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the Wilkinsburg SUN

VOL. 17 NO. 2 October 2023

A FREE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER BRINGING YOU GOOD NEWS ABOUT WILKINSBURG

Happy 136th Birthday, Wilkinsburg!

Historian Anne Elise Morris takes us on a journey back to a past birthday celebrations



Silver locomotive photo taken from the grassy slope by the raised mainline tracks.



The train station was the center of the 75th anniversary festivities in 1962.

Wilkinsburg’s official birthdate is October 5, 1887, the date of incorporation as a Borough. Prior to 1887 the area known as Wilkinsburg was very rural and there was no organized government.

Horse-drawn wagons traveled on rutted muddy trails, raw sewage was dumped in troughs along the trails, and travel after dark meant bringing your lantern. Life in Wilkinsburg was a very primitive existence.

After incorporation the new municipal

First Phase of Government Study Commission Complete

On August 23, the Wilkinsburg Government Study Commission (WGSC) held its last public meeting of the first phase of the study, and voted unanimously to proceed to develop a Home Rule Charter for Wilkinsburg.

Local governments derive their
continued on page 2

government could raise tax money to pay for all the amenities that Wilkinsburg residents and businesses wanted. Burgess (mayor) and Council were selected to plan the future for the Borough. Soon a public school system, police force, fire department, and road crew were in place. Residents enjoyed newly paved streets and sidewalks, garbage collection, indoor plumbing, electric street lights, telephone service, public library, and all sorts of benefits that we now take for granted. Wilkinsburg became a very desirable place to live and start a business!

By 1912, Wilkinsburg was thriving and a grand 25th anniversary celebration was held the week of October 5. The next twenty-five years saw Wilkinsburg’s population increase to over 30,000 people.

In October 1937 Wilkinsburg citizens celebrated the 50th Golden anniversary with a week-long party. This commemoration included a grand parade, anniversary banquet in the High School

gymnasium, historical pageant, anniversary ball, singing festival, baby parade and other activities.

One special project to enhance Wilkinsburg was the 1937 “Clean Up, Paint Up, Plant Up” initiative where every resident was encouraged to upgrade and improve their own area during the year. Many residents participated in this effort to beautify Wilkinsburg.

In 1962 the Diamond Jubilee celebration of Wilkinsburg’s 75th birthday was in the planning stage.

Mayor Harry Rowland proclaimed that “Wilkinsburg needs revitalizing. It needs a rebirth of community spirit. It needs something to put some of that old zing back into both residents and businessmen.” The mayor and the council devised a campaign entitled “Project 75” to encourage everyone to maintain and improve their property.

Placards in front windows recognized the
continued on page 6

Special Halloween Activities at the Children’s Library, page 6

Trunk or Treat

Mayor Dontae Comans announced a Trunk or Treat event for Saturday, October 28, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the parking lot next to 718 Wallace Avenue. There will be candy, prizes and a live DJ.

Reminder for Election

Borough Council reminds residents that political signs can be put out 60 days ahead of an election and must be removed within 7 days after an election.

Walkers Needed: CROP Hunger Walk October 8

This year's CROP Walk is on Sunday, October 8. Registration begins at 1 p.m. at South Avenue United Methodist Church. The walk begins at 2. There is a 5 mile walk and a 1.5 mile walk. Children and pets are welcome.

The Pittsburgh East CROP Hunger Walk raises funds to end hunger around the block and around the world, one step at a time! 25% of all funds raised will support the hunger programs of Wilkinsburg Community Ministry (WCM): <https://wcm15221.org> and 75% goes to the global humanitarian development work of Church World Service, a four-star rated charity (cwsglobal.org).

In 2022, this event raised \$40,000, with WCM receiving \$10,000.

Participants are needed for this year's walk. More information can be found at: events.crophungerwalk.org/2023/event/pittsburghpa

You can also donate to the Crop Walk without walking. Many organizations have their own separate fundraisers and give all or part of the funds raised to this Walk.

GOVERNMENT COMMISSION, from page 1 powers from the state constitution and can only exercise powers that the state specifically authorizes them to use. At present, Wilkinsburg is classified as a "borough," which has its own particular structure according to the state which defines the extent of its powers. A home rule municipality, on the other hand, is able to operate with considerably more leeway. Rather than being limited to a certain template of governance, it is able to structure itself according to the makeup of its constituency and its own particular context. Also, rather than being restricted to a set list of powers and procedures, home rule allows a municipality the ability to legislate itself in any way the state Constitution does not explicitly prohibit.

The study phase consisted of two public meetings per month from December 13 until August 23, two resident surveys, along with several listening and informational sessions in the community. To determine whether Wilkinsburg could benefit from home rule, the commission studied the current form of government and identified areas of concern that elected officials, department heads, and residents believed could be addressed. The commission also studied several municipalities that had

gone through the process to learn what was behind their decision and what benefits they saw as an outcome.

The charter drafting phase will last an additional 9 to 11 months. Proponents of home rule say that it could potentially offer more resident input in government affairs, more sustainable and equitable tax distribution, and more efficient structuring. Resident input will be sought throughout the process; upon its completion, the charter will be presented to residents, who will then vote whether to approve or to not approve of its adoption. It is unlikely this vote would take place sooner than the November 2024 general election.

Next meetings are October 11 and 25 and November 8 at 5:30 p.m. Residents may attend by Zoom. See the Borough website <http://bit.ly/44WDTPr> for details. Residents may attend in person at 900 Wood Street but seating is limited.

—Ruth Kittner,
WGSC Recording
Secretary



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“Lake at East End” Avenue Is Drained



- Installing up to 6 new inlets
- Backfilling the existing sump pit
- Restoring ADA ramps
- Restoring 1,175 square yards of pavement, and all associated surface restoration and traffic control and protection.

The work is being performed by local contractor Stamm Development, who was the responsible low bidder for the project.

The project is funded by a \$250,000 Commonwealth Finance Authority Multimodal Grant award, with Borough matching funds of \$30,000 approved by Council.

The Borough thanks Senator Jay Costa for his vital support for this important project.

As we go to press, work is completing on the Whitney Storm Water Rehabilitation project.

As previously reported in *The Sun*, the project repairs a significant storm water problem on Whitney Avenue between East End Avenue and Mifflin Avenue.

This highly trafficked intersection suffers frequent, sometimes extreme, localized flooding due to an inadequate storm water drainage system.

The resulting localized flooding is often referred to ironically as “Lake Whitney” or the “Lake at East End Avenue.”

The project is removing the no-longer-functioning storm water sump and connecting this intersection and adjacent blocks to the Wilkinsburg storm water system.

Specifically, the rehabilitation project involves:

- Installing 675 linear feet of 15” HDPE storm sewer
- Replacing 4 existing inlets

EV Chargers Power Up

On September 20, representatives from Duquesne Light (DLC) brought visitors from neighboring and nearby municipalities to Wilkinsburg to inspect the in-progress installation of electric charging stations at the Borough Building parking lot.

Arriving via an electric school bus, the visitors were hoping to learn details about the Borough’s project and use that knowledge to benefit their municipalities.

DLC has worked closely with Borough staff, Glenn Engineering, and general contractor A. Folino Construction on planning, procuring, and installing four dual-port charging stations in the Borough parking lot.

The charging stations are a component of the Borough Building Parking Lot Reconstruction Project, which is nearing completion. The stations are one output of a collaboration with DLC’s Fleet Consulting team, which provides free consultation with municipalities about preparing for and eventually converting portions of their vehicle fleet to electric vehicles (EVs).

The Borough’s initial EVs will likely belong to the Code Enforcement Department, as two of the department’s sedans are nearing the end of their service life and could be replaced soon. EVs are not yet able to meet the power requirements of police vehicles, but the Borough is now well prepared for a not-far-off future.



Pennies in the Wishing Well Exhibit Now at Lohr



Art All Over, the WCDC campaign dedicated to showcasing local artists and makers, kicked off its third season on Saturday, September 16 with an opening reception at the Lohr Gallery. Since Art All Over's inception in 2021, the Lohr Gallery has hosted 13 shows for hundreds of attendees and sold dozens of art pieces from this initiative, providing an arts-focused space for the Wilkinsburg community, as well as a platform for local artists.

"CDCP has been thrilled to partner on Art All Over with the WCDC for the past two years," says Casey Droegge of Casey Droegge Cultural Productions. "It's a platform for artists that aligns with our own mission of building the arts economy. It not only pays artists to showcase their work but pays an amount that aligns with local and national standards, as set by Wage for Work and VACE. It also invites visitors to Lohr Gallery to see work from artists, who are connected to the community of Wilkinsburg, in a comfortable and accessible space."

The September 16 reception celebrated the first featured artist, Kelly Lanzendorfer, who owns and operates Eastern Standard Photo on South Avenue.

"[At Eastern Standard Photo], I develop

film and act as a mini film lab," says Lanzendorfer. "I do everything by hand but also do a lot of education. That's kind of the core. I love teaching analog methods of taking photos, so I do a lot of workshops."

Lanzendorfer calls her clients "the greatest mix," including everyone from beginners to college students looking to expand their skills beyond what their school offers to tech and medical-oriented people who want to break away from their lifestyles.

The Point Park University photojournalism graduate credits a lot of her training to the now-shuttered Pittsburgh Filmmakers, where she learned techniques in analog processes and the fine arts. This craftsmanship is on display at her exhibit Pennies in the Wishing Well, available to view at the Lohr Gallery now through November 18.

"This presentation of work is something I've been shooting and keeping in the back of my mind since 2018. I'm always looking for sensitive quiet moments, and I'm taking these pictures and thinking, 'Why am I gravitating towards this thing?' The name of the show is Pennies in the Wishing Well, something I used to do as a kid. You throw a penny, and make a wish.

It's this concept of trying to pay attention as an adult now to things that are actually happening to me and being grateful for a lot of these things I've always wanted."

One of the reasons Lanzendorfer says she lives and works in Wilkinsburg is because of the area's authenticity.

"There's a lot of abandonment and room for improvement, but that's a caveat of why I started my business here because, with that authenticity, I feel comfortable. I want to make sure the things I'm passionate about can happen here. Hopefully, with the WCDC and Casey Droegge Productions, we're able to show that this can happen more."

Lanzendorfer hopes Pennies in the Wishing Well and Art All Over inspire the community in more ways than one.

"I hope people can see that you can make art, too, and you're going to be able to hopefully find more and more opportunities to do that right here. I hope people take a little bit of light-heartedness or joy away from this. Maybe people will reflect on their own childhood wishes and dreams and think a little deeper about how things come into fruition in our lives, and it can be sweet and magical."

The Wilkinsburg community can look forward to more Art All Over exhibits for the 2023-24 season, including artists Jasmine Green and Lizzee Solomon.

Pennies in the Wishing Well is on display on Saturdays from now until Nov. 18 from 12-5 p.m. at the Lohr Gallery.



Leadership Pittsburgh Welcomes Wilkinsburg Superintendent Maluchnik



Dr. Joe Maluchnik

Congratulations to Wilkinsburg School District superintendent Dr. Joe Maluchnik for being selected to the 2023-24 Leadership Pittsburgh cohort!

“It is an honor to be selected,” said Dr. Maluchnik. “Along with my colleagues, I hope to be able to gain a greater understanding of the Pittsburgh region and use what I learn to benefit our school district and the Wilkinsburg community.”

Earning a spot in this competitive nine-month program, which involves the examination of vital community issues, challenges and leadership development, is a remarkable achievement.

“We are honored to join with these leaders to amplify the outcomes of their civic leadership.” remarked Jenn Beer, CEO of Leadership Pittsburgh Inc. “Participants’ commitment to this program speaks to their passion for a thriving Greater Pittsburgh Region.”

The program commenced on September 12 with a reception at The Andy Warhol Museum. Following the opening retreat, the cohort will convene monthly for day-long sessions until the program concludes in June 2024.

Archeologist Visits 2nd Graders



This past week, Mrs. Cervi’s second-grade science class hosted a special guest, Aksel Casson—an archeologist and assistant professor of anthropology at Slippery Rock University.

Casson, whose son is a student in Mrs. Cervi’s class, provided a captivating glimpse into the world of archaeology. He showcased the tools he uses on his archaeological digs, giving our students a firsthand look at the equipment used in the field. During his engaging presentation, students heard stories about the many artifacts he had unearthed throughout his career.

Wilkinsburg students were enthralled by the real fossils, arrowheads, shark teeth and tools dating back 2,000,000 years that Mr. Casson brought. To immerse the young learners even further, Mr. Casson led a matching activity where students got hands-on experience with ancient artifacts.

This visit from was a great segue to the class’ next science unit focusing on pebbles, sand and silt. Stay tuned for more exciting updates as the young scientists embark on their exploration of the earth’s fascinating history.

School Calendar

OCTOBER

Mon. 9, No School for Students

Wed. 25, Early Dismissal for students at 12:45 p.m.

NOVEMBER

Thurs. 2, No School for Students

Fri. 3, Parent-Teacher Conferences

Wed. 8, Shoe Carnival, sponsored by Lewis family and Samaritan’s Feet Shoe Locker Program

TBD, Safety Patrol Swearing-In Ceremony with Officer Boyce

Tues. 14, Storybook Forest/Light Up Literacy Night 5 p.m.-7p.m.



OPEN HOUSES: Kelly Primary and Turner Intermediate opened their doors to students and their families for two open house events. Both evenings were filled with enthusiasm and a strong sense of community. Parents, caregivers and guardians had the opportunity to walk the halls, visit the classrooms and talk to the educators who make these learning centers come alive.

Kelly, serving students in grades pre-K through 2, added a twist to the evening by organizing a scavenger hunt for the children. At Turner, hosts guided students from grades 3 through 6 to their respective classrooms and introduce them to their teachers.

What Is Happening at the Library?

Adult Programs at Main Branch

Matinee—Prey, Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2 p.m., council chambers, 2nd floor.

Connecting Seniors, Thursday, Oct. 5, 10 a.m.–11 a.m.—Online meeting. Find the link on the library's website.

Nature Walk, Wednesday, Oct. 25, 1–3 p.m.

Career Link, 3rd Wednesdays, 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m.—3rd floor.

Adult Programs at Eastridge (1900 Graham Blvd.)

Crochet Corner, Oct. 14 and 28, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Tea & Inspiration, Oct. 21, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Book Club, Oct. 18, 6:30 p.m.—How to Sell a Haunted House.

Children's Department

Halloween Scavenger Hunt, all October—Search for spooky creatures hiding in the library. Find all to win a special treat.

Escape Bag Challenge, all October, both branches—The evil librarian has locked up the Halloween goodies. Use critical thinking to crack the code and “break into” the bag to claim your prize. Ages 8–18.

Cierra's Activity Tuesdays, 3:30–5:30 p.m., main library—Interactive and creative activities, including STEM, cooking, and art:

Oct. 3: Create Your own Puzzle (kits at Eastridge)

Oct. 10: DIY Trick or Treat Bags (kits at Eastridge)

Oct. 17: Design a Face Mask (kits at Eastridge)

Oct. 24: Green Slime

Oct. 31: Halloween Candy Glove

Around the World Taste Testing, Thursday, Oct. 12, 3:30–5:30 p.m.—Try a variety of delicious and tasty snacks from JAPAN and rate them.

Children's Cinema—Friday Oct. 6, 4 p.m.: Disney's Elemental. Friday Oct. 20, 4 p.m.: Disney's Haunted Mansion.

Ghost Stories, Saturday, Oct. 14, 2 p.m.—Join storyteller Alan Irvine presenting traditional scary stories and a few funny ones for all ages.

Ceramic Painting, Saturday, Oct. 21, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.—Choose a zombie head, pumpkin face, or other ceramic piece to paint and take home.

2nd Annual Halloween Bash, Friday, Oct. 27, 4–6 p.m.—The festivities return with games, food, prizes, and more. Come in your costume and celebrate Halloween with a party!

WILKINSBURG'S BIRTHDAYS, from page 1

homeowners' beautification efforts.

For the October 1962 celebration, a week-long schedule included two parades, a pageant depicting the Borough's history, teen dances, banquet, dog show, and more. From September 30 to October 7, the center of activity was the Wilkinsburg train station, festooned with a huge number '75' and a red, white and blue bunting.

“Pennsy station” hosted registration, receptions and other daily events. A railroading exhibit of both old and modern locomotives was at the freight yards in the 400 block of Penn Avenue, next to Wimco. An old locomotive, painted silver by the long-time train stationmaster, Chick Ake, was labeled “Diamond Jubilee Special” in honor of the 75th anniversary, drawing a lot of people to see the exhibits. The train display was partially on Wimco property. Wimco began in 1915 as Wilkinsburg Iron and Metal Company, a specialty metal fabrication business. This two and a third acre property was recently sold, and is now slated to be an Aldi grocery store.

—Anne Elise Morris



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**FALL FEST
AT THE
THURSDAY
MARKET**

FOOD * FUN * MUSIC

Thursday, October 12th
4:00 - 6:00 OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
HAROLD YOUNG, SR. PARKLET, WILKINSBURG

PRESENTED BY THE GREATER WILKINSBURG
COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT ASSOCIATION

Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce Celebrates 130 Years of Continuous Service

In 1893 seven Wilkinsburg business owners formed the Wilkinsburg Board of Trade, predecessor to the present-day Chamber of Commerce, to support the growth of the business district. Over the years, the Chamber has continued to grow and transform to support the changing needs of our community.

The mission of today's Chamber is to promote the growth, prosperity, and vitality of Wilkinsburg. With more than 55 members, the Chamber provides connections to local and regional community and civic activities and meetings. The Chamber supports and promotes the Wilkinsburg Thursday Open Market, networking events, and the annual Thanksgiving breakfast.

Looking ahead the Chamber will continue to promote positive change and growth through the collaboration of businesses, organizations, residents, and civic leaders; all working together in the best interests of our community and each other.

We will be celebrating the 130th anniversary on November 2 from 6-8 p.m. with an Open House at the Chamber office at 305 South Trenton Avenue. Additional details to be announced soon. Email Wilkinsburg.pa.chamber@gmail.com for information on how you can participate.

Last Day of this Year's Market Is October 12

The Thursday Market is open from 4-6 p.m. at the Harold Young, Sr. Parklet with locally grown produce, local vendors and community connections.

Join us on October 12 for Fall Fest at the Market. In addition to the produce distribution and vendors there will be a food truck, treat bags and spray-on tattoos for the kids, free pumpkins, and live music with Friends of Funk. See you there!

Save the Date!

We are happy to announce that the 59th annual Wilkinsburg Gives Thanks breakfast will be held on Thursday, November 16 from 8:15- 9:30 a.m. on the campus of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf.

More details to come!



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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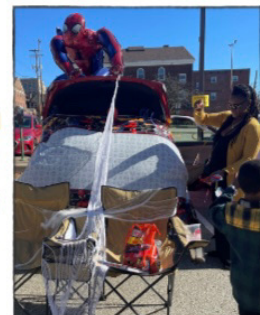
September 9 | 11a to 12p

Walk with the Mayor of
Wilkinsburg and his family!

Park Avenue Playground | 1349 Park Avenue

October 28 | Noon

Trunk or Treat 2023 in collaboration
with Mayor Comans
718 Wallace Avenue



REGISTER: BIT.LY/HBZWR23

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