October 2013

Highland Park
Community Council Newsletter

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Happy Halloween
What is a miracle? By definition it is a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency. I cannot speak to the divine intervention part of the definition, but what happened on September 26th at the Highland Park fountain does make one stop and wonder.

It has been three days since an elderly man driving an SUV crashed into the Highland Park fountain, taking out a large iron bench, hitting the fountain’s vintage surround, flipping end over end while flying approximately 15 feet through the air, landing upside down smack dab center on the actual fountain and, defying all odds, surviving.

Not only were the physics of the accident astonishing, but that no one else in the park that evening was injured, and that one of our neighbors, a doctor, happened to be sitting at the far end of the fountain the moment the accident happened and jumped in to administer first aid within seconds, is cause to stop and consider the possibility.

Many of us are given opportunities throughout our day where we can step in and make a difference in someone’s life. Typically our opportunities are much less dramatic than this one, but they make a positive difference none the less. Even the little things like tapping someone on the shoulder and letting them know their shirt tag is showing or helping someone pick-up something they dropped or simply asking if someone needs help carrying bags or finding their way, it is all paying it forward. And everyone who responded to this accident has certainly paid their share this month.

I arrived at the scene by accident two hours after it happened. I was driving home from my goddaughter’s birthday dinner and saw all of the lights and emergency vehicles around the fountain. They were just beginning to remove the car from its perch. The two tow truck drivers made the incredibly difficult task of removing the car look easy. They positioned their rigs on either end of the fountain, attached separate cables to the car and when they tightened their winches, the car lifted off the fountain core and seemingly levitated above it, water pouring out as they waited for it to find its balance on the cables. Once stable, one truck let their cable out while the other reeled theirs in and the car slowly moved toward the front end of the fountain. Once it cleared the vintage surround, they gently returned to solid ground.

Damage was done to the grounds, the area around the fountain, and to the fountain itself, which will remain off until next March. Some cars on Highland Avenue were also damaged during the accident, but all in all, I believe we can consider ourselves very lucky. Property can be repaired or replaced, but our neighbors cannot.

My sincere thanks go out to Dr. Sarah Hagerty and her colleague at UPMC Presbyterian who were the first responders who gave aid to the man until additional help could arrive.

Highland Parkers continue to make me proud to represent the neighborhood. Thanks for all that you do to make this a great place to live.

Monica Watt
HPCC President
An election of Officers and Directors was held. Previous nominations were seconded and approved for the existing Officers: Monica Watt as President, David Atkinson as Vice President, Paul Miller as Treasurer, and Bob Staresinic as Secretary. Nominations for Andrew Brooks and Kelly Vitti as Directors were duly made and seconded at this meeting. All of the nominees were elected to the board with all in attendance For, none against, and none abstaining.

Glen Schultz reported on the Heth's Run Bridge project, which is starting this month.

David Atkinson introduced Dr Regina Holley, PPS Board Member, Errika Jones from the PPS Superintendents office, and Michael Chapman from Obama. They discussed current public school issues and the status of the Envisioning Project and its impact on Highland Park schools.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm. The next HPCC meeting is Thursday, November 21st at 7:00 pm at the Union Project.
This year the City of Pittsburgh’s official trick-or-treating hours are from 5:30 to 7:30 pm on Thursday, October 31.

Highland Park Community Council Halloween Parade
Sunday, October 27, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm
Highland Park Victorian Fountain, main entrance to the Park

Your little ghouls, goblins, princesses and princes are invited to the annual Highland Park Community Council Halloween Parade. Local children of all ages are invited to join us in costume for the Halloween parade and costume contest. Prizes will be awarded in a number of different categories and delicious snacks will be provided.

We also need volunteers to help judge the costume contest and fill out certificates.

The parade is being held the Sunday before Halloween, since Oct. 31 falls on a school night and we wanted to give everyone maximum trick or treating time before bedtime. No sign-up required.

Contact Teri Rucker via e-mail at terirucker@yahoo.com to volunteer.

ZooBoo
Saturday & Sunday, October 19-20 and 26-27
11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Venture through the Zoo collecting candy, enjoying the animals and participating in other fun activities along the way. Stop by your favorite haunts and make a deliciously sweet treat or get spooked at the haunted house. Conjure up a frightfully fun costume for the Halloween parade and costume contest at Water’s Edge.
Owl-O-Ween at the Aviary
Saturday, October 19 and 26
11 am to 3 pm

The National Aviary will celebrate its annual Owl-O-Ween, Saturday, October 19 and Saturday, October 26 from 11 am to 3 pm, complete with a Halloween party, trick-or-treating, costumes, crafts, and even a creepy crawly bug station. Enjoy close encounters with raptors, owls and other creatures of the night. And, this year help us name our Eurasian Eagle Owl, who hatched back in March! All activities are included in price of admission.

Night of the Living Dead at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater
October 31-November 2 at 8:00 pm and November 3 at 7:00 pm

Micoscopic Opera will present the world premiere of the Night of the Living Dead opera written by Todd Goodman and Steven Catanzarite with special permission from film maker George Romero.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit Microscopic Opera’s website.
Meet Evan Church

Evan Church is the new artist in residence at Union Project. He will be there from September to December 2013 thanks to an Advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh Grant, a joint program of The Pittsburgh Foundation and The Heinz Endowments. As I interviewed him for this article, it turns out that is just the beginning of the story...

Evan was raised in Africa during a large part of his childhood. The son of missionary parents, he spent time in Malawi, Kenya and Zimbabwe. When he talks of Africa, and especially Zimbabwe, you can see genuine affection in his eyes. He describes it as a place of extremes with no middle ground - abundance vs. the absolute lack of it. It was in that lack of abundance that he found the most beauty.

In the slums, he witnessed people who had to focus on mere survival from day to day and yet they radiated joy. They had so little and yet they had so much - a spiritual people who were connected to the earth and to their communities. As an artist, he has tried to capture that spirit and share it with the larger global community.

In an effort to give back and affect change, Evan worked for years as a humanitarian/aid worker in some remote and dangerous areas of Africa hoping to make a difference in peoples lives. After 10 years of service, he came to believe that aid as we give it is not a sustainable solution, it does not help and in many cases it actually causes harm.

After years of following an interesting and successful project in a Malawi, as well as some others, he came to the conclusion that the best way to help the people he was so connected to was to start a business in one of these areas that had the potential to train and employed many.

The business of course would have to be sustainable using natural materials and fill or create a need. If successful, it would give the workers a vocation and good wages, not to mention improve their self worth. The thought being, if they had those, they could determine their own future.

Unlike in the US when we speak of determining one’s future, Evan means much simpler things such as the opportunity for clean drinking water, humane living conditions and for the worker’s children to receive an education. Things we take for granted every day.

One successful project in particular started Evan on his path to Union Project and Highland Park. It was about a business in Malawi. The plan was simple. An English potter married a Malawi woman and started a little ceramics shop. He trained a few locals in pottery to help him create product and low and behold, 20 years later he employs 200 workers.

Evan came up with a plan that is just as simple - find a location and open a ceramics shop using local workers and artisans and pay them a good wage. After much thought, he had narrowed his field to two locations, but there was a small kink in the plan... he did not know anything about ceramics.

Evan had been thinking about this project for some time when in September 2012, he was contacted by the son of a man who had commissioned a painting years earlier. He told Evan about how he had met street kids in Kenya from a feeding program his father helped fund. They had asked him if he could provide them with some sort of training that would lead to jobs and he was contacting Evan to see if he had any ideas. He did.

Evan listened intently knowing that Kenya was one of the two locations that he was considering for his shop. This conversation, as well as others, made him realize that this plan could work! Except for that little ceramics issue...
As with anything in life we feel we are destined to do, when the planets start aligning our vision gets more clear and determined.

Evan had been working at Ford Motor Co. in Michigan as an automotive clay modeler until he was laid off this past winter. A few days after the layoff, the man who had traveled to Kenya and told Evan the story of the children on the street begging for work or training, offered Evan $20,000 to start the project. The need to learn about ceramics was now imperative.

As the fates would have it, Evan attended the same church in Michigan as Union Project’s Jenna Sue Vanden Brink’s parents. I am sure you can guess the rest of the story, but there are one or two jewels I don’t want you to miss.

After speaking to Jenna about coming to Union Project to study ceramics, they realized a grant from The Pittsburgh Foundation and The Heinz Endowments was a perfect fit - it focused on advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh. Evan has been painting Africa since he was homesick for it in college in the US.

The Union Project applied for the grant to bring Evan to Pittsburgh with multiple goals in mind - support his work as an artist and entrepreneur, share their ceramic resources, and introduce an international artist to the Pittsburgh community.

During this time, Ford also called him back to work for 3 months, which allowed him to earn some money and start planning his future. A week after he was laid off again he received word that he got the grant.

We are always joking that the world is a small place and that Pittsburgh is eventually the center of it all - two degrees of separation instead of the more accepted six degrees in the rest of the US. Holding true to form, it turns out that Keith Hershberger, a UP ceramics guru and HP native, attended the same school system in Africa as Evan did growing up and although they did not know each other when in school they have many friends in common. Welcome to Pittsburgh!

It is clear that Evan is on the right path. There are too may coincidences leading to this moment to think otherwise. I’m just glad his path brought him to Pittsburgh.

As for his first impressions of Highland Park - he thinks the people are very friendly, even more so than in Michigan, which he was not expecting. He loves to walk around and get lost, just to see what he will find. He also finds the hilly landscape and brick and stone architecture fascinating.

“There is a tangible energy here in Highland Park that people see. They know it is worth their time and energy to invest in the community,” Evan said. That is the same feeling he is following all the way back home - to Africa.

Evan’s paintings and his descriptions of them will give you an idea of his love for Africa and the beauty he sees, even in the most challenging of places. In his words, “As an American raised in Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Kenya, I’ve grown up between cultures. Everything I do is a communication between the two primary cultures in my life, Western and African. I have learned so much from Africa. I feel an obligation to share my experience through my art and show that the lives of African people are beautiful and meaningful. I want people to hear the stories and realize that we can learn from people who live simply.”

Learn more about Evan and his work in person. Groups or classes interested in a studio visit with Evan are welcomed and asked to contact Jenna Vanden Brink at jenna@unionproject.org to schedule a visit. His work will also be shown at Union Project’s annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration on Monday, January 20, 2014.
“Rain Tree”

This is the portrait of a tree I love in Hwange, Zimbabwe’s premier game park. I was always fascinated by that branch which leans so far out.

“Chilende”

In Malawi’s capital of Lilongwe, Chilinde is one of several high density, low income areas or townships where the workers of the city live. My family also lived there and encountered scenes like this on a daily basis. This painting sums up a lot of what Chilinde is to me. There is a scruffiness to the area, but there’s also a beauty.

I was walking through part of the township with a friend in the Peace Corps who was to return to the States a few days later. She wanted to use up her film and asked me if I saw anything she should take a picture of. I thought to myself, “Yes, everything around you.”

“Four Boys”

Four Boys was my first commission. I was asked to paint a picture of children in Africa and beyond that I had complete artistic freedom. I built up the background around these four and their very distinct personalities.

“Turquoise Net”

The North Coast of Zanzibar is exquisite. I spent a couple days wandering the beaches there, watching the sea and the people who worked it. I followed these ladies down the beach hoping something would happen. It did when they dropped their net and began fishing in the shallows.

To see more images of Evan’s work visit his website at evanchurch.com.
City of Pittsburgh Fall Yard Debris Collection Day

Take advantage of the Department of Public Works’ Environmental Services Division’s fall 2013 yard debris collection day to be held on Saturday, November 9th.

Please note the following guidelines for debris collection:

- **Bag Leaves for Collection:** Residents must bag leaves in paper bags only and place them out at your normal refuse collection site. Bags should NOT exceed 35 pounds. Leaves in plastic bags will not be accepted. Paper yard debris bags can be purchased at Home Depot.

- **Tree Branches and Bushes:** Cut, bundle and tie branches and bushes in lengths not exceeding 5 ft. in length. Tree branch diameter should not exceed four (4) inches.

Please note that City crews will NOT collect dirt, rocks, stones or cement. Yard debris left at the curb by contracted lawn care workers or independent contractors will NOT be collected by city crews.

Yard debris not meeting the collection guidelines will not be collected by city crews. If you have any questions please contact Environmental Services at (412)-255-2631 or (412)-255-2773.

Tending the Gardens

*By Nancy Schultz*

The Highland Park fountain and beautiful flower gardens are just two of the many reasons we all love living in this neighborhood. The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, specifically Angela Yuele, provides the flowers, mulch and supplies, but it’s up to Highland Park volunteers to plant them and then weed throughout the season.

As we end this growing season, we want to give a special thank you to the Morningside Men’s Garden Club who have helped this summer and your Highland Park neighbors who gave their Wednesday evenings to keep the gardens beautiful. The gardens would be impossible without your volunteer help.

Thank you Angela and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy for your guidance and energy.

*See you next spring.*

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Nancy Schultz and Al Mann weeding the flower gardens at the Victoria fountain.
The months of October and November are often busy ones around historic St. Andrew's Church — and that's pretty much true this year, even as we continue in so many ways to deal with the disruptions of renovations and construction. Even with the jumble, Sunday services continue in the Church at 9 and 11 a.m., with programs for children, youth, and adults during the 10 a.m. hour. Our midweek services include a simple service of the Holy Communion on Wednesday mornings at 10:30 a.m and Choral Evensong on the “First Thursday” of each month at 8 pm and on the” Third Sunday” of each month at 4:30 p.m.

On Sunday afternoon, October 20, at 4:30 p.m. our monthly “Third Sunday” service of Choral Evensong will include a sermon by the Rev. David Gleason, recently retired Senior Pastor of the First Lutheran Church in downtown Pittsburgh and a key figure in our ecumenical community. Again, all welcome!

The annual All Saints Music Festival will have two major events this year. On Sunday morning, November 3rd, at 11 a.m., St. Andrew’s Parish Choir and the Pittsburgh Festival Orchestra, under the direction of Guest Conductor Thomas Octave, will present the W.A. Mozart Missa Brevis in D Major in the course of the principal Sunday morning service.

Then on Thursday evening, November 7, the Parish Choir and PFO will sing the Gabriel Faure Requiem in the context of a Requiem service of the Holy Communion, in observance of the Feast Day of All Souls.

And finally, on Sunday morning, November 24, the byways of our Highland Park neighborhood will be alive with the great sound of Bagpipe and Drum, as the Syria Highlanders once again join us for our annual festive anticipation of our Patronal Day, St. Andrew the Apostle. The Highlanders will be out in front of the Church for 15 minutes or so before the 11 a.m. service, weather permitting, and all are most certainly invited to join us for some or all of the celebration of the day. Later that week, on Wednesday evening the 27th, at 8 p.m., we will have our annual “Thanksgiving Eve” service - a simple service of the Holy Communion, with harvest hymns and an ingathering of non-perishable food items for our neighborhood East End Food Pantry.

St. Andrew’s, in the 5800 block of Hampton Street, has been at the heart of this neighborhood of Highland Park for over a century now. If you have a pastoral concern we can help with — a baby to be baptized, a marriage to celebrate, a sick or shut-in family member or neighbor who would appreciate a visit and a blessing, a family to comfort at the time of the death of a loved one — or if you simply would like to borrow a table, please feel free to give our Church Office a call at 412 661-1245 — or check us on the web, www.standrewspgh.org.

We’re always glad to hear from you.
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