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# the Wilkinsburg

# SUN

VOL. 17 NO. 4 December 2023/January 2024

A FREE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER BRINGING YOU GOOD NEWS ABOUT WILKINSBURG



Alexander when she was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

## Wilkinsburg Daughter Appointed President of Aviation Hall of Fame

On November 16, former Wilkinsburg resident LeSans Alexander was appointed president of the Delaware Aviation Hall of Fame, the first African-American and first female to be president.

Alexander herself was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2016. A 1981 graduate of Wilkinsburg High School, she explained, "I went into the Air Force two weeks after graduation as an air traffic controller."

She served as an air traffic controller for 34 years and has an impressive list of accomplishments. One important one was her service during 9-11. She was a supervisor at that time.

She said that "the most difficult thing was instructing pilots to land now without giving them a reason."

When pilots stated to argue with her controllers' instructions, she had to overkey her controllers and say, "You all have a choice. Put your aircraft down now

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## WILKINSBURG HOLIDAY EVENTS

### Christmas Decorating Contest

Mayor Dontae Comans has announced a Christmas decoration contest. Decorate your home in the most dazzling way possible, and you could win a fantastic prize!

On Friday, December 22, the top two decorated homes will be selected by three special guest judges. Let your creativity shine, and make Wilkinsburg the merriest place this holiday season!

### Santa's Open House

This year's Santa's Open House will be on Saturday, December 9, from 1-4 p.m. at the Christian Church of Wilkinsburg at 748 Wallace Avenue (across the street from the former senior high school).

Santa's Open House is a family event that features a free photograph with Santa along with free games, toys, books, stuffed animals, food and clothing for children ages 12 and younger. Children must be accompanied by an adult. No reservations required.

Donations of toys are always welcome and need to be delivered to the church by Thursday, December 7 between 3-7 p.m.

### Free Christmas Concert

Organist and composer Michael Kearney will give a free carillon and organ

Christmas concert at St. James Church on Friday, December 15 at 5 p.m.

He will play 15 minutes of music on the carillon, then a 35-minute concert on the organ.

### Christmas Bonanza

Celebrate Christmas with the Wilkinsburg Public Library and the Wilkinsburg Police Department on Saturday, Dec. 16, 1 p.m.-2 p.m.

Get your photo taken with Santa Claus. Hang out to enjoy games, crafts, hot dogs, pizza, and more.

Every family will receive a Holiday Food gift card giveaway. For those who registered, "Family Toy Bags" made from the Christmas Wish List will be available for pick up.

Activities will start during the week before the Bonanza from 3:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m. at the library:

- Monday, Dec. 11—Pin-the-Nose on the Snowman
- Tuesday, Dec. 12—Beaded Snowman Ornament
- Wednesday, Dec. 13—Candy Cane Shuffleboard
- Thursday, Dec. 14—DIY Ornament
- Friday, Dec. 15—Christmas Smell Test



continued on page 2

### Borough Council Update

The last Council Meeting for this year is Wednesday, December 20, 7 p.m. There is a holiday meet 'n greet before the meeting at 5 p.m. Recently elected council representatives will be sworn in for duty in January 2024. Two current Council Members will retire, Denise Edwards and Paige Trice. Ariel Haughton will also not return after 1 term.

Council Members elected in the November election include Linda Atkins (incumbent), Renee Haynes-Johnson, Moses Workman, and NaTisha Washington.

### Leaf Collection Ends Soon

Leaf collection ends on December 18. Only leaves in paper bags will be picked up at the curb on your regular street sweeper day. Leaf bags are available at both libraries, 5 bags for \$1. If your street is not marked for street sweeping, pile bags at the curb and call the Department of Public Works at 412.244.2959.

### Warming Centers Are Available

As the weather gets colder, warming centers are available for residents who may experience insufficient heat or a power outage and need a place to stay warm.



Get details on this year's Santa Open House on page 1.

One warming center is the Homewood Healthy Active Living Community Center, which provides shelter during extreme weather events. The center is located at 7321 Frankstown Road, Pittsburgh 15208. For details and updates call 412.244.4190.

Also, Abiding Missions has a daytime warming center from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. for anyone looking for a place to get out of the cold. It's located at 731 Excelsior St. in Pittsburgh's Allentown neighborhood. Two warm meals will be served each day.

HOLIDAYS, from page 1

### Holiday Cheer Meet-N-Greet

Starting at 5 p.m., all are invited to meet in front of the Holiday Tree in the Borough Building, 605 Ross Ave, first floor before the last Borough council meeting of the year, Wednesday, December 20.

Enjoy small bites and meet neighbors, and friends, and your Borough representatives.



editor@wilkinsburgsun.com

P.O. Box 86064  
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221

Lynne Gordon, Editor

### The Board of Directors

Jason Cohn, President  
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the WCDC and Casey Droege  
Cultural Productions presents  
an art exhibit by local artist:

# JASMINE GREEN

OPENING RECEPTION:  
Sat, Dec 9th,  
12:00-3:00pm

artwork on view  
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## Metro Community Health Center

# A Busy Fall and Winter at the Borough

## Borough Aggressively Pursues Grants

The Borough is wrapping up an aggressive fall grants season, submitting between October 25 and November 30, grant applications totaling just over \$3 million for infrastructure projects, equipment purchases, and economic development.

In late October, the Borough submitted a Gaming and Economic Development Tourist Fund (GEDTF) grant request for \$500,000 for the 2024 Economic Development Road Reconstruction Projects.

If awarded, funds from this grant would be used to mill, pave, and reconstruct the intersection of Hay Street and South Avenue and to reconstruct the block of Hay Street between Penn and Wallace Avenues, replacing the irregular brick/asphalt overlay surface with a reconstructed asphalt surface.

Regular readers of *The Sun* will recall that earlier this year the Borough secured \$581,000 in funding through PennDOT and Pennsylvania Commonwealth Financing Authority multimodal grants for the reconstruction of the brick portion of Hay Street between South and Penn Avenues.

The GEDT grant would enable the borough to reconstruct all of Hay Street between South Avenue and Hay Street, with the current brick surface rebuilt and restored with new brick.

The Wilkesburg Penn-Joint Water Authority will lay new water lines along this portion of Hay in coordination with this project.

In November, the Borough submitted a \$1 million Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for the purpose of milling and paving portions of the Borough's

streets that are most in need of repair.

CDBG grants are funded by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

As such, all grant awards are made based on data collected via income surveys of residences that would benefit from the grant project.

Projects will be awarded if the results of those income surveys meet HUD's criteria.

Finally, on November 30, the Borough submitted four Pennsylvania Local Share Account grants.

### Four More Grants

Final grant scopes were still in development when *The Sun* went to press. The four grants, if awarded, would support much needed projects and purchases.

An equipment purchase grant would fund a new street sweeper. A parks improvement grant would upgrade portions of Hunter Park.

A sidewalk grant would reconstruct sidewalks and curbs adjacent to Borough public property, notably Borough parks, playgrounds, and parking lots.

The fourth grant is a blight remediation and economic development grant that would fund further demolition of blighted properties.

This fourth grant would also provide funds for the Borough to use the County Vacant Property Recovery Program to acquire select adjacent, newly vacant properties in order to make them more viable for private redevelopment.

This approach proved successful on the 1400 block of Hunter Street, where Donald Development is currently raising capital for new residential construction.

## Borough Improves Accessible Parking Ordinances

Borough Council, at the November 15 legislative session, voted to amend Borough ordinances regarding residential accessible parking permits.

The amended ordinance will take effect February 1, 2024. The new ordinance provides needed updates and improvements to the Borough policies in response to needs and concerns raised by residents.

The improvements are in three areas. First, the new ordinance details a process for homeowners who have access to on site and off-street parking, e.g., private driveways or garages, but believe they still have the need for an accessible parking permit.

Second, the new ordinance details notification procedures for informing applicants about the outcome of their application and also details an appeal process for applicants who have been denied a permit.

The third change is a worksheet and criteria for the Borough to apply in managing the inventory of accessible spaces. The worksheet would be used in instances in which a permit application would fundamentally alter the street parking on the applicant's block.

The new ordinance will go into effect February 1. Between now and then, current permit holders will be contacted and asked to resubmit their permit applications.

Permit holders do not need to take any action as of *The Sun's* publication date and until contacted by the Borough.

## Strengthening Our Small Businesses

**Wilkinsburg's**  
**future**  
**starts today**

**WCDC** Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation

Business Resources | Community Initiatives  
Commercial Development | Vacant Property & Housing Resources

wilkinsburgcdc.org

expensive to manage. And in order to keep these programs free for the community, we rely on ongoing support from our dedicated donors and neighbors, like you.

Did you know that a donation of \$35 covers the cost of an entrepreneur's first business training class? This initial step helps set them up for success, ensuring a solid foundation to build their business plan and set realistic, achievable goals.

Please consider making a donation to the WCDC to help support our business training programs and all of the work we do at the WCDC. Together, we can support more entrepreneurs and create a brighter future for Wilkinsburg.

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### *An End of Year Note from Tracey Evans, Executive Director, WCDC*

One of the best things about Wilkinsburg is its small business community. Hundreds of small, mom-and-pop shops operate in Wilkinsburg—some for more than a hundred years!—with dozens more looking to open, move, or expand their businesses in the community.

Almost daily, an entrepreneur stops by the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation (WCDC) office to ask about assistance with their business.

My staff and I help in whatever way we can, whether connecting them with a local lender, providing a rent rebate or facade grant, or simply promoting a sale or service they offer.

Perhaps one of the most significant programs that we offer is a free 8-week business planning workshop, which has supported hundreds of local entrepreneurs since its inception.

While this work has been essential to our community for nearly a decade, the reality is that these programs are

WILKINSBURG CDC & WORKSHOPPGH PRESENT

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FOOD, DRINKS AT BOTH LOCATIONS, WALK BETWEEN BOTH AND EXPLORE

**SUN 12/10, 11-4PM**

Visitors welcome! Free to send if residing or making in Wilkinsburg!

WORKSHOPPGH.COM

By Lydia Richardson—Public Relations Officer for Wilkinsburg School District

## Turner Intermediate Welcomes 30 New School Safety Patrollers

photo by Lydia Richardson



On October 27, Turner Intermediate held its third annual induction ceremony for the AAA Safety Patrol Program during which they welcomed 30 new members.

The Safety Patrol Program, which has been around for a hundred years, is sponsored by AAA with the primary goal to create a safer school environment. With more than 600,000 AAA School Safety Patrollers across the county, Wilkinsburg School District is proud to have 43 to call its own.

Before being inducted into the program, students worked diligently with Lonzo Boyce, the security officer and safety patrol advisor of the school district, to learn about the responsibilities that come with this role.

Sharing their knowledge with peers, safeguarding students from road hazards, and providing assistance to the district's bus drivers and crossing guards are just a few of the responsibilities of patrol members.

While this program is normally for

fourth, fifth and sixth graders, Officer Boyce shared that there are four third-grade patrol members this year.

The ceremony began with some opening remarks made by Principal Kerry McClellan and Officer Boyce. After that, Judge Kim Hoots took the stand to begin each student's induction.

Each student came down one by one, raised their right hand, and proudly recited the Safety Patrol Pledge. They received their certificate and shook hands with Superintendent Dr. Joe Maluchnik, Wilkinsburg school board's Vice President Monica Lee Garcia, Mayor Dontae Comans, Officer William Coffee, AAA representative Tiffany Stanely, Principal McClellan and the district's three crossing guards—Kathy Williams, Wayne Wallace, and Geraldine Baynes.

After the induction, the crowd of administrators, parents, grandparents and community members were invited to stay for a reception with pizza and refreshments.

Everyone who was a part of this year's induction was welcome to sign the Safety Patrol Banner. Many took photos in front of it with their families and friends.

The district is extremely proud of the 43 Safety Patrollers who are committed to ensuring the safety of their classmates when traveling to and from school. Congratulations to those who worked hard to receive this well-deserved achievement!

## Samaritan's Feet's Third Annual Shoe Carnival

Thanks to Samaritan's Feet's third annual Shoe Carnival at Turner Intermediate and Kelly Primary November 8-9, every student received a new pair of sneakers and a drawstring bag, at no cost.

Each class visited the carnival, where students could choose shoes from a variety of colors and styles. Once students found their size, they were excited and eager to change into their new shoes.

The Samaritan's Feet volunteers made sure that no student was left out. Pairs were set aside for those who were absent, and in cases where a specific size wasn't available, they ensured it would be ordered.

Since 2021, dedicated volunteers

Scott Lewis, Lisa Lewis, and Sue Sloan have been coming to help distribute shoes to students. Growing up in Wilkinsburg themselves, they understand the impact of this distribution.

Scott said, "Our mother used to help hand out uniforms. When she passed away four years ago, I wanted to do something to honor her."

This year, Scott, Lisa, and Sue brought along Sue's granddaughter Adalyn. Their commitment to helping distribute shoes in the coming years, coupled with passing on the tradition, ensures this impactful initiative will continue for many years to come.

## School Calendar

### DECEMBER

Mon.–Fri. 11-15, Santa's Workshop

Thurs. 11, Light Up Literacy (Turner)

Thurs. 14, 1:30 p.m., Winter Concert (Kelly)

Thurs. 14, 5-6:30 p.m., Light Up Literacy Night @ Storybook Forests (Kelly)

Wed. 20, 10 a.m., Pre-K Breakfast with Santa

Wed. 20, Choir/Band Winter Concert (Turner)

Thurs. 21, 12:45 p.m., Early Dismissal for Students

Fri. 22–Mon. Jan 1, Winter Break–No School

### JANUARY

Tues. 23, 6th grade to Heinz Hall

## What Is Happening at the Library?

*Connecting Seniors, Thursday, December 7, 10 a.m.–11 a.m.*

*Connecting Seniors, Thursday, January 4, 10 a.m.–11 a.m.*

*Book Club, January 17, 6:30 p.m.—Eastridge branch library. An Unwanted Guest by Shari Lapena*

*Meet With A Social Work Intern Thea Brown, Wednesdays 9 a.m.–12 p.m. Thursdays 10 a.m.–4 p.m., and Saturdays—Meetings are by appointment only. Thea Brown is the social work intern at Wilkinsburg Public Library. She is able to help with, but not limited to: housing, family services, food security, health and mental resources, and education. Set up an appointment with Thea by calling the library at 412.244.2944 or email at brownt1222@gmail.com.*

*Book Fair With Paperpie Wednesday Dec. 6, 3 p.m.–6 p.m., Thursday Dec. 7, 3 p.m.–6 p.m., Friday Dec. 8, 3 p.m.–5 p.m., Saturday Dec. 9, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.—Formerly known as Usborne Books, Paperpie is offering a book fair for kids. 50% of the sales will be donated to the library in free books. To shop ahead and see more items go online to <https://c3679.paperpie.com/2581438>.*

*Christmas Bonanza, Saturday Dec. 16 @ 11 a.m.–2 p.m. —See details, including daily events in the week leading up to the event on page 1.*

*Tween and Teen Corner: DIY Donut Stuffies, Monday Jan. 8, 3 p.m.–6 p.m.—Learn how to sew and stuff your own donut plushie. A fun activity every month for ages 10 and up.*

*Cierra's Activity Tuesday, Tuesdays, 3:30 p.m.–5:30 p.m. Fun, interactive, and creative activities varying from STEM to cooking, and to art for youth.*

*Jan. 2—Tower Building Contest*

*Jan. 9—Mini Volcanoes*

*Jan. 16—Dream Notebooks (kits available @ Eastridge)*

*Jan. 23—Pet Rock Decorations (kits available @ Eastridge)*

*Jan. 30—Duct Tape Bracelets (kits available @ Eastridge)*

ALEXANDER, from page 1

as per my controllers' instructions or be shot down." She said the pilots stopped arguing quickly and landed as instructed.

Another accomplishment of Alexander's is her leadership in training others in such a vital industry. She is responsible for the training of sixty-five U.S. and international controllers, now holding key ATC positions around the world in critical areas including the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, Department of Defense, and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Alexander still talks to her Wilkinsburg childhood friends via social media. She said, "Every time I visit, I drive through Wilkinsburg just for the memories."

About her career, Alexander wants young people to know, "Flying teaches you to seize the moment, to appreciate the beauty of the world from a different perspective."

Wilkinsburg can celebrate this daughter who has accomplished so much for the good of many.

**6 Wilkinsburg Sun | December 2023/January 2024**

# Building Stronger Neighborhoods Together



**G**ot a small business (or an idea for one)?  
Get help with your financing needs. Let us connect you with flexible options for start-up costs, working capital, equipment, vehicles, leasehold improvements and more.



Contact **Danny B. McGlory** to learn more.  
412-342-7018 ext. 107 • [McGlory@ncd-fund.org](mailto:McGlory@ncd-fund.org)



Contact Us

Reach out at [info@ncd-fund.org](mailto:info@ncd-fund.org) • Visit us at [ncd-fund.org](http://ncd-fund.org)

# Shop in Wilkinsburg

Please support Wilkinsburg businesses during the holidays and throughout the year. Shopping locally and supporting small businesses has many benefits:

- Shopping local helps stimulate the local economy.
- Local businesses create jobs for friends and neighbors.
- Local businesses can offer personalized customer care.
- Local businesses add character to the community.
- Local businesses donate to community causes at more than twice the rate of chains.
- Shopping local helps to shape the community's identity.
- Shopping local can help reduce carbon footprints and conserve energy and resources.

*Wishing You and Your Family a Very Happy Holiday!*



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WILKINSBURG RESIDENTS  
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# WILKINSBURG WALKING ROUTE

## 2024 Winter Remix Schedule



**6**  
12:30-2PM  
Line Dancing



**3**  
12:30-2PM  
Heart Health/Wear Red



**2**  
12:30-2PM  
Zumba

**20**  
12:30-2PM  
Line Dancing

**17**  
12:30-2PM  
Heart Health/Wear Red

**16**  
12:30-2PM  
Yoga

### Wilkinsburg Borough Building

605 Ross Avenue  
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221  
(On the Third Floor)

**30**  
12:30-2PM  
Winter Wrap-Up

This program is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$1,122,899 with 85 percentage financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.



*Business Hours:*  
Monday thru Saturday  
11:00am - 9:00pm  
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