

Mifflin Kindergarten applications surge



Hallway outside of Mifflin's new "Makerspace."

by John T. Gillespie

Applications for the Thomas Mifflin School's kindergarten have surged following a steady drumbeat of good news about the school and aggressive marketing by the parents' association, Friends of Mifflin (FOM).

Enrollment for September, which stands at 50, is the highest in Principal Leslie Mason's 10-year tenure. Sign-ups have closed for the summer break, Mason told the East Falls *NOW*, but they will reopen in mid-August. Mason said she anticipates more enrollees in August.

In addition to the efforts of the FOM, the school has benefited -- to what extent is unclear -- from spillover from the fully-enrolled Cook-Wisahickon School in Manayunk, which has had to turn away children outside its catchment. Some of those families presumably have turned to Mifflin.

flin.

The result is that for the first time in many years Mifflin finds itself facing capacity enrollment in kindergarten.

As of the end of June the 50 students registered for the fall leaves 10 spots available with two months before school opens.

"In my ten years I've never seen interest this high," Mason said. In a typical year Mifflin carries between 35 to 40 children in two kindergarten classes. The jump in registrations makes it likely that Mifflin will fill its maximum 60-child kindergarten quota. If any are those turned away, they will go on a waiting list for the following year for first grade.

Carla Lewandowski, Co-President of FOM, says the narrative about Mifflin has changed thanks to the efforts of parents and friends. One program launched this past school year by FOM, Consider-

(Continued on page 15)

Full makeover creates Makerspace at Mifflin

by Maxine Coker, Counselor, Mifflin School

During the final days of the school year 55 volunteers from the Abbvie Foundation and the Heart of America descended on Thomas Mifflin School for an

extreme room makeover.

In just one day, they used new decorations, furnishing, supplies and equipment to transform a dreary storage room into our totally new Mifflin Makerspace.

Imagine a special place where students are encouraged to learn by collaborating,

designing, inventing, discovering and creating. It is a cheerful place with flexible seating, tools and materials for building and new technology such as 3-D printers, robots and stem kits -- a "Makerspace."

(Continued on page 15)

Officers elected; grants approved

The final East Falls Community Council meeting before the summer break saw the election of officers and approval of grants to community organizations.

The membership elected the slate presented to the general membership at its May meeting by the Nominations Committee, chaired by Holly Maher. Elected for one-year terms were: William Epstein, President; Todd Baylson, Vice President, Zoning; Mary Alice Duff, Vice President, Events; Joseph Leube, Treasurer; Christina Spolsky, Communications Director and Corresponding Secretary; Mary Jean Cunningham, Recording Secretary; and as members of the Executive Committee at-large Christopher Caporellie, John Gillespie, Thomas Flynn, Alex Keating, Emily Nichols, Robert Rabinowitz

(Continued on page 4)

Zoning Update: Lively debates across East Falls

by Todd Baylson, Chair, EFCC Zoning Committee

East Falls has been the scene for a lot of zoning and development activity in recent months. Here is a quick update on the properties that have sought zoning approval recently. The site plans, refusals and information we have received can be found at www.eastfallscommunity.org/zoning.

3680 Indian Queen Ln.: As a quick refresh, this property was purchased and is being developed by Glen Falso, who built the new homes along the downhill end of the 3400 block of W. Penn St. The Indian Queen Ln. parcel likely should have been zoned residential so that what was built there by right would better match the scale and heights of the buildings along Indian Queen Ln.

But over the years and through the 2012-2013 City re-

mapping, this parcel remained commercial zoning, similar to the adjacent commercial properties along Ridge Ave. The developer maxed out the height and massing (building shape) according to the commercial zoning, started construction, and then sought a variance to have the first floor be residential rather than the required commercial.

I'll summarize several months of internet banter and discussions at two public meetings by saying that people believed the system was being gamed and that the developer should not receive zoning relief via a variance because he did know, or should have known, what he was buying and what was allowed by right. The EFCC wrote a letter to that effect and the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA, the actual decision-making body on variances) agreed in a 4-1 vote -- meaning that now the property

(Continued on page 15)



EFDC Executive Director Meredith Johnson outside of the organization's Ridge Ave. office.

Meredith Johnson: Will success in Buda, TX, repeat in East Falls?

by John T. Gillespie

Buda (pronounced BYOO-duh), Texas, is a small town with plenty of small town charm. A main attraction, known for miles around, is the Buda Mill & Grain Co.

Dating back to the 1890s, the long defunct Mill & Grain on eight acres is home today to hip retailers and restaurateurs with names such as Hot Yoga, Sweet Cakes, Salon One, Ellipsis, Stella's Consignment, and Nate's Coffee and Cocktails. (Yes, in Texas, coffee shops can double as bars at night.)

The reborn site was largely the work of the East Falls Development Corporation's (EFDC) Executive Director, Texas native Meredith Johnson, who honed her planning skills in Buda and Seattle before earning a degree in historic preservation at the University of Pennsylvania and settling in Germantown. She took over as Executive Director of EFDC on April 1.

What's happened with Buda Mill & Grain reflects the conviction of planners that a prosperous "go-to" community needs an assortment of entertainment, eateries, and retail

(Continued on page 14)

Your July 2019 East Falls **NOW** Calendar

Due to air conditioning repairs, the Falls Library will be closed until July 5

Falls of the Schuylkill Library July hours:

Monday and Wednesday, 12 noon to 8 pm; Tuesday and Thursday, 10 am to 6 pm; and Friday, 10 am to 5 pm. Closed Thurs., July 4.
Saturday hours will resume in the fall.

The Summer of Wonder Reading Program will run through Aug. 3.

Stop in at the library to find out more about the program.

The librarians at the Falls Library are Drew Birden and Meredith McGovern. For questions, call 215-685-2093.

5 Friday

2 to 4 pm: Game Time Friday at the Falls Library for kids of all ages. (Story Pg. 6)

6 Saturday

10 am to 2 pm: East Falls Farmers Market under the Twin Bridges.

8 Monday

4:15 pm: Read with a Therapy Dog at the Falls Library. School age kids are invited to read with Wally or Orchid, certified therapy dogs. Come share a new book or an old favorite in a judgement-free space. (Story Pg. 6)

5:45 pm: Advanced Bridge at the Falls Library (Story Pg. 6)

9 Tuesday

10:15 am: Music and Movement Time at the Falls Library. Babies and toddlers will enjoy a parent-led music and dance story time. Children will play maracas, shake pom-poms, dance and listen to music and dance-themed books. Come tire out your little ones and meet local parents. Groups and daycares please call the library to set up special visits. (Story Pg. 6)

1 to 3 pm: STEM Tuesday at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

10 Wednesday

1 pm: Beginner's Bridge, Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

2 to 4 pm: Wonder Kit Wednesday at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

11 Thursday

9:30 am: EF Village Walk, Falls Library Garden. (Story Pg. 6)

2 pm: EF Village Summer Afternoon Yoga begins, Memorial Church of the Good Shepherd (Story Pg. 6)

5 pm: EF Town Watch meeting, 3540 Indian Queen Ln. (Story Pg. 13)

7 pm: Shakespeare in McMichael Park, Measure for Measure. (Story Pg. 8)

12 Friday

2 to 4 pm: Game Time Friday at the Falls Library for kids of all ages. (Story Pg. 6)

8 pm: Old Academy Players Summer One-Act Bonanza. (Story Pg. 12)

13 Saturday

10 am to 2 pm: East Falls Farmers Market under the Twin Bridges.

8 pm: Old Academy Players Summer One-Act Bonanza. (Story Pg. 12)

14 Sunday

2 pm: Old Academy Players Summer One-Act Bonanza. (Story Pg. 12)

15 Monday

4:15 pm: Read with a Therapy Dog at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

5:45 pm: Advanced Bridge at the Falls Library (Story Pg. 6)

16 Tuesday

10 am: EF Village Summer Morning Yoga (Story Pg. 6)

10:15 am: Music and Movement Time at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

1 to 3 pm: STEM Tuesday at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

17 Wednesday

1 pm: Beginner's Bridge, Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

2 to 4 pm: Wonder Kit Wednesday at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

6 pm: EF Town Watch meets with 39th Police District PSA 1 officers, Canaan Baptist Church, 5430 Pulaski Ave. (Story Pg. 13)

18 Thursday

9:30 am: EF Village Walk, Falls Library Garden. (Story Pg. 6)

11 am: Special program, Falls Library: Summer Snack Storytime for ages 2 to 6. (Story Pg. 6)

19 Friday

2 to 4 pm: Game Time Friday at the Falls Library for kids of all ages. (Story Pg. 6)

8 pm: Old Academy Players Summer One-Act Bonanza. (Story Pg. 12)

20 Saturday

10 am to 2 pm: East Falls Farmers Market under the Twin Bridges.

8 pm: Old Academy Players Summer One-Act Bonanza. (Story Pg. 12)

21 Sunday

2 pm: Old Academy Players Summer One-Act Bonanza. (Story Pg. X)

22 Monday

4:15 pm: Read with a Therapy Dog at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

6 pm: EF Town Watch meets with 39th Police District officials, 22nd St. and Hunting Park Ave. (Story Pg. 13)

6 pm: Program on the stoicism philosophy, Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

23 Tuesday

10 am: EF Village Summer Morning Yoga (Story Pg. 6)

10:15 am: Music and Movement Time at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

1 to 3 pm: STEM Tuesday at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

24 Wednesday

1 pm: Beginner's Bridge, Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

2 to 4 pm: Wonder Kit Wednesday at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

25 Thursday

9:30 am: EF Village Walk, Falls Library Garden. (Story Pg. 6)

11 am: Storytime and Block Party and the Falls Library, ages two to six. (Story Pg. 6)

26 Friday

2 to 4 pm: Game Time Friday at the Falls Library for kids of all ages. (Story Pg. 6)

29 Saturday

10 am to 2 pm: East Falls Farmers Market under the Twin Bridges.

29 Monday

4:15 pm: Read with a Therapy Dog at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

30 Tuesday

10 am: EF Village Summer Morning Yoga (Story Pg. 6)

10:15 am: Music and Movement Time at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

1 to 3 pm: STEM Tuesday at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

31 Wednesday

1 pm: Beginner's Bridge, Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

2 to 4 pm: Wonder Kit Wednesday at the Falls Library. (Story Pg. 6)

6:30 pm: EF Village documentary film on the Johnstown Flood, Falls Library (Story Pg. 6)

This date is beyond July and worth noting in your calendar: **Aug. 21-25: Parks on Tap Beer Garden, McMichael Park. (Story Pg. 8)**

Stay informed. If you don't receive the EF Community Council's weekly emails, send your email address to info@eastfallscommunity.org.



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Good news: Mifflin at 'tipping point?'; Bad news: Checks missing from Post Office?

I couldn't decide whether to go with good news or bad news this month.

I decided on both. First, the good news. As reported on Page 1 by John Gillespie, the Thomas Mifflin School has the largest number of kindergarten enrollees -- the largest by far -- in the past 10 years. Maybe longer.

Leslie Mason, Mifflin's Principal, says that normally when school closes in June she has about 15 enrollees for the following year. She now has 50.

And she's counting on more, when enrollment reopens in mid-August.

What's going on here?

Several things, in addition to the fact that nearby Cook-Wissahickon has reached capacity and might be driving families to Mifflin:

- The teaching and administrative staff assembled by Mason is running at high speed. If you've met Mason, her teachers, counselor Maxine Coker, former Assistant Principle and now teacher Michele Carpenter, and others, you can't help but be impressed by their energy, expertise and dedication.

- The parents' association, aka The Friends of Mifflin (FOM), is reenergized. Wit-

ness the successful battle to stymie, at least for the time being, the proposed Charter Lab School that sought to move to 3300 Henry Ave. with no real attempt at community engagement. The School Board, correctly acting against the recommendation of its own Charter School Office, put that move on "indefinite" hold because of the FOM's efforts. At the



A message from the
EFCC
President

by Bill Epstein

same time, the FOM has run a series of monthly "Consider Mifflin" meetings in homes in East Falls to introduce the school to prospective parents. They worked.

- People are recognizing the good things happening at Mifflin. Students from Mifflin are moving on to the highly competitive Masterman, Girls High and Central High Schools. Mifflin now has a piano lab, with 30 keyboards. Nearly every class as a smart board. In most grades, every

student has a chrome book. Soon every student will have one.

- This September, every grade will have Spanish. Mason had to trade away her art teacher to get a Spanish teacher -- a trade she shouldn't have had to make. It wouldn't be tolerated in better-financed suburban districts. Mason didn't want to make this Sophie's choice between an art teacher and a Spanish teacher, but she told EF NOW that having a Spanish teacher is something she's wanted for a long time, "because competitive high schools want children who have a second language capacity, and we don't want Mifflin students to be at a disadvantage." Until the ruling political party in Harrisburg wakes up and fulfills its duty to fund public education equitably, these difficult choices will be a reality in Philadelphia.

Here's where I stick out my neck, fully knowing that it could be cut off. I could be wrong. But I'm betting that I'll be right.

If you've attended EFCC meetings in the recent years, you might have heard me say that it isn't happening tomorrow. Not next month or next

year. But soon, people will be saying that they bought their house in East Falls because they want their children to attend Mifflin.

Sure, I always get skeptical looks when I say it. Now, in this July issue of East Falls NOW, I'm doubling down. I'm here to suggest that Mifflin has reached the tipping point. The kindergarten enrollment for September will go even higher; more good news is coming Mifflin's way, and Mifflin's momentum will continue to grow.

Some parents will say that they don't trust Philadelphia public schools. That's understandable, and for the near future a bit of that sentiment will remain. But Mifflin is about to become one of those schools that surmounts the problems of being a Philadelphia public school. It's happened in other neighborhoods in the city. The evidence shows that it's happening in East Falls. Visit and see for yourself. Consider Mifflin.

As for the bad news:

How can criminals be so smart?

In the past three weeks, we've learned of Fallers who placed mail in several local collection boxes -- mail that

contains checks.

Soon enough, they found that someone had opened their mail, taken the checks out of the envelopes, changed the dollar amount on the check by several multiples and used what's called a "whitewashing" solution to alter the name of the intended recipient. Next step: bank accounts are being drained.

These crimes have been reported to the police and the FBI. What we don't know yet is whether the checks were removed from the collection boxes, the collection truck, the East Falls Post Office or the Central Post Office. We also don't know if anyone inside the Post Office system is responsible, if someone at a bank or banks is in on the crime, and whether some clever criminals are altering these checks, photographing them and depositing them on line to their own accounts, people-free. You can do that at some banks. Ain't technology wonderful?

I like the good news better.

Stay tuned to East Falls NOW and our in-between email updates as we follow this altered check scheme. If you don't get our emails, drop us a note at info@eastfallscommunity.org.

Historic PA Farm Bill moving forward

Since 2012, I have served on the Agricultural and Rural Affairs Committee of the PA House.

At first some folks thought it odd that a 'city girl' would be interested in Agriculture. Now they know that I am indeed a huge supporter of the largest industry in Pennsylvania as evidenced by my involvement with the Committee's work, my

pro prowess at milking cows (at least once a year in the Celebrity Milking Contest at the Farm Show) and by my unwavering support for the W.B. Saul High School, located in my district and the only agricultural high school in the Commonwealth.

In fact, I am the prime sponsor of HB 1518, the Agriculture and Youth Organization Grant Program;

The PA Farm Bill, a package of legislation that provides support for and continued investments in the Commonwealth's agriculture industry, was modeled after the governor's six-point plan to cultivate future generations of citizens who earn a living in Pennsylvania's agriculture industry.

Highlights of the legislation include:



Pam's
Viewpoint

by St. Rep. Pamela A. DeLissio

- Creating the Pennsylvania Agricultural Business Development Center to help every farmer create a business plan, transition plan, or succession plan to ensure the best chance of success;

- Incentivizing the transfer of preserved farmland to a new or beginning farmer through the Realty Transfer Tax Exemption;

- Creating the Conservation Excellence Grant Program to offer financial and technical assistance to farmers to install and implement conservation best management practices;

- Expanding the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) tax credits by \$3 million to increase the lifetime cap and increase availability;

- Developing the PA Dairy Investment Program to fund research and development, organic transition assistance, value-added processing, and marketing grants in support of



Fresh vegetables from the Farmer's market.

Pennsylvania's dairy industry;

- Addressing issues within the animal agriculture industry, including processing capacity, transition assistance, technical assistance, food safety, and establishing industrial hemp as an approved animal feed-- through the Center for Animal Agriculture Excellence;
- Incentivizing access to meat processing inspections to encourage small or new producers by reimbursing federal meat inspection costs and subsidizing the first-time purchase of equipment;
- Expanding the allowable width for the use of implementations of husbandry on roads from 16 feet to 18 feet;
- Engaging with agricultural and rural youth organizations to help increase knowledge and awareness of agricultural issues through the Agriculture and Youth Organization Grant

Program;

- Improving childhood nutrition while increasing exposure to agriculture through the Farm to School Grant Program;

- Improving agriculture infrastructure in urban areas, the aggregation of product, sharing of resources, and support for community development efforts;

- Ensuring a quick response to agricultural disasters through the Pennsylvania Rapid Response Disaster Readiness Account;

- Making Pennsylvania the nation's leading organic state by further enhancing the growth of the organic industry;

- Supporting the PA Preferred program and bolstering enrollment in the Homegrown by Heroes Program, and;

- Creating the state-level Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to invest in and encourage farming of high-priority horticultural crops such as hemp, hops, and hardwoods.

For more information about the PA Farm Bill and the state's agriculture industry, visit www.agriculture.pa.gov.

This historic package of bills was voted out of the PA House Ag Committee in June and I look forward to voting these bills on final passage.

Since you will be reading this in early July, I would like to remind everyone that Farmers Market season is well underway and ask that you support buying local and buying fresh. A list of farmer's Markets in the 194th District can be found on my website, www.pahouse.com/DeLissio, under the About tab.

East Falls **NOW**

Published monthly and on-line by the East Falls Community Council
PO Box 12672, Philadelphia, PA 19129
www.eastfallsnow.com • www.eastfallscommunity.org

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Printed by our partner in community news,
The Chestnut Hill Local, and delivered to
homes and businesses in East Falls

Letters to the East Falls **NOW** editor

Speed bumps needed

To the Editor:

It's long past time for the City to install speed bumps or other devices to slow traffic in the 3200 block of Scotts Ln. Cars go up and down at speeds not meant for a residential street. I and others who live on Scotts Ln. have had mirrors knocked off and our cars sideswiped with my father's car being the latest one. Traffic has doubled over the years. From Ridge Ave. drivers get a running start up Scotts Ln. at high speed with nothing to stop them until they reach Indian Queen Ln. The same happens when coming the opposite way. And we're not just talking about cars. Many delivery trucks try to pass one another with our cars paying the price. If there is anything that can be done to slow the traffic, it would go a long way to saving us money on car repairs!

Diane Cox, 3226 Scotts Ln.

Let battle be 'peaceful'

To the Editor:

My theology professor at Reformed Episcopal Seminary told us, "Education without God only creates better educated thieves." I agree.

I fear that the difference between public education in the charter schools and public education at Mifflin is the difference between tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum, for neither is God-centered. Parents who take God and His revelation seriously try either to home school their children, or to send them to a religious school. Republican legislators for the past 25 years have encouraged a voucher system so that more parents can afford to send their children to religious schools.

It's great to see Mifflin School doing well and supported by the community. When I went to Mifflin (1956-58), the culture was more homogenous, and the Bible was read at the start of the day. Yes, I am with Dennis Prager on maintaining the Judeo-Christian foundation of our society, so there will be battles, but may they be peaceful.

Tom Muldoon, East Falls

Mifflin should be center of playground plans

To the Editor:

The announcement by Councilman Curtis Jones Jr. that he is committing \$250,000 to an East Falls play space may effectively put an end to the hopes and aspirations of the Thomas Mifflin School neighborhoods where a true neighborhood/community play space and playground are sorely needed.

Imposing a play space on McMichael Park, one of the few community green areas, does not reflect the written support of many community organizations and the will of many of the Councilman's constituents. Indeed, the recent groundswell of community support, led by the Friends of Mifflin, is for the Thomas Mifflin Elementary School to be the center of these plans. The reality is that the East Falls community has many more playgrounds than most of the Councilman's other constituent neighborhoods. Additionally, the proposed plan satisfies only a few of the Councilman's financial supporters and the owners of expensive

houses who seem unwilling to walk an equal distance to already existing playgrounds.

Likely to be disappointed are Mayor James Kenney, who has promised that close by Zip Code Equity recreational opportunities be made available to communities, and the children who will essentially be barred from the play space because of distance and the heavily trafficked streets that would have to be crossed.

The Councilman has largely been an effective leader who has just been selected to appear on the ballot for another term in office. That does not mean that he has correctly read community sentiment on all issues. Indeed, while the building of a playground in McMichael park continues to be a strongly divisive issue there are members of the Friends of Mifflin who, while initially supporting a play space in McMichael Park, have come to realize that a Mifflin School playground is a priority and that it is unlikely that two close by locations would each draw the requisite support for million dollar expenditures. Expectations are that Council-

man Curtis Jones Jr. will do for East Falls and the Mifflin School what Council President Darrell Clarke has done in creating a community play space and playground for Fishtown and the Alexander Adair Public School.

Dr. Robert Rabinowitz, East Falls

'Embarrassed' by behavior at Franklin's

To the Editor:

I was embarrassed to see how my neighbors treated members of the East Falls Community Council's Zoning Committee when they came to Franklin's to discuss the proposed development on Conrad St.

When the officers of the community council tried to speak – even when they were asked questions – they were interrupted and harassed and could hardly get in a word. It doesn't matter which way you feel about the proposal. We should treat each other with respect and not bully each other.

Name withheld at request,
East Falls



The truth on East Falls **NOW** photos

Let there be no mistake. At East Falls NOW, we're committed to running our photos until we get them absolutely correct!

Celebrating a first TV:

Last month we ran a wonderful photo, courtesy of Tony DiStefano, of students at the former St. Bridget School taking a break from lunch to gather around the first television in the school, circa 1951-52. We didn't have much information beyond that for a caption, but we now have the identities of some of the students. If any of our readers can identify the youngsters we've listed as "unknown," please contact Ellen Sheehan at 215-848-8396.

At the top center of the photo is Dick Clark (shaking hands). On the 1st Row: Steven Povemba, (first name unknown) Ward, Francis Simon, Tony DiStefano, William Conaty, Joseph Murphy, Joseph Gosse, Ray Dobson, Len McCoy, two unknowns, Pat Dobson, Mary Wynn Marino, three unknowns, Catherine Ryan, unknown and Roberta Fontana. 2d Row: three unknowns, Bob Stansfield,

Mike DeCarlo, Robert Smith, two unknowns, Joseph McCormick, unknown, Tony Gallagher, unknown, John Conway, and three unknowns. 3rd Row: unknown, Bernice Spiece, Joan Mahon, two unknowns, and Peggy Rocks. 4th Row: two unknowns, (first name unknown) Scanzello, two unknowns, Philip DiElmo and unknown.



Celebrating Mifflin's artists

We also ran a photo of a Mifflin student who was, justifiably, so proud of his artwork that he bought it for himself. He is, correctly, Andre Bell, and he's one of the shining stars of Mifflin because he's on his way to Masterman in September. Lots of reasons to be proud!

Officers elected; grants approved

(Continued from page 1)

and Christopher Rooney.

Epstein said that work will begin during the summer to recruit new officers for the 2020-21 year and to update the EFCC's by-laws. He asked that persons interested in serving on the EFCC's Zoning, Events or Education Committees send their contact information to info@eastfallscommunity.org.

The membership approved six grants, also as presented to the May meeting by Mary Jean Cunningham, Chair of the Grant Committee:

1. \$400 to Friends of Inn Yard Park to install shelves and hooks in a garden house being built at the park to store materials and tools used for the park.

2. \$500 to East Falls Community Garden to rebuild a shed destroyed by a fallen tree and for expenses related to chipping Christmas trees for use in the garden.

3. \$500 to East Falls Town Watch to assist with basic overhead expenses, costs related to patrols by members, litter cleanups in East Falls and National Night Out.

4. \$500 to Old Academy Play House to assist with buying new seats for the theater.

5. \$600 to Friends of McMichael Park to support the annual Theater in the Park production.

6. \$800 to East Falls Tree Tenders to help pay for nature-related programs at Mifflin School, field trip expenses and a book for each Mifflin graduate.

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Dragonflies – Valuable menace to mosquitos

Summer is here and that means insects -- many beneficial, others not so much.

One of my favorites are the dragonflies. Excellent fliers and ferocious predators, dragonflies eat many times their weight in pest insects every day. Dragonflies are completely harmless to human beings. But to a mosquito, they can be downright terrifying.



Navin on Nature

by Navin Sasikumar

Different species of dragonflies hunt in different ways, but most of them ambush their prey from the air. Some, like the skimmers, find a perch and then zoom out to catch something tasty that they spot. Others are fliers, rarely perching, constantly flying as they zip around catching prey. Dragonflies lay their eggs in or near water. Like the adults, the dragonfly nymphs are predators as well, eating most things smaller than them. And just like the adults, the dragonfly nymphs go after mosquito larvae, as well.

You might see where I'm going with this. Dragonflies are the best mosquito control you can find. I use *Bacillus thuringiensis* subspecies



Blue Dasher dragonfly perched on a plant stake as it hunts insects in Navin's backyard.

israelensis (Bti), and while it does a great job killing the mosquito larvae, the adults are still around and gravitate towards me if I'm out in my backyard. Bti is a strain of bacteria that target the larvae of mosquitoes, blackflies and fungus gnats. You can put Bti

dunks or granules anywhere water collects and any mosquito larvae that hatch in these waters will be killed.

But as I've noted, once the larvae form pupae or turn into adults Bti cannot kill them. This is where dragonflies come in. As counterintu-

itive as it may seem, building a backyard pond is one of the best ways to keep mosquitoes under control. Since dragonflies also lay their eggs in water, they are attracted to ponds. If yours is large enough, you might even get frogs and toads -- wonderful

mosquito predators.

Unfortunately, my backyard is too small to dig a pond, so I've been experimenting with building a barrel pond. It's half an oak barrel filled with water with some emergent plants. I still use Bti dunks in the pond, but this summer I'm starting to see some dragonflies hanging out in my small backyard. I'm hoping my tiny 'pond' is good enough for them to lay eggs in and in a couple of years, I won't need to use Bti dunks anymore since the dragonflies will do all the work.

One of the biggest challenges to establishing a strong dragonfly population in the neighborhood is the lack of continuous good habitat for them. If a few more East Falls residents dig ponds or build barrel ponds, we could have a great corridor of prime dragonfly habitat, perhaps even frogs and toads, and have the mosquito population well under control.

If you build a pond, remember to use Bti dunks until you have a thriving dragonfly population. Unlike chlorine, for example, Bti affects only mosquitoes. Dragonflies are not affected, so you can use Bti while building a dragonfly habitat.

If you have any questions about building dragonfly habitat, comments, or suggestions for future East Fall NOW articles, please email me at navinsasikumar@gmail.com.

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Library closed until July 5; Summer programs begin

East Falls *NOW* received late word that the Library will be closed until Friday, July 5 because of air conditioning repairs.

In the meantime, a full schedule of programs for children and adults will continue through July and August. The Library will be closed on Thursday, July 4.

Adult schedule

Bridge for beginners and advanced players will kick off the July schedule. Every Wednesday of the month at 1 pm, Friends of the Falls Library Victor Lewis will oversee the games, and all are welcome. On two Mondays – July 1 and July 15, both at 5:30 pm, Lewis will be available for advanced players.

East Fallers interested in the stoicism philosophy can join a discussion group on this ancient Greek philosophy that teaches self-control and fortitude. This will take place at 6 pm Mon., July 22.

Children's Schedule

The Summer of Wonder reading program will continue through July. Now's the time to stop in and grab a copy of the program's calendar. The activities are for children



aged newborn to 12 years, and include prizes for reading and completing activities. The program will wrap up on Fri., Aug. 3.

Read with a therapy dog

Every Monday in July at 4:15 pm it's time for Read With a Therapy Dog. School age kids are invited to come read with Wally or Orchid, certified therapy dogs, and share a new book or an old favorite in a judgment-free space.

Music and Movement Time Every Tuesday at 10:15 am Music and Movement Time takes over the kids' space at the library. Babies and toddlers will enjoy a parent-led music and dance story time. Children will play maracas, shake pom poms, dance and listen to music and dance-themed books. Here's a great opportunity to tire out your little ones and meet local parents. Groups and daycares should call the library to set

up their own special visits.

STEM Tuesday

Also every Tuesday, but from 1 to 3 pm, a different tabletop science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) will be presented.

Wonder Kit Wed.

From 2 to 4 pm every Wednesday the children's department will host Wonder Kit Wednesday, giving youngsters an opportunity to

explore Wonder Kits and their crafts, games and activities.

Storytime and Block Play

Recommended for ages two to six, accompanied by an adult, Storytime and Block Play will be held on Thurs., July 25 at 11 am. Siblings are welcome for stories and songs followed by playtime with the library's wooden blocks. Come to imagine, build, and create. Groups must call the children's librarian to schedule separate appointments.

Game Time Friday

End every week of July with the library's Game Time Friday, from 2 to 4 pm. You'll find games and puzzles for all ages! Play an old favorite or discover a new one.

Special Program

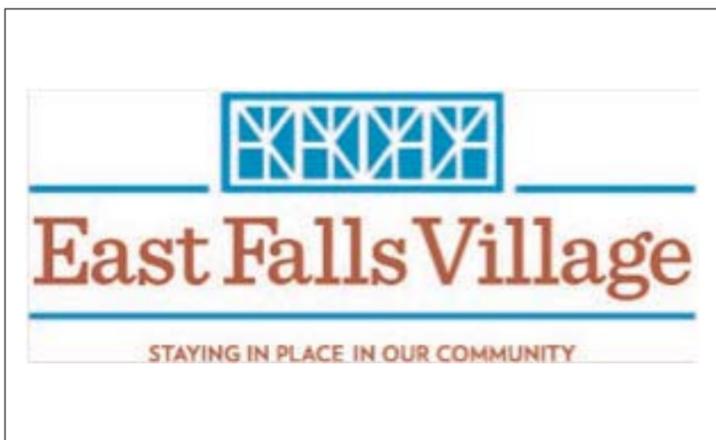
At 11 am Thursday, July 18 the library will stage a special Summer Snack Storytime. Youngsters can try something tasty and hear a favorite story. Fruit will be available, but feel free to bring your own choice. For ages 2 to 6 years old, with an adult.

EF Village sets summer yoga, Johnstown Flood video

by Mary Flourney

The East Falls Village's series of Tuesday morning yoga classes will begin on July 9 and run through September 24 from 10 to 11 am. The Thursday afternoon series from 2 to 3 pm will start on July 11, running through Sept. 26. All classes will take place at The Memorial Church of the Good Shepherd, 3820 The Oak Rd.

The classes are gentle yoga. The instructor, Lillian Rozin,



is from the Ralston Center and has experience teaching yoga to all ages – including folks with joint replacements, arthritis and other ailments. She can adapt poses and says, "If it hurts, don't do it!" Each class begins and ends with breathing and relaxation.

Give it a try. To register, call 267-444-4507. Members can register and pay on eastfallsvillage.org. The fee for each series is \$84 for members of East Falls Village and \$108 for non-Village mem-

bers. Checks should be made payable to EFCC and mailed to EFCC, PO Box 12672, Phila. PA 19129. Please write "Tues AM Yoga" or "Thurs PM Yoga" on the subject line of the check. Payment and registration are required for the whole series, but if you have to miss a Tuesday session, you can make it up by coming to a Thursday session that week or the next. You also can bring a check to the first session.

Johnstown Flood film and discussion

On May 31, 1889, one of the worst disasters in American history took place in Johnstown, PA -- the Johnstown Flood. A private dam burst, unleashing 20 million tons of water, with waves towering up to 70 feet high, roaring into Johnstown. Within minutes, the heart of the city was swept away, and 2,200 people drowned or died as a result of fires. Thousands were left homeless.

At 6:30 pm Wed., July 31, East Falls Village will show a short documentary on the Johnstown Flood at the Falls Library. EFV member Fred Vincent, whose family is from Johnstown, will introduce the film and lead a discussion following the film. All are welcome to attend.

For more information on EF Village membership, visit the Member Signup tab at www.eastfallsvillage.org, call 267-444-4507 or pick up a brochure at the front desk of the Falls Library.

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Shakespeare's Measure for Measure Set for July 11

by Alexis Franklin and Christina Kistler

Shakespeare's dark comedy Measure for Measure will be presented by Commonwealth Classic Theatre Company in McMichael Park at 7 pm Thurs., July 11, as the company opens its 2019 season right here in East Falls.

This will mark the 12th year that the Friends of McMichael Park (FOMP) have hosted Shakespeare in the Park.

Set in a world, much like our own, in which the corrupt exist side-by-side with the virtuous, Measure for Measure explores conflicts between the powerful and the powerless, justice and injustice, and love and lust. As always, Shakespeare explores the danger and hypocrisy posed by those who seem to be what they are not.

Fallers are invited to bring their blankets, chairs and picnics for this always popular free evening. The FOMP will celebrate the park's 90th anniversary with cake at intermission. In the event of rain the play and celebration will take place in the Kurtz Center at Penn Charter, 3000 W. School House Ln.

For further information, contact Lexy3904@gmail.com.



Helping to plant the 90th anniversary tree were, left to right: Back Row: Geoff Brock, Herb Henze, Beth Gross-Eskin, Deborah Carn of St. Rep. Rosita Youngblood's office, Alexis Franklin, Christina Kistler, Judith Ruback, Craig Whitney, Olivia Whitney, Coleen McKenna and Mike Niles. Front Row: Mary Zimmerman, Cynthia Kishinchand, Linda Norris, Ed Ruback, Mary Jane Fullam and Gayl Henze. (Photo by John-david Franklin)

Memorial Day observance

The FOMP were honored to sponsor the well-attended Memorial Day observance in McMichael Park. The St. Bridget's Choir performed, and Fallser Bert Bender, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, offered a moving tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend our nation. He and his father, Rob, laid a wreath at the War Memorial in the park.

Redwood tree thriving

FOMP are pleased to report that with all the rain we have experienced the 90th anniversary Redwood is off to a good. The tree was planted during Love Your Park day on May 11, when

volunteers equipped with shovels and pitchforks planted the tree.

Some 34 neighbors and friends, including Herb Henze with his trusty tractor,

turned, weeded and mulched tree pits and garden beds. Entrance beds were cleaned and flats of flowers were planted. Branches were stockpiled along the park perimeter. Trees were pruned. Debris was picked up and bagged. 70 brown bags of debris were filled. Three yards of mulch was spread. Sixteen tree pits were maintained.

Butterflies were part of the day with Pop-up-Play offering

creative wings for children to make. Six lovable dogs came with their rescue teams with a chance to foster or adopt. Fallser Mike Andrews, who volunteers with the participating animal rescue teams, said that the furry friends "really benefitted from being out of the shelter, enjoying the green space and meeting people in McMichael Park."

Colorful new additions to McMichael Park

FOMP received four new

additions to McMichael Park as part of the park's 90th birthday celebration. The donor chooses to remain anonymous and appreciates the Friends volunteer efforts, and the FOMP appreciate the donor's generosity. Take a look. Have a seat. Enjoy.

Finally, the Falls of Schuylkill's Story Time in the Park fell victim to too many rainouts, and will be rescheduled for the fall. Watch the pages of East Falls NOW for the date.

East Falls Village

STAYING IN PLACE IN OUR COMMUNITY

East Falls Village, a program of the East Falls Community Council, was established in 2011 to enhance the lives of residents in East Falls as they grow older. The Village is not a physical space, but a volunteer-driven organization.

Benefits for East Falls Village Members

- Rides to appointments
- Help with technology – cell phones, computers, etc.
- Social events



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East Falls Village Members Say

- "I don't know what I would do if EFV did not exist. Membership has enabled me to maintain my independence... I rely on the wonderful volunteer drivers who take me to doctor visits, the library, and grocery stores. I've made some really good friends as well."
- "I have met many new people through the Village."
- "I love the social events and the opportunity to volunteer as a driver."
- "One hour of Village tech help was worth our annual membership dues."

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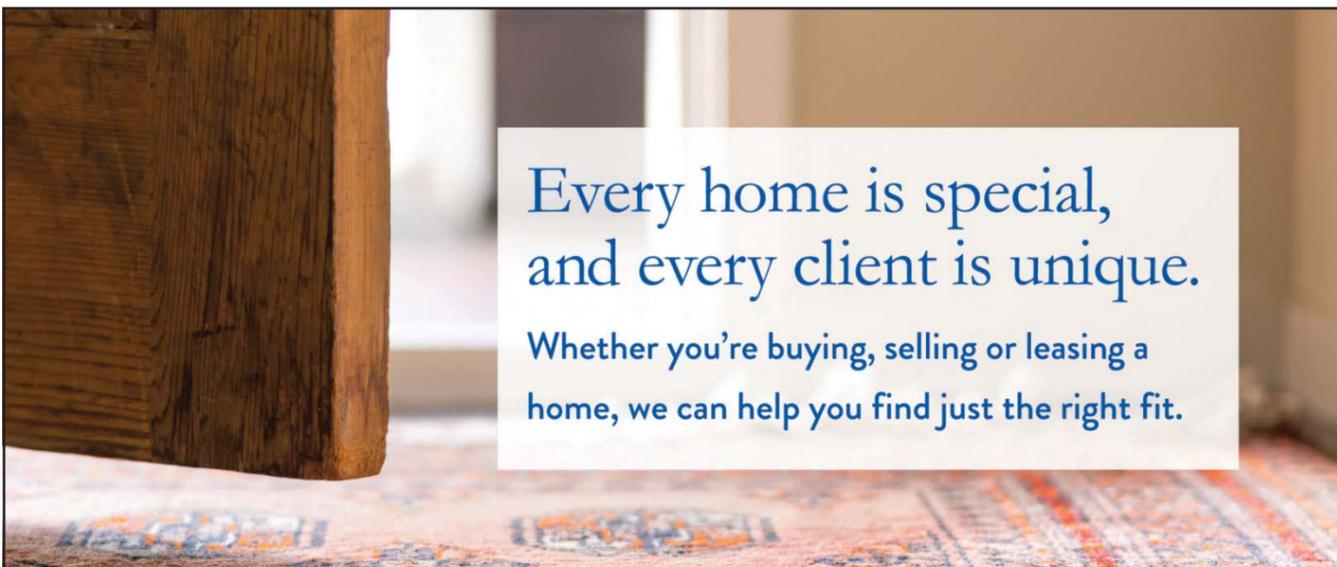
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(Left) U.S. Naval Academy graduate Bert Bender delivers comments at the Memorial Day observance.

(Above) St. Bridget's Choir performs the National Anthem at the FOMP Memorial Day observance.

(Right) Four lawn chairs gifted by an anonymous donor to FOMP now grace McMichael Park.



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Three new businesses set for Ridge Ave.

by Meredith Johnson
Executive Director, EFDC

The East Falls Development Corporation is excited to welcome not one, not two, but three new businesses on Ridge Ave.

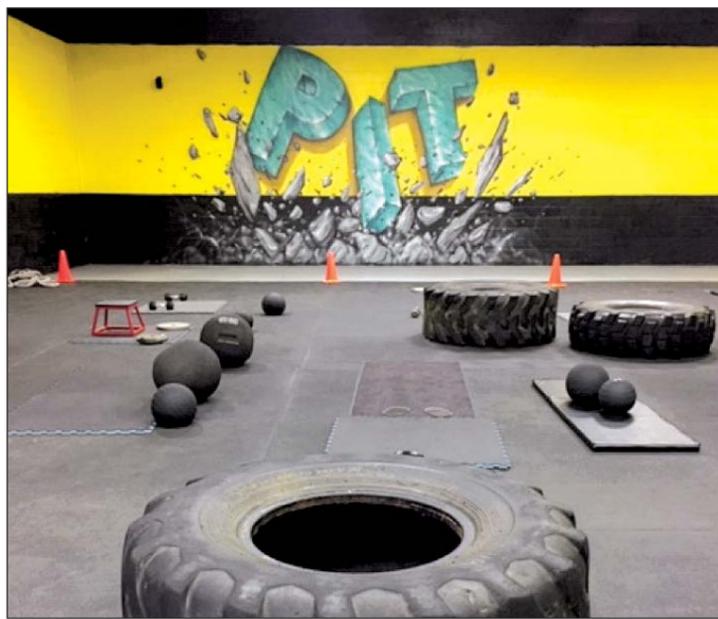
The first is Thunder Mug Cafe at 4233 Ridge Ave. This property has previously been used as a beauty salon and a floral shop. After nearly three years of vacancy, the space will be filled with a coffee shop and café. This will be Thunder Mug's first storefront, and we are happy that the owners have selected East Falls to begin this journey. The Cafe currently is undergoing interior renovations, with opening scheduled for July.

The second new business opening on Ridge Ave is Dreams Lash Bar, located at 4161 Ridge Ave. This property historically has been home to salons and other beauty-related uses. The previous tenant of this storefront was in business for more than seven years. After a short time on the market, the space was picked up by Dreams Lash Bar. The proprietors of the new lash bar have not yet announced their expected opening date, but they have been working on interior and minor exterior improvements. With this in mind, we hope to see Dreams Lash Bar opening in early fall.

The third business is Prime Intensity Training, or PIT, located at 4014 Ridge Ave.

PIT comes to East Falls by way of Conshohocken, where it has been in business since 2011. The owners, Matt Ramey and Pat Williams, are excited about this new opportunity in East Falls. They offer classes to accommodate all schedules, including early morning and evening classes. PIT offers personal or buddy training options to help clients reach specific goals. Look for Matt and Pat at community events, or find out more on their website: <https://primeintensitytraining.com/>.

The EFDC is happy to see these formerly vacant spaces filled – a trend we hope to see continue through the summer. And, of course, remember to visit our new neighbors!



PIT is open and ready for business at 4014 Ridge Ave. (Photos by Meredith Johnson)

Strawberry Festival at EF Presbyterian Church



Clearly enjoying the offerings at the East Falls Presbyterian Church's annual Strawberry Festival were, from left, Charlotte Dobson, Carol Dougherty, Bernie Lyman and Joy Ramil.

EFCC, DNB First Support East Falls Tree Tenders

by Cynthia Kishinchand

June was a very green month for East Falls Tree Tenders (EFTT.)

At the June EF Community Council meeting the membership unanimously approved EFTT's 22nd grant request, for \$800. Many thanks go to the Grant Committee and the meeting's attendees for their support.

The funds will be directed to Thomas Mifflin School's School Activity Fund for school trips, programs and educational materials related to nature. Come fall, when the Philadelphia Activities Grants are announced, EFTT is hopeful additional funds will be awarded for the same purpose. Since this neighborhood public school has a hard-surface play area, trips to local nature centers and farms provide the students their only opportunity to meet Mother Nature firsthand.

Thanks also to the \$500 contribution from DNB First, local school students will gather to celebrate Arbor Day at a local green space such as Inn Yard Park. These funds, along with those from East Falls Ridge Avenue LLC, mean that for one morning in May trees will have starring roles as they smile down on nascent tree tenders. We hope you will join us at this 25th annual event when it is



announced.

What do tree tenders do in the summer when we are not measuring the rainfall? We'll be checking the trees 35 trees planted last November and this past April. Under the leadership of Sue Park, pruning club volunteers will prune the young trees so there are no crossed branches or sprouts.

Gentle reminder: sitting under a tree is a wonderful way to relax. The chirping of the birds surpasses the beeping of a cell phone any day. For information on East Falls Tree Tenders, contact Cynthia Kishinchand at (215) 849-2474 or email crk3114@msn.com. To register for the September tree tender training classes, visit www.phsonline.org or contact Mindy Maslin, PHS Tree Tender Program Manager, at mmaslin@pennhort.org or email mmaslin@phs.org.



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Penn Charter's Sammy Siani signs with Pirates



Summer Tennis Hours at Legacy

As a result of an agreement between Legacy Tennis and the EFCC, anyone with identification showing residency in Philadelphia can play free on three outdoor courts during these summer hours:

Monday – Friday: 5 to 8pm
Sat. and Sun.: 9 am to 5 pm

Sign in at the front desk at 4842 Ridge Ave. The hours will change in September. Watch East Falls NOW for details.

Penn Charter baseball standout Sammy Siani, who graduated on June 8, was drafted by the Pittsburgh Pirates as the 37th overall pick in the 2019 Major

League Baseball draft. Siani signed with the Pirates organization and has reported to the team's Class A Advanced Affiliate club in Bradenton, FL. Siani's brother, Mike, was

drafted last year by the Cincinnati Reds and plays for the Dayton Dragons, the Reds' Class A Affiliate.

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Chanticleer - 'Planted to perfection'

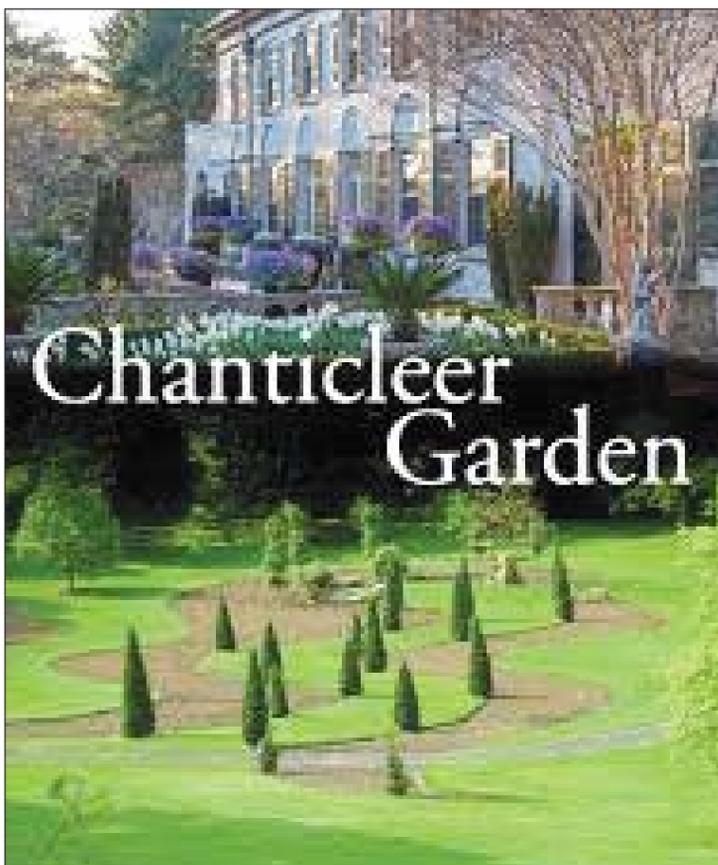
by Sharon Erwin

Thanks to a fellow East Falls gardener, I recently learned of an incredible garden wonderland not far from East Falls. Chanticleer, described by London's Financial Times as "planted to perfection" and by Garden Design magazine as "America's most inspiring garden," is located in Wayne, PA. It is a local treasure and "must visit" destination for anyone who loves gardens, is looking for inspiration, is interested in history, enjoys picnicking or simply wants to enjoy nature in all its glory.

I set off to visit Chanticleer on a cool, sunny day in May. It became one of the best days of my year, and a visit I plan to make again and again in all different seasons. Chanticleer's beauty is breathtaking, rejuvenating and, for a gardener, galvanizing.

The history of Chanticleer tracks the development of the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Chanticleer Estate was home to the Rosengarten family, built in 1913 as their country retreat from Philadelphia's summer heat. Over time, the family's pharmaceutical firm became part of Merck & Company, while the Estate passed from one generation to the next. Adolph Rosengarten Jr. generously left the Estate for the enjoyment and education of the public following his death in 1990.

As explained on the Garden's website, Chanticleer employs seven horticulturists, each responsible for the design, planting, and maintenance of an area. Chanticleer's horticulturists have created unique and beautiful garden areas that are always evolving, according to the website, "yet joined together as one complete unit."



The walking path, just under a mile, takes you through varied gardens, each with its own exceptional design and features. The Teacup Garden and Chanticleer Terraces, for example, feature seasonal plants, as well as tropical and subtropical plants. The Tennis Court, Ruin, Gravel Garden, and Pond Garden all focus on hardy woody and herbaceous perennials. The Gravel Garden "is hot and dry, a touch of the Mediterranean in Pennsylvania," while the Pond area is "exuberantly floriferous."

Contemplative shady areas with beautiful winding pathways can be found in the Asian Woods and in Bell's Woodland. A map of the gardens with extraordinary photographs can

be found on in Chanticleer's online Garden Guide, www.chanticleergarden.org/garden_guide.html. The website also features plant lists, weekly updates on what is in bloom and information about classes and workshops.

The gardens are open to the public, with general admission at \$10 Wednesday through Sunday from 10 am until 5 pm. Picnic areas are available. The garden also is open on Friday evenings until 8 pm from May through Labor Day.

This column is dedicated to your stories about your garden experiences and relationship to gardens.

Contact Deborah Kaplan at dkaplan8@verizon.net.

Kitchen Corner

Grill up those peaches!



by Anne Farnese

McCann Farm, a family-run operation in Monroeville, NJ, has been a consistently reliable vendor at the East Falls Farmers' Market for several seasons. This year, Kitchen Corner has particularly enjoyed its rich, plump blueberries in Sunday morning muffins, salads based on tender green leaf and spring mix lettuces and magnificent mushrooms sautéed and served with grilled steak.

Soon, baskets of peaches will grace McCann's stand and although this taste of summer is delicious eaten out-of-hand, another way of enjoying peaches is to grill them.

It is easy to do. Just make sure the fruit is firm. Cut along the peach's seam, twist, separate and remove the stone pit. Brush both sides of each half with grapeseed or canola oil. Place cut-side down on a low heat grill and cook each side for about four minutes until charred. The result is a smoky, sweet peach with a caramelized crunch that is delectable on its own, or it can transform easy-to-make dishes:

- Top grilled peaches on an

arugula and feta cheese salad dressed with your favorite vinaigrette dressing.

- For an elegant appetizer, drizzle grilled peach halves with balsamic vinegar, top with ruffled slices of prosciutto. Add some shredded basil on top and finish off with salt and pepper and a light drizzle of olive oil.

- Grilled peaches add a new flavor dimension to Peach Melba, the classic dessert created by the esteemed French chef, Escoffier, in honor of opera singer Nellie Melba.

The key to the dessert is the fresh raspberry sauce. Prepare it ahead of time by tossing a pint of raspberries with ¼ cup of sugar; let it sit until the raspberries soften. Strain the mixture through a sieve to remove the seeds. Put aside. Instead of brushing the peaches with oil before grilling, brush with equal amounts brown sugar and butter, melted. Grill peach halves on both sides until tender. Serve warm on top of vanilla ice cream and drizzle with the raspberry sauce.

Visit McCann's and other vendors at the East Falls Farmers Market on Saturdays from 10 am to 2 pm, 4100 Ridge Ave. under the Twin Bridges.

Summer comedy at Old Academy Players

Old Academy Players is readying its annual Summer One-Act Bonanza – a series of six fast-paced comedy performances. The plays will run for two weekends starting Fri., July 12.

Show times are Fridays and Saturdays at 8 pm and Sundays at 2 pm. Parking for all performances is free at the theater, 3544 Indian Queen Ln. Tickets are \$20 per person; \$10 per student with valid ID. Buy tickets by phone or online at www.OldAcademyPlayers.org. Old Academy welcomes groups at \$17 per person for 15 or more seats. Call 215-843-1109 for

more information and tickets.

The one-act shows will be *A Good Heart*, by Daniel Jankauskas, directed by Dale Mezzacappa; *Back to the Drawing Board*, by Nancy Frick, directed by Georgina Rosiello; *Deer Playrite*, by Rob Rosiello, directed by Jeff Hunsicker; *In the Eye of the Beholder*, by Richard Sivers, directed by Sivers; *The Font of All Knowledge*, by Leigh and Lauri Jacobs, directed by Lauri Jacobs; *This is What's Left*, by Michael Murphy, directed by Megan Murphy; and *Where Everybody Says Goodbye*, by Courtney Bambrick, directed by Nolan Maher.

Neighbors, join me at **Wissahickon Brewing Co.** July 24th at 5PM. RSVP required - email me using my contact info below!

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Town Watch aiming at car break-ins

by Mary Jane Fullam,
President, EF Town Watch

The June meeting of EF Town Watch volunteers with officers from the 39th Police District featured a discussion about the continuing auto break-ins taking place on several streets in the community.

Lt. Sean Bascom, coordinator for the 39th District's Police Service Area 1 (PSA1), which includes East Falls, said he will increase night patrols in the neighborhood. He and 39th District Crime Prevention Officer Bernie Spain said they would welcome and join late-night and early-morning Town Watch patrols to assist police.

The patrols will be scheduled for July. Anyone interested in taking part should leave a message at the EF Town Watch office, 215-848-2033.

The monthly meeting for Town Watch will take place at 3540 Indian Queen Ln. at 5 pm Thurs., July 11. Please note the earlier starting time so as not to conflict with the 7pm Shakespeare in the Park.

The July meetings with officers from the 39th District will take place at:

- 6 pm Wed., July 17, the monthly meeting of citizens and PSA1 officials at Canaan Baptist Church, 5430 Pulaski Ave., when Lt. Bascom and his staff will meet with East Falls and lower Germantown residents.

- 6 pm Mon., July 22, when 39th District Capt. Anthony Ginaldi and Community Relations Officer Joe Lukaitis will meet with residents from throughout the district at the 39th District headquarters, 2201 Hunting Park Ave.

TW continued its monthly series of "Litter Crew Ahead" clean-ups on Sat., June 22 when volunteers contributed more than 20 hours of work on the 4600 to 4900 blocks of Ridge Ave. The clean-up covered the avenue and surrounding area, including lower School House Ln., the Legacy Tennis area, Gustine Recreation Center, Philadelphia Canoe Club and SEPTA's Wissahickon Transfer Station.

The July "Litter Crew Ahead" clean-up is scheduled for 9 to 11 am Sat., July 27. Volunteers will meet under the Twin Bridges and the clean-up will focus on the area under the bridges and the 4000-4200 blocks of Ridge Ave.

East Falls residents interested in joining the Civilian Police Academy training program to learn the policies, procedures and practices of the Philadelphia Police Department should contact EFTW at 215-848-2033. The once-a-week training runs for 13 weeks from Sept. 4 through Dec. 4.

Tire Round-up

A final summer Town Watch activity will be to participate in the City's annual tire round-up. This is a great fund raiser for Town Watch, as the City offers 50 cents per tire to us and we rid the streets of unsightly abandoned tires. If you have old tires (up to two per person) please call the TW office at 215-848-2033 and we'll get back to you with drop-off or pick-up instructions. Also, we could use assistance with a truck if anyone can volunteer one on any of six Saturdays from mid-July through August.



Part of the crew, from left: Mary Jean Cunningham, Chris Bachman, Brooke Wimberley, Cory Czuczman and Monica Czuczman.



Talking part in the EF Town Watch June clean-up were Brooke Wimberley (left) and Joanne Connolly, both of Ridge Ave.

Penn Charter students earn first new certificates

Two years ago Penn Charter created new academic certificate programs -- one in Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability and another in Global Studies. At the school's commencement last month, seven students were awarded the programs' first certificates along with their diplomas.

The certificate programs require diligence and concentrated work, including three semesters of coursework, three major projects, 80 hours of activity credit, and an 80-hour Senior Comprehensive capstone project. Students begin the work as juniors and finish at the end of senior year with the presentation of their senior project.

The certificate programs provide motivated students a new opportunity to explore complex issues, and to hone

critical thinking skills, learn valuable research skills, and cultivate their ability to communicate in writing and before a live audience.

"By combining courses, projects, and their Senior Comprehensive project, these students are engaged in activities here in school and out in the world that fit with their individual interest and important environmental and global issues," explained Tom Rickards, Penn Charter's Upper School religion teacher and coordinator of the school's environmental programs.

"They are demonstrating real passion and academic strength," Rickards said.

Four of the students received a Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability Certificate, and three received a certificate in Global Studies.



Completing Penn Charter's rigorous course of study in two new certificate programs were graduates, from left: Sydney Nixon, Anne Winkler, Sophia Pinto, Stella Singer, Paige Proctor, Hadley Ball and Elizabeth Ominsky.

Meredith Johnson: Will success in Buda, TX, repeat in East Falls?

(Continued from page 1)

shops where people can relax, shop and dine. Buda Mill is a hot spot for residents and visitors from downtown Austin, 15 miles away. East Falls is six miles from Center City with a much larger population to draw from and an effective public transit system, which Buda lacks.

Buda's population has soared from 7,295 since the census of 2010 to an estimated 16,150 following restoration of the Mill and influx of techies to serve the region's newest Silicon Valley. Johnson calls it a "third place" after the structured environments of home and work, a necessary retreat from the busy, crowded lives of city dwellers.

The notion of "third place," popularized by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, calls for community hangouts -- a café, a church,

club, barber shop, bowling alley, public library, a hair salon -- where people gather for talk and companionship. Starbucks likes to call itself a third place, a breeding ground for social connections, inclusion, and democracy. Conversation is the main activity. Jordan Harbinger, radio personality and human dynamics expert, offers this description of a third place:

"A good third place is also easy to get to and is close to your home or work. You don't have to spend a lot of time and energy getting there. You can pop in and out quickly without much stress or planning. Ideally you can walk, but you might also get to your third place by public transportation or a quick drive."

The success of Buda Mill has inspired confidence and civic pride. Chance Sparks, Buda's



A so-called "third place" in Buda, TX created from the former Buda Mill and Grain Co.

former director of planning, and Johnson's boss at the time, says the Mill helped put Buda on the map. He gives Johnson much of the credit.

"She's never seen a place she didn't believe she could make better," he says. He calls her a "font of optimism and creative energy." Another colleague, David Marino, chief

of communications for Buda, said she "was always looking for solutions."

Could the same thing happen in East Falls that has happened in Buda? Could there be a third place or places? The popular Wissahickon Brewery on School House Lane shows what's possible. Nearby Main Street in Manayunk has "done

a lot to offer third places," says Johnson.

She sees the intersection of Ridge and Midvale as the epicenter of a third place community with its mix of restaurants -- Le Bus, In Riva and Trolley Car Diner -- "the only place you can get breakfast under \$4" -- and its new retail outlets, the woman's clothing store Alice Alexander, 4th Street Cookies, East Falls Beverage, and others.

On the other side of Midvale Ave. are restaurants San Chuan, Foghorn and Slices Pizza. Conrad St., with Milo restaurant, Billy Murphy's Irish Saloon, Cranky Joe's and Apollo's Pizza is a secondary option. Last month Johnson welcomed three new businesses, her first retail tenants, to Ridge Ave: Thunder Mug Café, Dream Lash Bar, and Prime Intensity Training (PIT). Eventually, she hopes to fill the vacant storefronts along Ridge Ave. and Conrad with invested long-term tenants just as she did for Buda Mill and Grain Co.

To support the retailers, Johnson supports greater population -- a flash point for those who fear crowding, more cars and inadequate parking. She's for residential development along Ridge Ave., including the long-awaited apartments on the former Rivage property, the HOW townhouses and the existing Falls Ridge Lofts and the Falls Ridge Senior building. "Density," she says, "is good for commercial stability."

In Buda, with its open spaces, its lack of public transit, and plentiful parking, most people drive. In East Falls which is served by several bus routes and two regional rail lines, "We need to target people within walking distance," says Johnson. That means some 14,000 people who live in the Falls or adjacent neighborhoods, the so-called catchment area.

Before joining EFDC, Johnson worked for the Tacony Community Development Corporation. She was instrumental in obtaining the organization's first self-funded grant to assist local businesses with capital improvements.



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Full makeover creates Makerspace at Mifflin

(Continued from page 1)

This was the dream that Mifflin Digital Literacy Teacher, Emily Adeshigbin, shared with me. With the support of Mifflin Principal Leslie Mason, we collaborated on writing and submitting a Makerspace grant proposal last school year. We were really disappointed when we found out that we finished in second place. We resubmitted it this year. What a thrilling honor it was to be selected!

At Thomas Mifflin School we have adopted a STREAM theme (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, the Arts, Mathematics) as a framework to plan learning experiences for our students. The second-floor Mifflin Makerspace is in keeping with this theme. It will provide additional opportunities for our students to learn and grow



“Makerspace” inside new second floor room.

utilizing hands-on, inquiry-based learning and team problem-solving as they acquire the skills necessary for success in the 21st Century.

We are truly grateful to the Abbvie Foundation and Heart

of America for making this investment in our school and our students. Special thanks to Mifflin parents Nelson Haankenson and Alex Keating, who helped us prepare for this event. We look towards

the upcoming school year with great anticipation when our Mifflin students will become our Mifflin Makers.

Maxine Coker is School Counselor at Mifflin.

Mifflin Kindergarten applications surge

(Continued from page 1)

ing Mifflin, hosts monthly events for prospective families at local homes with parents, the principal and faculty members.

“People are more likely to choose a school when other people in their social milieu are sending their children there,” says Lewandowski, who has two children at Mifflin and a third on her way in 2020. She adds, “The way to retain people is to get them invested.”

Mifflin also has benefited from a rash of good news. Reading scores on state tests have jumped, making the K to 8 Mifflin the most improved in reading among schools in Northwest Philadelphia. For two years in a row, Mifflin students have been admitted to the prestigious and highly competitive Masterman School, Girls High School and Central High School.

Mifflin also has turned into a beehive of neighborhood volunteer activity, raising its profile and amplifying its accomplishments. One program, Read to Me, is sponsored by East Falls Village. It draws a team of volunteers to read to younger Mifflin children and teach them how to use a library.

Mason said the school might not be able to accommodate all last-minute registrants for kindergarten. Robert Rabinowitz, Chair of the East Falls Community Council’s Education Committee, said that if over-enrollment becomes an issue a community-wide effort to secure a third kindergarten class from the School District will be launched.

Zoning Update: Lively debates across EF

(Continued from page 1)

is required to have commercial use on the ground floor.

The developer claims he has been unsuccessful in recruiting a quality commercial tenant and was quite angry about the ZBA’s ruling. At East Falls **NOW** press time Falco has filed suit against the City and the ZBA to win the relief he wants. We’re not certain what happens now as no one I’ve spoken with is looking to be part of a court case for a building that already exists. It is possible that the space will be vacant or become a vape shop, per the owner.

3501 Bowman St: The owner proposed a seven-unit development with 10 off-street parking spaces, requiring a variance. He also owns the large adjacent brick building fronting on Conrad St.

Although clearly this is a critical section of Conrad St. with some recent improvements in terms of commerce, the owner has generated a fair bit of unhappiness from near neighbors over the years. This was a divisive zoning matter on many fronts, and many near neighbors vehemently spoke out against the proposal. We had competing petitions and much spilled ink on the internet. One lesson learned: never have a zoning meeting at a bar.

The EFCC did not support the variance due to the loud and vehement reaction of the near neighbors and what feels like a collective groan about the amount of development and its impact on parking and traffic in this section of East Falls (not unique to East Falls, to be clear.) The owner collected a competing petition in support of his project.

It should be noted that the owner can build between four and six town homes by right, and is not required to provide parking for such homes. One could suggest that this would be a worse outcome for the neighborhood because it would put more cars on the street than the owner’s original proposal, which included 10 off-street parking spaces. It also would not necessarily create an intact street scape. For what-

ever reasons, many peoples’ response to this proposal was a resounding “no,” which the owner heard. He requested a continuance at the ZBA and last we heard was contemplating what to do now after hearing such a negative reaction.

3449 Scotts Ln.: This project, to be located on the vacant parking lot above the SEPTA tracks on the right side heading up Scotts Ln., was proposed last year and recently went through what’s called the Civic Design Review (CDR) process.

Plans call for some 92 units and about 140 parking space. The CDR is not a variance but a review process. It does not involve the ZBA. The parcel was rezoned after a public meeting last year, so essentially the developers already have their zoning. But the project’s size triggered the CDR, which

requires a public meeting and then at least one or up to two reviews by a board of architects and design representatives prior to receiving the formal zoning approval.

CDR is a thoughtful process. But the recommendations that emerge from the process are voluntary on the developer, so it’s a stop along the road without any real teeth. The project has zoning approval at this time. Scotts Ln. is a narrow and steep residential road and google maps and Waze have popularized it as a connector street. The main concerns we heard revolved around traffic, car speeds along Scotts Ln. and problems parking in the neighborhood.

The 3449 Scotts Ln. developers plan to create a second entrance and exit to Henry Ave. via the adjoining New-Courtland Senior Services

property. This will provide options for people coming and going.

The developers have an interesting design with some new meadows and a mix of housing types -- townhomes, duplexes and a few triplexes. This seems to be a thoughtful way to diversify the sales and types of units. The developers committed to leveraging their project approval process and paying their traffic engineer to try to get more attention from the Streets Department and to seek steps to slow driver speeds on Scotts Ln. The next meeting on this effort to slow traffic on Scotts Ln. has not yet been planned.

If you want to be notified about the future meeting with the Streets Department regarding this stretch of Scott’s Ln. please email zoning@eastfallscommunity.org.

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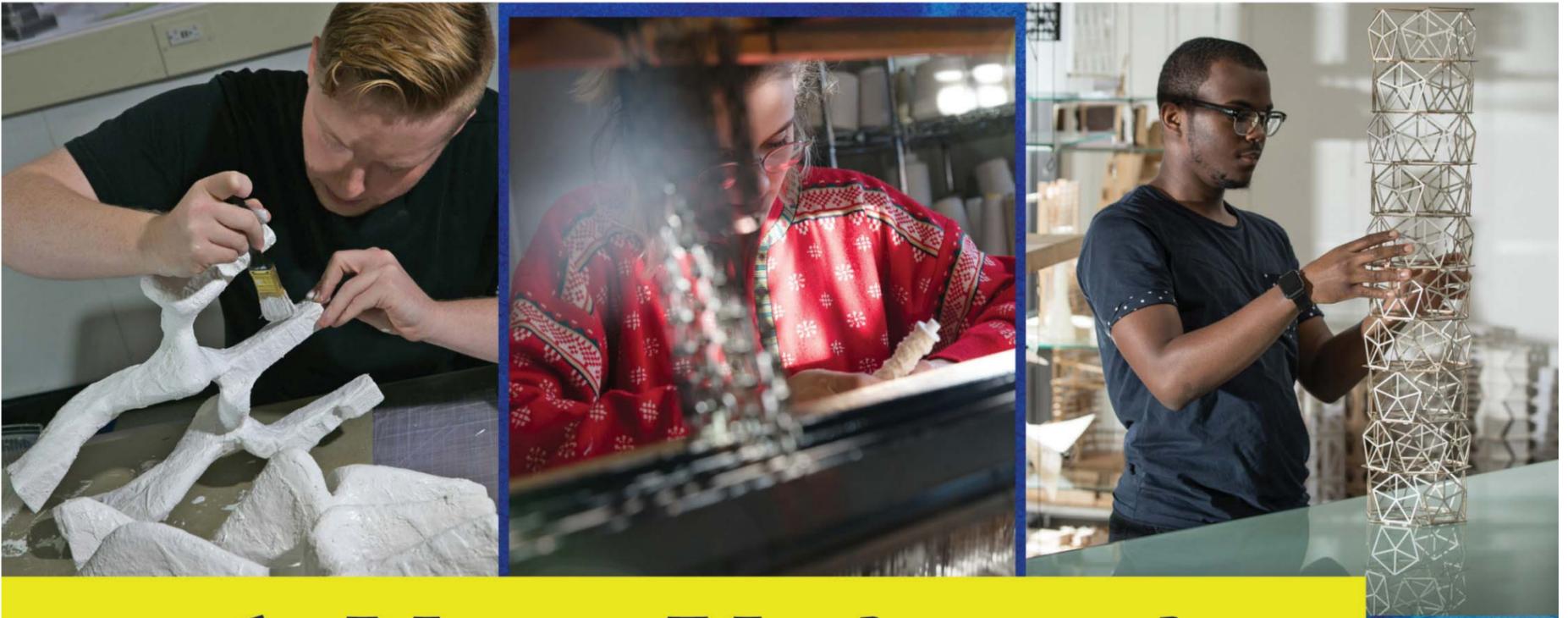
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