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the Wilkinsburg Sun

VOL. 17 NO. 7 April 2024

A FREE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER BRINGING YOU GOOD NEWS ABOUT WILKINSBURG

UpstreamPgh's Work in Wilkinsburg Receives Sustainability Award

The American Society of Civil Engineers Pittsburgh Section recently presented UpstreamPgh and partners with the 2023 Sustainability Award for their work to improve stormwater management in Wilkinsburg's Business District.

The Wilkinsburg Stormwater Resiliency Project Phase I replaced concrete medians in two publicly owned parking lots with green stormwater infrastructure, including rain gardens, tree

pits, and subsurface water storage.

These parking lots, which are located on South Ave and Wallace Ave, will capture an estimated 2 million gallons of water each year once the second phase is complete, mitigating basement flooding, recharging groundwater, and keeping pollution out of waterways. They also restore native habitats with plants, shrubs, and trees.

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Remembering a Community Advocate

Linda Kirkland Law was many things to many people. For over a decade, Linda was the vice president of the *Wilkinsburg Sun*, but that was just one of many hats she wore. Linda was a mother, a daughter, a sister, a chaplain and a friend.



Beyond her work as a *Sun* board member, she served on the board of Pittsburgh Housing Development Association, she was a chaplain with the Wilkinsburg Ministerium and Sanctuary project, and she was a longtime member of the Wilkinsburg Borough Parks and Recreation committee.

These official roles were only part of the work she was always striving to do—the work of connection and healing. Linda always looked for ways to connect people to the things they needed whether it was information, food, counseling or one of many other types of help or resources.

She loved being involved in her community, and she loved helping people.

Linda passed away on February 7, and we at the *Sun* miss her as do the many others who knew and loved her.

From Mayor Dontae Comans

Uniting for a Cleaner Wilkinsburg: Join the Movement

As the vibrant hues of spring begin to bloom in Wilkinsburg, so does the spirit of community unity and cleanliness. I emphasize that it takes a community being together to keep a community clean. With



the arrival of April, we are gearing up for a series of community cleanups, culminating in The Great American Cleanup on April 20, coinciding with Earth Day.

Spring signifies renewal and a fresh start, not only for nature but also for our community. It's a time for us to come together, roll up our sleeves, and work hand in hand to beautify our beloved borough. The Great American Cleanup serves as a focal point for our collective efforts, but I stress that this shouldn't be the sole occasion for community action.

Enter "One Wilkinsburg"—a rallying

continued on page 6

ALDI store coming to Wilkinsburg, p. 7

Calls for Talent that Shows Peace

The Wilkinsburg Sanctuary Project for Peace is hosting their annual Youth Art and Talent Show for Peace on Friday, April 26 at 6 p.m. at the Christian Church of Wilkinsburg at 748 Wallace Avenue.

Youth ages 12-20 who live, go to school, attend an afterschool program, or worship at a church or mosque in Wilkinsburg or Homewood, will receive a \$50 stipend for submitting a piece of art or performing a talent, such as a spoken word, song, dance, etc.

All artwork and performances need to share how to make peace. The show begins with a light supper at 6 p.m. for family and friends.

Pre-registration is required. Registration forms and artwork may be mailed or dropped off before or by Saturday, April 20, from 1-3 p.m. at the Christian Church of Wilkinsburg. For more information and a registration form, please contact Pastor Janet at pastorjanethb@gmail.com.

Wealth Building Tour Comes

100 City Community Impact and Wealth Building Tour by the National Association of Real Estate Brokers will come to Wilkinsburg April 13, 2024, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Hosanna House, 807 Wallace Avenue.

Registration and information is here: <https://narebblackwealthtour.com>

Wilkinsburg, Tree City USA

As a Tree City USA, Wilkinsburg is among thousands of communities across the country that exemplify good stewardship of the urban tree canopy. Our Borough government upholds this designation by supporting the work of the Shade Tree Advisory Committee, maintaining a strong tree ordinance, spending on urban forestry, and by celebrating Arbor Day. Visit www.arborday.org to learn more about what it means to be a Tree City USA.

This month marks our seventh year with Tree City USA status. The Shade Tree Committee will dedicate our annual Arbor Day planting to Jeanne Drennan, the

long-time committee chair and dedicated volunteer.

Are you interested in getting involved with the Wilkinsburg Shade Tree Advisory Committee? Contact wilkinsburgshadetree@gmail.com.

Older & Wiser Wilkinsburg: Seniors Day Returns

After four years since the pandemic halted most indoor gatherings, Older & Wiser Wilkinsburg: Seniors Day is returning, brought to you by the Wilkinsburg Library, Hosanna House, and Age Friendly Greater Pittsburgh.

All adults age 50+ are invited to spend the second Tuesday of each month at the Wilkinsburg Borough Building in the 3rd floor auditorium from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

A committee has been hard at work, organizing some entertaining programming with something for everyone. As before, activities include "light" exercise, crafts and games, an interactive speaker, and everyone's favorite—lunch.

The events are free and open to the public. The first is scheduled for May 14 and will feature a conversation with Mayor Dontae Comans and hopefully some games of bid whist.

For more details and to RSVP, please visit www.wilkinsburg.info. Drop-ins are welcome, but RSVPing will help organizers gauge how much food is needed.

Study of African-American Women

A research study is looking for participation of African American women ages 12, 16, or 19. The study is in regards to reproductive health and involves a telephone interview and an at-home questionnaire. Contact the research coordinator at 412.624.8977.

Freestore Hours

The donation hours for the Freestore in Wilkinsburg are Tuesdays 9:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m. and Wednesdays 10 a.m.–1 p.m.

Shopping hours are Saturdays 10 a.m.–1:45 p.m. No ID or appointment is necessary, and no donations are accepted.

For more information, www.freestorewilkinsburg.org



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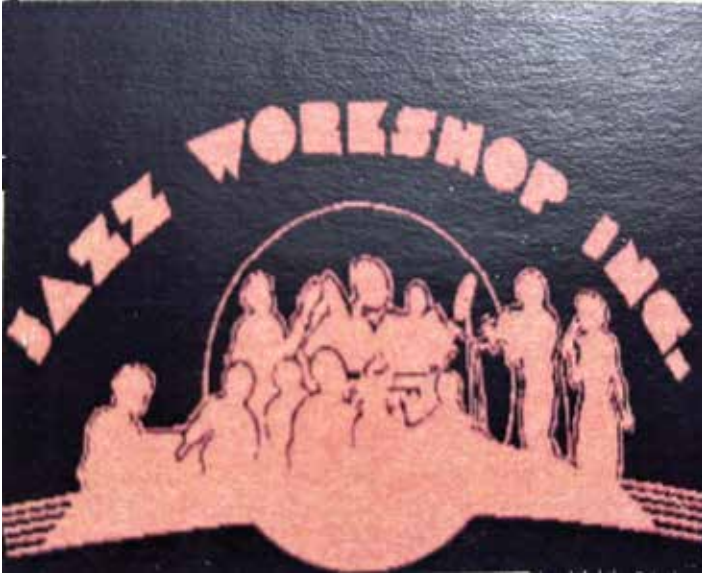
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Jazz Workshop Seeks Rebirth



Dr. Jacqueline I. Young is on a mission to bring the Jazz Workshop, with its education programs and weekly Big Band jams and poetry events, back to Wilkinsburg.

The Jazz Workshop, Inc is a music education and performance-based program. Its inception was in 1973, starting at the Carnegie Library in Homewood and extending its services to Wilkinsburg in the late 1990s. They celebrated their 50-year anniversary last year.

The workshop was created by Young's father, Harold Young Sr., who led the program until his passing in 2014.

He is a legend in Wilkinsburg for his work in teaching and inspiring generations to become musicians. His legacy includes the thriving Arts in the Park program that stages musical performances every summer in the borough parklet that bears his name.

His daughter, Jacqueline Young, took up and extended his legacy, learning music at the Jazz Workshops as a young woman, beginning a lifelong commitment to music, community building, and social services.

During its nearly two decades of operation, the Jazz Workshop, located at 1015 Center Street, allowed generations of students, young and old, to discover

and explore their passions in music and poetry.

When she recently retired from the U.S. Veterans Administration, Young focused her energy on revising both the program and the building that was—and soon will be again—its home.

Formerly housing the Center for Racial Equity, 1015 Center is a three-story building,

with offices and conference space on the ground floor and performing arts studio spaces on the second and third floors for individual, small group, and large group instruction and practice.

For twenty years the workshop at 1015 Center taught generations of Wilkinsburg children how to play musical instruments and write poetry, offering an out-of-school alternative for creativity and personal growth. As Young, Sr., was fond of observing, "Music provides an alternative to the rhythms of the street."

The Jazz Workshop educated a great number of adult students as well, with people at all stages of life discovering or rediscovering new passions and craft. "Even adults have dreams," remarked Borough councilmember and chair of the Special Events, Music, Arts, and Seniors Committee, Linda Atkins, noting that people of all ages can learn an instrument or express themselves through poetry.

The monthly Big Band Jam and Poetry performances were a highlight of the workshop. The studio space has smaller rooms, reserved for instructions in specific instruments like the saxophone or trumpet. Students would learn the same set of songs in hour-long classes and then come together as a group, or Big Band, to

practice together.

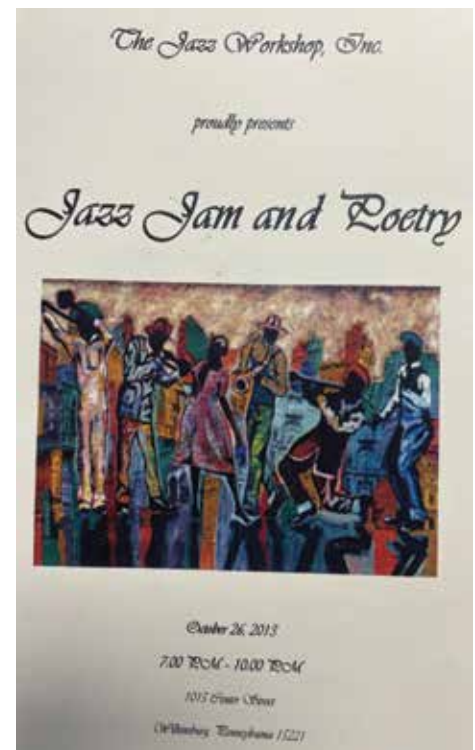
"Every week, I meet people of all ages who ask me, 'When are we going to start the Big Band or music lessons again,'" said Young.

Community music instruction and participation faces twin challenges in recent years. Schools continue to cut or reduce music programs, and many community programs were interrupted by the COVID pandemic and never resumed. Thus, the need for the workshop is greater than ever.

The building at 1015 does require repair. The studio and meeting spaces can be brought back to life relatively easily with new paint and flooring. It needs a new roof and some repairs to the plumbing and electric systems.

To this end, Dr. Young and her associates in the Jazz Workshop are raising money, with a plan to begin restoration work.

Please consideration donating to this vital community program by visiting jazzworkshopinc.org.



Empowering Our Youth: Community, Collaboration, Transformation

In the heart of Wilkinsburg stands Ethnan Temple, a vital hub for community engagement and youth empowerment in the neighborhood. Under the leadership of Pastor Jerome Hurst, Ethnan Temple has become more than just a place of worship, sparking widespread positive change through its dynamic outreach efforts and programs.

Pastor Jerome's vision for Ethnan Temple extends far beyond the confines of traditional religious activities. He envisions a community where every young person has access to resources and opportunities that empower them to thrive. "Our goal is to create a supportive environment where young people can learn, grow, and realize their full potential," says Pastor Jerome.

One of the highlights of Ethnan Temple's new summer programs was the collaboration with local organizations like the Carnegie Science Center and Squonk, a local arts group. Together, they offered a diverse range of activities tailored to children aged 5-12. The program, made possible thanks to the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation's (WCDC) Youth Mini-Grant program, included engaging STEM activities and interactive puppet ministry sessions, providing a unique blend of education and creativity.

Ethnan Temple also started other initiatives aimed at empowering teenagers in the community. One such program was a media camp where teenagers learned valuable skills like video production, photography, and graphic design. Participants received a stipend for their attendance and were encouraged to



become part of the media team at the church, providing them with hands-on experience and economic opportunities.

Another essential aspect of Ethnan Temple's youth empowerment efforts was the Service Camp, a collaborative project with other churches in the Wilkinsburg area. Led by Pastor Janet, the camp focused on community service activities like mural painting, gardening, and neighborhood clean-ups. The Temple's summer program integrated elements of the camp, giving young participants the opportunity to make a tangible difference in their community while earning a stipend for their efforts.

Looking ahead, Pastor Jerome envisions expanding the summer programs to include additional skills training opportunities, such as nail technician or hairstyling courses. He emphasizes the importance of teaching young people to become entrepreneurs and fostering a business mindset, equipping them with the tools to create their own opportunities.

However, Pastor Jerome acknowledges the challenges inherent in working with vulnerable young people, many of whom have faced disappointment and mistrust in the past. Building trust and sustaining long-term engagement are critical aspects of Ethnan Temple's approach to youth empowerment. "We understand that trust is earned, not given," said Pastor Jerome.

"That's why we're committed to being consistent and reliable in our support for these young people."

Despite the challenges, Ethnan Temple remains steadfast in its commitment to empowering Wilkinsburg youth. Through innovative programs and collaborative partnerships, Ethnan Temple is paving the way for a brighter future, one young person at a time.

As Pastor Jerome reflects on the impact of Ethnan Temple's youth initiatives, he is filled with hope and optimism for the future. "Our goal is to nurture a sense of empowerment and watch them grow into flourishing young leaders," he says. "Together, we can create a community where every young person feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed."

To learn more information about the Ethnan Temple, visit etemple7day.org. To apply for a 2024 WCDC Youth Mini-Grant, visit wilkinsburgcdc.org or contact the WCDC directly at 412.727.7855, or info@wilkinsburgcdc.org. All submissions must be received by Friday, May 4, 2024.

SUPPORT THE WCDC

- Mail a check: 729 Wood St., Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
- Donate online: wilkinsburgcdc.org/donate
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- info@wilkinsburgcdc.org

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By Lydia Richardson—Public Relations Officer for Wilkinsburg School District

District Students Read with Reading Champions

photo by Lydia Richardson



Left: Mayor Comans reads to students.

Below: Iceburgh visits third graders.

The Wilkinsburg School District has been making great strides in supporting their students with reading.

Turner Intermediate's 3rd-grade students participated in the Reading Champions program. This eight-week program, created in partnership with the Penguins Foundation and U.S. Steel,

works to increase literacy rates and foster a love of reading among youth.

As part of the program, students learn about hockey and are encouraged to read for at least 20 minutes every day. Turner's 3rd-grade students surpassed their goal, reading a collective total of 58,000 minutes over the course of eight weeks!

To congratulate the students for their hard work and dedication, they received a special visit from Iceburgh, the Pittsburgh Penguins' mascot! Iceburgh visited each classroom and gifted the students with prizes. Mrs. Sciuillo's class, which read the most, received an extra reward: free tickets to a Pittsburgh Penguins game!

However, the reading celebrations didn't stop there—Turner Intermediate and Kelly Primary kicked off the month of March

with their Read Across America Day celebrations. Each school had the pleasure of hosting guest readers from around the community.

Mayor Comans, Judge Hoots, and School Board President Amanda Barber were just some of the familiar people from the community who came and read to the students. The Wilkinsburg School District extends a heartfelt thanks to all those who generously volunteered their time to read.

Turner Intermediate's Spring Musical

Don't miss Turner Intermediate's production of Disney's Frozen Kids. Three performances of the show will take place at Turner Intermediate on Friday, May 3 at 6:30 p.m. and Saturday, May 4, at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

After the shows at Turner, Wilkinsburg students will showcase their talent at the Byham Theater Student Share Event on May 23, alongside the other grant-receiving schools.

All ticketing information will be available on our website once it becomes available.

School Calendar

APRIL

Mon. 2, Half clerical, half inservice day for staff

Wed. 3, Students return from break

Mon.–Fri. 22-26, Testing window for ELA

Mon. 29–Fri., May 3, Testing window for math and science

MAY

Mon.–Fri. 6-10, PSSA make ups

Tues. 14, 1:30-3:30 p.m., Kindergarten registration event at Kelly Primary

Thurs. 16, Remake Learning

Wed. 29, Field Day

Fri. 31, 6th grade promotion



Once Upon a Time: How the Wilkinsburg Library Grew



The library is turning 125 this year. In all that time it has only had 5 locations and added one branch on Graham Boulevard known as Eastridge in 2003.

When the library first opened as a branch in 1899 by Fred Evans it was in the McNair School. The library moved to

the old YMCA building on Ross Avenue in 1901. In 1903, it moved to the Colonial Building. After five years there, it moved to the Royal Building on Pennwood Avenue.

In 1939, the library moved to the municipal building where it currently is. Evans continued to be the Librarian of the library for 43 years. He started out with one room and only himself as staff.

In 1900, a second room was added and an assistant, Enid Woolsey, was hired. The library hours were from 1-5 pm and from 6-9 pm. By 1937, there were four librarians and four part-time assistants.

In 1899, the collection consisted

of 1,500 books and by 1927 it had grown to 29,000 volumes. In 1936, the library circulated 124,643 books.

We will be continuing the story of the library each month until its 125th anniversary in September when the library will be putting the history together for everyone at a big celebration for the community.

Stay tuned for more!

April at the Wilkinsburg Library

Main Library Adult Program

Movie Matinee, Tuesday, April 2, 2 p.m.—*The Iron Claw*.

Children's Library

• Ceramic Painting

Saturday April 6, 10 a.m.—4 p.m.—Choose any of their available ceramic pieces to paint and take home.

• Storybook Corner

Saturday, April 27, 11 a.m.—Each month will focus on one book for a storytime with book giveaways, story sharing, crafts, and fun activities. This month is *Golden Luck and The Three Pandas*.

Eastridge Programs

Eastridge Book Club, Wednesday April 17, 6:30 p.m.—*Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Selby Van Pelt. Check website for location.

Tea & Inspiration—On pause. Will resume May 18.

Saturday Crochet at Eastridge, April 13 and 27 at 11 a.m.—1 p.m.—Will take place at main library (3rd floor) while Eastridge renovation is under way.

UNITING, from page 1

cry for unity and collaboration. This initiative calls upon every resident, business owner, and stakeholder to join forces in realizing the full potential of our borough. As we embrace the arrival of spring, let us also embrace the opportunity to come together as one community, united in our commitment to a cleaner, greener Wilkinsburg.

Mark your calendars for The Great American Cleanup on April 20, and stay tuned for sign-up opportunities for upcoming events. Together, let's make Wilkinsburg shine brighter than ever.

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Thanksgiving Speaker Present Penn Avenue Development, including New Aldi Store

Albert Lardo was the guest speaker for the Chamber's 59th annual Thanksgiving Breakfast held on November 16 at Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. Lardo is the managing member of Ellsworth Equities.

At the breakfast Lardo presented his company's plan for the Wimco property at 401 Penn Avenue across from McDonalds and GetGo. It is planned that an Aldi grocery store is to be built on that site.

Recently, Ellsworth Equities was awarded a \$1.55 million Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grant from the Pennsylvania Department Community and Economic Development in September permitting the firm to move ahead on the project.

Groundbreaking is expected sometime soon with demolition to follow. An opening of the Aldi store is scheduled for the first half of 2025.

The Wilkinsburg store will be the second Aldi store in the East End of Pittsburgh with the first being on Penn Avenue in Garfield. Lardo, who has family roots in Wilkinsburg, said that the total investment in the project is to be \$3.1 million.

His company most recently developed the old Rockwell Manufacturing Company facility in neighboring Point Breeze. Rockwell Park is a 24-acre mixed-use development that is bordered by the PRT Busway, North Braddock Avenue, Meade Street and North Lexington Avenue in Pittsburgh.



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UPSTREAM, from page 1

“Flooding is an environmental justice issue in Wilkesburg. It can cause property damage, basement backups, and even health issues from things like moldy basements,” Mike Hiller, UpstreamPgh’s executive director, said. “This area ranked high in our Environmental Equity Study for several factors, including social inequities, environmental vulnerabilities, and the urban heat island effect from surfaces like concrete and asphalt. These rain gardens will help contribute to a healthier and more climate resilient neighborhood.”

The Wilkesburg Stormwater Resiliency Project will also positively impact the health of Nine Mile Run, a historically polluted stream. These parking lots are two of the largest impervious surfaces within the Nine Mile Run Watershed. Every time it rains, stormwater runs off the lots carrying trash, road salt, and other pollutants, which can flow into Nine Mile Run and eventually the

Monongahela River.

UpstreamPgh recently received \$390,000 from the DEP’s Growing Greener Plus program for the second phase of the Wilkesburg Stormwater Resiliency Project, which includes installing green stormwater infrastructure on the rest of the South Ave parking lot.

These gardens are maintained by UpstreamPgh staff alongside volunteers. Anyone interested in helping to manage this site and other rain gardens in the area can visit www.upstreampgh.org to learn more. No prior gardening experience is required, just a willingness to help!

The Sustainability Award recognizes innovative engineering projects demonstrating economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The American Society of Engineers presented the award to UpstreamPgh staff alongside

representatives from Sci-Tek, C&R Landscape Development, the Wilkesburg Borough, and Cronin Enterprises at a banquet last month. UpstreamPgh also thanks Duquesne Light, the Pennsylvania



Department of Environmental Protection, the Commonwealth Financing Authority of Pennsylvania, The Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, The Colcom Foundation, Hard Rock Paving & Sealcoating, and Pittsburgh Regional Transit for their support.

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