield Farm is happening this Sunday. If you miss it, there is another session in October as well.

Mill Days at Bloomfield Farm  
Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania, 100 E. North-western Ave., Phila., Pa. Event included with garden admission  
Sun., Sept. 19, 1-4 p.m.  
Sun Oct. 17, 1-4 p.m.  
morrisarboretum.org  
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Photo: Julieann Harris

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## 'Blistering satire' of sexism coming to Allens Lane

(Continued from page 17)  
ing out to California to pursue a career acting in film and tv."

When those plans didn't work out for the struggling young actress, she bounced around for a time before deciding to move back to the East Coast, finally settling in Philadelphia. And once here, Orion got back into acting seven years ago. "As a woman who is gender-nonconforming, I have played both men and women, and people seem to accept me in either role. I think in order to play a role convincingly, you must find the truth in that character somewhere. I believe I've been able to do that successfully many times."

When she's not on stage, Orion works as an instructor for adult learning, often trying to help people rejoin the workforce.

But she admits her heart still belongs to the theater, most especially to Allens Lane, where she's performed several times. This show in particular brings her much enjoyment and satisfaction.

"Both funny and shocking, I think the major point of this play is satire," Orion points out. "And the point of satire is that it's holding up a mirror to people who need to take a good, hard look at themselves. If you're quibbling with the plot instead of noting the sexism, homophobia and misogyny that is being skewered, perhaps it's time to examine your beliefs about women."

Allens Lane is located at 601 W. Allens Lane in West Mt. Airy. For ticket information: 215-246-0546.

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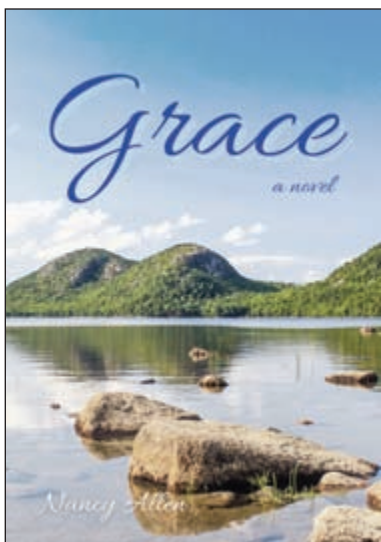
# Wyndmoor author's timely novel of college scandals

by Len Lear

If ever there was a timely novel, considering the resignation of New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and the career-wrecking scandals of so many other prominent men in recent years, including movie mogul Harvey Weinstein and “America’s Dad,” Bill Cosby, it is “Grace,” the recently published (June) novel by Nancy Allen, Wyndmoor resident for the last 24 years and former college teacher, consultant and administrator.

Allen’s novel about a college sex scandal, among other provocative issues, “explores the deceptions — of others and of the self — that haunt so many human relationships,” according to Joyce Hinnefeld, author of several well-reviewed novels. “Both Catherine, the novel’s central character, and her aging father, Douglas, are in painful retreat from past loves and past mistakes. Even Catherine’s immersion in her career as an academic dean at fictional Franklin College, an institution wracked by its own secrets and scandals, offers no escape.” (The eponymous character of Grace was a pioneer in the Civil Rights Movement who had a romance with Douglas many years ago. There are lots of revealing flashbacks of Catherine as a child and painful passages about her alcoholic, icy mother and comforting father still dreaming of the evanescent Grace.)

A dean at the college where Catherine works named Neil is



The book cover of Nancy Allen’s provocative, compelling novel.

leazy and repellent, as is the culture of the school where a sexual predator is protected and victims are shamed, and the college’s female president is no help. One can only hope that in the year 2021, troglodytes like this are a relic of the past at institutions of higher learning and all other institutions, although this one doubts it.

Allen, who grew up in Ocean City, NJ, is a 1980 alumna of Bucknell University who went on to earn an M.A. in English from Duquesne University and a Ph.D. in English from New York University, after which she taught at Villanova University, Immaculata University, Arcadia University and Rider University, among others. She also held administrative positions at all of the above schools as well as at the Universi-

ty of Pittsburgh, Cabrini College, Moravian College and West Chester University. So Allen is well versed in the politics of higher education.

Since the novel’s protagonist, Catherine Finley, is a college dean, a position Allen held herself at several schools, an obvious question for the author is whether Catherine is merely a thinly disguised version of Allen and her own college experiences with teaching and administrative intrigue.

“This is a fair question,” replied Allen. “Catherine may resemble a 40-year-old version of me: I have been a dean in a small college outside of Philadelphia; have a Ph. D. in literature and am an expert on autobiography, but the novel is not autobiographical.”

When asked if Catherine’s father, Douglas, was modeled after her own father, Allen replied, “Douglas is modeled after priests, rabbis and ministers who were deeply involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. From their parish posts, they often saw the poverty in America, both black and white, and the inequities in voting rights and employment.”

Allen’s own Wyndmoor home bears a resemblance to that of Virginia Woolf in her “Room of One’s Own,” which was a shed in the garden of her Sussex home, with “typewritten manuscripts with numerous revisions covering the floor around the tiny table where she writes on her typewriter. My dining room table



Nancy Allen, Ph.D. (Photo and artwork by Colleen Quinn)

looks like this. The difference? I still write longhand with pencils on yellow legal pads before I type a piece, the first part of the revision process. For years, I maintained folders with those handwritten first drafts in case there was a sentence or phrase that I might need to find as the novel came together.”

Allen started work on “Grace” way back in 2009 and “finished” it in 2015. She put it aside for four years and did substantial revisions during the late spring and early

summer of 2020. She also began writing a second novel, a prequel to “Grace,” in 2019, after leaving her last college position.

What is the best advice Allen ever received? “No matter what you do for a living, never stop pursuing the things you love.” This advice may have given me the courage to leave meaningful work to write. (Okay. It was only for a year. No one told me a pandemic was on the horizon.)”

What is the hardest thing Allen ever had to do? “Fall in love.”

What person has had the greatest impact on Allen’s life? “Al Labriola, my thesis director at Duquesne, and Denis Donoghue, my dissertation director at NYU. They helped shape a young woman who already loved literature and helped me see that a text is a living thing, always changing in the imagination of the reader. Their patience and kindness toward me made me a better, more thoughtful teacher. I think both would be proud that I had the courage to write a novel.”

“Grace” is published by Atmosphere Press, a hybrid publisher (containing elements of a vanity press and elements of a traditional publisher). For more information, visit [nancyjallenauthor.com](http://nancyjallenauthor.com). Len Lear can be reached at [llenlear@chestnuthilllocal.com](mailto:llenlear@chestnuthilllocal.com)



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## NW Village Network Photo Group Exhibit

On exhibit will be the works of Northwest Village Network members: Claire Robinson, David Fellner, Rickie Sanders, Paul Savedow and Taddy Dawson. All are members of the NVN Photo Group, and several have exhibited in other spaces, including Philadelphia Photo Arts Center, Temple University, IMPeRFECT Gallery, Mt. Airy Art Garage, Philadelphia Flower Show, the Media Arts Council and sanctioned shows of the Garden Club of America. Center on the Hill, Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill, 8855 Germantown Ave.

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