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Dear Reader,

Lawrenceville is home to trendy restaurants and hangouts for young people and “hipsters.” But, if you look more closely, you’ll find a rich history populated by world-renown musicians, athletes and even killers. You’ll also find micro-breweries, a place to get an old-fashioned cut of meat, a classic bowling alley and people who treasure deep roots and deeper friendships, including a funeral director who literally knows many clients from cradle to grave and a contractor who not only fixes roofs, but helps the people who live under them.

These are stories about the people who live in the figurative shadow of Lawrenceville’s famous “doughboy” and the places that animate this up-and-coming neighborhood which fell hard with the death of steel and is currently enjoying a renaissance. It’s a neighborhood with a unique blend of old timers, who can be found at the Teamster Temple, and newcomers, who can be found at the coffee shops, restaurants and art galleries that are flourishing along Butler Street.

Last fall, the students in Dr. Dillon’s Magazine Journalism set out to capture the people, places and personality of Lawrenceville. In this issue of Off the Bluff, they invite you to explore with them, to make a friend over a cold Duquesne Pilsner at Jimmy Nied’s, to try some pasta at Piccolo Forno, to explore among the monuments of the stately Allegheny Cemetery – in short, to discover Lawrenceville.

Anastasia Farmerie
Robyn Rudish-Laning
Katie Walsh
Editors
Off the Bluff Magazine
The Journalism and Multimedia Arts Department welcomed two new faculty members this year.

**Dr. Giselle Auger**

Dr. Giselle Auger teaches Public Relations. She has 15+ years of experience in communication and is accredited in public relations by the Public Relations Society of America. Auger’s research focus is on transparency in public relations and strategic nonprofit communication. She has been recognized by the Association of Researchers in Nonprofit and Voluntary Action as an emerging scholar, was a finalist for the Media Ethics division’s Burnett Award at the 2009 Association of Educators in Journalism and Mass Communications annual conference.

She received her Ph.D. from the University of Florida.

**Dr. Zeynep Tanes-Ehle**

Dr. Zeynep Tanes-Ehle teaches Advertising. Her research focus is New Media technology, particularly persuasive games, online community building and social perception.

Her research explores:

- Learning outcomes of repetitive play and the learner’s experience with the functions of the technology, such as feedback and goals;
- The ways in which messages are transmitted via interactive games in order to create knowledge gain, as well as belief, attitude and behavioral change;
- The creation of collaborative, motivational and supportive virtual environments that enhance message effects and information exchange;
- How self-efficacy and use of computer technologies affect world views, interests and socialization with other individuals by examining changes in the perceptions of self and the world in accordance with the content of the media.

Tanes-Ehle received her Ph.D. in Communications, with a concentration in Media, Technology and Society, from Purdue University.
JMA Receives Grant for Research

Dr. Charles Gee is overseeing a two-year, $125,750 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to study how audiences assess the quality, usability and trustworthiness of mobile content in broadcast news. He will teach a special invitation-only Knight Foundation course in Fall 2012 in which students will collect and disseminate news using mobile devices.

The research team includes colleagues Dr. Giselle Auger, Dr. Zeynep Tanes-Ehle, Dr. John Shepherd and Prof. Maggie Patterson.

“We are excited that the grant will allow us to enhance the experience and understanding of students engaged in news-gathering techniques,” Gee said.

The Duke Wins Awards, Names New Editor

The staff of The Duquesne Duke is happy to announce that two writers have won awards for pieces published in The Duke in 2011 as part of the 2012 Student Keystone Press Awards contest, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association Foundation, and that a new editor-in-chief has been named by the University Publications Board.

• David Golebiewski, a 2011 Duquesne graduate, won the second place award for his personality profile “Oldies Proud.” The piece chronicled the career of 770 WKFB radio personality Frankie Day.

• Katherine Mansfield, a sophomore journalism major, won the second place award for her columns published in the fall semester. Columns nominated for this award include “Apple without Steve Jobs? Not so bad,” “Bumble-bye,” and “World populations hits 7 billion; panic ensues.”

• Robyn Rudish-Laning, a first-year media technology graduate student, will succeed Jess Eagle as editor-in-chief of The Duke in the fall. Robyn has previously served as managing editor and layout editor of the publication.

When you take first step into Nied’s Hotel, you can tell you are going to be family.

Whether the older gentleman seated at the bar chowing down on his fish sandwich really knows you or not, he still shoots you a “How are ya?”

Plastic tables with matching chairs line the back of the room, but you’ll want to take a seat on one of the comfy bar stools. The bar is where the action is.

Two women in floral print shirts hustle behind the bar while they lovingly complain about how loud their husbands snore. One begins to butter bread to throw on the grill while the other ladles soup into Styrofoam cups.

The open cooking area will make you feel like you are sitting in Grandma’s kitchen on a Friday night.

“It’ll be 47 years for me this month . . . on the 22nd actually.”

Her name is Barb, and she has spent more than double my lifetime cooking at Nied’s Hotel.

Working at Nied’s is a family affair in her case. Barb’s aunt put in 32 years before she hung up her apron.

“The average lifespan of a worker at Nied’s is 30 years,” says owner Jimmy Nied.

The only thing that has changed on the menu over the years is the prices.

The menu lists the Pittsburgh staples: Pierogies, kielbasa with sauerkraut, burgers, the legendary fish sandwich and Iron City Beer.

The history behind the place is as rich as the personalities you will find inside.

After operating in Homestead, Ted Nied and his son Paul opened Nied’s Hotel at 5438 Butler Street in Lawrenceville in 1941.

Paul, who is now 91 years old, has passed the torch to his son Jimmy, who not only knows every face in his bar, but practically every face in Lawrenceville.

A gigantic flat screen hangs in the corner of the bar. ESPN is humming in the background, but nobody is paying any attention until Jimmy puts in a DVD.

“I had reels of old black and white pictures of this place and at one point I thought they were lost, but once we found them again we got it all put together on this DVD and passed it out to everyone,” Jimmy says.

The faces in the photos have aged and so has the bar, but the tight knit feeling of family is present in every frame.

When you stop in, be sure to introduce yourself to Jim Foley. He’s been coming to Nied’s since he was tall enough to see over the bar.

Foley has seen Lawrenceville through its ups and downs. He watched as storefronts turned into empty windows, Butler Street became deserted and families...
struggled to make it through the hard times.

“When the mills went down we were devastated, but the town had that family ethic and kept it together,” he says. “We all never left, we didn’t want to leave.”

Foley was one of the founding members of the Lawrenceville Business Association, and went door-to-door selling shirts, hats and even Christmas ornaments, to raise money for the community.

“When you get everyone together it’s amazing what you can get done,” Foley says proudly.

And if you are under the impression Nied’s is fit for a king, you are close — royal blood does flow through one of the Hotel’s permanent occupants.

Slim Forsythe, who lives in a one-bedroom apartment above the bar is the direct descendent of the Prince of Pilsner himself.

Slim’s father Frank Forsythe was part of a variety show sponsored by Duquesne Pilsner back in the 1950s. The Prince pictured on Duquesne bottles and advertisements is the spitting image of Slim’s father.

Slim performs regularly at Nied’s, and he penned many of the songs in his repertoire there. His latest is titled, “Down On My Knees, At Nied’s Hotel.”

Slim is not the only entertainment the bar has to offer. Jimmy is especially excited about the upcoming trips he has put together.

“It started out as a few people taking a bus trip down to the Wheeling Casino. Now we have over 200 people signed up to fly to Vegas together, and it is always a great time,” Jimmy said.

Nied’s Hotel is part of the fabric that binds Lawrenceville together.

So, the next time you are driving through the neighborhood, stop in at Nied’s Hotel.

The gang can’t wait to meet you.
Loose Leaves at the Purple Rose

By Sarah Blaisdell

The purple rose tea at The Purple Rose Tea Room can only be described as tasting “purple.” The loose leaves have a subtle flavor that reflects the overall atmosphere of the tea room.

“When you think of a rose tea, it’s not what you would describe,” said owner Dana Del Bianco.

Del Bianco, who also owns a software company, has a long-standing connection with tea. She and her mother have had tea the day after Thanksgiving as a “rebuttal of Black Friday” for the past 15 years. Del Bianco opened the tea room in Lawrenceville at her mother’s suggestion.

The Purple Rose Tea Room has been located on 4316 Penn Avenue for five years, but the building itself is 140 years old. The space is a reflection of Del Bianco’s family history.

Del Bianco’s grandmother’s wedding dress stands in a back corner, as perfect as the first day it was worn. The dollhouse her father built her as a child sits by the window. While the electricity doesn’t work anymore, the dollhouse still has its original hardwood and grouted tile floors. A mirror leans against the wall with a plaque which reads, “This is the original mirror from Charley the Tailor which was located in this building until 1997.”

Charley the Tailor was Del Bianco’s grandfather.

Del Bianco’s family has owned the building off and on since her grandfather passed away. The name, The Purple Rose Tea Room, is a tribute to her brother’s fiancé, who was killed in an accident. Her brother used to buy purple roses for his beloved.

Just like the history of the place, Del Bianco said the people and the stories her guests bring are very important to her. As she set her “story tea pot” on the table, she began to tell a story about a woman who visited the tea room a few years ago.

Del Bianco had bought the tea pot from a Web group called freecycle, a site for “people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns.” At one of the Victorian audience participation events which Del Bianco regularly hosts, a woman said the tea pot looked similar to one she had previously owned, even down to the chip in the lid. She had given the tea pot to Goodwill the only distinguishing characteristic the number of cups the pot could fill was written in permanent marker on the bottom of the pot.

Sure enough, the marking was there.

Stories like these inspire Del Bianco to look at the world and “understand the details.”

“I’m interested in stories, whether those are stories on the grand level or on the small level,” Del Bianco said.

On the grand level, Del Bianco cited Anna, Duchess of Bedford, who recorded that she had a “sinking feeling” during the day. In the 1830’s, British aristocracy ate breakfast and dinner around 8:00 p.m., but nothing in between. The Duchess began to request small sandwiches from her servants around 4:00 p.m., and this eventually evolved into the afternoon meal.
of “tea.” On the small level, Del Bianco spoke of the mismatched cups, plates and silverware at each place setting in her tea room.

“They’re deliberately mismatched,” Del Bianco said.

This allows Del Bianco to tell multiple stories at each place setting. Guests can dine with her Aunt’s plate or with one from a local woman who only brought the plate out twice a year and washed it by hand. The woman who sold the plate to Del Bianco said it had belonged to her grandmother and preferred that it be used in the tea room instead of being displayed.

The neighborhood is different now, according to Del Bianco. She remembers when small businesses like the grocery store or bakery existed side-by-side. She even recalls the General Electric store which used to be located across the street from her grandfather’s tailor shop.

“I remember getting my first alarm clock there,” Del Bianco said.

She thinks small businesses, especially ethnic food establishments, will continue to grow, but that the neighborhood will never be what it once was.

“Those types of neighborhoods don’t really exist anymore,” Del Bianco said.

She hopes that the tea room will stay in town especially since it is the only privately owned tea room in Western Pennsylvania. This gives her a lot of visitors from out of state, even some who have never even been to Pittsburgh. She recalled a group who drove in from Toledo and had never been to the city before.

“They drove in solely to have tea,” Del Bianco said.

Del Bianco would like the tea room to continue her family’s business and to be a place for those who enjoy tea, like one woman who took great lengths to come to a Victorian event she hosted.

“She had just finished sewing the gown right before and had to take two buses to get there,” Del Bianco said.
At Round Corner Cantina, located at the foot of Butler Street, things may not be what they seem.

The lone bar with a few cocktail tables in the front of the establishment greets whoever walks through the door. For the more adventurous Cantina-goer, there is a hidden hallway that leads to a back room and patio where patrons drink wine and dine on the exquisite Tijuanian-inspired menu.

After its grand opening in 2009, the Round Corner Cantina was primarily a bar. After a few months, owners Derek Burnell and Jesse Zmuda Burnell decided to bring Tijuana treats to the menu, reinventing the Cantina as a “gastropub” — meaning no one under the age of 21 is allowed in.

They also upgraded the interior. The walls are adorned with old world Mexican patterns and framed reproductions of paintings by famed Mexican painter Frida Khalo. Several tables are scattered around a back room lit by candles and a big screen playing ’70s Luca Libre movies.

“There is a good vibe here, it is really low key,” manager and server Kristen Burns says.

While the Round Corner Cantina is fit for locals and foodies, the bar does not play around when it comes to exotic drinks.

Take the Red Pepper, a cocktail with tequila, chartreuse, elderflower, basil, and lemon, garnished with a dried red chili. The spicy concoction combined with the refreshing taste of chilled tequila, is a drink for the bold.

The Cantina is a Lawrenceville favorite for the annual Day of the Dead party, officially called “Devil’s Night,” and happy hour specials. There are $4 La Cantina margaritas and $4 sangrias from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Cantina opens at 5 p.m. on weekdays, just in time for the after work crowd. Don’t worry, the Cantina opens at noon on Sundays, just in time for Steelers games.

So kick back, relax with a Modelo or a Sauza Gold on the rocks, and do as the Tijuanians do at Round Corner Cantina.
Boys and Girls get in “The Zone”

BY MECCA GAMBLE

The Boys and Girls Club of Western Pennsylvania trains high school students in an actual work environment called The Zone, a retail venture opened in Lawrenceville in 2010.

“A lot of the kids tell me it gives them a chance to learn things before they get out into the big time workforce ... They gain knowledge and experience before they actually go out into the real world,” said John Davis, General Manager of The Zone.

Located on Butler Street, The Zone is a full-service café and retail store that features lunch specials, Breyer’s ice cream, a t-shirt and poster printing business and a gift shop that has everything from balloons and candy to basic, everyday needs. The 13 round dining tables in the spacious café invite guests to sit down and enjoy their made-to-order sandwiches.

The employees, or interns as they are called, are students at the Career Connections Charter High School in Lawrenceville. As seniors, they can work three days a week while attending their classes on the other two. Upon completion of the internship, students receive customer service and retail certification.

Workers uniformed in their teal blue help prepare the food orders in the café, price items and select merchandise for the store. All training is done in-store with the goal of having the kids equipped with a firm understanding of customer service and retail. If they stay in the program long enough, they’ll be exposed to some managerial duties and learn how to fill out paperwork and order items, Davis explains.

Eighteen-year-old JaCeka McElligot a recent graduate of Career Connections Charter High School, is one of the The Zone’s success stories.

“We learn about customer service and we get to give input. I’ve been here since the beginning so we’ve been able to see how business grows, what makes it better, what makes it worse,” says McElligott.

Frank Policicchio, a 17-year-old, Career Connections High School Senior, had never cooked anything before working at The Zone, but now dreams of attending culinary school or going into restaurant management after graduation.

“I’ve definitely learned how to cook. Before I worked here, I never touched food. Now I like cooking and making it myself,” he says.

The kids really enjoy coming to work each day, especially because they get to see their friends and work at a steady business.

“It’s a neat environment, plus a lot of our ideas come into things. I love mocha frappuccinos, so I asked if we could have them here,” says McElligott for whom the “FrappuCeka” is named after.

Because of limited foot traffic, The Zone relies heavily on employees from other local businesses stopping in to eat during their lunch breaks. They’ve managed to spread the word about daily specials through a small fax list and flyers that are often handed out in the store for upcoming promotions. A television commercial is in the works, and the growing popularity of the printing businesses at The Zone keeps them going.

Policicchio suggests trying the Triple Club.

“It’s got Bacon, Ham, Turkey, Cheese and whatever else you want on it.” he said. “That was my favorite, but now I like to switch it up.”

Employees of The Zone are all smiles.

PHOTO BY MECCA GAMBLE
The Allegheny Cemetery, located in the heart of Lawrenceville, isn’t just a burial ground. It’s a place for a picnic, a shortcut home from school or a walk through history.

In the 1800’s, there was no trendy Butler Street nor houses at every corner. Just acres of farmland – soon to be filled up with corpses, some of them quite famous.

Pittsburgh’s tiny churchyards proved inadequate as the city grew. Trinity Church was a particular problem, says Assistant President of the Allegheny Cemetery Historical Association Nancy Craigo.

“Trinity didn’t plan far enough into the future to buy acres upon acres outside of the city, so these burial grounds were overcrowded in the middle of the 1800’s,” she says.

It took 10 years, but in 1844, with the cooperation of some land owners and farmers, the Allegheny Cemetery opened, relieving pressure on city churchyards and creating a unique urban green space. The first burial took place in 1845. The cemetery is the sixth oldest incorporated cemetery in the U.S.

“This was so new that people would come from other towns to see this new park cemetery landscape,” Craigo says.

Headstones, mausoleums and obelisks mark the passing of notable and notorious figures. Songwriter Stephen Collins Foster, son of Lawrenceville founder William Barclay Foster, rests in an iron casket within Section 21, Lot 30. Foster composed the great American classic, “Oh! Susanna” in 1848, along with many other old-time favorites. In 1864, while living in a hotel for indigents in the Bowery section of New York City, Foster collapsed, hit his head and died. Foster was only 37 years of age. He had 38 cents in Confederate scrip and three pennies in his pocket.

Negro Leagues baseball star Josh Gibson resides in Section 50. He was known as “The Colored Babe Ruth” and has been inducted into three Halls of Fame. Gibson was only 36 when he died of hypertension and, possibly, a brain tumor.

A more infamous inhabitant is Henry Kendall Thaw, scion of a Pittsburgh family that made a fortune in lumber. But Thaw is known for cutting down famed architect Sanford White atop the Madison Square Garden in New York City in 1906, jealous because his wife, Evelyn Nesbit, had once been White’s teen-aged mistress. White had delighted in watching the nude Nesbit soar upon a red velvet swing in his bachelor’s lair. The episode was “the crime of the century” in its day.

Lawrenceville also experienced the devastating loss of many young people when the Allegheny Arsenal blew up in 1862, killing 78 people. Many of the victims were women and children who were valued because they possessed “smaller fingers to make the ammo,” according to a press account at the time.
“For the Lawrenceville community, that was such a huge catastrophic event. Lawrenceville’s population was so small,” Craigo said. The remains of the young victims are marked by a stone memorial.

From a great American composer to a local baseball star to a stone-cold killer, The Allegheny Cemetery is place for everyone . . . even the living. The cemetery welcomes thousands of visitors each year, including locals who enjoy strolling the grounds and out-of-towners who come to pay respects to late luminaries like Thomas Mellon and Andrew Carnegie’s parents.

The cemetery has its share of non-human residents and visitors as well. Vast sections of the cemetery remain undeveloped and it’s not unusual to see deer and turkeys wandering among the monuments.

A group of full-time workers manages the grounds, digs the graves and tends the flowers in front of the entranceway. Their hard work keeps the cemetery attractive and vibrant for visitors who come in abundance, especially in the warmer months.

“You'll see people bike, jog through or walk. You’ll even see picnickers,” Craigo says.
With the smell of freshly-brewed coffee in the air and a spread of pastries and cheesecake in a display case, 720 looks like any other coffee shop. But this is only the front of the store. The farther you walk back, the more 720 morphs into a truly unique experience.

The Lawrenceville shop, located at 4405 Butler St., opened 12 years ago and focused on serving coffee, but expanded dramatically in 2011. It was then rechristened 720 Music, Clothing & Cafe to reflect the greater variety of its offerings.

In addition to selling clothing and jewelry, 720 also serves as a party space. It has even hosted a wedding reception, an event that part-owner Nate Mitchell is now intimately familiar with, having just recently been married.

“It’s an organic niche,” Mitchell said, in a city where Starbucks and Crazy Mocha are taking over. “If you have nothing to do, you come here. There’s always something to do.”

Records are a huge part of 720’s business. They line the walls and fill the floor displays. They also give the store its name. That’s because records have a geometrically round shape, a circle of 360 degrees. When a DJ puts two side-by-side on a turntable to roll out some beats, that 360 degrees becomes 720 degrees.

When power yoga classes are held in the space every Thursday and Saturday morning, the numerous record displays are pushed to the side, and the mats move in.

This rare mix of products attracts and serves a diverse clientele. Darrell S. Kinsel, a 720 regular, said that this is both “cultural and positive,” for Lawrenceville.

The Lawrenceville shop is owned by Mitchell, Jovon Mitchell, Paul Dang, Andrew Burger and James Schoglietti. Kinsel said the diversity of ownership is a special part of 720.

“The whole team of owners are very good people,” Kinsel said.

Kinsel’s artwork is featured on the wall above the tables. When he told Mitchell that he was interested in displaying his artwork in 720, Mitchell told him to go for it. Kinsel said Mitchell is very “encouraging of the younger generation.”

When Mitchell wanted to start something “cool in Pittsburgh,” something that would have zero competition, he began 720, and people have been walking through the doors ever since, Kinsel said.

He describes Mitchell’s initiative as, “Oh, let’s do it – boom! And it’s here.”

Kinsel calls Mitchell “the man” who inspires others to think: “Why can’t I do it?”

Nate takes special pride in 720’s coffee. In fact, he says it’s the best in Pittsburgh.

Amid all of the activity in the shop, Whitney Lovett is working the coffee end of the store today.

“It’s a cool spot,” she said of the café. “I’ll go out of my way to work here.”

Lovett brews the coffees and serves Italian sodas with the ease of having worked here for four months and with little direction from Mitchell, who lounges in a favorite chair, headphones in his ears and laptop open.

When the doors open and customers walk in, though, Mitchell’s headphones disappear and the people become the focus. He treats each like an old friend, his inviting smile welcoming each one as he says hello.

Once you walk past the initial café front, you enter the store floor area, wandering past Pittsburgh T-shirts with such local jargon as “Yinz” emblazoned on the fronts, to the beautiful lacey dresses displayed in the back, and the funky puzzle piece jewelry hung up across from musical accessories.

“I think it’s a perfect snapshot of the newness of Lawrenceville,” Kinsel said.
Here is a building on the corner of the 4700 block of Butler Street that has been a part of Lawrenceville since 1954. It is used for community meetings, local elections, fundraisers, charity events and much more.

This gathering place is the Teamster Temple, home of the Teamsters Local #249, the largest Teamsters labor union in Western Pennsylvania.

“We represent almost 4,000 members who belong to local #249,” said bookkeeper, David Winklemann.

Winklemann has been working at the Teamster Temple since June, 1977. He has seen a lot of change in the community.

And a lot of that change has been discussed in the very building he has been working in for 34 years.

When the steel industry declined, for example, and the unemployment rate increased, the Teamster Temple played a big role in the community, supporting a large number of union members.

The Teamster Temple is affiliated with the International Brotherhood of the Teamsters (IBT), headquartered in Washington, D.C.

Teamsters Local #249, however, is a general Teamsters chapter, supporting not only truck drivers and factory workers, but also workers in the Allegheny County courts, city refuse, Master Freight and UPS.

The Teamster Temple is not just used for union meetings. It is used by the community of Lawrenceville for a variety of different things.

“Any time there is a need for a place where people need to gather to discuss issues concerning Lawrenceville, they usually come here,” Winklmann says. “The auditorium we provide for them can hold almost 600 people. Any time it’s going to help the community, the union supports it totally.”

Throughout the years, this building has given the people of Lawrenceville a place to come together to discuss their issues and work them out.

“The board here fully supports all activities that concern Lawrenceville as far as making it a better place to live,” Winklmann says.

President Joe Rossi, Treasurer Rocco DiFilippo, Mike Ceoffe and Gary Alward make up the board of Teamsters Local #249.

“I could write a book on this place,” says Elaine Gletman, who has been a cashier at the Teamster Temple since 1979 and was rated the best cashier in the IBT. “Basically, it’s a great organization. You know, we help several people out. We help the handicapped, mentally challenged, men...”

Winklmann agrees. “Everyone here is dedicated and you know, just do an outstanding job at supporting the community and the people in it,” he says.
P L A C E S

WildCard: An Eclectic Homage to Pittsburgh

Rebecca Morris, a Pittsburgh native and lifelong crafter, came to Lawrenceville with the idea that the town needed an outlet for a new generation of crafters who combine old skills with new ideas.

With this idea in mind, in October 2009, Morris, 31, opened WildCard at 4209 Butler St., and created a “permanent home for handmade items.”

When you walk down Butler Street, your attention is immediately drawn to the brightly colored storefront of lime green and pink.

The store is filled with a variety of unique and colorful items—greeting cards and decorative papers, to embroidery kits and vintage décor.

These items are piled on top of old glass cases and spill out from the drawers of an old-school library card-catalogue cabinet. Rows of handmade greeting cards line the front wall.

“It’s kind of like grandma meets the roller derby at the flea market,” Morris said.

Local vendors and artisans are another key element to what the store offers. Morris wanted to be able to showcase the work of independent artists and crafters in a fun and laid-back atmosphere.

“I really like the sense of community that the store has because of all the local vendors that come in,” said Sarah Lacy, who has been working at WildCard since May 2011. “And it’s just really a fun place to work.”

Over the past few years, Morris has been collecting craft information from craft fairs, Etsy (an online marketplace for handmade items), friends who make things, friends of friends and more.

When she visits shops outside of Pittsburgh, she makes sure to take note when she sees a really cool product.

Morris favors handmade items that are recycled or repurposed, especially if they have a Pittsburgh theme.

“Aside from our handmade greeting cards, our Pittsburgh-themed screen-printed t-shirts sell the most because you always have somebody looking for that,” she said.

These screened tees display messages such as: “I Got My Sammitch Topped With Fries and Coleslaw in Pittsburgh” or “Yinz: we say yinz/you say you all.”

Morris likes the idea of displaying the work of artists and crafters year-round where people can see the items in person, as opposed to online or at the occasional craft-fair.

“I started going to the Handmade Arcade when it started in Pittsburgh, and I became involved in craft fairs when I lived in Chicago. Selfishly, I wanted a place where I could go shopping for cards, crafts, and fun stuff in general, so I made it happen,” Morris said.

After brainstorming suggestions for a name with friends and family, Morris came up with the name “WildCard” for the store.

“I like it because I feel like it really describes the store—an eclectic mix of things that is always evolving,” she said.

What makes WildCard different from most other craft stores is that the look and feel of the shop is a work of art in itself.

Morris designed the interior of the store, which is just as dynamic as the exterior. Her husband, Brian Mendelssohn of Botero Development, and Andrew Moss of Moss Architects, did all the reconstruction and renovation.

Mendelssohn and Moss gutted the old building and then began
building from the ground up, which allowed them to incorporate many unique touches, specifically those of the green color, into the store’s construction, such as recycled flooring, original tin high ceilings, and exposed brick walls.

Almost 15 percent of the building materials used for the renovation were salvaged from the building itself.

“I wanted it to blend in historically with a hint of sexiness,” Mendelssohn said in an article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. “It came out better than I was hoping for.”

Morris feels very lucky to have found this location, seeing as she lives in Lawrenceville and wanted her business to be there from the beginning.

“Lawrenceville is a tight-knit community with a bunch of small businesses, many of which are focused on art and design,” said Morris. “Everyone here has been very supportive and I have met many great people.”

Wildcard has had a great reception in its Lawrenceville location. Many people have approached Morris and said, “I’m happy that you’re here.”

Morris likes to think that there is a pretty strong craft scene in Lawrenceville that seems to be growing and becoming more mainstream.

At some point in the future, she sees the world of crafting expanding and becoming a bigger part of the average person’s world, instead of being specialized.

“There are a lot of design-based businesses and artists living here,” said Morris. “So, it really just seemed like a natural fit to me.”

Wildcard is a one-stop shop for handcrafted items – it’s all about being handmade and hands-on.
Many may think you need to live in a big city to have it all, but Gina Desko, founder and owner of Grey Box Theatre, finds everything she needs right here in Lawrenceville.

“I call it my mini-New York,” Desko said. “I live here in Lawrenceville, I have my studio here, and run an event place. It’s really cool to live here and work here.”

Grey Box Theatre is a rental facility for the performing arts that can accommodate pretty much any performance that anyone wants to put on. Measuring 3,000 square feet, with seating for 150, the multi-faceted venue sits right in the middle of Lawrenceville.

“We’ve had many great things here,” Desko said. “We had a magician [named] Paul Gertner. We also had Steve Pellegrino, an accordion player. They were both fabulous.”

Among other things, Grey Box Theatre has hosted open mic nights for teenagers, musicals, plays and dance recitals.

Desko, a former dancer, came across the location when she moved to Lawrenceville. She wanted to open a facility that independent artists and dancers could rent to display their talents.

“I actually had just come to Lawrenceville and saw the place, and thought why not do something with it?” Desko said. “It was a great place to open to allow other dancers and artists to have shows or events.”

But, it’s not limited specifically to the arts. Desko will work with anyone.

“It’s a blank slate, so any color that we put into your event will come out unique. It has an urban feel, but you can always create your own atmosphere with the lighting and design,” she said. “We’re willing to work with you to make it as formal or casual as you want it to be. Bill Deasy, an acoustic musician, played here for a private fundraiser, but it was nice because it was at a performance space rather than a loud bar.”

Desko also finds that there are many perks associated with running a business and living in Lawrenceville.

“Lawrenceville is a great place because it’s in a transition period,” she said. “It’s a community of people who have lived here their whole lives mixing with some new businesses. Seeing the dynamic of those things coming together is exciting. Lawrenceville is exciting, vibrant, and easily accessible.”

Grey Box Theatre draws local residents and visitors.

“We don’t get just the neighborhood crowd. We get a lot of them to come to shows, but we also get outsiders,” Desko said. “It’s a destination spot for people to come to Lawrenceville and have dinner here because we’re hosting a show they want to see.”

Desko works with performers to find out what they want and need and customizes the venue for whoever pays to perform there.

“People buy tickets for the shows, so it’s more like a real theatre,” she said. “We do all of the lighting and design if they want. Or if they have a play or musical that they want specific lighting for, then they can also do their own lighting with their designer.”

Desko expects Grey Box to thrive for a long time to come. She’s thrilled to be living in Lawrenceville as it transforms itself into a regional, and even a national, destination.

“It’s an exciting time to be in Lawrenceville. It’s vibrant and exciting, but not overcrowded like the South Side,” she said. “Seeing families who have lived here makes for an interesting dynamic with the businesses that are opening here. Many of the businesses are independent, and the owners live here in Lawrenceville. They really take care of and care about their neighborhood, which is good, and a lot of fun.”
The Stephen Foster Community Center on Main Street is a combination of meeting place, child daycare, adult day service, fitness center, computer café and whatever else it needs to be to serve the people of the community.

“This is truly a multipurpose facility,” says Gretchen Fay, the center’s executive director. The structure has been in the Catholic Youth Association’s hands since 1925.

The Center is supported by the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging, fundraising, grants, foundations and private donations.

After visitors walk the sidewalk flanked by one of the suburb’s only green spaces, they enter the building on the first floor, which is perhaps the most diverse level in the center. On this particular day, the maintenance man greets everyone who walks in. The adult day service program is located here, along with an infant daycare room and a computer café.

Members of the adult day service suffer from the early stages of Alzheimer’s Disease and dementia. They are at the community center from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m.

“They have two meals here, so when they get home, they can have dinner with their families,” Fay says.

As for the computer café, it is not a computer lab, as the name may suggest. Instead, two farm stands make up this part of the community center: one from the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, and the other from Penn’s Corner.

According to Fay, members place their food orders online for Penn’s Corner and pick them up every other Monday.

“A lot of food is from the Amish, so it’s fresh,” she said.

A short elevator ride to the second floor of the Stephen Foster Community Center brings visitors to two childcare rooms.

The third floor contains a full gym equipped with free weights, elliptical machines, treadmills, stationary bikes, and weight-training machines. Lawrenceville community members can use this room for $1 per visit. The other room houses group aerobic classes, which cost only $2 per session.

“We want to make it very affordable for them,” she added.

The Stephen Foster Community Center was originally a city school, constructed in 1883.

When the building was handed over to the Catholic Youth Association for a lofty $1, it was geared for kids only, Fay says.

“It was a kind of vocational school, where kids could come and learn a skill,” she says. “It also had language classes for the immigrant children, from Germany and other European countries.”

However, in the 1970s, its clientele changed, as the center was limited to senior citizens. Only the senior day service programs were held here. Then, in 2010, children were welcomed back to the Stephen Foster Community Center.

This time, though, both seniors and children shared the building, mirroring the noticeable transition-taking place in Lawrenceville.

“It is truly an inter-generational place now,” Fay said.
It was a dark and stormy night at the Arsenal Lanes. The lights flickered, shutting off twice. “I’ve been here for ten years and I’ve never seen the power go out,” Manager Glen Bell said as he rebooted the computer system.

The bowlers rolled on, however. The minor interruption wasn’t enough to keep the crowd of 25 from enjoying their Monday night at the lanes. While the main section of the alley is empty at the beginning of the night, the back eight lanes in the “Hollywood Bowl” section are packed.

Groups of college-aged men and women crowded in the shadowy ends of the lanes, sipping beers and tallying their scores on monitors. Later, more groups appeared – not just college kids, but also men and women in their forties and beyond, steadily filling the main room as well.

Arsenal Bowling Lanes lives off of its deals, Bell said. “Without these evening specials, would we close? Possibly.”

There’s a special every night of the week to draw in bowlers. Wednesday features live bands, Sunday afternoon offers 50-cent hot dogs and games, and there are DJs on Thursday, Friday, and Sunday nights. The weekends are the busiest, as over 100 people pack into the lanes. While the alley offers specials on birthday parties and group events, its focus is on the adult crowd. “We’re a traditional alley during the day,” Bell said, “but at night we turn into a night club.”

After 9 p.m., there’s a bouncer at the door checking ID’s. It’s strictly 21 and over at night, and groups of recent college-grads stop by in droves. The specials at Arsenal Lanes harmonize well with the clientele. It’s a cheap date, one that keeps the younger crowd coming back for more.

Arsenal Lanes, located on 44th and Butler Street, is right in the middle of the neighborhood. It sits on the second floor of what used to be Forester’s Auditorium.
It was a central gathering hall for the neighborhood in the early 20th century. Sporting events, competitions and receptions were held in the building. It’s the only second-floor alley left in Pittsburgh, Bell said, which adds to its charm. The alley is a family heirloom, staying with the same line of owners since it opened in 1938.

Arsenal Lanes isn’t a smoky, dilapidated alley from yesteryear, nor is it a loud, electronically-infused disco bowl. Instead, it’s a restored classic, an antique pains-takingly maintained. When there aren’t DJs and live bands, the only sounds are the low rumble of a ball rolling down the lanes and the crack of pins toppling.

The walls are lined with velvet and framed in varnished oak. It was renovated in 2005 and everything is fresh and crisp. Plush lounge chairs, hanging curtains, gold-painted molding and vintage decorations set the mood.

Along with two sets of bowling alleys, the “Upstairs Saloon” is a full-service bar and lounge. Vintage-style couches and lounge-chairs surround the pool table in the Saloon, with “artifacts” from the original Forester Auditorium displayed in glass cases lining the wall. Old posters advertise the “First Evening Reception,” held February 8th, 1895. Admission was a steep 50 cents, though ladies got in free. Today, the Saloon offers and food and booze to eager bowlers, as well as a place to sit and smoke.

Bowling, Bell said, is only just recovering from a huge hit in popularity. “It really got popular in the ’50s, crazy in the ’80s,” Bell said. “Then it went through a downturn from the late ’80s and early ’90s.”

Bell said a number of factors caused the decline, but the rising cost of play was the chief culprit. The game was reinvented in the 90s, allowing for less experienced players to compete with less of a time commitment. Better equipment and digital scoring has made the sport more accessible. Paired with deals and crowded with hip bowlers, Arsenal Lanes has recovered completely from the bowling recession.
Foster’s Meats: A Cut Above

By Marco D’Agostino

The cut is against the grain and the method a little old-fashioned, but the flavor of the place is in more than just the marbling of the meat.

It’s easy enough to drive right past Foster’s Meats at 51st Street and Butler. But long-time residents know exactly where it is and they’ve been shopping there for years. Twenty-seven years to be exact. Bruce Foster, 54, has been chopping, cutting, grinding and wrapping meat since 1984 – long before Lawrenceville became a trendy destination.

Maybe one of the many reasons Bruce’s business is still thriving is the fact that he takes the time to get to know and “jibber jabber” with each customer.

“I can talk to these people,” Bruce said. “I grew up in Braddock and worked in the meat business. You learn how to talk to these people.”

It’s more than conversation that attracts Bruce’s clientele. More often than not, the people buying meat at Foster’s are struggling, a fact attested to by the number of food stamps that cross the counter every day.

“The first through the fifteenth is mostly all government money,” Bruce says. “After that, it’s working-class people. Four years ago it wasn’t. Four years ago, there was nothing in Lawrenceville. Now, it’s the place to be.”

With this in mind, he tries to work with and help customers, offering them options to buy meat in package deals that are cost-effective and take family size into account.

“I don’t want to scare people away,” Bruce said. “I’d rather have people come in and buy often because you get the top dollar. These packages keep everything fresh and there is nothing lying around.”

A deal cut here and there is not that uncommon, but there are many ways in which Bruce keeps the place unique to Lawrenceville and feeling like what an old-time butcher shop would have felt like – long-time customers run tabs and the décor is Spartan.

“We used to put sawdust on the floor,” Bruce said, “but the Health Department doesn’t allow you to have that anymore. It made the place look like the old times.”

The sawdust is out, but that old-fashioned feel resonates from the hand-made posters, some decades old, that advertise the meat that he carries, and thick wood-slab cutting boards that were here when he bought the place.

While Bruce services a diverse and colorful cast of
characters, you won’t find many soccer moms at Foster’s.

“Supermarkets are so convenient for people right now,” he said. “The soccer mom will run into Giant Eagle and grab a pack of pork chops for dinner and be on her way. But they don’t understand the prices that they are paying.”

Big stores like Giant Eagle, Shop ‘n Save, Aldi, Save-A-Lot and Wal-Mart provide tough competition for Foster’s. While all these stores sell meat, their real selling point is convenience rather than quality or customized cuts, Bruce said.

Some of the ways in which Bruce makes his store so different from the rest and keeps with the old-fashioned vibe is by making his own horseradish, sauerkraut and kielbasa, giving out hot dogs on the weekends, cookies on the holidays, or always having something on the counter for his customers to eat.

“You can’t stiff people. You can’t be rude to them. You have to have fun,” Bruce said. “But the most important thing is that you have to keep thinking in this place. It’s a big mind game.”

The transformation of Lawrenceville is a mixed blessing for Foster’s. On the one hand, there are many more people with money in the neighborhood. The problem is they don’t know about older businesses. Meanwhile, the older residents who know and love Foster’s are dying out or moving on as property values soar.

“There are so many new places coming in. Everybody doesn’t know everybody now,” Bruce said. “There are all kinds of new businesses opening up here.”
New Amsterdam, a Hipster Hangout

By Matthew Zarin

Lawrenceville is changing. It has gone from a blue-collar mill town, to a progressive and up-and-coming community defined by the relationship between the old and new. Nothing captures this relationship better than the New Amsterdam bar on the corner of 45th and Butler.

It’s a place where hipsters mesh with the veterans of Lawrenceville. At one end of the bar is Shorty, the Lawrenceville lifer in his mid-80s, always welcomed by the bartenders. At the opposite end, is a man who would put Mike Tyson to shame with his tattoo-laden face and trucker hat. But, there will be no Tyson-like brawls in this bar. According to owner Jimmy Woods, there has never been a fight in the three years New Amsterdam has been open. It’s not your typical Pittsburgh bar.

“We keep the prices a little bit up in order to keep the not-so-nice people out,” Woods said. “Fifty cents a bottle keeps the derelicts out.”

But it’s not the bottles that people come for, it’s the drafts. From Magic Hat #9 to East End Fat Gary to Rock Bottom Uppity Jag-off IPA, the microbrew selection is as diverse as the customers.

Just like Lawrenceville, the New Amsterdam keeps you guessing. The transparent garage door that faces Butler Street draws one in, especially when the weather is nice and the door is open. The trendiness of the door is complemented by the acid-like tripy mural on the side of the building.

The mural centers around a skull illuminated with multi-colored patterns, bearing a toga-leaf crown. The skull rests above the Pittsburgh skyline, in a starry ambience divided by vivid colors. Above the skull is the New Amsterdam insignia that characterizes the eclecticism of the people within. The detail of the mural suggests that it took a long time to create, but according to Woods it only took artist Matt Spahr a couple of days.

“It was amazing to watch, it really was.” Woods said.

At first glance, New Amsterdam seems like any other bar. The lights are dim. The stereo’s blasting Pearl Jam or Sublime. There are tables and chairs in the middle and to the left side of the joint, with the bar stationed on the right. At the corner of the bar there’s a TV set up next to a Blue Moon clock and a Jameson Whiskey sign. In the middle is a blackboard listing the beers on tap and happy hour specials. Whether you are a regular or a first-timer, the bartenders treat you with friendliness and respect. New Amsterdam captures the Lawrenceville aura of cool.

“Lawrenceville is a movement. There’s an acceptance and comfortability. People express themselves with art, culture and music. There’s an interesting stigma around here,” said a Lawrenceville man who simply goes by the name Dee. Dee bartends at New Amsterdam, but on his days off he can often be found on the other side of the bar.

Dee has only lived in Lawrenceville for a couple of years, but he maintains that 10 years from now Lawrenceville will set an ideal for how people get along and come together.

According to Dee, the New Amsterdam is “not about just getting drunk and hooking up like in the South Side. Lawrenceville isn’t defined by the best night. Any night could be the best night. It’s about..."
being surrounded by people that give a s---- on a regular basis.”

Dee pauses and repeats with a little more emphasis as if he has found the perfect words to describe the scene: “Being surrounded by people that give a s---- on a regular basis.”

That is not to say that the South Side crowd isn’t welcome. During big games they utilize the ten-foot projection screen in the back of the bar to provide an optimal social experience. It’s a good place to relax after work and grab a bite or a beer. Drafts are a dollar off between five and seven and pub grub is half price. It may sound like a typical happy hour, but the selection of beer on tap and the quality of the food separates New Amsterdam. Choices range from sandwiches and wraps to Spicy Thai wings and cauliflower nugs.

Even the bartenders vary.

From a guy who mimics a typical Pittsburgh bartender to a guy like Dee to a girl like Lizzie, who has no problem flaunting the rose tattoo on her left arm and the piercings in her nose and lip. Each one is as friendly and cool as the last, with a genuine understanding of the culture.

“The place is filled with a lot of local people,” Lizzie said. “They have a respect for the neighborhood.”

New Amsterdam started out three years ago with a hip-hop vibe and deafening DJs. According to Woods, “It got so loud the walls were shaking.” New Amsterdam has come a long way and there is still much to come. A rooftop deck to add some space and energy is in the works. According to Woods the name of the bar was inspired by a bike trip he took across Europe just out of high school, which ended in Amsterdam. The bar emulates the good times in Amsterdam, while maintaining a mellow vibe.

“When I first opened up it got so big and we were making a ton of money, but it just wasn’t how I wanted to do it,” Woods said. “We got it back to normal.”
Pittsburgher stereotypically has affection for – and knowledge about – two things: steel and beer. That’s certainly true for Sean Casey, developer and owner of Church Brew Works on Liberty Avenue in Lawrenceville.

Casey, 45, was introduced to beer at an early age. The five-year-old paced the streets of Fox Chapel collecting beer cans, only to have his mother throw the collection in the trash a year later. He was hardly deterred.

“There’s always been that curiosity about beer,” Casey says. “My dad picked up different cases of beer, and I’d sip on it and put my finger in the foam to taste it. Beer wasn’t taboo growing up.”

A few years later, when he turned 10, he fulfilled the other half of the Pittsburgh stereotype and began working in his family’s steel business. Casey’s family business bought and refurbished second-hand steel-making equipment.

Throughout and after his can-collecting and steel-making childhood, Casey frequently rode his mountain bike across the railroad tracks into Lawrenceville.

“When you ride a bike, things slow down and you start noticing cool things about a community,” he says. These observations eventually served as the inspiration for the location of the Brew Works.

During one of his explorations of Lawrenceville, Casey noticed a “junky, spray-painted ‘For Sale’ sign” in front of a fire hall at the Dough Boy Plaza. This gave him inspiration for a brew pub, and he soon connected with old friends who had a background in brewing.

However, the business venture fell through because parking was limited and his partners got cold feet. Again, a perseverant Casey decided to continue the business venture, and purchased the large and regal St. John’s Baptist Church. The building was available due to a reorganization of the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh.

“I thought to myself, ‘Oh wow, now this looks pretty cool up here,’” he says. Shortly after the purchase, he and his two partners, Eric Cantine and Chris Fulton, worked on fundamentals, like getting approved for loans and permits. The church was officially purchased in February 1996, and the new pub was opened for business on August 1st.

The renovation process was extensive. The restaurant’s website outlines this progress: The original floors were uncovered and refinished, the confessional was removed, pews cut to fit the tables, and on and on.

The restoration and repair continues, according to employee Antonio Caligiuri. “[Casey] has been coming in lately to do some renovating, and I saw him repainting the sign outside a couple weeks ago.”

The ever-transforming church-turned-brew pub has employed some of the same people since the day it opened over 15 years ago, Casey says.

“Our executive chef, who was 19 Church Brew Works aids Neighborhood Revival

Photos by Anastasia Farmerie

Church Brew Works is a place where customers can get good food and have a wide-selection of beers to choose from.
when we opened, has been here since the start. That’s pretty amazing in the restaurant business,” he says.

While some of the people inside the Brew Works have been constant over the years, the community around it has been undergoing a renaissance.

“Gentrification has been occurring in Lawrenceville,” Casey said. “It’s becoming a more hip community.”

This “hip” Pittsburgh suburb mirrors the community as it was in the 1950s, before steel declined, he added.

“There are hardly any corporate chains here in Lawrenceville, and what we have here is a cool, locally-owned business,” he says. “The great architecture and a neat flow of community attracted us here in the first place, and hopefully that continues to attract people and keep this a vibrant part of town.”

Casey says these city residents are his target market.

“We built this place for Pittsburghers first, not for tourists. We try to cater to the Pittsburgh community.”

Though the owner of the Brew Works wants his business to have a Pittsburgh-first mentality, he also hopes that the pub flourishes like similar establishments in Germany and the rest of Europe. He is optimistic that Church Brew Works can pass from generation to generation and endure as its European counterparts have.

“Hopefully, 100 years from now, there will still be beer and food made locally here,” Casey says. “Over in Europe, beer is a tradition and a rite of passage. There’s a difference between abusing it and it being a part of your culture.”

Sean Casey renovated the 110-year-old church so that the brew house is fixed on the altar, creating a link that keeps the appearance of the old St. John’s Baptist alive. This idea is demonstrated in Casey’s positive outlook for the future of Church Brew Works.

“Ultimately, my hopes are that this place serves as a museum of the past.”
Lauren Byrne is always looking to find new uses for old things. Working as executive director of Lawrenceville United, Byrne sees potential in the neighborhood.

“Our organization was created to deal with quality of life issues,” Byrne says.

Lawrenceville looked different 10 years ago. Crime was high; abandoned houses were common; businesses were dying. Lawrenceville today, however, is full of hip shops and artsy boutiques. Community organizations such as Lawrenceville United and the Lawrenceville Corporation brought about this transformation.

“Crime has decreased by almost 60 percent over the past 10 years,” Byrne says. “We feel that our public safety programs had a lot to do with this. Lawrenceville is changing.”

Federal funding played a big role in getting local improvements on track.

“Operation Weed and Seed gave us tons of resources,” Byrne says. She explained that the program “weeds out crime, and seeds positive community involvement.”

The organization has also worked to arrange community programs for kids, such as the Unity Art Program.

“A local artist would volunteer and teach 60 kids every Sunday night,” Byrne said. There were also movie nights on Fridays in Arsenal Park, a Halloween party for children and a Lawrenceville light-up night in the winter. All of these programs were free to the public.

While community programs are important, Byrne is more focused on improving the neighborhood. By removing blighted properties, which Byrne describes as “vacant and tax delinquent,” the organization wants to bring new life to old buildings. These properties are often empty and sometimes occupied by squatters and the homeless, which according to Byrne “helps breed antisocial behavior.”

“She gets the community, she understands it... she’s savvy”

Byrnes no stranger to working in the community. Her grandmother has been active in the in the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation as deputy director for decades. As a child, Byrne would worked with her grandmother and saw first-hand the changes being made in the community. Before her work with Lawrenceville United, Byrne worked closely with the mayor’s office to address macro-level issues in Pittsburgh. For someone with experience in working on a community level, the mayor’s office was frustrating.

“There’s only so much you can do for all of Pittsburgh’s 90 neighborhoods,” she says.

The work her grandmother did with the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation served as an inspiration for her to get involved on a more intimate level for one neighborhood. When the opportunity opened up in Lawrenceville, Byrne jumped at it. Since then, she’s been working to turn the neighborhood into what it is today, a hip place that blends old and new.

Matthew Galluzzo, executive director of the Lawrenceville Corporation, had worked with Byrne since before either was involved in Lawrenceville.

“Lauren is tireless in her pursuit of the common good for this neighborhood, he says. “This spreads across a diverse programming vision for Lawrenceville United.” Galluzzo and Byrne first worked together in the mayor’s office. “She gets community. She understands it. She knows how to liaise with seniors. She’s savvy,” he says.

According to Galluzzo, Byrne’s ability to work with the community is something that comes naturally to her.

“Lauren is from this area, she brings a level of credibility, the
ability to converse and facilitate in a way that others can’t because they don’t have that extensive ‘grew up here’ history.”

Byrne works constantly to keep money flowing into Lawrenceville United. While programs like Operation Weed & Seed help, they are limited to five years.

“We rely heavily on federal and local government funding,” she says, but added, “It’s not bad looking for funding.”

While the neighborhood has seen drastic changes in the past decade, Byrne and her organization aren’t done yet. A long-term goal is the re-integration of Upper Lawrenceville.

“It’s cut off from the rest of Lawrenceville,” she says. The Allegheny cemetery divides central Lawrenceville from the upper part of the neighborhood, which only adds to the difficulty of improving the area.

Without long-term goals, however, organizations like Lawrenceville United wouldn’t be as effective. Byrne tries to mix quick fixes with larger projects to keep the changes coming. Some smaller goals may be community programs, or neighborhood crime watches.

“We need tangible, quick results as well as a long-term goal for the community,” she says. “The short term-improvements are paired with the long-term.”

Being a community worker runs in Lauren Byrne’s blood. Byrne stands to the right of the Lawrenceville United sign.
Funeral Director Buries the Dead and Tends to the Living

By Matthew Zarin

Attending the funeral of a loved one can be a heartbreaking experience. For James Murray, director of the John F. Murray Funeral Home, that heartbreak is part of his job.

“The hardest part is burying friends,” Murray says. “I have buried three or four friends within the past year. I know 95 percent of my families. I know them all. I have worked with a lot of widowers and buried their spouses.”

The John F. Murray Funeral Home, located at 5175 Butler Street, has been serving Lawrenceville for six decades. John was raised on the second floor of that business, left to marry in 1973, but moved back in 1989, when he took over for his father.

Murray's living situation characterizes the way he does business. He maintains a balance between the personal and professional side of an industry that is defined by mourning and empathy. It is difficult enough coping with grieving family members and burying their lost loved ones, but in such a close-knit community where everybody knows everybody, the delicacy of that task is intensified.

That balance was tested the day he had to bury a 28-year-old woman whose family he had known his entire life, a woman whose husband was left widowed, and children left motherless. The woman’s children were playing in a softball tournament in Butler on a hot day, when suddenly she collapsed and suffered a fatal heart attack.

“I was literally crying at the funeral,” Murray says. “To this day when I see her husband, he holds a special place in my heart.”

Murray’s role as a prominent community figure is based on more than his occupation. He is very involved...
with the Catholic Church as well as a member of Lawrenceville’s Citizen Council, Lawrenceville United, and The Boys and Girls Club of America.

“He is a real asset to the community,” says Casey Mullen, a 2011 Duquesne Law graduate who has known Murray as long as he can remember. “When I was applying to law school, he got an attorney he knew to write a letter on my behalf. But I’m not unique. He’d do anything for anybody.”

That anything includes personal and business-related favors. The average cost of a funeral, not even including cemetery or headstone costs, is between $6,000 and $7,000 according to the National Funeral Directors Association. When one local family could not afford to pay the full amount at once, Murray set them up with a $25-per-month payment plan.

Murray has watched Lawrenceville boom, ebb and then begin to resurrect itself. When he was a young man, the community was enduring hard times. With the death of the steel mills and other heavy industry in the 1970s, Lawrenceville became a haven for drug addicts and prostitutes. Businesses closed and the streets grew grimy and unsafe.

To keep him out of trouble Murray’s father decided to enroll him and his brother in military school. Murray started in third grade and his brother in first.

“When I look back, there was a method to his madness,” Murray says. “Half of the local class is dead due to drugs and alcohol around here. Military school kept me out of the loop.”

That didn’t keep Murray from having a little fun, though. On Friday nights when his parents would head across the street for bingo, Murray would have a few friends over to hang out and listen to music. That was what kids did in the ’70s. It was all about who had the biggest stereo. For Murray and his friends that stereo just happened to be at the funeral home.

“Knowing everybody in the neighborhood wasn’t always a good thing. Turf wars would sometimes break out between the three wards of Lawrenceville. Back then, those boundaries actually meant something, and there were “bullies and fisticuffs.” On the other hand, every grownup knew every kid and didn’t hesitate to tip off parents when their kids crossed the line.

“I couldn’t get away with nothing here in Lawrenceville,” Murray says. “I got blamed for stuff I never even did.”

Eventually, Murray settled down and married a “neighborhood,” his childhood sweetheart since he was 14. He took over his father’s business. And he raised a family of his own in the funeral home, with a son and two daughters. Mullen, who went to the same school as Murray’s son and is still very close with Murray, remembers passing by their home growing up.

“When I was a kid I always thought it was strange,” Mullen says. “It was strange when I would see them sitting on their porch. I was like, ‘there’s dead people downstairs.’ They’d be doing homework while people were downstairs crying.”

All the changes in Lawrenceville haven’t changed the way the John F. Murray Funeral Home is run. It combines the generosity of the Goodwill that sits just behind it off of 52nd street, with the charm of the Nied’s Hotel tavern, which has been family-owned in Lawrenceville for 66 years. Murray is a role model for how a business should be run. As a lawyer, Mullen acknowledges the challenge he faces with balancing some level of empathy while maintaining the business aspect. He says that Murray is “an excellent person to attempt to emulate in that regard.”

Murray took over the family business in 1986, and was thrown in fulltime when his dad passed away in 1988. But Murray has been around it his entire life. And even after all those years Murray is still proud of what he does.

“I still believe in a personal touch,” Murray says. “I work my doors. I care for the families. As corny as it sounds, I get personal satisfaction out of helping people, I really do.”
A Little Off the Top at Top Notch

BY DEBRA SCHREIBER

From the Xbox 360 featuring *Call of Duty*, to the Terrible Towel hanging on the wall, to the Pittsburgh *Courier* in the stands, Top Notch Styles Hair Services is a predominately black Lawrenceville barbershop that has been open for about three years.

Barber Milton Joyner has been there almost as long. Joyner was introduced to owner Paul Mollett by Mollett’s daughter at a Christmas party.

Weekend days are fast-paced, with Friday being Top Notch’s busiest. There is no lunch break at noon or one; the barbers eat when they can, heating up food in the shop microwave.

The TV in the front of the shop blasts bits of the late morning news, and the open door brings a cool, autumn draft – and the next customer – to Joyner’s chair. Joyner quickly gets to barbering.

He works efficiently, carefully, moving smoothly from this customer to the next, his Nikes carrying him quickly from customer to work space.

Mykey Lundy, reclining in a chair close to Joyner’s station in the back, has been coming to Top Notch for about two or three months.

While the shop mainly provides hair services for men, Joyner adds that he can color and style women’s hair, too.

Regulars walk through the door every day, as do those who become regulars, which explains the crowd gathering on the chairs in the front of the store, and on the bench across the barbers’ spinning chairs.

Regulars have turned into friends, so the chatter quickly moves to Halloween plans, as the holiday is fast approaching.

“What are you doin’ for Halloween,” Joyner asks a guy who has just walked in, giving him a handshake.

“Sleep!”

“Oh, I wanna dress up!” shouts Sabrina, the female stylist whose station is set up at the back of the store.

The guys joke that the barber between Joyner’s and Mollett’s stations should dress up as Inspector Gadget, hat and all.

“He’s not puttin’ a hat on that,” Joyner says, referring to his colleague’s dreadlocks.

Joyner works on a Pittsburgh policeman’s hair, moving from one barbering tool to the next, working in precise, neat strokes, each cut a sharp piece of work. A small boy who is sitting on the bench waiting for his haircut is impatient and fussing. Joyner says he likes to work with kids, and has seen a lot of local children grow from toddlers into tykes.

Mollett is expecting a group of children soon: kids from local area schools come in for haircuts. After finishing his chicken, he marches back to his work-space up front.

The Halloween costume discussion continues. Puss ‘n Boots, Jermaine Jackson and Michael Jackson are brought up as possibilities, and quickly dismissed, since they are individual costumes. The guys at Top Notch work as a unit.

They turn to the possibility of going as the Na’vi, the indigenous people from the movie “Avatar.” For that they would have to wear, “tail thongs and blue paint.” They quickly decide that the best way to get the Na’vi look would be to jump in a tub of blue paint, and to find some cat contacts.

“I could be blue for a weekend,” someone laughs.

“Don’t they got five toes?” someone else asks.

“How about going as the Blue Man Group?” someone asks, since they seem to be going for a blue, three person theme.

Joyner says no, the Blue Man Group is old news. They want to do something new and original.

Customers can get a trim – and hear a good tale – from the barbers at Top Notch.

PHOTO BY ANASTASIA FARMERIE
Characters

Best Friends Remember Glory Days

By Allie Cerami

Claire Snyder babysat Geraldine “Gerry” Rizer over 50 years ago. All these years later, they are sitting next to each other in a Lawrenceville dining room, the M*A*S*H theme playing softly in the background.

“I used to go down to Gerry’s house to read stories to her before she went to bed,” said Claire. “And now she lives across the street from me!”

Nostalgia is pleasantly starting to draw Clair and Gerry out and the ladies sweetly reminisce about the Butler Street of their youth.

“If someone said your mum was “up on Butler” you knew exactly where to find her within ten blocks,” Claire explains. Those ten blocks, between 40th Street and 50th Street, were the epicenter of Lawrenceville.

The ladies conjure memories of a butcher shop with marbled cuts of meat hanging in the front window, a laundromat owned by a Chinese immigrant and an ice cream shop specializing in a popular drink called “pepper uppers.” Down the street at the Arsenal Theatre, you could see 17 cartoons and two features for just a quarter.

Claire remembers going to the theatre as if she went last Saturday. “Your mum would pack you a lunch and you would go down to the theatre for the day and watch the Saturday cartoons.”

They talk about grade school dances that would be over at 9:30. After the dances they would head on over to the ice cream shop.

Decades later, the friends reflect on how many ways Lawrenceville has changed – and the one way in which it has not.

“Lawrenceville is a really tight-knit community,” Claire says as she motioned towards a Plummer Street house whose residents are long gone – except in her memory. “Bonnie across the street would do anything for you.”

Claire says that if kids misbehaved in front of other parents, they were afraid to go home because their mothers already knew what had happened.

On top of that, when other parents and people of the neighborhood saw you do something wrong, they scolded you, and there was nothing wrong with that.

“You know,” Claire says, “you can’t do that nowadays with other kids.”

What Synder and Rizer remember about Lawrenceville is a quality most people wish their neighborhoods possessed now.

“What we remember most is a sense of community,” says Geraldine.

Even though Gerry, now a housekeeper, got married, and Claire, a retired banker, moved to Delaware at one point, Butler Street eventually brought the pair back together. They walk their dogs together and lounge on the front porch on a sunny day.

Five years ago, Gerry moved into a house across the street from Claire, a mere five blocks from the home she was raised in. Lawrenceville had changed. The ladies had gotten older. But some things remained the same.

“You know,” Claire says as she sat back in her dining room chair and laughed. “The younger kids like to go get a $4.00 cup of coffee, but I’d rather just invite a friend over, and warm up a pot myself.”

Off the Bluff
Characters

Jude Wudarczyk: Minder of the Past

By Loren McClosky

Visit the Lawrenceville Historical Society’s Website and you’ll find the name Jude Wudarczyk on almost every page.

“I’ve been involved with the organization for 26 or 27 years,” Jude said as he sat down at a small table with a cup of tea.

Jude has been volunteering since 1985 at the Lawrenceville Historical Society, where he provides information and lends his talents to researching the community’s past.

Exploring Lawrenceville’s history comes naturally to Jude, who has lived here for his entire 54 years. While other kids his age were involved in sports and clubs, young Jude pored over books and documents that chronicled Lawrenceville’s past.

“Other boys would go to clubs or the parks and I’d be in the library,” Jude says. “History and reading just fascinated me so the library was my favorite place . . . well, besides the bakeries and candy stores,” he added as a smile appeared on his face.

Even now, he finds himself being drawn to the restaurants, bakeries, delis and cafés that he says are the best part of the neighborhood.

His brother, James Wudarczyk, “the backbone of the Lawrenceville Historical Society,” according to Jude, is the person who introduced him to the organization.

“He’s the one who really encouraged me to start writing about the neighborhood,” Jude says. “He was always there for me to bounce ideas off of and always willing to give me advice when I was president.”

Jude became president of the Lawrenceville Historical Society in the early ‘90s when the organization was facing turmoil. He was discouraged from taking over in a time of declining membership. He took the job anyway.

“I didn’t listen to people telling me not to do it,” Jude says. “I set goals for one year. People were telling me that I should set them for four or five years, but I knew what I was doing.”

Even though Jude is a lifelong resident of Lawrenceville, he didn’t realize how much history occurred there until he became involved with the Lawrenceville Historical Society. For instance, he did not know that boxing was such a big part of Lawrenceville from the ’20s to the ’40s. In 1920, the Willow Club hosted a national amateur boxing championship. Out of the eight weight categories, four champions were Pittsburgh natives. Three of them were from Lawrenceville.

Jude continues to sip his tea and chat with people as they come and go through the quaint café. If the camaraderie of this neighborhood wasn’t evident to an “outsider,” spending an hour or two with Jude Wudarczyk would make it very obvious that Lawrenceville is a tight-knit neighborhood.

“It’s one of those everyone-knows-everyone kind of communities,” Jude says, “at least for people who have lived here as long as me.”

Over the past 20 years, Jude has watched as yet another distinct chapter in Lawrenceville’s history unfolded and it has become a hip destination for Pittsburgh residents and tourists.

The turning point came in the early ‘90s when the Lawrenceville Historical Society began giving House Tours, which drew people from over eight states, including California. The tours are a Society mainstay.

“Lawrenceville was finally getting some attention,” Jude says.

At that time, Lawrenceville began rebuilding its population as younger people moved into the
characters

community, immersing themselves in the culture that longtime residents knew was there the whole time.

“I think the [Lawrenceville Historical] Society has done a pretty good job at promoting our community,” Jude says very matter-of-factly.

The annual “Doo Dah Days” celebration at the Allegheny Cemetery, created to honor Lawrenceville’s famous son Steven Foster, also attracts many visitors.

Recently, Jude was given the opportunity to promote the neighborhood through the Travel Channel’s “Off Limits” show when he gave a tour through the Allegheny Arsenal Grounds.

Jude’s passion for Lawrenceville and its history continues to grow every day as he keeps learning more about the community. He believes that this neighborhood is as strong as it was 50 years ago, and will continue to thrive in the years to come.

“I’ve seen other communities around Pittsburgh have gone downhill,” he says. “Lawrenceville hasn’t gone too downhill. It’s held its own. And I would like to think that the Lawrenceville Historical Society has a lot to do with that and keeping the community together.”
Ten years after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, many people can remember how they reacted when they first heard that planes had crashed into the World Trade Center. As shock spread across a shaken nation, Americans began to respond to the tragedy in different ways.

Pittsburgh native Dan Holland saw the general response of the nation as a call to action to rebuild the community, starting right in our own neighborhoods, but it would not be easy.

The U.S. was in the midst of a recession. It relied on non-renewable energy sources. Many buildings were vacant and infrastructure was crumbling. A wave of young people had left the Pittsburgh region.

And so began his uphill battle.

When Holland graduated from Carnegie Mellon in 1991 he immediately ran into two obstacles blocking his path in the revitalization of local neighborhoods.

“I discovered there were few young people involved in the field. I also received very little support or encouragement from existing preservation organizations for my work, so I decided it was time to start a new initiative that put young people at the helm, not as a side initiative or special project,” Holland says.

With this mindset, in 2002 Holland created the Young Preservationist Association of Pittsburgh and the number of young members involved is still growing today.

“What better way to send a message to the terrorists than to rebuild one’s own country. And, what better way to start than by involving young people,” Holland says.

This past August, YPA hosted its third annual Preserve Pittsburgh Summit, geared towards getting young people excited about restoring Pittsburgh communities.

The YPA’s goal is to take steps now to change how existing resources are reused and reinvested in communities. Young people are, after all, inheriting this world the way that it is left to them in whatever shape or form the older generations leave it.

Lately, YPA has been investing much of its time in Lawrenceville.

“Lawrenceville has been an interesting case study for how to revitalize a neighborhood,” Holland says.

“Notice that it has been built upon restoring and reinvesting in existing infrastructure, rather than demolishing the old and building new. There is good new construction, too, but the design is based on the existing architecture. This is what preservation is all about, the wise use, and reuse, of existing assets,” he says.

Lawrenceville was selected for intensive investment because of the changes that have been rapidly moving forward over the past...
Characters

A YPA advocate exhorts people to restore their communities.

few years.

The neighborhood is an excellent illustration of the power of preservation and a great new opportunity for long-term investors, business owners, renters, and homeowners.

“It’s the day-to-day activities that bring the neighborhood to life. The coffee houses, people hustling off to work, shoppers during the day, bar hoppers at night. It’s the 24/7 activity and ‘eyes on the street’ that make a neighborhood safe, welcoming, and vibrant,” Holland says.

The neighborhood’s changes and improvements did not happen overnight. They took years to develop and nothing happened by accident.

A number of nonprofit organizations helped Lawrenceville bounce back, namely the Lawrenceville Corporation, through the Main Street Program.

“I hope Lawrenceville builds upon its success. I’d like to see additional development and restoration take place throughout the community,” Holland says.

Lawrenceville’s Main Street is operating much as it once did a generation ago. At that time, the central employers were the mills that operated on the riverfront. People walked to work, or they took the trolley. It was a much more pedestrian-oriented community than it is today.

Plans are in the works to increase the density of the neighborhood along Lawrenceville’s main drag of Butler Street while accommodating parking on off-street lots. There are also opportunities for loft housing, reuse of warehouse space and other commercial ventures.

Lawrenceville’s revitalization has really just begun.

Lawrenceville offers an excellent example of how an old neighborhood can come back to life – new businesses, new homeowners, lots of renovated old buildings, as well as new construction.

“It’s hot right now, and there’s a lot of buzz about the community,” Holland says. “The objective of the Preserve Pittsburgh Summit was to show young people what the buzz is all about, but also explain how it got that way and encourage people to do it in their communities.”

Holland invites anyone interested in becoming a Young Preservationist to check out www.youngpreservationists.org or like the group on Facebook for more information.
Who Knew Mod was Retro?

By Sarah Blaisdell

Walking through the door of Who New? Retro Mod Décor is like taking a step back into your grandmother’s attic. Except that unlike your grandmother’s dusty attic, everything in co-owner Jeff Gordon’s “attic” is in its own place, in mint condition.

Retro Mod Décor is a treasure chest full of goodies for antique-lovers, vintage-goods connoisseurs and hipsters who have come to Lawrenceville. Art hangs on the walls and furniture fills the open gallery space. Cups, plates, mugs, knives, lamps and knick-knacks are stacked everywhere. A wall of clocks ticks in unison. Entire shelves of salt and pepper shakers stand at attention.

Here, what is old has new life. The store itself was first a family-run furniture store and then a ceramic factory before Gordon and his co-owner, Roger Levine, worked with a developer to renovate the space. It sat empty for quite some time; its only visitors were the occasional intruders who broke into the building.

“It looked like the London blitzkrieg when I first walked into the place,” Gordon says.

Gordon and Levine gave the store a new life with a fresh coat of white paint and a gallery-style transformation. They didn’t touch the walk-in kiln which still stands in the back of the store, but they did fill the space with passion.

According to Gordon, this is the nature of artists.

“That’s what artists do by their very nature – they make community. Artists are the best at making something out of nothing,” Gordon says.

In a sense, the store’s resurrection is a symbol of Lawrenceville’s rebirth.

Imagine Lawrenceville about 10 years ago. The streets are a little dirtier, the shop windows a little barer, and hookers and drug dealers are abundant on sidewalk corners.

It was one of Pittsburgh’s worst neighborhoods, according to Gordon.

Today, a great shift is occurring in Lawrenceville, due in large part to the healing effect of the arts. Gordon has noted this transformation in the eight years that he’s been there. The arts have nurtured the neighborhood back to life as new artists and creative types have arrived to open small businesses. Gordon has contributed to this renaissance with the establishment of his store.

“Now, we kind of have our thumb on the pulse of the neighborhood because anyone moving into the neighborhood comes here first,” Gordon says “There’s a lot of hip, young, couples, most of them design-savvy, most of them do-it-yourselfers, most of them artistically inclined, and they have a sense for recycling and being green, and we kind of cover all that.”

Lawrenceville is becoming home to many new people, while there are still those who are “embedded” in the neighborhood, according to Gordon, who is a native of Pittsburgh himself. Long-time...
residents are selling their homes, making way for the “young hipsters” purchasing affordable real estate.

“Pittsburgh in general, Lawrenceville in particular, is getting a hip reputation,” Gordon says.

Take, for example an article in National Geographic which ranked Pittsburgh as one of its top picks for places to see in “Best of the World 2012,” citing “a wealth of fine art and architecture, and a quirky sense of humor.”

That’s “world,” not “country.”

Gordon attributes Lawrenceville’s success to its “livability” and affordability, but says the trip to the top is a process that occurs in many cities, not just Pittsburgh.

“It’s a cycle. It happens everywhere. It’s the way of the world,” Gordon said. “It’s happened in New York City to neighborhoods. The neighborhoods become depressed, they become crime-ridden, and slowly but surely, artists and urban pioneers come in and they start making community, they develop a cool sensibility again, and larger entities move in, the rent goes through the roof, and they can’t stay there anymore.”

Gordon hopes that the small businesses sprouting up in town will be able to withstand any potential corporate threat. His biggest fear is that businesses will become “cookie-cutter” and lose their identity.

“Humans can be overwhelmed, I think, by big. Bigger isn’t necessarily better,” Gordon says. “An individual needs to feed their own soul. And when something is mass-marketed it’s off-putting. Especially to creative people.”

Like his store, in his little corner of the world, the nice thing about Lawrenceville is its smallness. Its intimacy. Its passion—like the passion Gordon has for Who New? Retro Mod Décor.

“It’s about having the passion,” Gordon says. “And that’s what makes Lawrenceville special, is that some of these small businesses, you’ll walk in, and you know, you’re going to meet the owner. We’re small businesses, we can’t afford employees and taxes and health plans for employees, so there’s that one-on-one human connection, there’s that passion for what you’re dealing in, and that’s what makes an intimate community.”
Characters

Mary Coleman, Crafter

The Owner of Gallery on 43rd Street, Mary Coleman, opened her gallery in 1994 because of the emerging community of artists located in Lawrenceville.

By Jennifer Miklosko

When you walk into the Gallery on 43rd, right off of Butler Street, you are immediately overcome with a feeling of warmth and calmness — as if you’re looking at works of art in the comfort of your own home.

Yet the current artworks by Robert Villamagna hanging neatly on the walls are doing what art is always trying to do.

It speaks to people directly about beauty, about personal capacity and freedom, about how individuals acting on their own can find themselves and express their discoveries.

This meaning behind art is what sparked a partnership between a creative mind and an irrepressible heart within Gallery on 43rd owner, Mary Coleman.

Coleman, 62, likes art the most when it truly moves her, grabs some sort of emotion inside of her.

She has been a figure in the Lawrenceville art scene for 17 years.

“Mary does an excellent job explaining why art can make your life richer,” said Ron Donoughe, a local painter who has had his work displayed in Coleman’s gallery.

Coleman came to Lawrenceville in 1994 because she saw an emerging community of artists here.

“It’s always the artists that come to an area that’s kind of blighted because they’re not afraid and they just work with people,” she says.

But Coleman says that some long-time residents were, and still are, wary of the artists in their midst.

“I say to them, since they’re usually my age or older, that you need to relax and when you’re out walking, just smile at somebody,” she says “Because usually everybody smiles back and says ‘Hey, how you doin’ today?’”

Coleman had a life-long interest in art, particularly weaving, but never intended to open her own gallery until she decided to make the leap to Lawrenceville in July of 1994.

“In high school I dabbled in drawing and of course everybody — especially parents — thought everything was just beautiful, but you know, that’s what they’re supposed to say,” Coleman says laughing.

After high school, she moved from her house on a farm in Green County to Pittsburgh to study retail at Wheelers School, a business school downtown.

This was a big transition in her life because it was a huge culture shock for her.

Wheelers was a two-year school, but she only attended for one before taking a job at a store in Shadyside.

At this point, Coleman’s interest wasn’t really art anymore.

However, that changed when she married an art teacher and started to become influenced by what he was doing.

Coleman and her husband eventually divorced, but she maintained a strong interest in art and in November 1994, she got the idea to open her own gallery.

Her plan was to display other people’s artwork while still she continuing weaving.

“I was thinking that in the summers with the warmer weather, I’d be doing festivals, which is what would carry the gallery then,” Coleman says. “And when fall came,
things would be geared towards the holidays and that would carry the gallery, but you know, things don’t always work out.”

Coleman first started out by displaying the artwork of her friends and meeting new people through them and those who came to see their art.

Now, the artists find Coleman.

“Mary is great to work with and I’m proud to have had my work hanging in her gallery,” says Pittsburgh mosaic and fiber artist, Stevo Sadvary.

Coleman is happy with what she’s doing, even if not everyone in Lawrenceville is aware of it.

A lot of people know her from seeing her walking dogs; they don’t realize that she’s a mainstay of the art scene in Lawrenceville.

The Gallery on 43rd is more than Coleman’s place of business. She lives there, too.

Her favorite thing about owning a gallery is seeing all the artwork and meeting artists, especially the young ones.

“I’m amazed at what they’re doing. I don’t always understand it, but hey, if they’re willing to work with me then I’ll try it,” she says.

Coleman puts a lot of energy into running the gallery by finding artists to put work in it, which leaves very little time for her to weave as much as she’d like.

However, she doesn’t see herself being able to work for anyone else.

“I can’t start over now – I don’t care what anybody says,” explains Coleman. “It allows me more freedom than getting on a bus and going into town or going out to the suburbs and I also need to be around freer thinking people.”

Coleman also participates in events held in Lawrenceville throughout the year such as the Cookie Tour and the Artist Studio Tour.

She often thinks of where she’d like to be 10 years from now but the answer comes to her without hesitation: right where she is.

“I think it’s something I wanted to do all my life, but it just took going through life to get to this point,” she says.
Musician Grooves on Neighborhood Vibe

BY KURT RENEAUER

Musician Caleb Pogyor finds that cheap rent, a communal, family feel and the willingness of venues and artists to work together make Lawrenceville the perfect place for a striving musician.

“It’s not a hectic place like South Side. It’s really easy to get people to come out to shows here. It just has a much more personal vibe to it,” Pogyor says.

Pogyor moved to Lawrenceville several years ago to work with friends on his music projects. Though he’s a “newbie” in Lawrenceville, he appreciates that many of his neighbors have deep roots here.

“My street is like a lot of families who have lived there their whole lives,” Pogyor says. “More families seem to keep coming in, too. You see the same people over and over again, so it’s nice to get to know everyone.”

This relaxed, familial environment allows Pogyor to create his own schedule, loaded with shows and recording.

“I played a lot of shows supporting my first album I’m Talking to You, and was able to book them on my own around Lawrenceville and Bloomfield with some friends to open the shows. I’m back in the studio now, and I’ve got about 22 songs prepared. I’ll be super busy recording because I just keep writing more,” Pogyor says, laughing.

Pogyor plans to keep recording at his homemade studio in Monongahela. A typical recording session goes from 10 p.m. until four in the morning. Sounds long and tiresome, but Pogyor says that he often wonders where the time goes when he’s in the studio.

Growing up on metal bands of the ‘90s, and getting into grunge and alternative in his teens, he started writing full songs around the age of 15. He also listened to bands like Radiohead and Smashing Pumpkins, which inspired in him a desire to make melodic music.

“I have a lot more upbeat, poppy songs going onto the next record. I started experimenting with Queen-type harmonies, and I’m overall just really challenging myself. I’m recording almost all of the instruments on my own, so it’s totally solo.”

Pogyor says doing it all that adds stress to the recording process, but it also gives him total freedom without having to rely on band members. His friends often come out to shows, and sometimes even take part.

“I often call on them to come play shows,” he says. “If a drummer can’t play a show, I have two or three other people I know I can call to come out and play with me.”

Pogyor was planning on playing at the “Come Together” Beatles Tribute to benefit Project Bundle

Caleb Pogyor takes pride in his music and his guitar while rocking out.
Up at Hard Rock Café, where he will be playing two cover songs of The Beatles. Pogyor wants to play more covers as he becomes more comfortable with playing shows.

“I feel like I’ve grown into myself and my music a lot more, and getting to know myself as an artist. I don’t get nervous anymore, I just rock out.”

Aside from playing more shows, Pogyor also has big plans for his album upon completion. His last album is available for free download on BandCamp.com, and he plans to do more unique offers for the next release.

“[Lawrenceville’s] not a hectic place like South Side. It’s really easy to get people to come out to a show here. It just has a much more personal vibe to it”

Pogyor has benefitted even more from Lawrenceville as he has contacted some local artists about doing artwork for his upcoming album. The perks of living in Lawrenceville seem to be never-ending.

“Lawrenceville is just so communal and inexpensive to live here,” he says. “I work two part-time jobs and can still devote time to my music. I couldn’t have done it anywhere else.”
CHARACTERS

‘Like a good neighbor’:
Contractor Ronald Schiavo

BY ANASTASIA FARMERIE

In his ramshackle gray boots and protective glasses, 55-year-old Ronald Schiavo climbs down the ladder that leans on an older woman’s house on 46th Street in Lawrenceville. She just needs a maintenance check on her roof, but she is getting a lot more than that.

Schiavo and Son specialize in roofing, windows, additions and clean-outs. However, Ron and his son do more than just home maintenance; they help maintain their community. Ron started the company around 30 years ago with his father, and now he works with his son. “I didn’t plan on going into it but in the summers, I would always help my father do side work on residential areas,” he says. Schiavo does his part to keep Lawrenceville the friendly place he remembers growing up in.

An example of that friendliness happened about 10 years ago when Ronald Schiavo’s hands were attached to his steering wheel – like a magnet to a refrigerator – as he drove through Lawrenceville to pick up Ralph Drishler at a nursing home.

Drishler was a former client of Schiavo’s, and a long-time Lawrenceville resident. He was old, weak and worn down and had colon cancer. Unfortunately, he needed help finding an assisted-living facility. Schiavo would help and pick up the old man for the weekend and invite him over for the holidays to celebrate with his own family. “The last five years of his life were better because of it,” Schiavo says.

With thanks and appreciation towards Schiavo and family, the man left his house to the Schiavos. Schiavo’s son, Ronald Jr., now lives in the house. But Schiavo did not lend a hand expecting a reward; he did it because that was how things worked when Schiavo was growing up in Lawrenceville.

“Everybody knew everybody, up and down the streets,” he says. Schiavo can name every person who lived on 46th Street when he was a kid. “They weren’t related to you, but they were your neighbors,” he says.

Children and older folks would be out on the streets at night, talking, participating in the community. “Mr. Heightman used to live up the street, and he was an old guy who wore long-johns all year round. We used to love talking to him.”

Schiavo’s hand touches the bill of his timeworn roofer’s cap when speaking of Butler Street and how it has always been known as the “main drag.” With its trendy shops and hip reputation, he hardly recognizes it. “Now, I couldn’t name hardly any because they are all

Ronald Shiavo gives instructions to complete their construction job.

PHOTO BY ANASTASIA FARMERIE

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renters,” he says. “People don’t stay real long.”

Still, there are others like Schiavo who wouldn’t dream of leaving Lawrenceville, like Schiavo’s longtime best friend and fellow St. Augustan’s Catholic High School classmate, Robert Bromberg.

“They call me ‘Bobbo’ because there were so many Bobs growing up,” Bromberg recalls with laughter. Bobbo’s family still lives in Lawrenceville, not too far from the Schiavos.

Schiavo spent a lot of time at the Boys Club, now the Boys and Girls Club. He was a member and also worked at the club. “I would hang everyone’s coat on the rack and check off I.D. numbers, even for myself. Mine was 313.”

The boys learned swimming, stamp collecting, camping and ping-pong. The club even held Christmas parties every year for members. “You got a stocking and a toy, and a one pound box of Keystone Candy! Keystone Factory used to be up on 45th, where Children’s Hospital is now,” Schiavo shouts with excitement.

Even though Lawrenceville has changed, there are still people who carry on its traditions and remember its history. Ron Jr. is living proof.

“I learned everything I know from my dad,” he shouts down from the roof.
If “Italian-American” is a way of life, the hyphen that links them is the kitchen.

For Domenic Branduzzi, the owner of Piccolo Forno, that way of life has always revolved around the kitchen.

“It’s where all the activity is, where all the conversation is, the arguing, the fighting. All the good stuff happens in the kitchen,” Domenic says. “It’s a really good way to have people stay connected and work together.”

That philosophy guides Domenic’s relationships with his family, his co-workers, and with the entire community of Lawrenceville.

“I can’t be an ambassador for it, but there isn’t much Italian culture here in Lawrenceville,” Domenic says. “I think it’s going to be a big melting pot eventually, which makes it so great, but I stay true to my own roots.”

He shares with Lawrenceville what he calls “a poor cuisine of sorts,” the tastes of his home in Lucca, Italy.

“The things you eat here are the things you would eat around my home,” Domenic says. “These are the things that they have always eaten. Even in Italy, cuisine is area-to-area because they are working with what they have, what the land gives them, what the sea gives them, whatever is around them.”

When Domenic was four, his parents, Carla and Antonio Branduzzi, moved from Lucca, Italy, to the United States. Like most immigrants, they brought with them what was important and in this case, what they had brought with them was what they had learned to cook.

At 22, Domenic was given the opportunity to purchase Regina Margherita, a pizzeria that was once where Piccolo Forno is now, and do what his family has always done – cook.

This wasn’t always the plan, however, as Domenic graduated from Duquesne University in 2004 with a degree in International Business and Marketing.

“He came to me and said that he was thinking about this and I said that you are crazy,” his mother Carla said in a phone interview. “I said, ‘If you do it, put your whole heart and soul into it and you’ll have an asset. And when you get burnt out or tired, you can sell it to someone else.’ But I don’t foresee that happening.”

As the rebirth of Lawrenceville unfolds, Domenic has taken the time to dish to his customers the stories and traditions of his family.

“I know who I am and I’m happy with who I am,” Domenic says. “I know my roots and I don’t try to push it on anybody, except for the food. I want them to try the food.”

Though Domenic is not a certified chef, he certainly has had training and moral support from his family as he grew up.

“It’s a family affair here,” Domenic says in reference to his mother and his two younger sisters who work with him. “It’s one place where we can work together and be together and hopefully not fight – especially with me against three women.”

Maybe from time to time opinions are exchanged between the family members, but when it comes down to it, the relationships Domenic and his family share with the Lawrenceville community are as warm as the embers in the redbrick oven at Piccolo Forno.

The focus of it all is to bring the family back to the table.

Food is a way of communication at Piccolo Forno and in this case, the main language is Tuscan cuisine.

“The American family, unfortunately, has become
Characters

Branduzi performs all the tasks into making a pizza pie.

too busy with other things in life and when they come here, I hope that they feel what maybe their grandmother had done,” Carla says. “People don’t have time to go home and cook anymore. Everybody is working instead.”

Being “too busy to cook” is contrary to the way the Branduzi family works. Food has always been an important aspect of their life.

The Branduzi family previously owned another restaurant, Il Piccolo Forno, in the Strip District for 15 years. Shortly after Antonio passed, the business was sold and focus was shifted to Piccolo Forno.

Authenticity is what counts for Domenic, but it’s also his experience that has made it possible for him to share what he knows with others.

“It’s a labor of love,” Domenic says, “but there’s enough reward to make it worth it for sure when you see the effect that your food has on people.”

The Branduzi family spent many hours together in the kitchen cooking and making memories.

“I stayed home a certain amount of time and took my children to work with me. It was different,” Carla says. “I took them to the bakery with me. I put them on the table and made pies. They would put aprons on and decorate crostata di frutta and clean vegetables with my grandmother sitting in the corner and things like that.”

For Domenic, these memories are what matter the most and give purpose to what he does.

“Enjoy the small things,” Domenic says, “Whether it’s a plate of pasta or a nice glass of wine or a beautiful woman. I think it’s really important to enjoy the moment because we live in a crazy world and there’s a lot thrown at us. It’s being able to recognize those happy moments that keep you going in a crazy, stressful, hectic day.”
Visions of Lawrenceville

Off the Bluff
VISIONS OF LAWRENCEVILLE

Off the Bluff
Matt Cvetic: Commie Hunter

Matt Cvetic was an American citizen, Christian, Lawrenceville resident, and a hard-working man. Or was he an FBI agent?

History, as well as many people, wonders who this person really was.

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Cvetic had no idea growing up that he would eventually be working for the FBI.

He wanted more than anything to be in the Army, but was denied because he was only 5 feet 4 inches tall, which was two inches too short to fit the requirements.

All that changed one day in 1941 when his phone rang in his office at the United States Employment Service in Pittsburgh, where he worked as a lowly placement interviewer.

The voice on the other end of the phone, which belonged to an FBI agent, said Cvetic could perform an important task for his country and asked to meet at a dark restaurant.

According to George Putnam, reporter and close friend of Cvetic, Cvetic’s knowledge of Slavic languages made him uniquely qualified to infiltrate the Communist Party. It also helped that he held a strong dislike for the Communist Party.

During this point in time, which was the Great Depression, the FBI was worried about the growth of Soviet influence, so it began to monitor communism within the United States very closely.

The FBI needed a Bolshevik, a member of the Communist Party, of their own. That’s where Cvetic came in.

If Cvetic chose to take part in this, he would have to turn his back on his family, friends, church, and living his life normally.

But he was eager to help and soon became a friend and confidant to those a part of the Marxist-Stalinist cause in the United States.

It wasn’t until two years later, however, that Cvetic gained the trust of the Party Leadership and he was sworn in as member of the Communist Party.

Cvetic attended over 3,000 “Red” meetings and supplied the FBI with the names of hundreds of Soviet agents and Communists.

As time went on, more and more people became aware of the service he was doing for the country.

Putnam said that Cvetic had been sharing his stories with his priest, the manager of the hotel where he was staying, and multiple women he had met.

Life for Cvetic continued to become more difficult as his loyalties surfaced more and more.

By 1950, the Cold War had begun and Communism had become a “menace to freedom.”

He put it all to an end during the In-House Senate Committee on UnAmerican Activities where he turned over the last 80 pounds of documents that he was able to snatch.

Cvetic also revealed the names of Soviet agents and American communists who had been working or were working to overthrow the government.

In response, the Communists called him “Cvetic the Rat”, among other names.

Cvetic risked everything by agreeing to go undercover.

He lost those who had mattered most to him, especially his family.

And many of those whom he lost either failed to learn his true story or were gone before the truth could be told.

Matt Cvetic, third from left, worked for the FBI to infiltrate the Communist Party in the 1950s.

**BY JENNIFER MIKLOSKO**
The Doughboy statue that overlooks the gateway to Lawrenceville embodies the memory of the struggles of World War I veterans. Hunched over, exhausted, clothes torn, gasmask at his side, rifle, bayonet, and ammo at hanging from his belt. The man in the statue was made to represent the common man fighting for his country during the First World War. The pedestal beneath the eight-and-a-half foot soldier lists the names of Lawrenceville veterans from World War I and World War II.

The Doughboy has had some cosmetic work done since it was erected in 1921. In the 1970s signs of deterioration called for slight restoration. Members of the Lawrenceville Citizen’s Council used money granted by the city to restore the Doughboy back to his former glory, an act with good intentions that sparked some controversy.

Allan Becer, co-founder and first president of the Lawrenceville Historical Society, contended that the preservation efforts took away from the splendor of the statue. “That’s kind of a touchy subject,” Becer said. “That statue was ruined. It’s been coated and it’s not the original statue. Many years ago it was a bronze color and if you look at it now that’s not bronze. I think they ruined it.”

This is not the Doughboy’s first battle with controversy. The day the statue was unveiled, a large celebration was held on the street corner with almost 20,000 citizens in attendance. However, not all of the attendants were celebrating. Some were protesting. Becer says that they were protesting the commemoration of violence.

Jude Wudarczyk and Becer, authors of the book A Doughboy’s Tale ... and More Lawrenceville Stories and members of the Lawrenceville Historical Society, said that other protesters were griping about the fact that the statue would ruin the streetcar stop and comfort stations that once resided on that intersection. Citizens made threats that they would show up with guns and stop the unveiling. Fortunately, the only guns at the Memorial Day unveiling were the canons at the Allegheny Arsenal Grounds that were set off for a 21-gun salute of the statue and the soldiers it represents.

The statue was created by famed sculptor Allen Newman who, according to Wudarczyk, was inspired by Michelangelo’s David for the somber pose of the Doughboy.

The Doughboy, which now stands guard over a bus stop, is not without a sense of humor. “It’s kind of a joke in Lawrenceville,” Wudarczyk said. “Ask why the Doughboy looks so sad. It’s because he missed the bus.”
History Happened Here

When the “Croat Comet” Ruled the Ring

By Marco D’Agostino

Notorious for his dirty fighting – thumbing his opponent’s eyes and hitting below the belt – Ferdinand “Fritzie” Zivic chose boxing as a profession in an era when the sky burned with fire and steel mills sprawled across the city.

His fighting was so dirty that Jay Design Soaps and Gifts commemorated “FRITZIE ZIVIC” soap after him in 2006.

“Fritzie Zivic, outside the ring, was a real loving guy,” said Jimmy Cvetic, executive director of Iron City Boxing. “Inside the ring was a different story.”

As many immigrants in Lawrenceville flocked to the mills for work in the early 1900s, Fritzie and his four brothers, The Fighting Zivics of the 9th Ward, had different plans.

Fisticuffs were their ticket out of the mills and they packed a lethal dose of Croatian pride in every punch.

On Oct. 4, 1940, Fritzie defeated Henry “Hammering Hank” Armstrong in Madison Square Garden, claiming the title of Welterweight Champion of the World. His eight-month reign as champ was short-lived, however; he was beaten by Red Cochran on July 29, 1941.

In all, Fritzie did pugilistic battle 230 times and retired in 1949 with a record of 155 wins, 65 losses and 10 draws. He was knocked out only three times.

“It was all very interesting times, very hard times, hard men, good men, men of steel,” Cvetic says. “That’s where I would place Fritzie Zivic.”

Lawrenceville Launched Famous Thespians

By Zach Kuntz

Lawrenceville gave the world two Hollywood stars: Regis Toomey and Frank Gorshin. Toomey, born in 1898 in Lawrenceville, acted in over 250 films and television shows. He attended the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Tech School of Drama, now Carnegie Mellon University, and made his first appearance in the 1929 gangster film Alibi.

Acting stuck for Toomey. He worked in film for the rest of his life. Early in his career, Toomey would play streetwise characters, scoring prominent roles in fast-paced crime movies. As he grew older, Toomey typically played supporting roles as judges, sheriffs and businessmen.

Toomey died in 1991, at 93 years old. He describes his life best: “I’d rather be a supporting actor than a star. Supporting actors last longer.”

Like Regis Toomey, Frank Gorshin was born to a blue-collar family; his father was a railroad worker, his mother a seamstress. Born in 1933, Frank did not follow in their footsteps, despite growing up in Lawrenceville at the height of the steel industry. Instead of going into factory work, Gorshin took up acting at his high school.

Following in Toomey’s footsteps, Gorshin went on to the Carnegie Tech School of Drama to study performing arts. This later put him into work in nightclubs and in plays before hitting films and television. In the 1950s, Gorshin broke into Hollywood films and left Pittsburgh to live in California.

His most famous role was in the original Batman television series. Gorshin was famous for his role as The Riddler. Gorshin was also known for his celebrity impersonations.

Gorshin starred in over 70 films and is credited with crafting the character of The Riddler from a minor villain into a major recurring character. Gorshin died in 2005 at the age of 72, and was buried in Greenfield’s Calvary Cemetery in Pittsburgh.
Captain James Lawrence had the title. He had the crew. All he needed was the ship.

Lawrence got his warship on June 1, 1813, in the middle of the War of 1812. It was called the U.S.S. Chesapeake, and came with 49 guns. Its mission was to intercept British ships bound for Canada, but Lawrence had other plans. He took the Chesapeake to Boston to tangle with the Royal Navy’s H.M.S. Shannon, commanded by Capt. Philip Bowes Vere Broke. Blockading Boston, Shannon only had 38 guns, but packed a powerful punch.

Fifteen minutes into the engagement, the Chesapeake started to go down. The Brits shot holes in her sides until she couldn’t take it anymore. Capt. Lawrence, mortally wounded in battle, bled for her.

With the voice of a dying man, he called out, “DON’T GIVE UP THE SHIP!”

His loyal crew carried him below deck and fought to save the ship until each one was wounded or dead. Capt. Lawrence died from battle wounds four days later, leaving his wife and daughter behind.

Lawrence’s early career did for foretell such an ignominious end. He saw his first action in the Tripolitan War, where he built his naval reputation. He started the War of 1812 by commanding the Hornet and sank the British Peacock. Lawrence was promoted to a captaincy. But, as we know, he wasn’t so lucky the second time around.

But alas, that’s not the end of Capt. Lawrence’s tale. Drive 3.1 miles outside Pittsburgh and you’ll find yourself in the neighborhood (once a separate city) that bears his name, Lawrenceville is much different from the town that sprang up in 1814 around the newly established Allegheny Arsenal. Founder William Barclay Foster, father of composer Stephen Foster toyed with the idea of naming the settlement “Fosterville,” but then decided to name it after Lawrence, considered a naval hero, because he thought it would be extremely fitting for an arsenal town.

While Capt. Lawrence may have lost his life serving our country, his legacy lives on in Lawrenceville. Try a Wikipedia search on Lawrence’s famous words, “Don’t Give Up the Ship,” and a broad list of results comes up. Ranging from the title of a documentary series, to a 1959 comedy, to a “set of rules for naval war games,” to the name of a rock band from Wichita, Kan.

We’ll give Eggleston the last word:

And ever since that battle
The people like to tell
How gallant Captain Lawrence
So bravely fought and fell.

When disappointment happens,
And fear your heart annoys,
Be brave, like Captain Lawrence—
And don’t give up, my boys!
Medical care in the 1880s was not as advanced or as readily available as it is today. For this reason on Dec. 31, 1883, a charter was signed for the creation of the Protestant Home for Incurables on Butler Street in Lawrenceville.

As the name implies, the institution cared for people with incurable diseases – in those days anything from tetanus, to diabetes, to cancer (or consumption, as it was known then) promised a death sentence.

Jude Wudarczyk of the Lawrenceville Historical Society said that once someone was admitted to the home they could live there for the duration of their life, even if they ran out of money to pay the $200 monthly fee.

Founder Jane Holmes gave her summer home to be used to house the sick. The Holmes family was influential in the Pittsburgh area and gave to multiple philanthropies in the 19th century.

The home was originally intended for women only, but later welcomed men as well. But not all women and men: the home was strictly for Protestants and patients could only be admitted if they were not contagious and were sane.

"The home was a 'private effort to make life better ... for certain people'"

Martha Ressler, an artist and Lawrenceville resident, says that the home was a “private effort to make life better for people.” She then corrected herself: “for certain people.” Ressler believes the home was part of many segregated charities in the area during that time. She says that there were strong prejudices particularly between Catholics and Protestants. This is why the home was created for Protestants and only accepted patients of that religion.

Wudarczyk says it is his understanding that the home was a very nice place where “inmates” were well taken care of. There were two doctors on staff at the home. Wudarczyk says children played and went sledding on the hill behind the home. He likes to think the dying patients got joy from watching those children at play.

According to Wudarczyk, the home was known to “old timers” as Holmey House or Holmey Hill and the name of the house was later changed to the Holmes House. In the 1960s, the home applied for government subsidies. Wudarczyk says he can remember going to the home to apply for a job and standing on a porch that was clearly rotting away. The home closed shortly afterwards. Today, the site of the home is a strip-mall. Even though the Protestant Home for the Incurables is gone, Jane Holmes’ legacy lives on in the Lawrenceville community through her work and philanthropy for the sick and poor, especially the “incurables.”

Atlantic Refinery fire threatened homes, businesses

Pittsburgh was spotted with oil refineries and on June 15, 1923, one of them, the Atlantic Refinery Company, was struck by lightning and went up in flames, creating an inferno that threatened to engulf Lawrenceville. Smoke poured from the refinery and oil exploded on the street that is now home to boutique shoppers and food lovers. “The fire destroyed 100,000 barrels of oil and caused more than $1,000,000 in damages,” according to the Post-Gazette.

While scores of citizens and firefighters were injured, miraculously, no one died from the fire.
Stephen Foster's birth date could not be more appropriate.

Born on July 4th, 1826, Foster is often regarded as “the father of American music.” His simple folk songs have withstood the test of time. Songs like “Oh! Susanna,” “Camptown Races,” and “Old Black Joe” are more than just crackled recordings from beeswax records: they’re a testament to the modernization of American music.

Born and raised in Lawrenceville, Foster was born to William and Elizabeth Foster, near the Allegheny Arsenal. When he was seven years old, he picked up a flageolet (a popular kind of flute) at Smith & Mellor, a music store in Pittsburgh, and with no prior knowledge of music was able to play “Hail! Columbia” in a matter of seconds.

It was the fusing of Henry Kleber, a classic musician and Dan Rice, a “blackface” singer, that would give Stephen his unique style that paved the way for essentially all American folk artists. He would play with these musicians, as well as learn from them to craft a style of his own.

He often wrote about early American settlers and pioneers. He was also very influenced by his surroundings here in Pittsburgh. He liked to listen to the African-Americans on the wharf of the Ohio River sing and worked that influence into his songs. His songs are “happy-go-lucky” and tell stories of home.

Stephen died from an accidental fall at the young age of 37 in a New York City hotel room. He was buried in Allegheny Cemetery and his tombstone can still be found there today.

Stephen Foster truly manifested a fusion and style of music that is unsurpassable. Virtually every American singer and songwriter can count him as an influence.
The Lucy Furnace dominated the Allegheny

**By Jonathan LaPlante**

“A Dreadful Casualty: seven men precipitated into a hot furnace – two are burnt to death and two others supposed to be fatally injured.”

This *New York Times* headline from 1877 describes the harrowing story of seven men who fell 40 feet onto a scalding hot furnace floor at Lawrenceville’s Lucy Furnace. This accident was determined to be the fault of the plant managers, who bullied workers into doing maintenance work on the furnace while it was still burning.

The furnace itself was intimidating. In his 1903 book, *The Inside History of the Carnegie Steel Company: A Romance of Millions*, historian James Bridge described it as “75 feet high by 20 feet diameter,” a true monolith of Pittsburgh industry. It was powered by four boilers, each 60 feet long. With the ability to produce 250 tons of iron per week, the furnace was the cornerstone of Carnegie enterprises. It was created by Thomas Carnegie, not his famous brother Andrew, and named after Thomas’s wife.

The stories behind the furnace are filled with intrigue: business partners forced out, decisions made behind Carnegie’s back, and ruinous contracts made for personal financial gain. For most, the Lucy Furnace provided stable jobs for hundreds of workers. The work was unglamorous and dangerous, but it allowed men to provide for their families and start generational journeys of upward mobility.
The Steel City was considered the “Gateway to the West,” during the War of 1812, according to Lawrenceville historian Jude Wudarczyk. That belief led to the construction of the Allegheny Arsenal in Lawrenceville.

William Foster, father of Stephen Foster, sold the farmland in 1814 to the government to begin the Arsenal’s construction. The complex produced and housed small arms, bullets, belts, canteens, knapsacks, and highly combustible gunpowder.

The gunpowder, which once provided prosperity and profit, is the likely culprit that contributed to a devastating explosion at the Arsenal on Sept. 17, 1862. The blast set off 125,000 rounds of ammunition and killed 70 workers, most of whom were young girls. A memorial to the victims can be found in the Allegheny Cemetery. The explosion occurred on the same day as the Battle of Antietam – the costliest battle of the Civil War in terms of lives lost.

“Nobody knows for sure what caused the explosion,” Wudarczyk said. “A lot of people believe a horse struck a stone with its shoe, ignited a spark, and followed the trail of gunpowder.”

The explosion acted like a fuse, he added. A trail of gunpowder led from one building to the next, creating a domino effect.

According to a Sept. 10, 2010 article by Michael Connors, “Witnesses reported bodies bursting in air. A stray arm flew beyond the Arsenal’s massive stone wall. Where the heat was most intense, there was nothing but white bones in a heap. They had burned like pine logs.”

The Arsenal was desperate for manpower when the Civil War broke out, initially hiring boys, but they were soon after banned from the facility due to smoking inside the grounds. Women and girls took the place of the male workers, and performed more efficiently, due to their smaller hands, Wudarczyk added.

Coverage of the explosion was limited nationwide, because the Battle of Antietam took place the same day.

“That was the bloodiest day in American history,” Wudarczyk said.
1877 Strike One of Bloodiest in U.S.

The Pennsylvania Railroad was the largest in the country during the 1870s, but could not escape the Panic of 1873, which led eventually to the Strike of 1877.

Companies were going bankrupt, banks were failing and the railroads needed to make financial decisions. They cut wages by 10 percent twice, reduced work weeks to two or three days and added extra railroad cars without extra employees.

Workers were furious, and on July 19, 1877, they made that outrage public and walked off the job. Workers who wouldn’t join the walk-off were stopped from doing their jobs by strikers. Gov. John Hartranft asked the Western Pennsylvania National Guard for help, but they had sympathy for the strikers.

According to Jude Wudarczyk of the Lawrenceville Historical Society and author of the 1877 strike chapter in A Doughboy’s Tale . . . and More Lawrenceville Stories, the strike had “strong public support.” Hartranft had to call in the Philadelphia militia, which “didn’t want to be in Pittsburgh,” Wudarczyk added.

While the strikers made their protest, the militia tried to clear them out. But “the crowd kept getting bigger,” said Wudarczyk. So large, in fact, that there is, “no real consensus as to what really happened,” he said of the violence that began.

Protestors threw rocks and shot at militiamen. The militia fired, too, but not just at the protestors.

A woman watching the show from the hill was grazed by a bullet. That same bullet killed the baby she was holding.

A man returning home from work was hit with another bullet in the back of the head.

“The whole citizenry rose up against the militia,” Wudarczyk said.

They began to storm the armories and forced the militia to retreat to the Pennsylvania Railroad roadhouse. Protesters attempted to smoke troops out. It worked.

The militia left, traveling along 28th St. and Penn Avenue, hoping to find refuge at the Allegheny Arsenal at 39th and 40th Streets.

The militia was denied entry to the arsenal because the officer was “afraid that if he let the militia in, the rioters would storm the arsenal,” Wudarczyk said. Instead, the officer made a deal. He would permit neither group entry, but would tend to the wounded on both sides, as long as they left the arsenal alone. The rioters agreed; the militia left.

When the troops walked over the 63rd Street Bridge to Sharpsburg, the crowd did not follow them.

“THE WHOLE CITIZENRY ROSE UP AGAINST THE MILITIA.”
Since opening its doors in 1861, the Pittsburgh Brewing Company has played an important role in Western Pennsylvania, providing “locals” and “locals-at-heart” with city-favorite beers.

The red-brick building, located at Liberty Avenue and 34th Street in Lawrenceville, is the site of a major milestone in town, and American, history—one that will not soon be forgotten. The establishment moved to Latrobe, Pa. in the summer of 2009 but still brews Iron City.

The end of Prohibition in the United States on midnight of April 6, 1933, had the beer drinkers of Lawrenceville and surrounding towns ready to guzzle alcoholic beverages containing less than 3.2 percent alcohol.

At 12:01 a.m. on April 7, in an air of anticipation, groups of people gathered outside of the Pittsburgh Brewing Company to celebrate the end of the 13-year Prohibition.

They celebrated the end of what had limited the Pittsburgh Brewing Company to producing only non-alcoholic “near-beer,” soft drinks and ice cream.

They celebrated outside of one of only 725 breweries that were still in operation in the United States after Prohibition.

According to a city newspaper on the morning of April 7, 1933, “With a whoop of joy, thousands of parched Pittsburgh throats greeted the end of the Great Era at 12:01.”

The Pittsburgh Brewing Company, now Iron City Brewing Company, is one of the oldest beer makers in the United States and one of the 15 largest. It is responsible for creating a city staple, Iron City beer, which has become as big of a tradition as watching “Stillers” football on Sundays.

And almost 150 years later, the four-story, red-brick building still remains an icon for the brewery business and for the people of Lawrenceville.
[creating synergy across new media]