



FRIENDLY FIGHT

Montrose Park residents mostly kept to themselves, until they united for a common cause.

BY M. DIANE MCCORMICK



Ray Davis



Jeb Stuart

On a crisp autumn afternoon, mums brighten the charming homes of Montrose Street.

Two girls step off the school bus and head home. Pickup trucks halt respectfully at the four-way stop signs. An elderly homeowner leans on a rake, chatting with the mailman.

Welcome to another idyllic day in Montrose Park. One of Harrisburg’s original suburbs has long been a haven of serenity, but now, residents say, their unified opposition to a proposed development has refreshed their sense of community. The disputed project’s outcome remains in doubt, but all agree that they are forging new friendships and neighborly ties.

“I’m starting to meet people who I didn’t know where they lived, and now I do,” said long-time resident Jeb Stuart. “I’ve been to their homes. I’ve had them to mine. It’s been a really cool thing, where the neighborhood has come together around the banner of Montrose Park as an identity.”

“It’s a perfect case of ‘adversity brings a community together,’ because that’s what has happened,” agreed resident Ray Davis. “There’s good that has come out of all of this.”

THE ALARM SOUNDS

The last of the pre-Great Depression mansions of Harrisburg line the Susquehanna Township portion of N. Front Street. Today, many are offices. Behind this grand façade are the leafy, pre- and post-war blocks of Montrose Park, just over the city line.

The Susquehanna Township neighborhood was born when the Herre brothers, local contractors, sold lots and built homes for their workers. The development lacked the then-common restrictions barring Jews. So, when the Jewish Community Center moved from Midtown Harrisburg to Montrose Park in the 1950s, many Jewish families followed.

Montrose Street forms the spine of the neighborhood. A narrow, vacant, star-crossed lot occupies the Front Street end and juts into the residential area. Like a toothless smile, this lot stands out for what was lost—a substantial home built in the 1920s and demolished in 2014.

In spring 2021, lot owner Riveroaks Associates and developer Linlo Properties proposed developing the site as a medical office building, including a dialysis center. Riveroaks and Linlo sued neighboring property owners on Front Street for relief from decades-old deed restrictions.

Linlo Properties partner Lowell Gates defended the use of the site for dialysis—easily accessible and only minimally impactful on traffic, he told TheBurg—and said he revised the building’s design to suit Front Street’s historic vibe.

In the residential blocks, however, neighbors sounded the alarm. Traffic, parking, flooding, medical waste were all cited as concerns. They perceived a mismatch with “Sustainable Susquehanna 2030,” the township’s comprehensive plan.

On Aug. 27, the Susquehanna Township Board of Commissioners unanimously rejected requested waivers and the entire proposal. Riveroaks has appealed, so the proposal remains in play.

Residents at Montrose Park community block party.



BANDED TOGETHER

The yard signs were unlike anything ever seen in these sedate parts, spiked along curbs like hobnails on a boot:

“They said nobody walks here.”

“Don’t sue your neighbors.”

“Save Montrose Park.”

Then there was the change.org petition and the resident appearances at township meetings. A new Facebook group, Friends of Montrose Park, rallied neighbors with updates.

By August, in the midst of the fight, new-ish resident Debbie Tramontin and other movement leaders had a stress-relieving idea. Why not hold a block party? Close Montrose Street. Set up tables. Haul out the grills. The morning of the event, neighbors “were popping in and out of my driveway saying, ‘Do you need tables? We have more chairs,’” said Tramontin. “Someone pulled up and brought a tent.”

Lifetime Montrose Park-er Tim Patterson joined the gathering just by stepping out of the Cape Cod home designed and built by his father in 1937. As the party ended, he told Tramontin, “This is the first time I ever sat in the middle of Montrose Street and had lunch.”

“I said it half-jokingly,” he said now, “but it’s true.”

Whether longtime homeowners or new, residents agree: Montrose Park has grown closer—a change from the neighborhood where “other than the guy next door or the family across the street, you really didn’t know your neighbors,” said 20-year resident Linda Loudon.

At the block party, Loudon met an elderly neighbor looking for a walking partner. They now walk the streets of Montrose Park as they “jibber-jabber about everything,” she said. They swap recipes and talk about grandchildren. When Loudon was getting estimates for a new roof, they critiqued roofs of the houses they passed.

“She’s a very sweet, adorable 84-year-old, and she’s in pretty darn good shape,” said Loudon. “I made a new friend, and she’s getting more walking done. It was really great, and it all came from our little block party.”

Eclectic and diverse in people and architecture. That’s what 35-year resident Sam Levine loves about Montrose Park. He and his wife moved there from Midtown because they needed more room without losing that city feel.

Residents have long known their neighborhood is unique, but the dialysis center controversy “made people realize we’re taking something for granted,” Levine said. “Everyone kind of banded together with the cause that they wanted to preserve the special-neighborhood feeling we have.”

If you’re a developer hoping to avoid organized opposition, you might want to steer clear of professional neighborhoods in state government towns. Montrose Park contains an office park’s worth of expertise: engineers, planners, attorneys. There are health care administrators, communications pros, historians, security consultants.

“We’ve begun to feel we have this body of knowledge at our fingertips,” said Tramontin. “If you have a question about almost anything, I can probably give you the name of a person in our neighborhood who has knowledge around it.”

Davis noticed the Montrose Park brain trust when residents spoke at township meetings.

“There is a tremendous amount of really knowledgeable people—knowledgeable about different things,” he said. “We have somebody who is an expert in stormwater management. We have someone who’s an expert in the medical aspects of what they were trying to do. There’s someone knowledgeable about engineering and flooding.”

Then he added perhaps the most important part.

“I never knew that,” he said. “I didn’t know a lot of these people.”

WE’RE ALL NEIGHBORS

Today, the yard signs remain.

Although the fight is now in the courts, Friends of Montrose Park plans vigilance, said Tramontin. Residents might take turns attending Susquehanna Township meetings, prepared to issue alerts about the proposed development and anything else affecting the livability of Montrose Park and beyond, such as sidewalks that take people to work, school and worship.

“We want to be listening not just for our neighborhood but all over the township,” Tramontin said. “Not everybody is going to have time to go to meetings, but when they know what’s happening, they do really care and want to be a part of it.”

When Montrose Park residents talk about their neighborhood controversy, the term “silver lining” comes up.

“Once a neighborhood comes together, it has a brand and a commonality to it,” said Stuart, who lives in the Front Street home built by his grandfather in 1927. “This is kind of a watershed event, and, hopefully, we will coalesce and bond together in the future—not just because of controversial projects but just because we’re all neighbors.”

Even conversations among the daily dog walkers are different, Davis said.

“You know people well enough, so you have some common ground to talk about things other than the weather,” he said.

The first block party set the stage for a new sense of community, and there are probably more to come, said Tramontin.

“We didn’t talk much about what was going on,” she said. “We just had fun. We decided that whatever was going to happen with respect to (the development), we are going to work hard to keep our neighborhood wonderful and keep people together as a community and have fun no matter what.” **E**



This picture of sisters Jenny and Zelda Irene Harshbarger inspired a citywide hunt for a missing elk statue.

A STATUE STORY

After stumbling on an old family photo, a Harrisburg woman goes on the hunt for a missing elk.

BY M. DIANE MCCORMICK

“We’re driving down some side streets, and I see it in a junkyard.”

Yes, a majestic statue of an elk would stand out. Crystal Skotedis thought her search for a forgotten piece of Harrisburg history—ostensibly what this story is about—had hit a dead end. Suddenly, there it was, as if the call of the elk had lured her to this spot.

Where to start? With the well-traveled statue, or with Skotedis’ sleuthing that led to new connections in family and Harrisburg history? Let’s begin with Skotedis.

THE PHOTO

Visiting her grandmother in North Carolina, Crystal Skotedis was poring through family photo albums. A sepia picture of her great-grandmother and an unknown woman sitting on a bronze elk seemed jarringly whimsical.

“These people were from Lewistown,” Skotedis told me. “They never, ever traveled. They were farmers. For her to go to a destination and climb on top of a bronze statue, it was kind of surprising.”

She turned over the photo. “Harrisburg, Penna,” it said.

“What are the chances of that?” Skotedis marveled. “That’s where I live, and I have never seen this elk in my life.”

So many questions. Who was that other woman? Why had Skotedis never seen this elk? Where was it now?

An internet search revealed a PennLive story on Harrisburg’s monuments, and there it was—an elk erected in Reservoir Park by Elks Lodge #12, Harrisburg, PA.

AN ELK RISES

In 1896 and 1897, Harrisburg attorney Meade D. Detweiler served as Grand Exalted Ruler of Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the USA for an unheard-of two terms. In that age of joining, he was renowned for his oratory and as the only person with “nerve sufficient,” in the words of one newspaper, to mediate disputes among warring Elks factions.

After the national Elks disbanded Harrisburg’s first Elks lodge, Detweiler recruited leading lights for a new lodge and, with his national clout, fought off other lodges for a coveted low number that had become available. In June 1904, just as national officers were arriving in Harrisburg to celebrate initiation of B.P.O. Elks Lodge #12, Detweiler fell ill and died, age around 38.

In October 1906, Reservoir Park resounded with speeches, poetry and music. Hundreds gathered for a ceremony dedicating Lodge 12’s Detweiler memorial, a \$10,000 edifice of towering column, Detweiler bust and statue of an elk.

The work would “forever stand as an emblem to those beautiful, ennobling, uplifting, humanitarian principles of your order: Charity, justice, fidelity and brotherly love,” said Charles A. Disbrow, then-president of the city parks board. “In accepting the care of this handsome monument, which you have so generously presented to the city as an adornment of this park, the Park Commission promises you to cherish and preserve it in its present artistic beauty.”

By “forever,” Disbrow apparently meant about six decades. Someone broke off a tip of the horns that, in Elks lore, represent the spreading antlers of protection. Around 1966, Lodge #12 moved the statue—first, to its lodge in downtown Harrisburg, and then to guard its new lodge on Woodlawn Street, near the city line with Paxtang borough.

In those intervening generations, the statue became a destination. Locals and visitors would trek to Reservoir Park and hoist themselves on the back of the elk. Someone would pull out a Kodak Brownie and snap a pic.

Dauphin County Historical Society archivist Ken Frew helped Skotedis unearth the statue’s history.

“I’m pretty sure I have a photograph of me sitting on it or beside it when I was little,” he said. “It was a favorite spot for parents to take their children to get their picture taken.”

THE GREAT FIND

Jenny. That was the other woman on the elk, the sister of Skotedis’ great-grandmother. Skotedis learned this when her grandmother suggested that she connect with the daughter of her great-great-grandfather’s brother—still in Lewistown and a keeper of “generations of old family photo books.”

“She let me borrow her life’s work to take home and enjoy,” Skotedis said. “At this point, I’m anxious to see if I can find this statue. Maybe I can sit on it and re-create the photo.”

Skotedis dragged her husband to the Elks lodge, but the building recently had been sold. Her next thought—drive to Reservoir Park and take a photo at the statue’s pedestal, standing in the footsteps

of her great-grandmother, named Zelda Irene Harshbarger.

That was when they passed that scrapyard. The gate was open. No one answered at the office. Skotedis hopped on the elk, her husband snapped a photo, and they darted away.

Worried that this “relic of the history of Harrisburg” would be melted down, Skotedis contacted Elks Lodge #12 and got a return call from Exalted Ruler Robert “Bullit” Martindill.

“He was wonderful,” she said. “He was as robust an Elk as you’d want someone to be.”

Sigh of relief there. The elk will not be melted down. The scrapyard belongs to a lodge member who accepted the statue for safekeeping after the Woodlawn Street building sold. It might even move temporarily to West Shore Lodge #2257 until Lodge #12 finds its new home.

Lodge #12 is devoted to community service, sponsoring youth events, supporting veterans and presenting drug awareness programs, said Martindill.

“That elk shows that we’re there for the community, and we’re here to spread goodwill and do what we can to help out,” said Martindill. “That’s why it’s important to keep the elk intact and have it displayed in front of our Elks building or any Elks building at this time.”

CITY BEAUTIFYING

So, they erected a monument in 1906. What else was going on in Harrisburg back then?

Oh, just construction of a water treatment system to eradicate the scourge of typhoid. And the paving of impassable dirt streets. And creation of a parks system that sparkles to this day. And the dedication of a grandiose state Capitol building.

Embracing the City Beautiful movement, Harrisburg was transforming from a swampy, disease-ridden backwater to a capital city.

“Statuary was a big part of it,” said Frew. “I’m sure that the Elks monument was part and parcel of that movement.”

With a career in public accounting, Skotedis is a principal with Boyer and Ritter LLC and a Harrisburg resident since 2003. She feels “appreciation and gratitude” for those City Beautiful pioneers and, following in their footsteps, serves on the Capital Region Water board.

“You can kind of transport yourself into that timeline and get energized by the passion of those people who were establishing a community,” she said.

Skotedis texted relatives with the play-by-play of her elk hunt, including the discoveries in their own heritage. There was the ninth great-grandfather who was the first Amish bishop to settle in Pennsylvania. An uncle helped test the first space shuttle and joined investigations into the Apollo I fire.

Mostly, Skotedis gifted her beloved grandmother, Doris Reed, with stories that brought young Zelda to life. As a businesswoman with a positive spirit, Reed was “my living, breathing example of a woman in business who was really assertive and really empowered,” Skotedis said. “I know 1,000% that’s one of the reasons I knew I could go into public accounting in a still very male-dominated field.”



Crystal Skotedis & grandmother, Doris Reed



Crystal Skotedis atop the elk at the scrapyard.

Martindill, of Hummelstown, is a retired police officer still living with injuries sustained while rescuing inhabitants from a burning house that exploded around him. While other civic organizations bleed membership, he is busy initiating new members eager to serve.

“The young people mingle with the older crowd, and they’re respectful and they learn things,” he said. “In order to go forward in life, you need to understand what all us old farts have gone through to give you some direction.”

Skotedis sees that commitment to service in her search. She met people passionate about the community. She uncovered a quirk of Harrisburg history that draws others into its orbit. She found a statue and, she hopes, will follow its journey, wherever it leads.

All from a sepia photo marked “Harrisburg, Penna.”

“If you peel back a couple of layers, you’re not that far unrelated from people who walk down the street,” said Skotedis. “Holy cats. The elk really unified our family in a whole new way.” **B**

For more information on Harrisburg Elks Lodge #12, visit <http://bpoe12hbg.wixsite.com/website> or their Facebook page.



Steve Rudolph. Photos courtesy of Central PA Friends of Jazz.

OH, JAZZMAN

*Over four decades ago,
pianist Steve Rudolph
dropped into Harrisburg.
Since then, he's played
countless dates and
made countless friends.*

BY M. DIANE MCCORMICK

"This'll say a lot about Steve."

Andy Herring is sharing a story about Steve Rudolph. The pianist had retired as executive director of Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz in October 2019. The group's board had an idea for a fundraiser in Rudolph's honor. Why not give Rudolph a chance to play with all the greats he'd always dreamed of playing with?

Rudolph had "kind of a different idea"—a reunion concert of colleagues across the decades.

"That says something about Steve," Herring repeated. "His career is built on friendships."

The Sept. 26 "This One's for You!" concert presents three bands representing three eras in the career of Rudolph, whose ubiquity in public conceals a behind-the-scenes presence that strengthened and solidified the central Pennsylvania music scene.

JAZZ ALIVE

Rudolph's story in Harrisburg begins with that standard, "Danny Boy." And money laundering.

Short version: The Indianapolis native was touring with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra in 1978, grabbing practice time on every beat-up hotel piano he could find. At the Holiday Inn Town, now the Crowne Plaza Harrisburg, he was playing "not a fine instrument" in a hallway near the kitchen. A passerby asked to sing along (hence, "Danny Boy"). The man said he was the new manager, in search of a house jazz band.

"Riding around in an iron-lung bus 2,500 miles a week and playing seven nights for a little over a year had gotten very old," Rudolph said. "I sat down with him and convinced him to hire my trio with guest artists."

Unintentionally, Rudolph had walked into "some sort of organized crime situation." There were benefits. Laundering ill-gotten gains meant generating lots of actual cash, so Rudolph gained fame and name recognition from the constant advertising meant to drum up crowds.

How quickly did he get an inkling?

"In about three days," he said. "They treated me very well. They made me entertainment director for

the three hotels they had. They gave me a room and a car and did my laundry”—the type that literally goes in the washing machine—“so what did I care?”

In those days, the Harrisburg area had few jazz clubs but many fine musicians and, as Rudolph became established, a constant stream of guest artists. When the Holiday Inn Town gig ended in 1980, Rudolph banded with Jack Snively, Lee Swartz and Russ Neff to found Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz, stoking a base of fans eager to keep live jazz alive.

Rudolph would find two other steady gigs, first at the Lucky 7 in Harrisburg, and then on staff at Hilton Harrisburg for 22 years. Through it all, he was working behind the scenes, as a Friends of Jazz board member and volunteer.

BEST ADVICE

Rudolph first became a businessperson “out of desperation.”

It was in Indianapolis, where a thriving jazz scene of legendary talents—Wes Montgomery was born and died there, for cripes sake—bred fierce competition for gigs. Rudolph learned to create work simply by walking into clubs and convincing the owners that they needed music. His rule for getting gigs?

“Count the chairs, and then imagine how many dollars per chair the guy will pay before he doesn’t like jazz anymore,” he said.

Rudolph carried those skills to Harrisburg, bringing jazz to a long list of clubs.

“It wasn’t hard to do because I had a following,” he said. “As soon as we played in a place, they suddenly got an influx of new customers.”

In 2012, Friends of Jazz was adrift, and Rudolph stepped in as executive director, while still playing gigs. Today, Herring calls Rudolph “the founder that every executive director wishes they could succeed”—supportive, available to answer questions, but never controlling.

Once, advising Herring on the balancing act of filling spaces with quality acts while keeping audiences and venues happy, Rudolph offered “one of the best pieces of advice ever.”

“When you think, ‘I want to tell so-and-so what I’m really thinking,’ that only helps you, and actually, it doesn’t even help you,” Rudolph told Herring. As Herring interpreted it, “It’ll make you feel good right away, but don’t burn the bridge.”

“Steve is a minister of tact,” Herring said.

GOOD MAN

Musician Dred “Perky” Scott has been a Rudolph friend and colleague for more than 40 years. They met when Scott, impressed by Rudolph’s trio at the Holiday Inn Town, asked to sing along. The tune that came to mind was “Bye, Bye Blackbird.”

“We immediately had a musical connection,” said Scott. “It was instantaneous.”

The pair has “grown together tremendously” over their 40 years through “the ups and the downs and the ins and the outs,” Scott said. “He hears what I hear before I say it, and I hear what he plays before he plays it. It’s unique and treasured.”



Scott added that Rudolph “has been able to accomplish what he’s done because he’s white, but that does not in any way dilute the importance of what he did.” Rudolph agrees.

“Absolutely,” he said. “Let’s face it. It is not a balanced street. Most all of my heroes and many, many of my friends are of African American descent. The contributions they made to the way I play and the way I am as a person are boundless. I owe a debt, of course, to the founders of this music.”

And, he adds, the “whole historical concept of the music” is steeped in African and African American traditions and culture.

“Without knowing the concepts of the blues and of African traditional music, I don’t think you’re much of a jazz player,” he said.

Rudolph’s relationship-building prowess has helped make possible the full retinue of Friends of Jazz events, in part by attracting donors, said Herring.

“When Steve talks about something that’s going on, people immediately listen,” he said.

Today, Rudolph spends his time composing, arranging and—as venues reopen—playing. He and his wife of 25 years, Andrea Minick Rudolph, executive director of Oryoki Zendo meditation center, host an annual trip of music and mindfulness to Italy’s Borgo San Fedele, JazZenjourney.

“She’s been the ultimate support,” Rudolph said. “She really makes the bad days better. During the pandemic was probably the most wonderful time. Suddenly, I wasn’t working six nights a week,

and we could see each other and maybe watch a television show together.”

Scott is among the musicians lined up for the Rudolph tribute.

“It’s a well-deserved honor because of his activism,” Scott said.

Throughout the region, Rudolph has created an unprecedented, jazz-nurturing collective of venues, “and to his credit, he never slid over to what they call ‘smooth jazz.’”

“He’s a good man,” Scott said. “He’s a righteous man who does his very best in everything he does and has been a friend to musicians in this area.”

Rudolph knows that landing in Harrisburg “was totally a fluke.” As for his legacy, the most rewarding thing “has been seeing the young players who grew up inspired by what I was doing or at least involved in what I was doing who went on to become amazing musicians and teachers.”

“The whole purpose of my involvement in this music is to keep it alive and hopefully encourage people to try to improve it and add their personality to the music,” he said. “Jazz sounds different from one player to another. It really is the ultimate self-expression.”

Oh, and please, go hear live music. 🎷

“This One’s for You! For All You’ve Done, For All You Do,” Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz tribute to Steve Rudolph, takes place Sept. 26 at 4:30 p.m. at Whitaker Center, Harrisburg. For tickets, visit FriendsOfJazz.org/Rudolph. Presenting sponsor: The Foundation for Enhancing Communities.



HARRISBURG & HARLEM

Programs spotlight three local women hailed as Harlem Renaissance poets.

BY M. DIANE MCCORMICK

*I pledge allegiance to the flag—
They dragged him naked
Through the muddy streets,
A feeble-minded black boy!*

—“Flag Salute”
by Esther Popel

*This pretty futile seam,
It stifles me—God, must I sit and sew?*

—“I Sit and Sew”
by Alice Dunbar-Nelson

*Oh, little brown girl, born for sorrow’s mate,
Keep all you have of queenliness,
Forgetting that you once were slave,
And let your full lips laugh at Fate!*

—“To a Dark Girl”
by Gwendolyn Bennett

Esther Popel, Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Gwendolyn Bennett were three major voices of the Harlem Renaissance—lost to time, in part, because those voices belonged to women.

All three poets had ties to Harrisburg. Now, 100 years later, Harrisburg artists, civic leaders and historians are educating a new generation of students who find inspiration in their stories.

In an age rededicated to equity, lessons about the artists of the Harlem Renaissance confirm the imperative of paths to opportunity and promise.

“With learning about yourself, about your culture, you are definitely able to propel your community and become your full self, knowing who you are and

being comfortable in your skin, being an African American,” said Courtney Brown, president of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Epsilon Sigma Omega Chapter, Harrisburg, which is educating students about the Harlem Renaissance and the three poets. “This allows for that, to say you have forefathers who have been in poetry, art and dance, and you’re able to continue on that legacy and be glad in it.”

ALICE, ESTHER, GWENDOLYN

Harrisburg. Harlem Renaissance. Safe to say, the two are rarely linked. Until now.

The Harlem Renaissance was the flowering of African American culture in the 1920s and ‘30s. The likes of Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Marcus Garvey and Josephine Baker flourished amid a literary, musical, activist and intellectual environment devoted to creativity, free expression and Black empowerment.

In the years before the Harlem Renaissance, Harrisburg had its thriving 8th Ward, where African Americans joined a diverse mix of cultures and faiths to build homes, businesses and places of worship. By the 1920s, it was gone, demolished to make way for the expansion of the state Capitol grounds.

On the Capitol grounds, the Commonwealth Monument now commemorates the civic and economic vitality of the Old 8th. Among 100 names listed of the residents who gave the 8th Ward a place in history, three are poets whose voices battled injustice.

Alice Dunbar-Nelson (1875-1935): Author, poet, playwright, publisher, peace activist. Indefatigable suffragist whose 1915 speaking tour across Pennsylvania—including an audience of 1,000 at Harrisburg’s Wesley Union AME Zion Church—challenged men, in the words of one headline, “to Present Real Argument Why Women Should Not Vote.” Her poem, “I Sit and Sew,” seethes against an African American nurse’s only pathway to contributing to the World War I effort while men died “in that holocaust of hell, those fields of woe.”

Harrisburg tie: The marriage to her first husband, poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, fell apart amid his abuse and alcoholism. After his death in 1906, she married prominent Harrisburg publisher Robert Nelson and split her time between Harrisburg and Wilmington, Del.

Esther Popel (1896-1958): Poet, writer, educator, editor of African American periodicals. The academically gifted Popel (also known as Esther Popel Shaw) was the first Black woman to graduate from Dickinson College, which named the Popel Shaw Center for Race & Ethnicity in her honor. Popel’s searing “Flag Salute” juxtaposes lines from the “Pledge of Allegiance” with an account of a highly publicized Maryland lynching (“With Liberty—and Justice—They cut the rope in bits/ And passed them out/For souvenirs, among the men and boys!”).

Harrisburg tie: Born and raised, a graduate of Central High School.



Esther Popel

Gwendolyn Bennett (1902-1981): Poet, artist, commentator, a founder of the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and Zora Neale Hurston conversed in the salons that Bennett hosted.

Harrisburg tie: Born in Louisiana but kidnapped by her father after her parents divorced, she grew up in the 8th Ward and excelled at Harrisburg schools.

As the Commonwealth Monument project accelerated, local historians and artists spotted the ties between the three women.

“These are really significant women,” said Messiah University Professor Jean Corey. “It’s not like Gwendolyn Bennett was a little bit of Harlem Renaissance. She helped start the Harlem Renaissance.”

The creative lights of the Harlem Renaissance, including Harrisburg’s contributors, form the centerpiece of an arts-education initiative meant to fill gaps in African American cultural history caused by cuts to the arts in schools, said Brown.

The service sorority’s in-school programs planned for this fall could culminate in performances that provide “opportunities for students to showcase their talents and maybe develop their gifts in a way that they didn’t realize their ancestors before them have already done here in America.”

“It’s not something new,” Brown said. “It’s something that they can continue.”

"THIS HAPPENED HERE"

For students, shining a light on women from Harrisburg who built national followings through uncompromising words inspires the realization that others have blazed a path, said Brown.

"They can be engaged in the arts in this way, and it gives them some commonality to say, 'I can lead from where I am because other people have done it,'" she said.

For girls, Brown added, the women offer "mentorship through history. They're seeing themselves, and they're also seeing that there's opportunity, especially when times arise again that you're looking at the difficulties of sexism in America. They're able to see that they can propel through those difficulties and obstacles and stand on top of their fields, be it athletics, be it science, be it entertainment."

Bennett and Popel definitively answer the question, "Can anything good come out of Harrisburg School District?" said Sharia Benn, founder, president and executive artistic director of Sankofa African American Theatre Company.

"This happened here," she said. "Esther would not have been what she became if she had not been here. I continue to be amazed. In the face of exclusion and adversity, she still rose. These women are phoenixes."

Give today's students the same access and opportunity, Benn added, and they, too, can develop "creative legacies of honor and legacies that honor our present, our past and will reflect our future."

CONDUITS FOR EDUCATION

Benn had a "wait a minute" epiphany while developing her play, "Voices of the Eighth." It was approaching 2020, a year of elections and census. Culling sources from the 100 Voices/Commonwealth Monument Project, she spotted the three poets and the parallels to our times.

"These women spoke to the importance of being counted," Benn said. "They addressed the importance, as a woman, of being seen as a valuable member and contributor to their society and to politics and to policymaking."

Benn wrote Bennett and Popel into "Voices of the Eighth" (a.k.a. "VOTE"), presented for students and audiences throughout the area. As a pandemic-year follow-up, Benn created a virtual presentation, "Do You Know Me?" featuring Dunbar-Nelson and her most famous poem, "I Sit and Sew." That presentation, with talkback and study guide, reached 2,500 students and teachers.

The women's poetry—including Bennett's powerful "To a Dark Girl"—enraptures students already accustomed to word slams and rap, said Benn.

"Being able to use those rhythms presented with words is engaging," Benn said. "They're hearing history that they've never heard before, never encountered before, didn't even think was possible."

Brown experienced the power of that connection with a group of St. Stephen's School boys, seemingly too cool to engage in a workshop with renowned poet Nikki Grimes. Then they used the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance to inspire their own raps, and they were all in.

"This was a way to showcase their talents, to show that music is not only rhythmic, but it's also a way to express yourself as a writer," Brown said.

In the coming year, Benn hopes to explore the characters more fully in a "VOTE Part Two," because their calls for human rights and dignity continue.

"It's sad but true," she said. "They're calling out for equality, for compassion, for justice and also to other African Americans, particularly women, to fight for freedom, to recognize the beauty that is in us as a people, to celebrate that. It's also an appeal to humanity to live and fight for the marginalized,

to recognize that an inclusive and respectful society is the most healthy and progressive and successful society." ⁵

For more information on Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Epsilon Sigma Omega Chapter, visit www.akaepsilonsigmaomega.com.

For more information on Sankofa African American Theatre Company, visit www.sankofatheatrebbg.com.

Images courtesy of Messiah University.

Scrapbooks by Alice Dunbar Nelson

FINAL SUFFRAGE MEETING TODAY
Mrs. Dunbar To Speak at Court House At 8 P. M.
The final meeting of the Woman Suffrage campaign in York will be held in the Court House, Monday evening, when Mrs. Paul Lawrence Dunbar will speak under the auspices of the York County Committee of the Woman Suffrage Party.

heard and came in contact with her, and she is certain to have a large and enthusiastic audience on Monday evening.
Dr. George W. Bowles will introduce the speaker, and Mrs. Ethel Armstrong will preside.

York Labor Nov 1, 1915 News.

Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association
HEADQUARTERS: 201-205 ARCADE BUILDING, HARRISBURG, PA. TELEPHONES 2366-2367

MEMBER NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MISS JANE CAMPBELL,
413 W. SCHOOL HOUSE LANE, GERMANTOWN

AUDITORS
MRS. ELLEN H. E. PRICE, PHILADELPHIA
MRS. JOHN O. MILLER, PITTSBURGH

CHAIRMAN OF STATE COMMITTEES
WOMAN SUFFRAGE PARTY
MISS HANNAH J. PATTERSON,
809 S. LINDEN AVE., PITTSBURGH
FINANCE-DR. MARY M. WOLFE, LEWISBURG

MRS. FRANK M. ROESSING,
201-205 ARCADE BUILDING, HARRISBURG

DEPTS
LIDA STOKES ADAMS,
1921 GREEN ST., PHILADELPHIA

MARY E. BAKEWELL,
34 THOMAS ST., BEMICALEY

MAXWELL K. CHAPMAN,
1860 MADISON AVE., SCRANTON

ROBERT MILLS BEACH, BELLEFONTE

H. NEELY FLEMING, 202 W. 8TH ST., ERIE

MAUD BASSETT GORHAM, SWARTHMORE

MISS HELEN C. CLARK, HARRISBURG

MRS. ROBERT K. YOUNG,
68 WALK ST., WELLERSBURG

WRITE STATE-FULL SUFFRAGE
RELATED FEATHER-PARTIAL SUFFRAGE
FLORIDIAN-STATE AND PARTIAL SUFFRAGE
DAKE STATE-INDIAN SUFFRAGE

MISS ALICE

Monthly Total R



THE BIG SHORT

As the holidays near, local businesses struggle with, adapt to a broken global supply chain.

BY M. DIANE MCCORMICK



Elementary Coffee “topless” cup

Cup, meet lid. Or not. The world’s supply shortage has oozed down to the lowliest essentials at your friendly, albeit slightly frazzled, local business. As the holiday shopping season nears, watch for imaginative workarounds.

“We’ve had to get super creative,” said Andrea Grove, owner of Elementary Coffee Co. in Harrisburg. “For a long time, we couldn’t get cold cup lids. So, on our Twitter posts, we said, ‘Yeah, we’re going topless, and please bear with us.’ People loved that.”

Local business owners are an overworked but agile sort. They tend to tell the same story, managing fairly well in COVID’s first wave, but getting hobbled by the second.

Diane Krulac, owner of Brittle Bark in Mechanicsburg and Cocoa Creek Chocolates in Camp Hill, first called her bevy of suppliers in March 2020.

“Everybody felt we would be OK, but it slowly degraded,” she said. “By far, it has been the worst impact this year.”

For Krulac, there are the chocolate slowdowns caused by barriers of shipping across borders and the Atlantic Ocean. And then there is packaging. Krulac’s boxes hold truffles in quantities from a few to a few dozen. One supplier has delivered them for years.

“All of a sudden, he’s out of stock and doesn’t know when he’s going to make them,” Krulac said.

WHAT THE HECK?

When nationalist trends of, ahem, four or five years ago drove supply chains from global to domestic, the U.S. economy had time to adapt, said Penn State Smeal College of Business economist Fariborz Ghadar. Then came the COVID tsunami. Manufacturers shut down or restricted operations. Customers kept available supplies for themselves.

Things smoothed out, but then COVID returned. The same shortages bedeviling computer chips began haunting supplies of boxes, packaging, whatever. Plus, aging workers in the logistics and other high-risk sectors “basically said, ‘The hell with it, I’m retiring now,’” Ghadar said.

Take away port workers to unload containers and truck drivers to haul the goods, and let the logjam begin.

“To top that off, the big guys have more power to get first in line,” said Ghadar. “If you’re Amazon, you have priority in the eyes of the manufacturer. If you’re poor Joe and Nancy who’s got a shop, you have no priority.”

Those conglomerates further aggravated the supply chain by preordering for the holiday shopping season. Krulac, for one, followed a supplier’s advice to “order big” this fall.

“It puts you at the head of the line,” she said. “That’s just the packaging. That’s not even the chocolate. I order much earlier in anticipation of waiting, and that’s worked really well, too.”

A STINKING LID

Grove has built her business on a philosophy of sustainability.

She seeks out higher-end, compostable or recyclable to-go supplies. When her regular line of cold cups, lids and combos petered out, she found a substitute—at about four times the price. To fill the gap, she was ordering two boxes at a time, “which lasts about a week and a half.”

“Oh, my goodness, we’re already struggling for funds,” she would think. “This is going to run us into the ground.”

Talking with her team, they agreed to impose a 35-cent cup charge, while encouraging customers to bring reusable cups because, after all, “COVID’s not really spread that way.”

In Linglestown, St. Thomas Roasters also struggles to find matching lids and, in the words of owner Geof Smith, “gosh-darn cups.”

“The customers have been very understanding,” Smith said. “They all get it. Whatever job they do is probably affected. But you want to put a stinking lid on somebody’s drink cup so they don’t spill it on their lap in the car.”

Coffee supplies have been only minimally problematic for Smith, but in packaging, food and shipping, he confronts one snafu after another. Unsealed packages of gluten-free cookies that had to be returned. Sara Lee running out of cinnamon buns. The shipment of products mistakenly sent to



Florida, turning a two-day delivery timeline into two weeks.

“And then, two shipments later, they sent it to Maryland,” he said. He attributes that little “fubar” to untrained newbies called up to fill staffing shortages.

And here in the age of store signs declaring, “Due to a shortage of . . .”, Smith posted a sign of his own, along the lines of, “If you’re staying in the shop, please don’t take a lid. We’d like to give the lids to people in their cars.”

Not every small business is feeling the pinch, so far. You can still get your sugar fix with a red velvet or Georgia peach cobbler cupcake in a jar from Alisha Perry, aka That Cupcake Lady. She finds her ingredients online or at local grocery and restaurant supply stores.

“I’m grateful that I’m not in that boat,” she said.

NIGHT OWLS

The search for alternatives, plus the brain-racking accounting needed to avoid price hikes for customers, drain time that small business owners can’t delegate to their nonexistent underlings.

“It’s a huge mess of energy that gets expended,” said Grove.

Krulac’s husband wondered why she was on the computer until midnight. Her challenge, she said, is finding supplies that mirror those pictured on her website, for online orders. A change in packaging would require new photos. Even a search for 1-inch red ribbon demanded finding a supplier with a quality product.

“Invariably, and I’m sure it happened to other businesses like me, you don’t have a relationship with those suppliers,” she said. “You’re not buying in volume because you don’t know what your volume might be, because you might not be getting your original stuff from your original people.”

It’s all for the customers.

“You don’t want to disappoint them,” Krulac said. “They’re going through this whole pandemic, too. They want some normalcy. They want a good-quality product in a beautiful box for the price they’ve been paying all along. They want everything to be the way it was. We’ve tried to do that and have been pretty close to accomplishing that.”

EARLY BIRDS

Ghadar sees an end in spring 2022, when businesses adjust to their workforce challenges and the ports clear up. But he has advice for 2021’s holiday shoppers.

“Do your Christmas shopping early, and get whatever is there,” he said. “If you want something, you better not wait for a price change. If you don’t like this color, and you want another color—well, that other color is just not going to come.”

Krulac recently bought 50 cases of chocolate, saving more than \$1,000, and prompting groupthink on finding storage in every nook and cranny. She is now committed to building her arsenal of supplier relationships.

“Absolutely!” she said. “Absolutely! We have great relationships with multiple suppliers that we never had before. That’s good because we have a backup. Every single thing we use, I now have a backup, and

that took hours and hours of time, but that’s OK, because I have a backup.”

Grove, of the topless cold cups, sees a societal wake-up call. In this idyll, consumers bring their own cups, and businesses dream up incentives for BYO cups and bags.

“Maybe it’s getting people to plan more about what to do with their day, ideally,” she said. “It’s hard. It’s a struggle like everything else. In a world based on single-use products, it’s not easy to change that mentality overnight.”

In the meantime, she’s smiling through.

“Now,” she said, “there are shortages in hot cups.” **E**

LEARN MORE

To find out more about the businesses in this story, visit the following websites:

Brittle Bark Co.
www.brittlebark.com

Cocoa Creek Chocolates
www.cocoacreekchocolates.com

The Cupcake Lady
www.thatcupcakelady.com

Elementary Coffee Co.
www.elementarycoffee.co

St. Thomas Roasters
www.stthomasroasters.com



SCHOOL'S OUT, READING'S IN

Kids may need to play catch-up this post-pandemic summer. Luckily, there are resources to help them.

BY M. DIANE MCCORMICK

On a warm Saturday in Uptown Harrisburg, a colorful RV parked in the shade. Kids and adults streamed in. As they left, they held cups of popcorn in one hand and free books in the other.

Tri-County OIC's BookyMobile was making its rounds, joining the annual African American Black History Expo. Outside the BookyMobile, Lisa Gibson of Steelton clutched a bag full of books for her grandchildren, ages 3, 12, 14 and 16.

"They all need the reading practice," she said. The BookyMobile is "always nice to have around, especially when you don't have a car and can't get to the library."

Summertime, and the reading is easy in the Burg. Local literacy advocates are mixing the tried-and-true with the innovative, distributing books wherever they find hands to take them. In the post-pandemic recovery, as underserved children struggle to regain lost academics, they say that encouraging reading is more urgent than ever.

TO THE STREETS

This is the BookyMobile—a 1996, 30-foot Winnebago. On shelves lining the gutted interior, straps hold the books in place (imperfectly, admits OIC Executive Director Jeffrey Woodyard).

Summertime is BookyMobile primetime. Stocked with books donated by schools and private donors, it trundles to fairs and celebrations. Visitors appreciate the air conditioning, as well as the art supplies and all-you-care-to-take books.

As a consortium of job skills providers, the OIC makes literacy an easy fit, comfortably snuggled with its GED and English-language classes. BookyMobile even has Wi-Fi, courtesy of a Dauphin County gaming grant, so adult visitors can sign up for courses.

Reading and summer go together because it's the time when "people can get out and enjoy themselves," said Woodyard.

"For the places we go, they don't get a lot of free stuff," he said. "We give away things that are free and educational. We try to make it look like it's fun."

The consequences from a year of lost schooling could further increase racial and economic disparities. Students in schools that were already struggling academically are now even farther behind



their better-off peers, reports the Blog on Learning & Development. Those who can't get back on track could experience more delays in reading skills, leading to academic failure because, after all, reading is the foundation of learning.

The Dauphin County Library System doesn't have peer-reviewed data that its Summer Reading Club can help curb the problem, but library reading programs are known to halt the traditional "summer slide" in learning, said Youth Services Administrator Hannah Killian. The pandemic's "whole new layer of learning losses" added urgency to a traditionally fun endeavor.

"The impact of this won't be understood for months or even years, but if we can help to motivate kids and families to read together this summer, we can at least begin to help with turning the corner on these losses," said Killian.

Reaching for solutions, the library made this year's Summer Reading Club easier than ever. Log the books read or minutes spent reading, and everyone from preschoolers to adults can earn free books.

Read "Pete the Cat" with the kids? Points earned. Listen to an audiobook on the drive to the shore? Four hours' worth of points earned for everyone with ears. My Sunday morning curl-up with the New York Times? I've already racked up enough points for a free book.

Reading club participation dipped during the pandemic, but Killian is not "super-concerned" about the numbers.

"To me, it's more about the experience our community is having and that they are reading together," she said.

DRIVE FOR DIVERSITY

The pandemic halted the indoor gatherings that were ideal for book giveaways, but it heightened the need to put books—especially those showing diversity in characters, authors and illustrators—into homes. So, Dauphin County Library System worked with community literacy agencies to create the Super Cool Book Parade, held June 23 in the John Harris High School parking lot.



The outdoor, socially distanced event invited families to walk or drive through the “parade,” accepting books and a to-go dinner to take home.

The AKA Foundation of Central Pennsylvania—an outreach of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority’s Harrisburg chapter, Epsilon Sigma Omega—used the book parade to continue its year-round efforts to put diverse books in the hands of children. COVID-19 “absolutely” added urgency to the imperative of attracting children to books through the power of seeing themselves and those different from them on the pages, said Karen Love, chair of the chapter’s African American Read-In Committee.

“The key is truly to have our kids be exposed and interested and excited about reading and learning through reading,” said Love. “The idea is always to expand our reach and understanding of all cultures. Books that support all children, reflecting the variety of cultures and backgrounds, are important books for everyone to read everywhere.”

FAMILY AFFAIR

Where do all of these free books come from? To find a primary source, drop by the “two-car” garage of Joe Bedard, where one bay is stacked with books.

“About once a week, there’s someone picking up books from here,” said Bedard, chair of the Capital Region Literacy Council. “They usually leave with 300 to 500 books.”

Since 2004, the Capital Region Literacy Council has been a kind of food bank for books, acquiring 575,000 books for distribution by community agencies—everything from Head Start classrooms to Hamilton Health Center pediatricians’ offices. Many of the books are acquired at deep discount or simply the cost of shipping from First Book, a resource provider dedicated to educational equity that helps children escape poverty.

Summertime finds Literacy Council books going home with charter school students or set

up for giveaway at events in city parks. While kids get books, parents get kindergarten-readiness checklists and tips on promoting literacy.

Those helpful hints address the “elephant in the room,” said Bedard—the fact that children in poverty trail higher-income kids, developmentally, by two years. Just when the neural “hard drives” of low-income preschoolers are under construction, they hear 35 million fewer words than children from professional families.

“A lot of the moms didn’t grow up with reading,” said Bedard. “What is more important than handing a book out is delivering a message so the moms and caregivers understand how important it is and make the choice that, ‘My kid’s going to become a reader, and then the kid has a chance.’”

Parent education is instrumental, agrees the OIC’s Woodyard.

“We try to show parents how to model good reading habits,” he said. “Even if you’re struggling with reading, just holding a book and turning the pages and talking about what you see—that’s good.”

BOOK FACTORY

Books are made, not born. Some summer literacy events generate interest in reading by revealing the art—and toil—of book creation.

Dauphin County Library System’s first “Author in Residence” program (well, in residence virtually) brings Carlisle-based author and illustrator Amy June Bates to families through interactive online sessions on how books are made. In the final session on Aug. 19, participants will make their own books. “Kids realize there’s a person behind the books who is writing them and helping us think about our lives,” said Killian. “Meeting an author can go a long way in helping kids read and love books.”

Children will also make books from start to finish at American Literacy Corporation’s 6th Annual Central PA Writers and Illustrators Virtual Summer Camp.

In-person sessions of the past also culminated with a book, which “gave them a goal to strive for,” said ALC Executive Director Floyd Stokes.

“They’re excited,” he said. “They can actually walk away at the end of camp and say, ‘I wrote a book.’”

Back at the BookyMobile, 11-year-old Jasani Cousins was filling a bag with books for her home library.

“I love it, because at my house, I have three shelves of books,” said the Harrisburg native visiting from her Florida home. “I was surprised because the books are free, when you usually have to pay money for them. I got lots of books.”

She looked around the shelves. Something caught her eye.

“And I’m getting some more,” she said. **B**

READING RESOURCES

To dig deeper into literacy efforts around Harrisburg, visit these websites:

AKA Foundation of Central Pennsylvania
www.akafoundationofcentralpa.com

American Literacy Corporation
www.superreader.org

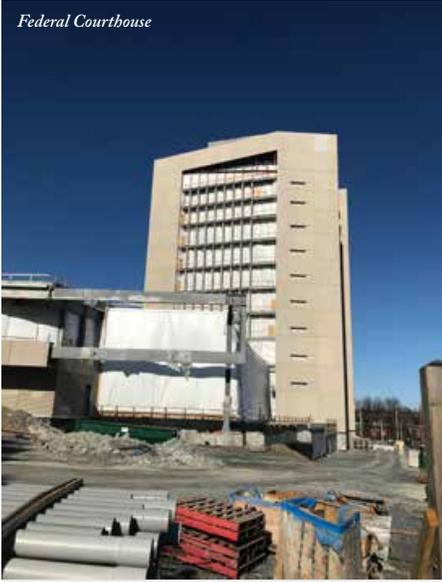
Capital Region Literacy Council
 Capital Region Literacy Council on Facebook

Dauphin County Library System
www.dcls.org

Tri-County OIC
www.tricountyoic.org



Federal Courthouse



The Hudson Building will become the Atlas 1923



WE RE-BUILT THIS CITY

Harrisburg hasn't experienced this much development in a century. What's driving the trend?

BY M. DIANE MCCORMICK

Former First United Methodist Church



In a world emerging from strife and disease, Harrisburg plants its flag. Grand buildings emerge. Neighborhoods fill with new homes. People congregate to celebrate life. So, is it 1921 or 2021? Harrisburg has seen building surges in other ages, but right now, a perfect storm of trends is driving a renaissance that's reshaping the cityscape for the 21st century.

WAITING LIST

Twenty-seven projects. That's the number of development projects planned or underway as counted by Harristown Enterprises, and the number keeps growing. Total investment in the city: \$601 million.

Many projects are clumped in a few blocks of Midtown Harrisburg. Whatever could be going on there?

While the federal courthouse at 6th and Reily streets is not the sole reason for the surge, it is the catalyst that city leaders hoped for when they stopped the mighty U.S. government from gouging a gash in the heart of downtown, choosing instead to build in a once-blighted area about a mile away.

Historic Harrisburg Association recently talked with two federal judges who want to get to know their new neighborhood and "be a part of the community," said Executive Director David Morrison.

"That's what we think is spurring a lot of this development—federal employees wanting to live in that part of Midtown, as well as people who do business with the U.S. courts," he said.

One major project clearly spurred by the courthouse is the Reily House—seven floors of apartments, retail, urban grocer and restaurant, with a 500-space garage for courthouse parking neatly disguised to the rear.

"That's a really creative approach to killing a couple birds with one stone," said historian Jeb Stuart.

Single causes have never driven Harrisburg's historic "spikes in development and lulls in development," said developer Derek Dilks. Some of today's projects are "obviously" attributable to the courthouse, but others are like his—redevelopments of townhomes, offices and a Midtown church to satisfy demand for Class-A, market-rate apartments and retail spaces.

"For the best and the newest products, there's a waiting list," he said. "People in older apartments, paying the same or similar rent, are going to go from older stock to newer. Hopefully, that encourages the owners of those older buildings to redevelop."

GOOD STOCK

With their historic perspective, Morrison and Stuart emphasize that the city has had multiple growth spurts.

The City Beautiful movement of 1901-02 was sparked by construction of the new state Capitol and a comprehensive plan to clean up a filthy city. In the 1920s, growth pushed northward, creating the Zembo Mosque, William Penn High School, Italian Lake and new homes. Municipal historic districts created in the 1970s—earlier than in many cities—protected priceless architecture from the wrecking ball. The “Harristown Plan” of the 1980s focused development on downtown.

For today’s resurgence, all of those phases add up to good bones. Harrisburg has a robust inventory of buildings sought by character-craving apartment-hunters and restaurateurs.

“We have some really nice architecture here,” said Harristown President and CEO Brad Jones. “No question about it. Two of our projects are that kind of adaptive reuse. I was showing that (27 projects) slideshow to someone from Philly recently, and he said, ‘Wow, you picked some nice buildings.’”

Increasingly, developers and community groups contact Historic Harrisburg to vet their ideas for adaptive reuse. Developers responding to market demands—driveways in the 1920s, walkability in the 2020s—are a key force in growth, said Morrison.

“The municipality is a helpful partner, but it’s not a monolithic domineering factor that prohibits things from happening,” he said. “It’s kind of a partnership that happened then and we’re seeing now.”

AT THE GATEWAY

While the courthouse visibly represents Midtown development, people don’t see the interest that Harrisburg Director of Economic Development

Nona Watson is fielding for projects citywide. She won’t cite the projects yet, but “wheels are turning in other parts of the city.”

“They’re using what’s happening to continue to branch further and further out,” she said.

From her perch, Watson tries to formulate “a holistic approach” that convenes existing assets, funding and multiple partners to revitalize not just buildings but entire neighborhoods. It worked organically for Mulder Square at Mulberry and Derry streets, she said, and now, it’s a model for such areas as Camp Curtin, to extend the courthouse’s redevelopment juice farther up the 6th Street corridor.

There at the Camp Curtin gateway, Adam Maust is redeveloping the long-abandoned Hudson Building at 6th and Maclay streets into The Atlas 1923. With no development experience, Maust dove into a massive project that, he hopes, will help smooth out the neighborhood’s “rough areas.” He has worked with neighbors and community groups to design the Atlas elements, aiming for a market or grocery store, and perhaps a community center for exclusive use by neighbors.

“I’m excited about saying we can come in here and really help foster a safe environment, a lit-up environment, with things that are just going to organically help the area,” he said.

Affordable housing is high on Watson’s agenda. At the direction of Mayor Eric Papenfuse, she is working with City Council members to develop an affordable housing plan that could incentivize developers to mix affordable housing with market-rate units. And as she notes, affordable housing means housing for moderate-income people as well as low-income.

“We have to have housing on all levels,” Watson said. “If you have too much affordable housing, especially in a particular area, then you have concentration of poverty. If you talk about all market-rate, then you have gentrification.”

Watson is seeing the difference that the development surge is making in—yes—grocery stores. Food chains that rejected her overtures before now want in on the action.

“Development is going to draw more investors, is going to draw more businesses, and with that, of course, you’re going to need more housing,” she said. “Everybody wants to be on the winning team.”

From a developer’s perspective, Harrisburg is “manageable,” said Maust. Out-of-state developers spooked by the cost points of redeveloping in big cities are stretching their budgets in Harrisburg.

“We have the Farm Show,” said Maust. “We have the Susquehanna River, which is gorgeous. You have the historical, long-term buildings and residences all around the area. It is a beautiful city that is actually very tangible, and that’s why you’re seeing all these big projects.”

VALUE PROPOSITION

Harrisburg real estate is “red hot,” said Jones. One of the reasons: The scrutiny that secondary and tertiary cities—the terms come up a lot—are getting from metropolis residents who have become work-from-home converts.

“There’s lots of flight from bigger, more expensive cities to places that offer a strong value proposition but still give you some of the things you loved about your urban environment,” said Jones, whose company is building more two-bedroom apartments in response. “If I only have to work in the office a couple times a month, I can live in Harrisburg.”

Big-city companies and people are looking for value in tertiary markets, agreed Dilks.

“If you’re in Chicago or D.C. or New York and you just want to get out of the city, you’re going to come to a smaller market, like a Philly or Harrisburg or Lancaster,” he said.

Dilks is tailoring his apartments to the remote-work trend, with bonus spaces or sliding walls to keep the dog from crashing Zoom calls. Such spaces could also be attractive to lobbyists and others who travel regularly to Harrisburg on state business. Once, they rented an office space and a hotel room. Now, they want a single space year-round.

Like Watson, Jones sees “more projects coming into the pipeline, all over the city. The more you see, the more there will be. One project’s success leads to the next one’s evolution.”

Dilks plans to wait for the pandemic’s after-effects to materialize before deciding on his next projects. In the meantime, he counts himself among developers who are “doing what we do because we love the city.”

“We love the architecture. We love development. There just happens to be a market here that supports what we’re doing,” he said. “Those are the ingredients you need. You need somebody who loves to do it, and you need a customer to appreciate what you’re doing.” **B**



Nona Watson



Michael Burke. Photo courtesy of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.

TOIL & SERVICE

*For St. Patrick's Day,
we search for the origins
of the Irish in Harrisburg.*

BY M. DIANE MCCORMICK

Dennis Dougherty. Tillie and Patrick Conway. Timothy P. O'Leary.

If you're looking for Irish Harrisburg, look under your feet. Actually, look six feet under at Mount Calvary Cemetery. It's the compact graveyard at 13th and Berryhill streets that you've probably passed without noticing (I know I have). The grounds are neat, but the last plot sold here was in 1920, making the cemetery feel—forgive me—not lived-in.

Harrisburg's Irish history is well hidden, but you can find pieces of it here at Mount Cavalry, in stories of heroism, humanity and hope.

FORGOTTEN MAN

Lynch. O'Sullivan. Here's a Reagan. There's a Kennedy.

No doubt about it. Mount Calvary was the last stop for Harrisburg's 19th- and early 20th-century Irish community. There are three bishops here, as well as an Irish-born physician buried under a grandiose Celtic cross and America's first Irish-born Medal of Honor winner (more on him later). The Patriot-

News once called the site a "who's who of prominent Catholics of yesteryear."

But I was there on a search for the forgotten man. Some of the bodies here made a second journey after their first burials. They were originally interred at the graveyard of the first St. Patrick's Church on State Street. Many came from the Irish community nestled in the vicinity. During church rebuilds in 1902 and possibly earlier, around 1868 (there's a bit of confusion here), the dead were reinterred in this little country graveyard high atop Allison Hill. More may have been moved in 1902, with construction of today's St. Pat's. Today, trucks rumble past on I-83.

Hard to say where these reinterments are, exactly. I couldn't find anything like a mass reburial or ancient markers, so I spent my time communing with the Gilmers and Clancys and McGraths. And Hugo Schutzenbach and Joseph Aiello. No ethnic discrimination here, but non-Irish are definitely in the minority.

Michael Madden was not hard to find. Maybe 20 feet beyond the main entrance stands a stone—hefty but nothing elaborate, proclaiming, "MADDEN,"

for eternity. A wreath obscured the name of beloved wife Annie, but there is Michael J. Madden, 1841-1920.

Born in Limerick, Ireland, Madden immigrated to the United States in 1855, hard up on the Great Famine that brought waves of Irish to this country. On Sept. 3, 1861, the strapping, blonde, hazel-eyed Madden was serving with the 42nd New York Infantry, known as the Tammany Regiment (“cannon fodder,” Ancient Order of Hibernians historian Michael Edmiston told me). On a reconnaissance mission, Madden and two comrades drew fire. One of them, John Coffey, was hit and couldn’t walk.

“If I left him lay,” Madden said for posterity, “he would have probably bled to death or starved in their Rebel dungeons.”

With bullets flying, Coffey rallied, and Madden walk-carried him to the water’s edge. From an island in the river, Madden’s company provided cover. The Confederates returned fire. Amid bullets zinging into the water, Madden put Coffey on his back and swam to safety.

The fresh wreath hanging on Madden’s Mount Calvary grave—honestly, one of the few signs of remembrance in these grounds that probably haven’t seen a burial in decades—is a “Wreaths Across America” recognition from the Cumberland County-based Ancient Order of Hibernians, Michael Collins Div. 1.

Madden would be wounded twice in 1862, at Glendale and at Antietam. In 1863, he fought at Gettysburg. In 1864, he was mustered out of the Union Army—and reenlisted.

“He didn’t get wounded enough,” surmised Edmiston.

Finally out with the war’s end, Madden came to the bustling railroad town of Harrisburg. While serving as a railcar inspector, he and his brother-in-law got a patent for a railcar brake. He was, said Edmiston, “a pretty interesting character.”

“If you have any doubt that there has been a substantial presence of Irish-born or Irish descent in this area, that cemetery is loaded with names that smack of the Old Sod,” Edmiston said.

FIRST CLUSTER

In 1850 Harrisburg, the largest foreign-born group of residents was the Irish—421 people in a town of 7,834. Many didn’t stay long, perhaps moving north with railroad construction jobs.

But one group had been in Harrisburg and stayed, all the way to Mount Calvary. They were fairly well tolerated in the Know-Nothings age of rabid anti-immigration fervor. Funny little historical footnote: One exception to the area’s tolerance for Irish Catholics was a Harrisburg Telegraph and Morning Herald editor who relentlessly denounced the Irish as paupers filling the jails, living off taxpayers, and blindly obeying the pope. His name was Stephen Miller—just like former President Trump’s anti-immigrant immigration adviser.

Back to that first cluster of Harrisburg’s Irish. They came here in the 1820s to build the Pennsylvania Canal. The remnants of their labors are still visible in the filled-in canal beds behind the Glass Lounge and the Harris switch tower near the Forum, and in that watery trench fronting the Steelton steel plants.

A small Catholic mission had been located on Sylvan Heights since around 1810 but, according



Mount Calvary Cemetery

to Ken Frew’s “Building Harrisburg,” never got much traction. Canal construction provided a “ready congregation” of Irish Catholic immigrants, so the tiny church’s leaders moved to the riverfront where they lived. On a plot on State Street, the cornerstone for the first St. Patrick’s church was laid in 1826. Those canal workers built the church, named—it’s said—in honor of their national patron saint.

That humble building’s 1873 replacement gave way to the permanent St. Patrick’s Cathedral, dedicated in 1907. Tap on the floor somewhere in the St. Patrick’s sacristy, and the Irish-born canal and railroad contractor Michael Burke might tap back to say hello.

The entrepreneurial, civic-minded Burke made his way from Tipperary to Harrisburg. The outsider made his fortune working with the area’s native-born elites—many of them Scotch-Irish, which is a whole other story—to transform a sleepy community into a factory town, according to Gerald G. Eggert’s “Harrisburg Industrializes.”

Burke died in 1860 in a tale worthy of an Irish pub song, the victim of a freak accident involving a railway crossing, a carriage, a horse and a train cowcatcher. The horse was not injured. Burke was buried in the old St. Pat’s churchyard and, it appears, never re-interred to Mount Cavalry.

Burke is “buried under the floor under the present St. Patrick’s,” Frew told me. “The nearest we can figure, he’s still encapsulated there.”

SISTERHOOD

Around 1869, Harrisburg’s first bishop, Jeremiah Shanahan, wrote to his aunts, who were Sisters of Mercy in Chicago. Their order, founded in Dublin in 1831, had been sending women from Ireland to the United States since 1843 to serve the sick and the poor. Now, Shanahan needed nuns to serve his newly designated diocese.

On Sept. 1, 1869, six Sisters of Mercy boarded a train in Chicago and journeyed to Harrisburg, according to a 2020 story by Sister Regina Werntz in the newspaper, the Catholic Witness. For a time, their motherhouse was the Sylvan Heights home—later an orphanage that these sisters would run, and today, the landmark home of the YWCA of Greater Harrisburg.

The order’s Mother Clare bought a \$10,000 property for the sisters on Maclay Street “with only \$10 in the bank,” recalled one of the sisters. “There they prayed for coal and food, especially bread. The tombstones bearing the ages of young Sisters who died of tuberculosis . . . is proof of the poverty they suffered.”

The Sisters of Mercy went house to house, visiting the sick and braving open ridicule on the streets. They didn’t charge for their ministry, but lived on fees charged for music lessons and the tiny schools that they ran. Over the next decades, the sisters operated an infirmary in Harrisburg and a government school for Native Americans in Carlisle. They taught at Bishop McDevitt, Trinity and Delone high schools. In Lancaster in 1975, the order learned Spanish so that they could teach the children of Latino families. That same year, they aided refugees arriving at Indiantown Gap from Vietnam.

As I walked up the sloping hill of Mount Calvary Cemetery, I gasped at a striking sight—two long, back-to-back rows of tiny Celtic crosses. They are engraved only with names and dates. Sister Mary Francis Donovan, 1845-1918. Sister Agatha Horn, 1850-1921. Here is one who died young, Mother Carmalita Brady, 1884-1909. The Sisters of Mercy came to Harrisburg from Ireland to minister and educate. Here, they remain. **B**



Kevin Dolphin and Lisa Burhannan

ILLNESS & INSPIRATION

COVID-19 has greatly impacted Harrisburg's Black community, but some find hope amid the disease, the loss.

BY M. DIANE MCCORMICK



Kevin Dolphin once watched his friend, Lisa Burhannan, work her magic on a room of teenage girls.

Their nonprofit, Breaking the Chainz, teaches cognitive development in schools, but these particular girls were “having a bad day.” So Burhannan got them to draw how they were feeling.

“By the end of the day, you could see the light in their eyes,” said Dolphin. “They would always come to her for advice. They couldn’t wait for her to get there so they could ask her and talk to her about things. That is more priceless than anything.”

Burhannan is gone now. So is Gerald Welch, who never backed down if it meant keeping children from falling through the cracks.

COVID-19 has plowed through Black America, carving a gash in leadership structures and within families. In Harrisburg, those left behind are finding resiliency in the community and plumbing the legacies of lost loved ones for inspiration.

DREAMS RELEASED

The Rev. Dr. Brenda Alton no longer pastors her own church—she is system manager of spiritual care services at UPMC Pinnacle. But in the COVID year, she presided over more funerals than ever before.

Her job, though, still inspires hope. She gets to deliver “good news in bad times” to a community rediscovering its strengths.

“The pandemic has allowed the ‘neighbor’ to return to the ‘hood,’ so we have ‘neighborhood,” said Alton, who lost dear friends to the pandemic while she and her family were “deathly sick” in March. “We have neighbors who check on each other. We have families that have restored a level of care. They pay more attention. There’s this heightened sense of protection for our elders and maybe even a return of respect for our seniors.”

Quarantines have not halted a renewed grassroots activism, Alton adds. Community leaders organized food distributions and holiday gifting for people suddenly facing the loss of livelihoods, businesses and retirement savings.

Black churches rarely trumpet their good deeds, so the role of the church in sustaining community has long been overlooked, said Ronald D. Holton, Sr., pastor of Lingo Memorial Church of God in Christ in Uptown Harrisburg. The pandemic has changed that. One young man Holton knows had frequently disparaged the church online but is now saying “Amen” to Holton’s virtual sermons.

“In difficult times, individuals turn to the church, and they begin to see the importance of the Black church in the Black community,” Holton said.

And, says Alton, old aspirations that had gone dormant in pre-COVID days are awakening as people collaborate to launch startups and patronize small businesses.

“All those dreams we’ve had locked up, it’s time to work on them and release them,” Alton said.

In the wake of COVID, the Black community is mobilizing on multiple fronts, addressing physical and mental health, economic upheaval and social justice, said Dolphin.

“Coming together has been one of our greatest strengths,” he said.

ESSENTIAL

When you suddenly can’t smell Clorox, COVID-19 is calling.

Aaron Johnson blames his case on high-fives exchanged with fellow Steelers fans at a Dallas Cowboys home game. But the loss of taste and smell didn’t keep him from eating the Thanksgiving dishes that friends dropped off.

“What are we gonna do?” he said. “I’m still gonna eat. I know what it’s supposed to taste like.”

Kidding aside, Johnson’s wife also contracted COVID. So did his sister, who was hospitalized. He lost his stepbrother and several friends. One friend, a bus driver with underlying kidney disease, recovered, but only after being placed on a ventilator.

Through all of this, Johnson wonders—who’s watching out for sanitation workers? As director of Harrisburg’s Department of Public Works, he’s been juggling the schedules of the sick and quarantined. Contact tracing turns one possible case into four or five workers forced to isolate. Test results take days to come back, forcing people off work while they wait.

The people who pick up our trash, a largely Black and Brown workforce, should be classified as essential workers and given priority for vaccines, Johnson said.

“Public works and highway and sanitation, we’re emergency workers,” he said. “Ever since (the pandemic) broke out, sanitation is on the ground.”

A VOID

Dolphin and Burhannan grew up together, the children of dysfunctional families from “the wrong side of the tracks,” in Dolphin’s words.

With her “giving and selfless heart,” Burhannan would reach out to help “anyone, anywhere,” especially after the death of her son. Locally, she led chapters of Mothers in Charge and Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, ministered to hospital patients, and supervised a re-entry home for women. Her work took her nationwide.

“Those are a pair of shoes that no one in the city or wherever will be able to fill,” said Dolphin, the founder and president of Breaking the Chainz. “She definitely left something behind. There’s a void.”

Even from the ICU, Burhannan hosted Zoom meetings and helped family. She died from COVID-19 on June 11.

Harrisburg School Board Director Gerald Welch succumbed on April 15. For a man known for his brutal honesty, Welch was “a teddy bear,” says his wife, Donna. They met online. He proposed the first time they met in person. She said yes because “it just felt right.”

Moving to Harrisburg from New York after they married in 2008, Welch worked as a behavior specialist and drug and alcohol counselor. He also grew incensed about the school district’s dismal graduation rate. On his second run for school board, he won a seat, sharing a platform with a group that wanted to oust former Superintendent Sybil Knight-Burney.

When the pandemic arrived, he kept working, meeting patients one-on-one. Many joined a long line of mourners in a drive-by tribute on a cold, rainy day in late April. Welch’s ICU nurses displayed a banner saying that it was an honor to care for him. One woman he helped to sobriety made a sign—still in Donna’s yard—showing a black and a white hand coming together in unity.

“People would come and put balloons in my front yard, or candles,” said Donna.

In Gerald Welch’s memory, fellow school board Director Carrie Fowler founded Gerald’s Kids. The scholarship program focuses services on individual children transitioning from first to second grade—an often-overlooked time when children who are struggling to read or who lack adult attention risk lifetime consequences. The first child sponsored is the son of an imprisoned man who Gerald Welch had reached out to.

At Burhannan’s socially distanced service in Reservoir Park, Alton presided for her longtime friend. She reminded mourners to follow Burhannan’s example of a life transformed.

“Lisa gave it her all, 24/7,” Alton said. “There is a void, and I’m hoping that those who are still



mourning will say, “She is still alive in my heart.”

Tina Nixon has received “too many text messages and phone calls” informing her of deaths. An aunt died from COVID. So did a cousin.

“COVID has shined a spotlight on the health disparities on communities of color,” said the vice president, mission effectiveness, and chief diversity officer at UPMC Pinnacle. “We’ve been addressing it, but we can’t do it alone.”

UPMC Pinnacle is leveraging existing connections to share messages of staying safe against COVID and getting the vaccine, said Nixon.

The system’s Faith Community Health Connection, which includes many African-American churches, shares education on the impact of the virus. Hamilton Health Center, a UPMC Pinnacle partner, launched a free mobile testing center. UPMC Pinnacle also opened satellite testing sites and helped provide transportation there.

And the Healthy Harrisburg Initiative, planned in 2019 but launched virtually in 2020, targets the underlying conditions—specifically high blood pressure, chronic heart disease and diabetes—that have intensified COVID’s deadlines in the Black community.

LIVE ON

On Easter Sunday, Gerald Welch struggled to breath but kept procrastinating a trip to the hospital. He spent his time writing names on his

“gazillion” beloved watches, instructing his wife to give them to the designees. She refused, insisting that he wasn’t going anywhere.

Since Gerald’s passing, Donna Welch has given watches to his sons and grandsons, but “there’s still a bunch left.” She is helping administer a church scholarship fund that he worked passionately for.

“I just remember him and how much he cared about people, especially children,” she said.

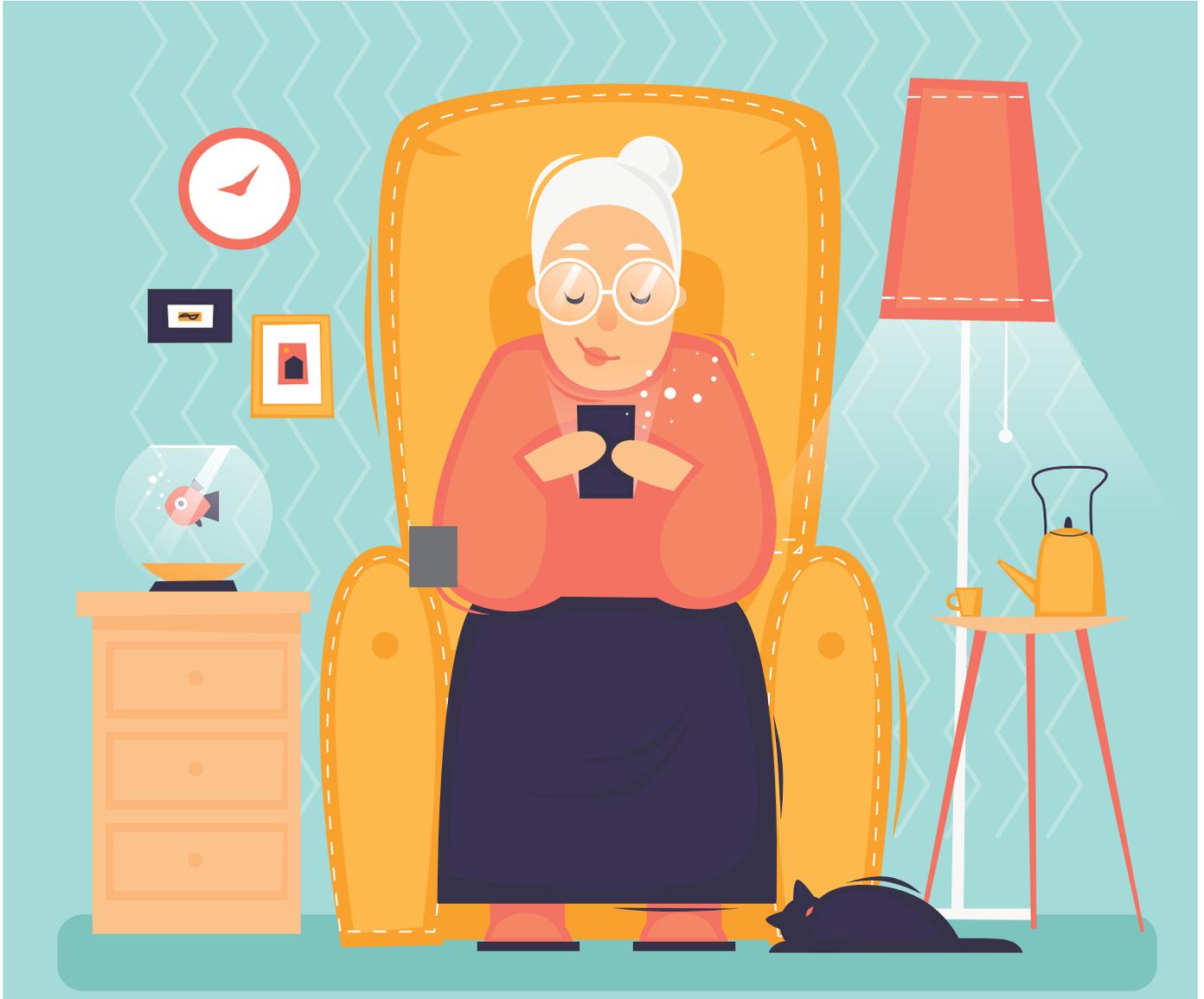
Aaron Johnson’s sister is slowly recovering. His Public Works Department is managing the impact on personnel, even as residential trash pickups rise with more people at home. He and his wife got through their illnesses with prayer and the help of family and friends.

“We couldn’t have done it without them,” he said. “For me, it’s sad because there’s a lot of friends and family that I lost.”

Dolphin won’t accept discouragement, especially when he recalls the tireless energy of Lisa Burhannan—the friend who rode with him to countless conferences nationwide.

“She’s always with me,” he said. “When I’m riding, she’s in the seat next to me. She was that spirit. As long as I’m alive, as long as Breaking the Chainz is around, she’ll definitely live on.” **B**

For more information about UPMC Pinnacle’s Healthy Harrisburg Initiative, visit www.upmcpinnacle.com.



CARE & CONNECTIONS

Despite COVID, life goes on in area nursing and personal care homes as staff, residents adjust to fight fear, isolation.

BY M. DIANE MCCORMICK

Mavis McCollam looks forward to the Country Meadows lifelong learning broadcasts, including a new series on world cultures. Shows delve into people and architecture. A monthly meal ties into the featured country.

“Roast duck,” she said of the previous night’s Denmark-inspired dinner. “Some kind of potatoes. And then a Danish rice pudding, which was different from ours but was very, very good. It has almonds in it.”

There’s a lot of living going on inside the midstate’s retirement communities and group homes. When COVID-19 restrictions shut the doors for most non-residents except employees, it set off a constant churn to ward off isolation and keep residents engaged, connected and active.

“They cannot hug anymore,” says Teri Gotti Szubinski, psychotherapist with PinnacleHealth

Psychological Associates of Pennsylvania at UPMC in York. “They cannot even hug their loved ones. They cannot even hug nurses or caregivers. They are completely tossed to the side. That’s a hard thing to comprehend when you wake up in the morning and all this is going on, and there seems to be no end.”

The solution, as facility officials figure so far, is multi-dimensional. FaceTime family visits. Hallway happy hours. Closed-circuit exercise sessions. Hardee’s takeout. Quiet prayer. Spiders and lizards. More on the creepy-crawlers later.

CONNECTIONS

No family visits. No entertainers. No volunteers spreading cheer. At the midstate’s residential facilities, the creativity caps are worn 24/7 to fill the activities void.

At Paxton Street Home, two “dear, dear ladies” host monthly tea times. Residents sip tea and nibble

treats served on donated china—under normal circumstances. Pandemic-era, the china still comes out, but the ladies appear via Zoom.

“They can talk to the folks they’ve gotten to know over the last couple of years,” said Jodie Smiley, executive director of Paxton Ministries, administrator of the Harrisburg-licensed personal care home. “There can still be that communication. It’s not the same, but we can still stay connected. It takes a lot of creativity. It takes a lot of staff time, but we can still stay connected to many people.”

Isolation is a real danger when residents in group settings are cut off from the things and people they love, said Gotti Szubinski. Those who can’t comprehend the why behind the sudden break from loved ones can feel abandoned. It’s the employees who step in to relieve their “unforgettable grief and sadness.”

At Paxton Street Home, where residents once walked up the road for their mushroom-and-Swiss “Thickburgers,” staffers take orders for Hardee’s takeout. Country Meadows Retirement Communities, which includes campuses in Mechanicsburg and Hershey, commandeered its in-house television circuit to broadcast in-room wellness sessions, high school students performing their numbers from canceled musicals and do-what-you-will programming from staff.

“At one campus, an associate’s daughter rescues reptiles and all those creepy-crawly things,” says Executive Director of Dynamic Living Kim Eichinger. “She did a program on rescuing these lizards and spiders. She took residents into her room and had the spiders out.”

At the Middletown Home, even residents’ outdoor visits with family on the 100-acre campus have been curtailed at times. There, staff “in some way have become their surrogate family.”

“We want to keep people safe, but we also believe that separation from family and friends is as, if not sometimes more, devastating than COVID itself,” said CEO Louis Vogel. “Obviously, we want to keep people safe. How do we keep people connected? Because we believe it’s all about relationships.”

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE

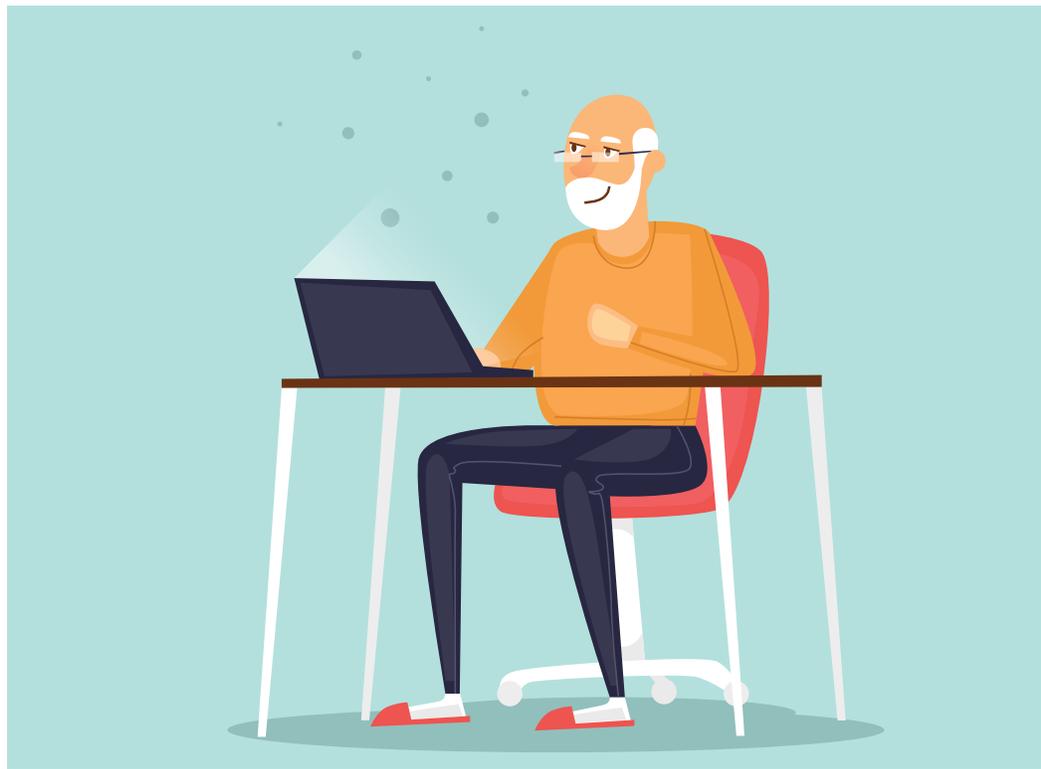
McCollam and her husband, Ron, moved from West Virginia to Country Meadows Mechanicsburg in May 2019. Today, she laughs about the timing.

“Let’s move to Pennsylvania,” she recalled saying. “We’ll be close to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren.”

At residential facilities nationwide, an army of staffers is wielding iPads as weapons in the fight against loneliness. FaceTime and Zoom sessions, all agree, are no substitute for family visits, and people with dementia can struggle to understand what’s happening.

But, they help.

“The wonderful thing about these caregivers, I cannot say enough about them,” said Gotti Szubinski. “The very same people who used to run activities like bingo and dancercise—they are the same people now who are dressing up in the gowns and whatever they need in order to walk into the



rooms with an iPad or an iPhone so they can help these residents talk to their relatives, sometimes for the last time.”

Country Meadows found other ways to sneak in hellos from family members. For Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, family members selected special appetizers or desserts and sent personalized notes to be shared on the meal trays—delivered, of course, individually to rooms.

“We’re just trying to make the simplest things fun and surprising for the residents,” said Eichinger.

Easy? Not at all. Actually, wrenching sometimes.

“The hardest thing are the residents who are somewhat confused,” added Eichinger. “The whole mask concept is difficult for them to wrap their head around. They need the ability to be aware of where their body is in space. For some of them, cognitively, it’s a challenge. It’s hard for them not to snuggle up with their friend on the sofa, elbow to elbow, because that’s what gives them comfort.”

Unable to hold congregant worship services, the Middletown Home is deploying pastoral care staff for one-on-ones. Personal, in-room performances by musically talented staff and visits from Carolina and Blanche, the home’s golden retriever and black lab, also provide a lift.

“It doesn’t sound like an awful lot, but something that’s really, really important is for folks to be physically present and just to listen,” said Vogel. “It’s about being physically present and sitting there, even if you have to wear gloves to hold somebody’s hand. Whether it’s praying with them, singing with them, being a liaison and getting their family on a Zoom call. It’s any of those wonderful things.”

Spiritual support helps ward off the worry that worsens depression and anxiety in the elderly, said Gotti Szubinski. “When you have spirituality in your life, faith in your life, it makes the future a lot less fearful.”

At Paxton Street Home, volunteers were able to come in and decorate a “Christmas corner” in holiday style. Residents came for photo shoots, posing for pictures sent to family and friends.

“What do you do?” said Smiley. “This is a year when you make a plan and adjust. That’s the reality for all of us. You just adjust.”

TAKES A TEAM

As 2020 neared its end and a vaccine loomed, Smiley reminded residents, “You’re doing a great job.”

“We understand that it’s bad out there,” she told them. “You’re doing a great job. There is a light at the end of this very, very long tunnel. You’re three quarters of the way there. Hang in there.”

Country Meadows resident McCollam believes that the crush of revised activities—socially distanced happy hour, Bible studies on TV, craft kits to make Christmas decorations for a school—are “most definitely” keeping residents engaged and purposeful.

“It gives us something to do,” she said. “We can meet with a few people at a time and enjoy something and talk with other residents. You’re not just sitting in your apartment, vegetating. It keeps you active. It keeps you engaged. They’ve done a good job.”

For the duration, those creativity caps are secured firmly on heads. At Country Meadows, in-house-produced exercise broadcasts target the motor skills that diminish when people are confined to their rooms, walking only from bed to bathroom to lounge chair. For the holidays, Eichinger and the Country Meadows fitness director developed a “12 Days of Fitness” program.

“One breath of energy, two head turns, three shoulder rolls, four leg extensions, and five sit-to-stands,” said Eichinger. “It truly takes a team. It truly takes a team.” **B**