

inside

BOROUGH	3
WCDC	4
SCHOOL DISTRICT	5
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	7

VOL. 7 NO. 4 December 2013/November 2014 A FREE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER BRINGING YOU GOOD NEWS ABOUT WILKINSBURG

The Community Comes Together to Build a Playground



For more images of the playground build, see page 8.



Over 200 volunteers from the community came together on November 2, and built a new brightly-colored playground at Ferguson Park at South Avenue and Center Street. The new playground's design is based on drawings created by children who participated in a design day event in September, including students from Pittsburgh Urban Christian School (PUCS) who use the playground during recesses.

This happened because of a cooperative effort of PUCS, the Borough, the Heinz Endowments, and KaBOOM!

Because children need a place to play every day in order to be active and healthy, KaBOOM! as an organization has been committed to providing for children's physical, social and cognitive health since 1996. They say only 1-in-5 children live within walking distance of a park or playground.

The new playground will provide more than 500 children in the community with

continued on page 7

WCM Executive Director Ann Greider Retires

Ann Greider, Executive Director of the Wilkinsburg Community Ministry (WCM) since 2007, retired in November. WCM is a ministry of local churches whose mission is to help those in need in the Wilkinsburg area. Programs such as the Youth Food Partnership, Meals on Wheels, Dollar Energy, Emergency Food Pantry and social service counseling serve Wilkinsburg residents.



Ann Greider

The last five years have been difficult times for all charities and Greider has been a leader for WCM, maintaining the

continued on page 6

We are thankful for our distributors! Since the *Pennysaver* quit mailing in Wilkinsburg, *The Sun* relies on local businesses to distribute issues. If you are a local business interested in being a distributor, please contact us at editor@wilkinsburgsun.com.

Parade, Caroling and Concert on December 14

This year's Holiday Parade begins at 11 a.m. at the DPW building and ends in front of the Wilkinsburg High School with a concert at 2 p.m. on Saturday, December 14. Later that evening, the 5th annual Wilkinsburg A'Caroling begins at 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Participants can sing with the Greater Pittsburgh Area MAD DADS beginning at the corner of Whitney and Center, or with Wilkinsburg Block Watch starting at the corner of Whitney and Pennwood, or with St. James Church (6-7 p.m.) gathering at the front door of the church on Franklin

When Is Wilkinsburg Basketball?

Wilkinsburg High Varsity Basketball is underway with quite a few home games this month and next. For the girls schedule, visit <http://www.msasports.net/hs/wilkinsburg/girls-basketball> and for the boys, visit <http://www.msasports.net/hs/wilkinsburg/boys-basketball>.

Ave. Or residents can create their own group and choose their location.

Wilkinsburg A'Caroling is a project of the Greater Pittsburgh Area MAD DADS and Wilkinsburg Block Watch. For more information, contact Ernie Bey of the MAD DADS at 412.225.6943 or Kate Grannemann of Block Watch at 412.475.7444. Email Kate for a booklet of carols

Free Health Care Overview

Everyone has questions about the new Affordable Health Care Act.

On Saturday, January 11, Rachael Singer from the Squirrel Hill Health Center will be answering all your questions and giving an overview of the new Health Insurance program at 1 p.m. at the library.

Everyone is encouraged to attend with questions for themselves and family members. The presentation is free and open to all interested adults.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE SUN BY EMAIL

For those of you who are used to getting your copy of *The Sun* in your *Pennysaver*, we are no longer able to deliver that way as the *Pennysaver* no longer circulates in Wilkinsburg.

But never fear: All you have to do to ensure you never miss another issue is go to <http://eepurl.com/v0iBP> and sign up to receive a link to each and every issue via email just as soon as they hit the street.

the Wilkinsburg
Sun

P.O. Box 86064
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
412.916.1790

Lynne Gordon, Editor

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jason Cohn, President
Minister Linda Kirkland-Law, Vice President
John Irwin, Treasurer
Vanessa McCarthy-Johnson, Secretary
Richard Bradford

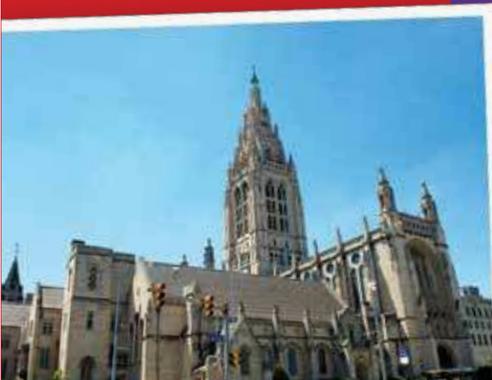
The Wilkinsburg Sun is a free monthly community newsletter published by the volunteer Wilkinsburg Community Newsletter Board, with the support of the Wilkinsburg Borough, the Wilkinsburg School District, the Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce and the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation. The Sun is printed by Knepper Press.

Please submit all articles and calendar events to: editor@wilkinsburgsun.com, or by mail, P.O. Box 86064, Wilkinsburg, PA 15221. **Please submit articles 6 weeks before publication and calendar events 4 weeks before publication.** To advertise, e-mail adsales@wilkinsburgsun.com, or call 412.916.1790. The Sun accepts submitted articles provided they are related to Wilkinsburg and are civic-minded. *The Sun* reserves the right to withhold articles from print. Please note that *The Sun* does not publish political or opinion pieces.

Celebrate the holidays with us!

Jazz "Lessons & Carols" Service December 15 - 11:00 AM

Christmas Eve Services December 24 - 5:00 & 11:00 PM



East Liberty
Presbyterian Church
THE CATHEDRAL OF HOPE

116 S. Highland Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

www.CathedralOfHope.org

Landlord Responsibilities 101, Part 1

Landlords must adhere to all local, state and federal safety codes for their property. They may learn some of these codes the hard way if they fail a property inspection. Some examples of safety codes are:

- how many smoke detectors are required per apartment/floor,
- how to remedy mold,
- the requirements for banisters and proper lighting in stairwells,
- the maximum number of people per bedroom or a maximum of “X” amount of people per “X” amount of square feet.
- weather related laws, such as how soon to have walkways salted and shoveled after a snowfall.

Landlords must have the correct amount of insurance on property. Many homeowners’ insurance policies do not cover renting. If not, they need, at the very least, to obtain basic landlord property insurance, which is insurance for the physical structure. Basic insurance plus contents will cover possessions in the building, such as tools or appliances. It will not cover the tenants’ possessions. Tenants need to obtain separate renters insurance to cover their belongings and liability.

Other types of insurance can cover floods or natural disasters and claims that may not be covered by your other liability.

Landlords are responsible for paying property taxes to the government, including taxes on the income received from collecting rent. As a landlord or property owner, there are numerous tax deductions available, which will be discussed in the February issue.

Act 90 and the Blight Fight

Blight [blahyt] noun

1. *the rapid and extensive discoloration, wilting, and death of plant tissues.*
2. *any cause of impairment, destruction, ruin, or frustration*

Potato blight contributed to permanent changes in Ireland’s demographic, economic, and cultural landscape.

Urban blight has contributed to changes in Wilkesburg’s demographic, economic, and cultural landscape, but the Borough is working to ensure that these changes are not permanent!

The Steel Valley, Turtle Creek, and Twin Rivers Council of Governments (Tri-COG) have analyzed the financial impact of blight on their 41 member communities, including the Borough of Wilkesburg. They found that:

Blight has a devastating effect on the Tri-COG Communities. Blighted and vacant properties damage the fabric of the community, cost significant dollars to maintain, and erode the local tax base because of the tax delinquency often associated with blighted properties.

Stroll along the streets of Wilkesburg, and blight is pretty obvious. What isn’t so obvious is the staggering financial impact. In their study, Tri-COG determined the costs, direct and indirect to the 41 communities in the study area:

The direct cost to municipal services is \$10,720,302.

The direct cost related to the loss of tax revenue is \$8,637,875.

The indirect costs associated with a loss in property value are estimated at between \$218 million and \$247 million.

The indirect costs associated with the loss of real estate taxes due to a decline in

property value is estimated to be between \$8,574,723 and \$9,718,019.

Unlike the Irish, who could not eradicate potato blight because of a lack of information about its causes, we have an understanding of what not only causes urban blight, but also how to fight it. In 2010, the PA Legislature gave cities and municipalities new tools in the “Fight on Blight” in the form of Act 90. Chapter 61 of the Act, subtitled “Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization”, lists actions municipalities may take against owners of properties with serious code violations. These include permit denials, extradition of out-of-state owners to face charges, and attachment of owners’ personal assets. Specifically, the act states that “a lien may be placed against the assets of an owner of real property that is in serious violation of a code or is regarded as a public nuisance after a judgment, decree or order is entered by a court of competent jurisdiction against the owner of the property”.

The Borough is in the process of determining how Act 90 can be used to encourage absentee property owners to take responsibility for their property. Act provisions do not apply to every vacant house in Wilkesburg, but they do provide another weapon in the fight to address blight.

Residents can help in this fight by continuing to report issues with vacant houses to the Code Enforcement Department (412/244.2923), and by maintaining their own properties according to Code standards.

Together, we can ensure that the impact of blight in the Borough isn’t a permanent condition! To see the full Tri-COG report, go to: <http://tcvcog.com/pdf/BlightImpactFullReport.pdf>.

The Borough’s 2014 Budget is available for your perusal at: <http://wilkesburgpa.gov/pdf/2014ManagersBudget.pdf>

UPCOMING MEETINGS

12/11 (Wed.)	7:00 P.M.	Council Legislative Meeting
12/12 (Thurs.)	6:30 P.M.	CACDC Meeting
12/18 (Wed.)	6:30 P.M.	Council Planning Session
12/19 (Thurs.)	5:30 P.M.	Parks & Recreation Meeting
1/8 (Thurs.)	7:00 P.M.	Council Legislative Meeting
1/15 (Wed.)	6:30 P.M.	Council Planning Session

All meetings will take place in the Wilkesburg Borough Building, 605 Ross Avenue.

Wilkinsburg Receives Multi-Million Dollar Funding Package to Drive Community Revitalization

Last July, Tracey Evans sat at her Executive Director's desk in the WCDC office fervently working to complete a 100-plus-page grant application for the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP). With the due date less than a week away, Evans received a call from Bill Schenk, President of TriState Capital Bank and current funder of the WCDC's NPP. He announced that two more corporations had decided to fund the WCDC for the next six years! This meant two things: the NPP would be fully funded at \$500,000 per year for the next six years, and Tracey would need to rewrite the grant within a few days. She got to work and submitted the revised grant to the state in time. At the end of October, the award letter arrived for the full \$500,000 allocated!

This extra funding resulted from a program called Strengthening Communities Partnership (SCP) developed by the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD). The SCP initiative was designed to address disparities still present in many of our region's communities, by accelerating neighborhood improvement through concentrated private investment in community development corporations.

Dennis Yablonsky, CEO of ACCD,



A. William Schenk, Taris Vrcek, Tracey Evans, Greg Jones, Dennis Yablonsky.

explains that "Through the Strengthening Communities Partnership and participation in the State's NPP, the private sector can be vital partners in driving economic development in some of our region's struggling communities." The WCDC is pleased to have been accepted by the SCP to be a part of the initial program.

McKees Rocks CDC also participated in the SCP this year. Both McKees Rocks CDC and Wilkinsburg CDC submitted proposals with detailed development plans already underway but in need of additional investment. Allegheny Conference member companies committed funding that ensures that McKees Rocks and Wilkinsburg CDCs each receive \$500,000 a year.

SCP funding for Wilkinsburg will come from TriState Capital Bank (increasing its existing investment to \$1.65 million); Keystone Health Plan West, a Highmark Company (\$900,000); and Dollar Bank (\$450,000).

"Since 2008, we have been working to revitalize the business district along Penn Avenue in Wilkinsburg and have

made significant progress," said Evans. "The additional investment and expertise, which comes as a result of our partnership with the Allegheny Conference, will provide enormous assistance as we move forward with our plan and build on the progress we have already made."

"While the Neighborhood Partnership Program is available statewide, the private sector and the community development corporations in the

Pittsburgh region have established a unique and effective approach to leveraging these tax credits," said Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development Secretary Alan Walker. The WCDC is excited to pilot the SCP in the hopes that other distressed communities can receive corporate support through NPPs.

The Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), a tax credit program of the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, provides for a maximum of \$3 million per community, paid over six years. This program offers an 80% tax credit to companies that make contributions to qualifying community development organizations. Supported activities include: affordable housing, real estate development, social services, crime prevention, education, workforce development, and other community revitalization efforts. To learn more, visit www.newpa.com.



To support the WCDC, send a tax-deductible contribution to 1001 Wood St., Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
OR donate online at wilkinsburgcdc.org
Thank you!
412.727.7855 • 412.871.3149 (fax)
info@wilkinsburgcdc.org

WCDC CALENDAR

12/5 (Thurs.)	8:30 A.M.	Business District Safety Meeting—WCDC office
12/10 (Tues.)	6:30 P.M.	Re-energize Workshop at Landmarks Housing Resource Center
1/9 (Thurs.)	8:30 A.M.	Business District Safety Meeting—WCDC office*

* Please note change in schedule



Elementary Band Entertains at Wilkinsburg Thanksgiving Lunch



Band teacher Ray Strobel leads Turner and Kelly Schools' elementary performance.



Wilkinsburg's elementary band performed at the recent free community Give Thanks Lunch at the new Bible Chapel at South and Center Avenues.

The band, taught and led by Ray Strobel, is comprised of young musicians

from Turner and Kelly Elementary Schools.

This year the band welcomed 71 new members. Along with the veteran

members, the band is now 116-students strong. If you missed the performance at the Give Thanks Lunch, you can treat yourself to an upcoming concert listed below:

Elementary Band December Performances

Thursday, December 12, 7 p.m.—Elementary Winter concert (Kelly and Turner combined). The band and other student groups will be performing.

Saturday, December 14—Holiday parade, beginning outside the fire hall, ending with a brief performance outside the HS building.

Wednesday, December 18 (Call school for time)—Turner Elementary's Storybook Forest. Turner's band only will be performing. Special guest trumpet trio performance by Ray Strobel, Shawn van Mastrigt, and Mike Evans.

School Calendar

Dec. 23–January 3	Holiday and Winter Recess
January 20	Martin Luther King Day (Schools Closed)
January 23	End of Second Grading Pd.
January 24	Clerical Day (No Students)
February 7	Act 80 Day (No Students)
February 17	President's Day (Schools Closed)



Pitt Makes a Difference Day on October 26 brought dozens of Pitt University students to Wilkinsburg's Fall Clean-Up Day. Min. Linda Kirkland-Law, the team leader and borough coordinator, is the centerpiece of the picture in the ball cap. The community is grateful for all their hard work and the leadership of team leaders Kathy Sweeney and Karen Jedinak and community leaders Roy Clark, Cindy Smith, Josie Smith-Bryant, Cindy Bahn, and the Wilkinsburg DPW Workers!

GREIDER, from page 1
programs to provide continuing client services.

Greider is a member of the Christian Church of Wilkinsburg and on the board

of the Sanctuary Project.

She will continue in retirement to be active in Wilkinsburg to serve those in need of help. The community is indebted to Greider for her service.

it's more than just food

EAST END FOOD CO-OP

*natural groceries
local produce
bulk foods
vegetarian cafe and
fair trade coffee bar*

Located in The Factory off Penn Ave.
7516 Meade Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15208
412-242-3598 www.eastendfood.coop
Open to Everyone, Everyday 8am-9pm

Featuring a Unique Blend of New & Vintage Jewelry

KENYON JEWELERS

- Your Neighborhood Jeweler Since 1924 -

Handmade, Custom Jewelry • Jewelry Repairs
Antique Jewelry Restoration

711 Penn Ave. Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
412-731-6063
www.kenyonjewelers.com

\$5.00 OFF
for over \$20.00
spent on Jewelry Repair

Kenyon Jewelers
711 Penn Ave., Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
412-731-6063

One Coupon per Customer

TRCIL

Your local resource for
LIVING WELL WITH A DISABILITY™

One Call. Countless Resources. Endless Opportunities.

WHAT DOES LIVING WELL MEAN TO YOU?

- Finding a job
- Recreational activities that are accessible
- Spiritual growth and exploration
- Finding a new hobby
- Exercising or cooking healthier food
- Obtaining new assistive technology
- Local excursions and more!

NO REQUEST IS TOO SMALL OR TOO LARGE!

CALL US at 1-877-TO-LIV-WELL
(1-877-865-4893) or TTY 412-371-6230 or
visit www.livingwellwithadisability.org

PMC

(Licensed by the PA Department of Banking)

Jim Butler, President
NMLS ID # 139251

PROFESSIONAL MORTGAGE CONNECTION, LLC
NMLS ID: 127881

412-672-5060

Preferred Lender:

TRISTATE

NMLS ID# 688561

ARE YOU SEEKING
REWARDING
YET
CHALLENGING
EMPLOYMENT?

If you are reliable, patient,
caring, kind-hearted and able to put the
needs of another person first...

WE ARE LOOKING FOR YOU!



Three Rivers Center
for Independent Living

Positions for PCW's (Personal
Care Workers/Attendants)
throughout Allegheny and
Westmoreland counties
are available.

Duties include providing in-home
personal care and other approved
support activities for people with
disabilities. Paid training
provided. Hourly rate starts at \$9.

Send resume to:

Damon Kemp
c/o TRCIL

900 Rebecca Avenue
Pittsburgh PA 15221

Or email: dkemp@trcil.org

*TRCIL does not discriminate
in employment opportunities or practices
on the basis of race, color, religion, sex,
national origin, age, disability, or any other
characteristic protected by law.*

Member Spotlight: James Flower & Gift Shoppe

James Flower & Gift Shoppe has proudly served Wilkinsburg and the greater Pittsburgh area since 1910. The business moved into Wilkinsburg in the 1940s and is currently located at 712 Wood St. Yvonne James, a third generation family member, currently runs the shop and her 86 year old father still lends a helping hand.

The James family maintains a storefront on Wood St. with window displays worth checking out. Some people even peek in the store from time to time to visit with the cats that like to wander around inside. Also inside you will find friendly and prompt service catering to your specific floral arrangement needs.

James Flower & Gift Shoppe specializes in weddings and funerals. They make both traditional and contemporary arrangements from their large inventory of fresh flowers. They also offer gift baskets, candy, greeting cards and balloons. It is open 6 days a week, but it is flexible to meet the needs of clients. They offer full deliveries to many local areas.

The Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce is proud to have James Flower & Gift Shoppe as a long time member.

General Chamber Meeting

Chamber members will meet on Thursday, December 19, at 8 a.m. at the Wilkinsburg CDC Office at 1001 Wood Street



Greater Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 86064, Wilkinsburg, Pa 15221 • 412.242.0234
info@wilkinsburgchamber.com

PLAYGROUND, from page 1

a safe place to play. "We look forward to years of happy and safe play at our new Ferguson Park," said Patrick Shattuck, Chairman, P&R Advisory Board.

This is the fourth in a series of playground construction projects in the Pittsburgh area supported by an \$800,000 grant from The Heinz Endowments. The project is also one of more than 150 playground KaBOOM! will help build this year. Since 1996, KaBOOM! has helped build more than 2,300 playgrounds.

According to Bob Phelps from PUCS, more will be done with the playground, including a basketball court. The Borough may regrade the grounds to come down to the sidewalk level on South Ave. and a water fountain, swings and maybe a sprinkle element may be added.

PUCS is a K-8 school that, according to their mission "equips students for life . . . through a love of learning, God and neighbor within a racially and economically diverse community."



Metro Family Practice, Inc.

www.metrofamilypractice.org

901 B West Street
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221



Metro Family Practice provides care
for all people, at all stages of life.

Schedule an appointment at:
412-247-2310

Caring for the family and Caring for the community

Christmas is December 25!



"Serving Pittsburgh for over 90 years"
Family owned & operated

James Floral & Gift Shoppe

www.jamesfloralshoppe.com

1-800-860-3794
(412) 731-3794
Fax (412) 731-4537

Yvonne James
712 Wood Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

Check Out the Library: Holiday Thoughts from Writers and Actors

"It came without ribbons! It came without tags! It came without packages, boxes or bags!"...Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before! "Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas... perhaps...means a little bit more!"—Dr. Seuss, from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*

I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.—Charles Dickens, author of *A Christmas Carol*.

Christmas, my child, is love in action. Every time we love, every time we give, it's Christmas.—Dale Evans, actress.

It's true; Christmas can feel like a lot of work, particularly for mothers. But when you look back on all the Christmases in your life, you'll find you've created family traditions

and lasting memories. Those memories, good and bad, are really what help to keep a family together over the long haul.—Caroline Kennedy, ambassador and author.

To perceive Christmas through its wrappings becomes more difficult with every year.—E. B. White, author of *Charlotte's Web*.

I stopped believing in Santa Claus when I was six. Mother took me to see him in a department store and he asked for my autograph.—Shirley Temple, child actress.

A good conscience is a continual Christmas.—Benjamin Franklin, statesman and author of *Poor Richard's Almanac*.

One of the most glorious messes in the world is the mess created in the living room on Christmas day. Don't clean it up too quickly.—Andy Rooney, humorist; author of *My War*.

Our hearts grow tender with childhood memories and love of kindred, and we are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmas-time.—Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of *Little House on the Prairie*.

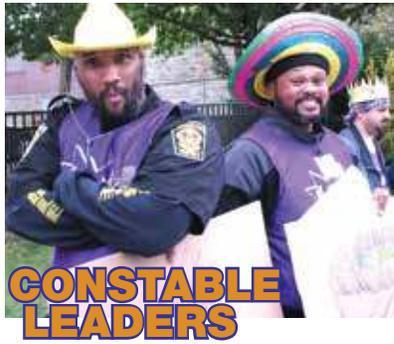
Christmas is the season for kindling the fire of hospitality in the hall, the genial flame of charity in the heart.—Washington Irving, author of *Rip Van Winkle*.

When we recall Christmas past, we usually find that the simplest things—not the great occasions—give off the greatest glow of happiness.—Bob Hope, comedian and actor

Check out and enjoy the books and movies of these and other writers and actors this month. Happy Holidays from your Wilkinsburg Public Library staff!

More Images from the Playground Build at South and Center

See story on page 1



MAKING CONNECTIONS



Photographers Vanessa Johnson, Bea Thomas and Jamie Robertson.