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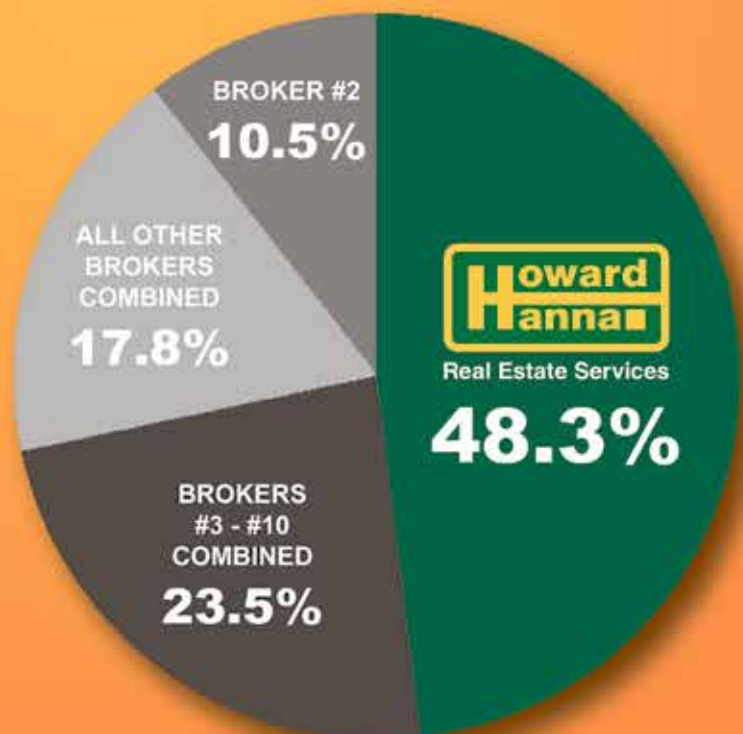
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The following illustration represents a sample of aggregated real estate brokers in northeast Ohio's YES MLS multiple listing service for listings sold from 1/1/18 through 12/31/18 in the communities of Aurora, Chagrin Falls, Gates Mills, Pepper Pike, Shaker Heights and Solon. Data in the MLS may not reflect all sales in the marketplace.



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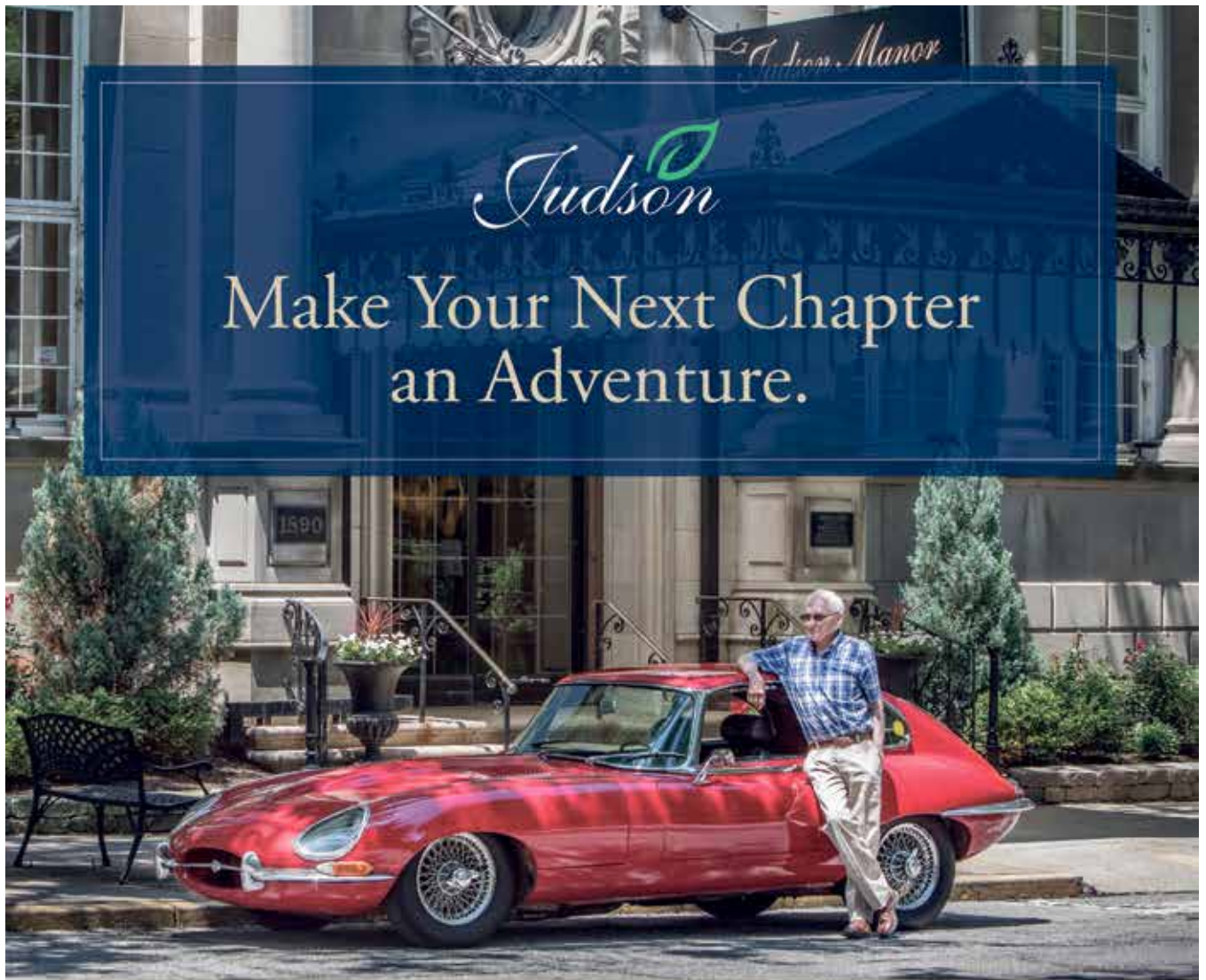


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Welcome to the Chagrin Valley! No matter what time of year you choose to visit – spring, summer, autumn or winter – you will experience the beautiful vistas that we are fortunate enough to enjoy every day. This magazine, provided by a partnership between the Chagrin Valley Chamber of Commerce, The Chagrin Valley Times and Chagrin Valley businesses is intended to aid you in your planning and navigating of the Chagrin Valley.

As you wander through our 13 communities, make sure your shopping experience includes the many local and national businesses that call the Chagrin Valley home. You will be tempted by the many restaurants that will surpass your every culinary craving. If you are lucky enough to enjoy our communities for more than a day, make sure you relax at one of our many hotels or bed and breakfast establishments. Unwind at a spa, then savor the ambiance of one of our award winning wineries.

For more information or ideas relating to your visit, feel free to visit our website at www.cvcc.org or drop in at Town Hall at 83 N. Main St. in Chagrin Falls and chat with our Visitor Center staff.

Enjoy your time with us and know we are looking forward to your visit.

— Michael Butler, President,
Chagrin Valley Chamber
of Commerce



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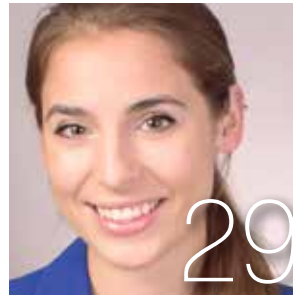
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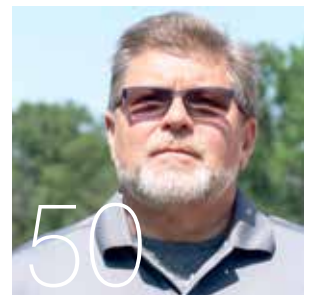
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ON THE COVER: Photographer Michael Steinberg captures a glimpse of alpacas quietly grazing in a meadow along Fairmount Boulevard in Hunting Valley on a warm summer day.

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VALLEY MAGAZINE

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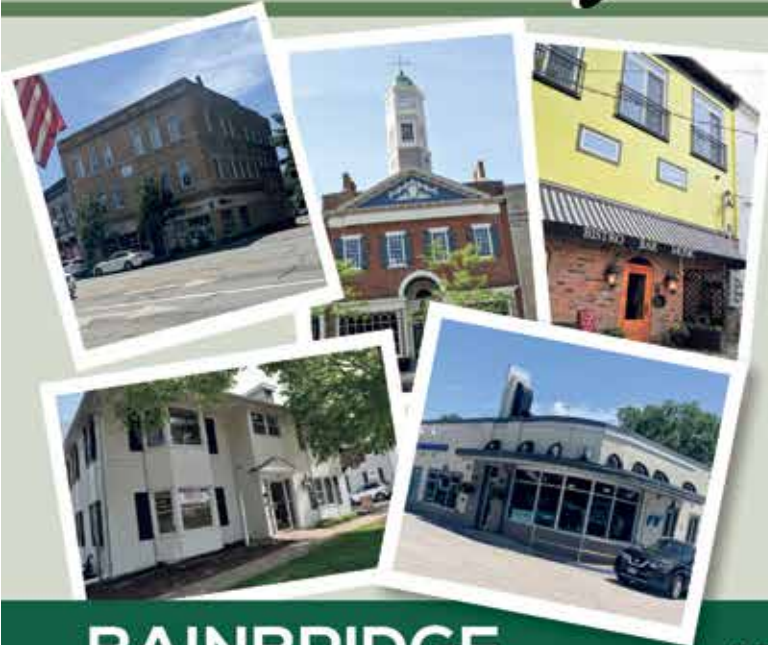
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Turning the page

Fireside Book Shop's story continues with new owners dedicated to customers' needs

By PARIS WOLFE

When Lori Muller-Zaim was in third grade, she'd climb into bed and wait for her parents to turn out the lights. Then, she'd slide the button on her red plastic flashlight, hide under blankets and read Nancy Drew mysteries.

"I spent a lot of time at the library and once considered reading all the books in alphabetical order," said the self-acknowledged book nerd.

Meanwhile as a third grader, Jean Butler was busily reading her way through author Judy Blume's books and falling in love with the written word. "I had a book with me all the time and spent every free moment reading," Ms. Butler said.

Fast forward to 2019 and you'll find both women in their happy place, working among 25,000-plus new books and countless used editions at the Fireside Book Shop in Chagrin Falls. That's because, in 2017, Ms. Muller-Zaim and Ms. Butler bought the shop from second-generation owner Jim Lewis. Mr. Lewis' mother, Barbara Lewis, and aunt, Muriel Stoner, founded the store in 1963. Mr. Lewis took over in the early 1990s when his mother passed away.

The new owners never planned to spend their lives as booksellers. In fact, Ms. Muller-Zaim studied restaurant management at the University of Illinois. And, Ms. Butler earned a chemistry degree from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

But books beckoned. For Ms. Muller-Zaim, 62, the call came after a career in the restaurant

Continued on page 14

In 2017, Jean Butler, left, and Lori Muller-Zaim bought the Fireside Book Shop from second-generation owner Jim Lewis. His mother, Barbara Lewis, and aunt, Muriel Stoner, opened the iconic shop in the heart of downtown Chagrin Falls in 1963.

Photo by Michael Steinberg



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industry and being a stay-at-home mom. Ms. Butler, 46, didn't know what to do after college and she began working in Walden Books in Euclid Square Mall. That snowballed into a retail career that brought her to Fireside 20 years ago and ownership just two years ago.

Ownership of the iconic independent bookstore was a bonus for both women. "I bought the store because it became available at the

right time in my life," Ms. Muller-Zaim said. "I had recently lost my husband and was trying to figure out what my next step would be. It gave me a purpose, and it was something new and exciting to focus on."

Meanwhile, Ms. Butler was on a mission. "When Jim Lewis started talking about selling the store, I knew I had to do something. It was my baby, and I felt very strongly against bringing someone new in to run it. Jim had been living out of state for several years, so

I already thought of it as mine. But I didn't think I could do it with three young kids and living on the Westside. Then, Lori and I started talking about doing it together and it just clicked. It happened on my 20th anniversary (store, not marriage). As corny as it sounds, it's like a dream come true."

While it looks like a simple storefront from the street, the three-story shop is spacious inside. It's cozy yet expansive, with a namesake fireplace on the second floor. New books and areas with old favorites are shelved by topic with special displays to call out best-sellers and staff favorites.

"We don't specialize in any one type of book," Ms. Butler said. "I try really hard to have a great variety of books on hand. I'd rather have one copy of 10 books than 10 copies of one book."

In a time when Amazon and eBooks threaten bookstores, Ms. Butler isn't worried. "We can't compete with them, or any retail stores that offer big discounts. But we provide great customer service, a plethora of recommendations and a meeting place for friends and families," she said. "As for Kindles, I prefer the feel of holding a book, flipping back to reread something and frankly, decorating my house with books. I know I'm not the only one."

Ms. Muller-Zaim agrees. "We don't try to compete with them. It would be impossible. We offer great customer service. Our booksellers always have great recommendations. And they will hunt down any book. Even if the customer says something like, 'It's about a dog and it has a blue cover and I heard about it on NPR sometime last month.' We also can special order almost any book in a week or less."

The flashlight days are over for Ms. Muller-Zaim. Today she reads mysteries, fiction and nonfiction by light of day or night. "I feel like I won't live long enough to read everything I want to," she said. Some of her favorite books include "The Poisonwood Bible" by Barbara Kingsolver, "A Town Like Alice" by Nevil Shute and "In a Sunburned Country" by Bill Bryson. She still likes mysteries and has graduated from Nancy Drew to authors like Sue Grafton, Louise Penny, P.D. James, Donna Leon and Elizabeth George.

As for Ms. Butler's favorite, she protested. "Asking me to pick my favorite book is like asking which child is my favorite." Her top five include "Outlander" by Diana Gabaldan, "Memoirs of a Geisha" by Arthur Golden, "One for the Money" by Janet Evanovich, "Cowboys Are My Weakness" by Pam Houston and "Game of Thrones" by George R.R. Martin. ■

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Photo by Michael Steinberg

Dewey Forward considers the 2000 renovation of the Popcorn Shop a labor of love, even scouring antique shops for period furniture. The shop overlooking the Upper Falls remains a focal point of downtown Chagrin Falls.

Another popping venture

Entrepreneur Dewey Forward takes on the competition

By VALERI FURST

Dewey Forward said he is retiring, but not really. The 70-year-old owner of the iconic Chagrin Falls Popcorn Shop just doesn't have it in him. Not really a surprise since Mr. Forward has an entrepreneurial spirit that showed itself when he was just 8 years old.

"I started a canteen in my basement where I would spin records and sell 7Up and hot-dogs. It was going great until a friend across the street who had a screened in porch got into the business and got all the people to go to his house. Then a kid two streets over opened one. He had a pool and crushed it. I

have hated competition ever since."

Mr. Forward grew up in Shaker Heights, graduated high school from University School, attended college and eventually ended up in Hartford, Connecticut. A self-proclaimed hippie, he loved parties and music which led to him and his buddies purchasing a 3,000 seat concert hall. It lasted seven months and Mr. Forward said he "learned a lot and failed a lot."

Returning to Northeast Ohio, Mr. Forward could not get past his love of music and his desire to put on shows. Peabody's Café opened in 1977 in Cleveland Heights and Peabody's Down Under on the east side of The Flats in 1981. The business was sold in 1996 and Mr. Forward began thinking about the next chapter. That's when the Popcorn Shop in Chagrin Falls came into his life.

Mr. Forward explained, "I was friends with Mort McClellan, whose mother started the Popcorn Shop in the 1940s. In 2000, a van crashed into the store forcing it to close. It was virtually condemned. I gutted the place and created a new layout. Definitely a labor of love. There were 11 layers of linoleum covering the original hardwood floors. The paneling was covered with dry wall. I scoured antique places for furniture and décor. It is my 3D art piece."

The shop has been successful ever since it reopened. Mr. Forward credits the community, saying the people who visit love the store and are very protective of it. When Ben and Jerry's ice cream store came into town, Mr. Forward said they wanted to buy the shop. When he said no, they opened a store down

Continued on page 22

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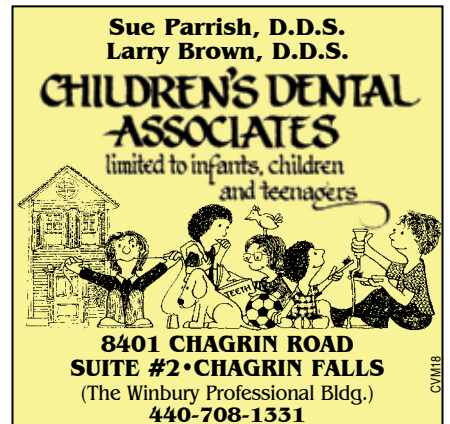
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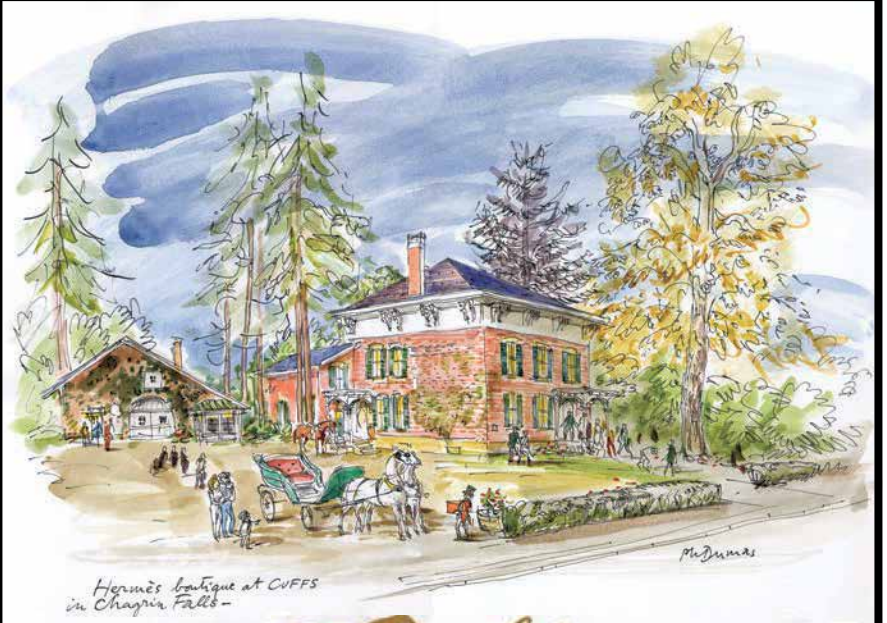
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Continued from page 16

the street.

"I was nervous but in that year's parade, there were three Popcorn Shop floats. It showed me people love this store. It really is the heartbeat of the community."

Twenty years ago, before the Popcorn Shop came into his life, Mr. Forward thought about being a teacher because he wanted to work with kids. That career path was not meant to be, but he still got his wish. Upwards of 25 high school students work at the store at any given time, mostly in the summer.

Mr. Forward also owned Dewey's Coffee on Shaker Square in Cleveland which offered coffee drinks and some food. He recently closed that shop after 15 years in business, truly thinking he was going to retire. Instead, he and his two business partners, George Richards, who has been involved with the Popcorn Shop since the beginning and Patty Raymond, who has managed the shop for 15 years and was made a partner in 2018, are now looking to expand the popcorn business.

Mr. Forward explained, "It's a fun product. We now have about 12 flavors and are selling in Heinen's and Dave's supermarkets and at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton. I want to stay active and this is so enjoyable coming up with new places to sell our brand and new flavors. We are even thinking about holding a recipe contest."

So for now, Mr. Forward does plan to spend more time traveling, more time riding his bicycle and even taking an art class, but there are also new ideas and ventures to consider. When it comes to retirement, Mr. Forward admits, "I doubt I really have it in me." ■

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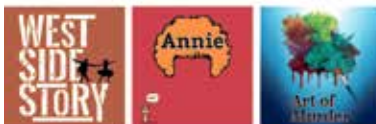


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Jessica and Jason Brown started Wood Thingamajigs three years ago in Newbury featuring unique handmade creations.

Photo by Michael Steinberg

Wood Thingamajigs

Crafters transform wood into unique handmade gifts

By DAVY VARGO

Every Christmas, Jason and Jessica Brown had an agreement: bestow each other with a handmade gift. One year, Jessica turned wood into a scrabble set for her boyfriend. A posted photo of the scrabble set on Facebook got lots of praise. Sell them, a friend suggested.

To Mr. Brown, a former automotive painter, and Ms. Brown, an Army veteran, the idea appealed. And so, three years ago, the very same year they got married, the wood-making company Wood Thingamajigs was born, in the at-

tic. The business, now nestled beneath the cell tower in Building I of the Newbury Business Park, fetches much success to the Browns.

Only, what to call the store? Ideas flew. "Well, what are we going to make?" Ms. Brown remembers them wondering. "I think it was me that said, 'Well, we're going to make thingamajigs,'" Ms. Brown recalled. "I was just being funny. And then it just stuck, actually." The Newbury residents now revel in the positive reviews of their company's "very memorable" and "kind of funny" name. Currently, the two owners are also the two workers, along with their teenage son, who uses the lathe at home to shape striped wine stoppers, which are quite popular (and he gets half the money).

One summer, the couple peddled their woodwork to 50 events, like sidewalk sales and flea markets. Generally, they do two to

four events a weekend at places like Legacy Village in Lyndhurst. In wintertime, the International Exposition Center's Christmas Connection and Home and Garden Show in Cleveland as well as boat shows keep them busy. They also sell online and accept custom requests. Upon one petition, Mr. Brown said they once made a "massive" kennel for "one big dog and three little ones" from solid cherry wood. They "ended up making it in two pieces just to be able to get it into the house." Furniture is their favorite to build, and walnut is their beloved wood, but tables aren't as economical as other items. A table the Browns' toted to the Home and Garden Show collected praise, but not until 30 minutes before they closed on the last day did a man insist on buying it.

"Coming up with our own idea and then seeing people's positive reaction to it," is the most pleasing part of the business, Ms.

Brown said. An idea might not fly, but it is great fun when people “think the same way you did,” Mr. Brown chimed in. Sometimes lines trail from the store’s event tent, and once, stock ran out. It sometimes seems like the most preferred spot, Ms. Brown said. A nationwide Wood Thingamajigs might sprout, but before that all the major Ohio cities need wood gear. “We definitely want to conquer Ohio,” Ms. Brown said.

Locally sourced maple, oak, walnut and cherry woods transform under the hands of 40-year-old Ms. Brown and 45-year-old Mr. Brown. Deby Lexow from Chagrin Falls’ LO-CLE Box, another small Chagrin Valley business, uses the Browns’ wooden creations, like cheeseboards, in her gift boxes. These cheeseboards are layered with assorted woods. Ms. Lexow happily extolled Wood Thingamajigs’ owners, calling them accommodating, nice people, who’ll be “wildly successful.”

Wood articles dried in the wide shop, like half-made, orange-colored Cleveland signs that hinted at Cleveland Browns colors. To the left of these drying signs sat a CNC machine, and on the other side, past assorted paints, the 180-watt laser machine rested, which “tends to bite,” Mr. Brown said, displaying his stung arms. The laser eats the wood, cutting the tiny designs from the computer’s model. Though it could “take fingers off without even thinking about it,” Mr. Brown wiggled his still-intact digits. The laser machine slices some of the wood articles, like the plywood pieces, and burns sketches in others, like one rectangle piece engraved with a Cleveland map.

Corn hole, Jenga and other yard games are outdone by the Cleveland/local decor, which sells the best. The Browns procured a license to use the Cleveland script in their products. The top-selling article, a large, framed Cleveland sign with an outline of the skyline, sells for \$70. The oblong, framed Cleveland map piece is \$25. A batch of 20 pieces, such as the best seller, demands about three days of work. When determining prices of items, the Browns ask themselves if they’d spend that much.

Across from the workshop, outside another building that stores the finished products, Ms. Brown denied any personal artistic ability. The firm woman granted herself some warm smiles. Calling herself a tomboy in her younger days, she blamed her one brother, and her four boy cousins for the personality. Instead of taking “cooking and sewing or whatever those crazy courses were” in school, she heartily appreciated woodworking in seventh grade. After, she assisted her dad with a new deck project and a basement-turned-family-room. “She knows more about this stuff than most guys do,” Mr. Brown said.

Mr. Brown would call himself quite artistic. The pierced, tattooed man located a

spray bottle on a shelf, and grabbed a scrap of wood. Squirt, squirt. “Now I smell like vinegar,” Mr. Brown said. Let steel wool soak in white vinegar, then spray it on the wood, and the wood turns slightly purple and then blackish blue, he explained. “It basically dissolves some of the iron out of the wood,” he illustrated, exhibiting the light-colored wood as it turned a dirty green, on its way to becoming a charcoal navy. “It’s basically a chemical reaction with the tannins in the wood.” This technique he learned from an old woodworker. Much of his woodwork knowledge comes from his dad, who

sometimes comes to the shop to sand.

Mr. and Ms. Brown compete with ideas. Ms. Brown said that might mean that if Mr. Brown proposes an inventive idea that doesn’t make sense to her, then “I’ll be like, ‘Mmm, OK, whatever.’” Then she said, “Somebody’ll be like, ‘That’s the greatest thing,’ and I’ll be like ‘Wow, all right, I guess we’re going to keep making that.’”

And whose ideas sell better?

They paused. “His,” Jessica said, laughing. Mr. Brown smirked. “I wasn’t going to say it.” ■



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FLOH creates signature Ohio vodkas that are easy to sip

By TIM TEDESCHI

Shortly after graduating from Cleveland Heights High School in 1999, Jacques D. Evans opened his first business, a clothing store called Dress Code. Twenty years later, his entrepreneurial spirit hasn't waned, and he has taken all of the lessons he has learned in business along the way to build and grow Cleveland-based FLOH Vodka.

Mr. Evans, 38, of Shaker Heights said he was involved in several clothing businesses, event planning and the promoting of various liquor brands over the years. After growing tired of promoting companies he didn't believe in, he founded FLOH in 2012.

"It was hard (getting started). Every day was still challenging because you're competing against giants right now and their plan is to make sure no one ever sees you," he said. "It's definitely challenging because this industry is dominated by big brands, big private equity firms, and being independent and starting locally is a challenge."

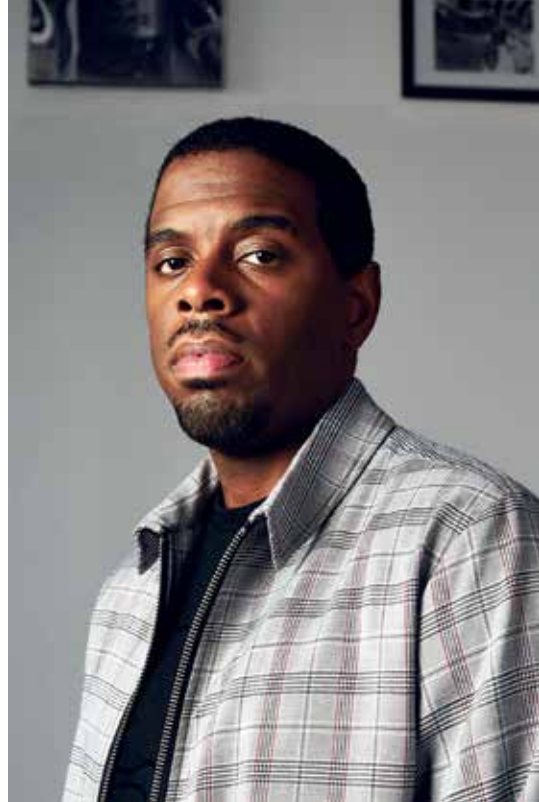
The quintessential startup business story, FLOH began when Mr. Evans drew a design



for a bottle on a napkin. He then reached out to his friend Diego Hodge, who now serves as chief operating officer, and the two hit the ground running to build their brand.

"It was one of those things where, because we were so ignorant to what it takes, nothing could discourage us. It's different when you know," Mr. Evans said. "We had no fear. We just went into the industry like it is what it is."

Continued on page 28



Photos by Peggy Turbett

Jacques D. Evans is the president and founder of FLOH Vodka in Cleveland. Designed by Mr. Evans, the tinted glass bottles represent flavors including Pink Grapefruit Dragon Fruit Premium Vodka.

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Continued from page 27

While researching and developing the formula for the vodka, Mr. Evans found a distillery in Bend, Oregon that has since taken care of the production of FLOH's Ultra-Premium vodka. Distilled 10 times using American corn and pure Oregon water, FLOH is produced in handcrafted small batches, he said.

"I had kind of focused on the marketing and the sales side of it, and I went out [to Oregon] and it felt like home," Mr. Evans said. "It was literally fresh off the plane you could smell the difference in the air, and then once I met the people there it was kind of a no brainer."

Top taste profile

Mr. Evans said the FLOH brand is focused on taste and is gluten free, kosher and has zero sugar, making it easy to sip.

"You won't have a headache after. It's really the sugar that's in these products; most of these flavored vodkas are syrupy," he said. "Anything with sugar in it, with enough sugar it can taste good, because it's the sugar that you're tasting. It's no longer even the product that it's made of. I think our taste profile and the way you feel after is definitely what sets us apart."

Another difference between FLOH and national brands, Mr. Evans said, is that FLOH's signature vodka and pink grapefruit and dragon fruit flavored vodka are the top of the line from the start, with no need for "premium" or "elite" versions that cost more than the original.

"It's no knock to how they're marketing, or whatever they're doing it works for them. But they always have different versions of the same thing which is so strange to me even as a consumer, that you would want to drink this

cheap product and then be sold their super elite product," Mr. Evans said of other brands. "We'll never have a FLOH vodka 10X and it's so smooth and this is clean. This is clean from the start, we're giving you the best product that's manufactured, and we stand on that."

FLOH's logo is a simple bass clef, but the bottle design stands out because Mr. Evans said he designed it to look like a tuxedo, which doesn't look like any other bottle on the market.

"The bass clef is a very sexy symbol. Visually, it's appealing, and for me I felt that was key in my whole design because I went completely outside the box designing my bottle black," he said. "If you go to a bar, from across the room, all the others look the same."

While already licensed and distributing in 10 states, Mr. Evans said the company's goal is to be known as Ohio's signature vodka brand and grow FLOH's presence in its home state as a lifestyle brand.

"I didn't want it to be the drunken club vodka; I didn't want college kids to want it. It's just not that kind of brand," he said. "I want you to be able to drink and wake up in the morning and not be sick and go into work. That's really our goal. I don't want you to just party all night, drink a bunch of cheap liquor and line our pockets. We want it to be known

that this high end product came out of Ohio."

Mr. Evans said he has taken his lessons from Dress Code and other businesses and applied them to his work with FLOH.

"The challenges don't change. The same stuff I went through then at 18 years old, I'm going through now at 38. It's just you learn how to deal with them and kind of anticipate them," he said. "It's all the same, especially dealing with anything that involves inventory, planning ahead and marketing ahead and so it's just that entrepreneur lifestyle. You've got to really figure out a way to start it, plan it, complete it and then be ready to start it over again because it's constant restarting."

Chagrin Valley connection

After speaking at a Chagrin Valley Chamber of Commerce event in 2018, Mr. Evans and FLOH have become active members of the Chamber. Executive Director Molly Gebler said FLOH is now the official vodka of the Chamber, and she has enjoyed working together with the FLOH team to get the brand into more local restaurants.

"They truly are phenomenal; it's not just an act. They're the kindest people, always giving back, but [Mr. Evans] just has his hands in everything, like they are just so busy promoting their brand," Mrs. Gebler said. "It's mind blowing to me, and they made a lot of connections when he spoke. A lot of people had no idea about FLOH, so it's great to see some of our Chamber members fall in love with the vodka."

Mr. Evans said his relationship with the Chamber and its members has been positive from the start, and he appreciates seeing their support when FLOH hosts events.

"I do events sometimes that I don't even think Chamber members know about, and I'll always see them there," he said. "That type of stuff, you need it when you're trying to build something and you're going to these areas. It's like anything else, a kid playing sports, it's good to see a familiar face in the crowd."

Mr. Evans said the most challenging part of building FLOH is the industry regulations and politics of getting his foot in the door, but he most enjoys growing something that will outlast him.

"We've designed something that can live when I'm gone," he said. "That's probably my favorite part, that I've actually created something that puts us in the history books no matter what book it is, but we'll be in somebody's book that we started something."

Mr. Evans and his wife, Ylleya, have six children: Donny, 21; Donna, 14; Dakota, 12; Grey, 5; and twins Phoenix and Prime, 3. He also operates the Golden Opportunity Foundation which provides funding for Cleveland Heights High School students to start businesses, and has released a FLOH comic book with plans to release a new edition every year. ■

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Brianna Arko is princess of philanthropy

By PARIS WOLFE

When someone questioned Brianna Arko's medical school ambitions – to work with sick children – the Chagrin Falls woman wanted to prove she could do it. So, in 2013 she started working as a child life volunteer at University Hospitals of Cleveland Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital. During her 4-hour, weekly shift she walked the pediatric cardiac floor making certain that patients and their siblings had what they needed – books and toys. Or she'd accompany them down the hall to the playroom while their parents were busy.

One day a nurse approached the tall, long-haired brunette and said, "You're so good with kids, would you read a story to a patient as a princess."

A little surprised by the request, Ms. Arko agreed.

The nurse volunteered a princess dress and Ms. Arko started to create a fairytale alter-ego for children on the floor. "Once parents saw me in the hospital, they asked me to come to birthday parties," she said. Then they started requesting different characters including mermaids, superheroes, a female knight and historical female heroines.

The varied personas required different costumes, which Ms. Arko and her mom bought or created by hand. Visits evolved from reading books to include singing, dancing, crafts, bubbles and magic glitter.

Today Ms. Arko, 29, works with A Special Wish, a wish-granting organization in Brecksville, to identify patients for visits. Not long ago a 3-year-old girl desperately wanted to see Disney on Ice: Frozen. Unfortunately, she was stuck in the hospital. So, Ms. Arko donned a princess costume and delighted the small child with singing, dancing and bubble blowing.

"The little girl was in shock, it was a beautiful moment," said Eileen Lane, executive director of A Special Wish. "Brianna is a rock star."

Ms. Arko added, "As a character, I can engage the children in ways that their nurses or doctors are unable to. Many of these children have watched the movies or listened to the songs of the character for hours while receiving treatment. They know everything about the character and feel like I am a friend.

"They want to get up and play, they want to sing, dance, and move. This can be therapeutic," she noted. "Providing them an outlet to be a kid again can give the child and family a moment to just be together, away from everything they are dealing with."



Brianna Arko of Chagrin Falls dons glittery costumes of fairytale characters visiting children for A Special Wish organization.

Photo by Alana Clark

Today all of Ms. Arko's volunteer efforts are done around character visits. "My typical monthly schedule includes a hospital visit and several visits for A Special Wish," she said. "Sometimes A Special Wish will ask me to visit a child at home. They try to give terminally ill children something special everyday. It provides a distraction for them."

When visits require more than one character, she enlists family and friends to join her. The collection of princesses also works with A Special Wish to raise money for the charity's activities. For the past five years, in February, they've thrown the Princess Ball

at South Park Mall. At the event children meet at least a dozen princesses and get to see them perform.

Ms. Arko, who has Bachelor of Science degrees in biology and chemistry from Kent State University, said the experiences working with the kids as a volunteer reinforced her desire to pursue medicine and working with children.

"I wanted to make sure it was the right field for me to go into," she said. "Doing this princess work has given me a look at what it will be like to work with children. I know I can do it." ■



Photo courtesy of Douthit Communications

Ed Picevich, left, and Harold Kenneth Douthit, Jr. stand in front of the then new revolutionary web offset printing press at the company's headquarters in Sandusky, Ohio. It was the first offset press to go into operation west of New York. Mr. Douthit was publisher of a number of papers in Ohio including the Chagrin Valley Times.

The valley's newspaper

Chagrin Valley Times still reaching out to community

By PARIS WOLFE

For almost five decades, the Chagrin Valley Times has consistently delivered community news to the homes of residents in Geauga County and eastern Cuyahoga County. Those working in the newsroom have over the years been driven by the mission to find local stories that come alive on the Times' pages.

Retired Editor Dave Lange, at the helm of the Times operation for 25 years beginning in 1988, recalled one of his favorite stories from 1992.

"A waitress in a local restaurant [the former Dinks] was left the total inheritance of a wealthy man from Moreland Hills," Mr. Lange recalled. "He had lost his wife, didn't have children and regularly went to the restaurant for breakfast. This young waitress treated him well."

When that gentleman passed away, he left



Photo by Michael Steinberg

H. Kenneth Douthit III, is the second-generation publisher of the Chagrin Valley Times. He remains involved in the day-to-day operation of this and other Douthit Communications publications across Ohio.

her \$500,000. "It was the most memorable story for me because it went international," Mr. Lange said. "Other newspapers covered

it later. But we printed it first."

While larger newspapers take a macro focus, the Chagrin Valley Times has been part

of the local community since 1971.

Subscribers and residents of Chagrin Falls for 35-plus years, Kathleen and Jack Gips appreciate that.

"We are eager to see what is going on in our town, both commercially and administratively," Mrs. Gips said. "We like the local news relevant to our lives here in town. We like reading about what the town is doing and what residents are up to. We read all the ads to see what stores are offering and the police blotter to see about safety. We also like to know what council is working on."

Bentleyville Village Councilwoman Kathleen Hale, a reader since 1993, pointed to the value of the newspaper's role in community and government. "As a member of Village Council, we rely on the Times to get the word out to our community about what we're doing and the challenges we face. People don't come to meetings, as a rule, unless they have a particular reason to come," she said.

"Sometimes, residents feel separated from their community because everyone is so busy. Village government is trying to become more available to residents on social media, but you can't replace a local paper," Ms. Hale said. "They carry 'uncurated' news. Social media can, too often, represent only the point of view of the administrators. A newspaper can step back, get different points of view and fact check in a way that too often is missing from social media."

"I can't imagine trying to carry on the business of local government without the balance offered by a vigorous local paper, whether in digital or physical form," she added.

The Chagrin Valley Times started when a group of local business leaders came together to launch a "Republican" newspaper in response to the perceived liberal competition. With no experience in the business they soon determined they were in over their heads and, in 1973, sold the paper to the late Harold Kenneth Douthit, Jr.

At that time Mr. Douthit owned a printing production facility and several other publications. The Chagrin Valley Times fit into his portfolio. Over the years the weekly newspaper has grown from 3,000 circulation to 8,500 today. Douthit Communications added Northeast Ohio publications to its portfolio including the Solon Times, with a current circulation of 2,000, and Geauga Times Courier, with a circulation of 4,500. Still, the mission remains strong – serve timely, accurate local news to residents of the Chagrin Valley and surrounding area.

"You need to have an independent paper looking at issues and reporting on them," said H. Kenneth Douthit III, second-generation publisher of the Chagrin Valley Times.

Continued on page 32



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Photos by Michael Steinberg

The Chagrin Valley Times office in South Russell Village is a busy place, especially during days when the weekly paper is being produced.

Continued from page 32

“The last thing you need is government, or anyone else, telling you what to think. You need independent verification of facts.”

That’s what newspapers do, collect information and vet the facts, he said. “You could probably find the information that’s in the paper on your own, but it would take you a long time. With the Chagrin Valley Times, we’ve done the work for you,” Mr. Douthit added. “And, when we do our job right, the information is in a concise package that’s easy to use.”

Carol Vigliotti was hired in 1974 by Harold Kenneth Douthit, Jr., and worked as general manager for 35 years. During that time the Douthits launched the Solon Times, the social monthly newspaper Currents and pur-



Joan Demirjian is a longtime member of the Chagrin Valley Times reporting staff. By her side is Kobe, the 1-year-old Shih Tzu office dog.

chased the Geauga Times Courier.

While Ms. Vigliotti ran the business side of the newspaper, she respected and valued the editorial side. “Woe to the democratic process if papers fail,” she said. “Local papers are the last bastion of the watchdogs of government. They publish news that no one else covers.”

Ellen J. Kleinerman, the Times editor since 2014, said, “People depend on us to find out what’s going on in their communities. There’s so much world news and you’re inundated by CNN, MSNBC, FOX. You need local options to find out what’s going on in your communities.”

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"You need boots on the ground. You need reporters and photographers to talk to local officials, to talk to the interesting people, to vet the issues and to find out what's true and what's not true," she continued. "We tell people what's going on in their school districts, where their taxes are going and why there is flooding in their backyard. National news can't do this."

In a recent enterprising project, the Times newspaper staff examined recycling issues in the communities it covers. "There were so many unanswered questions," Ms. Kleinerman said. "We did a three-part series on the overall changes and issues challenging communities. I'm proud of the staff. They were really able to present the issues."

Social media is, of course, a challenge to the newspaper. In 2018, social media outpaced newspapers as an information source for the first time, according to the Pew Research Center. The research, however, also shows that social media can be inaccurate.

"We verify facts and doublecheck figures," Ms. Kleinerman said.

To keep up with younger audiences who look online for information, the Chagrin Valley Times is fine tuning its digital presence. "We redesigned our website in the last 18 months and re-launched our Facebook page," Ms. Kleinerman said. If there's news breaking, the Times alerts readers through the Facebook page with a link to the story on the website, she said, rather than waiting for next Thursday's weekly edition.

The paper involves readers with its robust letters section. Sure, social media attracts comments, but Ms. Kleinerman appreciates letter writers because they tend to do more research.

As the paper continues to evolve with technology, it will become easier to access on mobile devices. "We're considering an e-edition," General Manager Amanda Petkiewicz said. "We're aware of how paper use affects the environment. It would be good for us to give people an option. It would be the same as producing a print edition but presented in a different medium."

For the meantime, print remains relevant. "We hear from our advertisers that print is still the No. 1 way to reach their market. They don't get the response online that they get from the paper," she said. ■

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The new Cleveland Ballet is bringing back classical dance to Northeast Ohio thanks to Artistic Director Gladisa Guadalupe, left, and President and CEO Michael Krasnyansky.

Photo by Tanner Mondok

Great ballet for a great city

Pepper Pike couple central to return of Cleveland Ballet in Playhouse Square

By JULIE HULLETT

Michael Krasnyansky and Gladisa Guadalupe are making an impact on the arts scene in Northeast Ohio by adding a missing component – ballet. The new Cleveland Ballet is growing quickly in the dust of two ballet companies that closed their doors.

The Cleveland Ballet, the resident dance company at Playhouse Square, has 29 dancers from 11 countries and territories, including Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, France, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Taiwan and the United States. The dancers are mostly in their 20s, although the company recently hired a 16-year-old dancer.

The new company is the pride of Mr. Krasnyansky, 63, and Ms. Guadalupe, 56, who are married and reside in Pepper Pike. He is the president and CEO of the Cleveland Ballet, while she is the artistic director. In addition to the professional company, Cleveland Ballet has a trainee program, the School of Cleveland Ballet, and a youth ballet company.

“In keeping with our commitment to present ballet at a high quality level, the Cleveland Ballet once again brings together an incredible group of artists including the world’s greatest singers, musicians, lighting, set and costume designers and of course dancers,” Mr. Krasnyansky said.

Dancers flock to Cleveland

Dancers are drawn to Northeast Ohio, Ms. Guadalupe said, for the growing arts scene now that Playhouse Square’s theater district is the second largest in the U.S. behind Lincoln Center in New York City.

Three of the city’s major arts destinations include the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art and Severance Hall, home of the Cleveland Orchestra. Others include the Gordon Square Arts District at West 65th Street and Detroit Avenue and the Waterloo Arts District on Waterloo Road. In 2017, DanceCleveland launched the week-long Summer Dance Festival.

“[The dancers] have been impressed by the growth of the arts scene in Cleveland,” Ms. Guadalupe said. “Once they visit here, they fall in love with the city.”

Though it has a small annual budget of \$1 million, Mr. Krasnyansky said the company is financially stable. He explained that some ballet companies spend a lot of money on set designs

and costumes, while Cleveland Ballet focuses on choreography. For example, Mr. Krasnyansky said that one company might spend \$1 million or \$2 million producing the Nutcracker, while the Cleveland Ballet can produce the show with \$100,000 focusing on intricate choreography and well-trained dancers.

“[The dancers] realize this company is financially stable and growing and has produced excellent productions,” he said.

Ms. Guadalupe’s ability to recognize talent has been part of the reason for the company’s success so far, her husband said.

She has an eye for spotting unrealized potential, he said. “She knows that in several months of training, that dancer can be a great dancer. She proved with many dancers that she can find the talent that others don’t see.”

Ms. Guadalupe added that the facility and training environment is beneficial to the dancers. Although the Cleveland Ballet is the resident company at Playhouse Square, their studio is located on Miles Road in Bedford Heights. The space has three studios and a fourth one is under construction. According to Ms. Guadalupe, she does not foster a competitive environment within the company and insists that everyone has talent that he or she deserves to show.

“We aren’t in a fancy facility, but we create the environment,” Mr. Krasnyansky said.

"We're like a family."

The Cleveland Ballet also partners with University Hospitals Sports Medicine to offer comprehensive care to their dancers. Mr. Krasnyansky and Ms. Guadalupe said that they are working on a program with their healthcare provider to offer physical, mental and emotional health services to the dancers.

In addition, the Cleveland Ballet is unique because it includes live music in the performances. Other ballet companies often use recorded music only, they said, but this company likes to include musicians on stage, such as a guitarist or a singer.

"It's easier to have an orchestra or recorded music, but it's not easy to combine them," Mr. Krasnyansky said.

History of Cleveland Ballet

This isn't the first time that a ballet company has sprung up in Cleveland. The first Cleveland Ballet was also known as the Popeloff Ballet, after its creator, Russian dancer Sergei Popeloff. It lasted from 1935 to 1942 and became inactive as the U.S. became more involved in World War II.

The Cleveland Ballet was re-incorporated by Dennis Nahat and Ian Horvath in 1972, and a co-venture with a second base in San Jose, California was established in 1986. The company stayed in Cleveland until 2000, when it moved all operations to San Jose. The ballet later closed in San Jose in 2016.

In 2000, Ms. Guadalupe founded the Cleveland School of Dance, later renamed the School of Cleveland Ballet, and in 2014, the couple founded the current Cleveland Ballet. The company offers a mix of classical and contemporary performances and re-introduced the regular holiday performances of the Nutcrack-

er. The Cleveland Ballet is entering its fifth season, and the 2019 performances include Carmen on Oct. 18-19, the Nutcracker, Dec. 5-15 and the Magic Flute May 8-9 in 2020.

"We agree on the simple statement that every great city has to have a great ballet company," Mr. Krasnyansky said.

Art meets business

Ms. Guadalupe said that for an arts organization to work, the leaders must have a mix of art and business experience. Ms. Guadalupe is an alumna of the School of American Ballet, the training academy for the New York City Ballet.

She moved on to a professional career and became a principal dancer with ballet companies in Puerto Rico, Venezuela, San Jose and Cleveland. Ms. Guadalupe was a principal dancer for the second installment of the Cleveland Ballet.

Mr. Krasnyansky, whose university education was in physics, earned his Ph.D in environmental science in Moscow, Russia. He moved to the U.S. in 1989 and was employed at a chemical testing company and worked his way up to become the CEO. He is the president and CEO of MK Global Enterprises, LLC and has experience in the environmental, technology, health and oil and gas industries. He joined the School of Cleveland Ballet administration in 2011.

Day to day, Ms. Guadalupe has a training class for the dancers before rehearsals begin for upcoming performances. She is also the founder and artistic director of the school, which offers classes for dancers ages 2 through adults.

Mr. Krasnyansky reviews the financials, reports cash flow to the board of directors and prepares contracts, grant applications and marketing materials.

Outreach efforts

There is also a community aspect to the Cleveland Ballet. Mr. Krasnyansky and Ms. Guadalupe said that they want to make ballet accessible to everyone.

"Originally, ballet was for the elites, a small group in France, Russia and Italy," he said. "We strongly believe that it is not just for elites."

Three years ago, the Cleveland Ballet started an outreach program to teach ballet to area children, according to Mr. Krasnyansky. Kids ages 8-15 from Bedford, Bedford Heights, Maple Heights and Warrensville Heights come to the studio twice a week to learn musical concepts and creative movements. At the end of the season, the children perform to show what they have learned. The Cleveland Ballet also works with Twinsburg youths ages 5-15 through a nonprofit called Made By Kids.

Mr. Krasnyansky said that the company has also donated tickets to Cleveland Ballet performances at Playhouse Square to allow families who cannot afford a ticket to immerse themselves in ballet. In addition, the School of Cleveland Ballet offered four full scholarships to students from the outreach program to join the school.

Ms. Guadalupe and Mr. Krasnyansky emphasized that their outreach efforts stem from their value for the arts.

"At the theater, you foster education and future arts," she said. "There's an intangible element to it. You go to a magnificent theater and watch a ballet company. You cannot build a generation of mediocrity."

The couple continues to work on growing the ballet company and preparing for future performances, and thanked board chairman Dick Pogue for his brilliance and guidance. ■



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Replicas of classic art and photography line the upper level dining room at the Bull & Bird Steakhouse, in the former Gamekeepers in Chagrin Falls.

Photos by Peggy Turbett

Nod to past, salute to future

The Bull & Bird Steakhouse and Inn of Chagrin Falls carry on tradition of hospitality at Crane's Canary Cottage site

By JULIE HULLETT

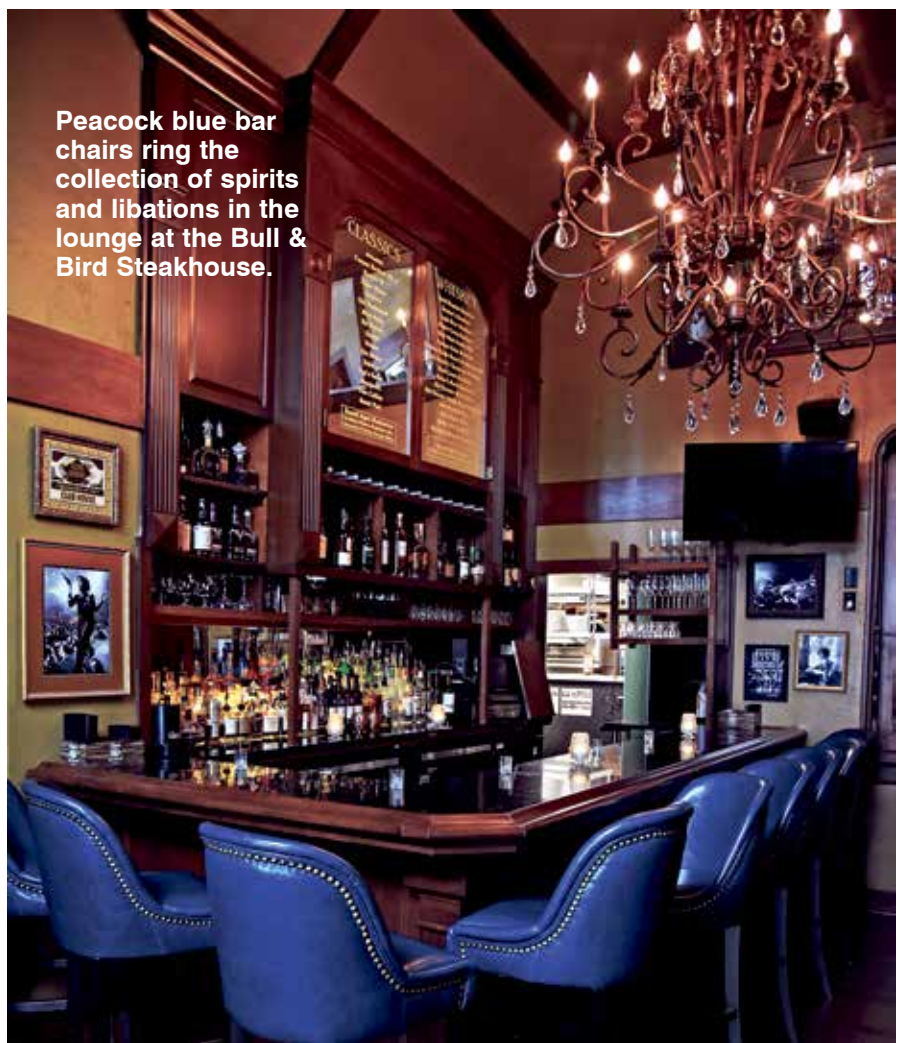
Nestled in the heart of downtown near the iconic Upper Falls, the Inn of Chagrin Falls and Bull & Bird Steakhouse are drawing on their pasts to shape their futures.

The two separate businesses on West Street in Chagrin Falls are connected by an inside hallway. This way, they share patrons and welcome other guests from near and far at separate street entrances.

Crane's Canary Cottage

Clarence Crane, a native of nearby Garrettsville, Ohio, worked in the chocolate industry in the early 1900s before developing his own type of candy that wouldn't melt in the summer heat, now known as Life Savers, according to the Chagrin Falls Historical Society. With a device that pharmacists used to make round pills, Mr. Crane formed his candy but punched a hole in the middle making it resemble a life preserver. He made

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Peacock blue bar chairs ring the collection of spirits and libations in the lounge at the Bull & Bird Steakhouse.



Tuscan bone-in ribeye with garlic herb butter is served on the all-season patio at The Bull & Bird Steakhouse.

a fortune selling Life Savers starting with saloon customers who wanted to refresh their breath after drinking and smoking.

Mr. Crane bought two 1800s-era cottages on West Street in Chagrin Falls in the spring of 1927 and built a 10,000-square-foot addition between them, inn manager Jen Ganger said. This structure would become Crane's Canary Cottage, an elegant restaurant that opened on Labor Day in 1927.

The restaurant attracted famous visitors, including Mr. Crane's son, poet Hart Crane, actor Will Rogers and food critic Duncan Hines. Pilot Charles Lindbergh had a reception there and John D. Rockefeller of Standard Oil had his own table, according to the historical society.

Mr. Crane died in 1931, and his wife, Bessie, ran the restaurant until 1942, when the rationing of food and supplies during World War II caused it to close. The Chagrin Falls Historical Society said that following the war, she remarried and opened a shop called William and Bessie Hise's Canary Cottage Antique Shop.

In the mid-1960s, Harold Reed purchased the building from Mrs. Hise and opened his business, the Artificial Plant Company. Carl and Beverly Vessele bought the business in 1975 and it remained opened through the 1980s. Gamekeeper's Tavern opened in 1976 with Tom Lutz and Erik Heatwole as the original owners. The Vesseles bought the building in 1978, according to Mrs. Ganger.

They began planning a New England-style bed and breakfast, and opened the Inn of Chagrin Falls in 1991, Mrs. Ganger said. The structure that was originally Crane's Canary Cottage is now the Inn of Chagrin Falls, Bull & Bird Steakhouse and Juicy Lucy, a women's clothing store.

Bull & Bird Steakhouse

After 40 years of business, Gamekeeper's closed in 2017. Hyde Park Restaurant Group took stewardship of the business and opened

Bull & Bird Steakhouse in August of 2018. Joe Saccone, principal of Hyde Park Restaurant Group, said that they chose the name by combining the menu's focus.

"The bull is the steakhouse and the bird represents Crane's Canary Cottage," he said. "It's part of today and a nod to the past."

Mr. Saccone explained that the new theme of the restaurant emphasizes storytelling and travel. While developing the concept for Bull & Bird, Mr. Saccone and his team found that the Cranes ran their restaurant together. The Hyde Park team took this fact and brought it a step further, imagining what could have

happened if they traveled the world.

Bull & Bird is decorated with more than 100 pieces of art to document a fictitious couple's travels across Europe. Mr. Saccone's team knew that this restaurant would be an American steakhouse, but chose to add a European twist in the food and the decor.

"We had a couple, they had a restaurant and they decided to travel. We were looking at it saying, 'It could have been the Cranes,'" he said. "That's where the inspiration came from. The art represents the places they've

Continued on page 40



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Continued from page 39

been, and there are stories from the American West to Europe.”

When patrons visit the restaurant, they will be taken back in time through the wall decor. There are oil paintings of historical figures like George Washington and black and white travel photos, such as the open road on Route 66. The photos display fashion from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, and show off the biggest cities in America, such as New York and Chicago. Well-known landmarks can be seen in pictures adorning the wall, like the Eiffel Tower and Grand Central Station.

The restaurant also went through a nine-month renovation prior to opening the 4,300 square foot space that seats 130 people. The front landscaping was replaced with an all-season patio with a fireplace and heated floors, and the patio opens into an extended bar area with roll-up windows. Mr. Saccone said that smaller spaces were opened up and woodwork throughout the restaurant was cleaned, stained and finished. He said that other features include leather seating, plaid booths, wood-paneled walls, two more fireplaces and private and semi-private dining rooms.

Mr. Saccone said the menu includes American dishes with a bit of European flavor, such as the Tuscan bone-in ribeye, Spanish style steak and lobster escargot-style.

Lush landscaping leads to the entrance of the Inn of Chagrin Falls, established in 1991 on the site of the historic Crane’s Canary Cottage.

“We brought back old-style cocktails,” he said. “We smoke them like how they were done in the 1940s through the 1960s and put on a new twist. It’s fun from that standpoint.”

Kevin Foley is the chef at Bull & Bird Steakhouse, and the menu is chef-driven. Mr. Saccone said that there are often weekly specials and new dishes that change with the seasons. In addition, Mr. Saccone said that the restaurant draws customers from Chagrin Falls, greater Cleveland patrons and others who are visiting Northeast Ohio for the weekend and choose to spend the day in Chagrin Falls.

“We’re very happy with where we’re at,” he said. “When you develop something like this and try to be creative, we’re very pleased. The feedback has been great from our guests.”

Inn of Chagrin Falls

Mrs. Ganger said that the Inn has “a country, charming, New England style.” The inn has 15 rooms, and most have a single bed while a couple have two beds or a rollaway bed. There are no kitchen facilities at the inn, a light continental breakfast is offered. The rooms include amenities like a flat screen TV and some have a fireplace and a jacuzzi, she said.

Each room has a memorable name, whether named after a person or a location in the

Chagrin Valley. Some of the lower priced rooms are named in honor of the original restaurant, such as Canary Room and Cottage Room. One of the more expensive rooms is called Poet’s Corner after Mr. Crane’s son, and the rooms with the highest price tag are named Philomethian Suite and President Garfield Suite. Aside from the charming features of the inn, Mrs. Ganger said that the Inn’s major draw is its location.

“The best part is that we’re in Chagrin,” she said. “We’re within walking distance of downtown Chagrin Falls.”

The visitors say that they love being so close to downtown Chagrin Falls, since the inn is just around the corner from shop-lined Main Street. The inn is the only place to stay in Chagrin Falls, Mrs. Ganger said, excluding Airbnbs. Mrs. Ganger said there are business travelers and leisure guests from near and far who enjoy a nice change of pace from hotel chains.

“Chagrin is such a destination so we get a lot of northeast Ohio people who come for a getaway, for wedding nights, and we have a lot of guests that come to visit local residents,” she said.

A mix of young couples, older couples, business people and families with children stay at the Inn, and Mrs. Ganger said that the best part

of her job is getting to know them. She said that many of their guests are regulars, and the staff develops friendships with them.

The inn has also had a few famous guests, according to Mrs. Ganger, including TV talk show host and reporter Geraldo Rivera (who now lives in Shaker Heights), professional golfer Mark O'Meara, former Cleveland Browns quarterback Brian Sipe and the late Tim Conway, who grew up in Chagrin Falls.

"It's different here," she said. "The charm brings them here."

The inn also had minor renovations in the last couple of years. The roof and some windows were replaced, the building was painted and a new ramp along with a vestibule was added at the front entrance last summer.

Future plans

Bull & Bird is working on another renovation in the coming months. They are in the designing stages to redo the back patio, slated to open in May of 2020. Mr. Saccone said he isn't sure yet what the patio will look like, but is planning for the concept to be a different style than the Gamekeeper's patio, including a bigger bar.

As for the inn, Mrs. Ganger said that she and her staff will continue to provide the best service to their guests. As long as Chagrin Falls is a destination for travelers, Mrs. Ganger said, the inn will happily welcome guests. ■



The Mill Room is one of the uniquely appointed suites at the Inn of Chagrin Falls.



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Photos by Peggy Turbett

The dining room and bar space at Aurelia at 16 North Main St., in Chagrin Falls, features a birch-themed mural.

It takes a family to serve up 'honest food and drink'

By TIM TEDESCHI

No matter how much experience you bring to the table, opening a new restaurant from scratch can be a demanding endeavor. It helps to have family to lean on, but it helps even more when your family members are the ones working alongside you to make the dream a reality.

Executive Chef James Balchak, his sister Diane Moore and brother-in-law John Moore have partnered to bring Aurelia to downtown Chagrin Falls, focused on serving locally sourced “honest food and drink” to their customers.

Mrs. Moore said her family had been trying to convince Mr. Balchak, who had established himself as a French-trained chef in Asheville, North Carolina, to return home to Cleveland for years so he could have complete creative control of a new restaurant venture. Mrs. and Mr. Moore have owned and operated industrial product businesses



Ribeye steak, from Miller Livestock in Kinsman, Ohio, is served with asparagus and mushroom risotto at Aurelia, an American-style bistro featuring Ohio-grown fresh foods.

and offered to share their expertise so Mr. Balchak could focus on the menu.

“So we had always said, ‘Come back here and we’ll help you. We can’t help you long distance,’ because we’ve had businesses and we know what it takes,” she said.

After an August 2017 family visit to Ashe-

ville, Mr. Balchak agreed to move home, and by January, the family had signed a lease at the former Dink’s and North Main Diner space at 16 North Main St., in the heart of Chagrin Falls. Aurelia celebrated its first anniversary in June of 2019.

Mr. Balchak and Mrs. Moore’s mother, Arlene, was always called Aurelia by their late father, James, bringing a family connection to even the naming of the restaurant. Mrs. Balchak said she has enjoyed being able to see her family come together to make the restaurant successful and is especially

happy to be able to enjoy Mr. Balchak's cooking after he had been working far from home for the past 18 years.

"Jim is very knowledgeable about all these things, but I had never seen that side of him because he was away for so long," she said. "It sometimes becomes a lot of work, but it's so rewarding to see Jim loves what he does and he's good at what he does. There are certain things that I eat and I say, 'I can't believe it.'"

Mr. Balchak said after being away from home for so long, it was overwhelming to have the help of Mr. and Mrs. Moore, his mother and the Moore's children Jack and Holly to make his vision for Aurelia come to life.

"I think it would've been very difficult for me to do this on my own without the help of my family. There are so many things that you don't think about in this business that keep it running, separate from food, separate from cooking, that I had no idea, and to have this team absolutely be right there with you, it almost shakes you a little bit because I'm so used to doing it on my own," he said. "To have somebody say, 'Hey, we got this part,' and to really mean that, that was huge for me."

Mr. Moore said while the immediate family put in the work to get the restaurant going, they now have grown to rely on their staff and actively work to make every employee feel valued.

"When we started, we wanted to make sure that the employees all know they're part of the family," he said. "We've got a great staff from our servers to cooks to bussers and dishwashers and our bartender, they're all really tight."

The family behind the quality food and service includes Executive Chef James Balchak, left, with partners (clockwise) John Moore, Diane (Balchak) Moore, and Arlene (Aurelia) Balchak, namesake of the restaurant.



All in the family

Aurelia's tagline of "honest food and drink" takes a lot of work to fulfill, Mr. Balchak said, with a menu that can change daily based on what is fresh, in season and locally available. The restaurant staff has had to work to educate its patrons to realize that even American diet staples like chicken have seasons of availability when locally sourced, he said.

"If you want pasture-raised chicken when it's inclement weather, they're not out there eating what they should be eating. So the farmer does not want to sell them like that and the integrity of that farmer to say that when really you could probably buy some, they wouldn't be high quality or they

wouldn't be what that person wants to sell," Mr. Balchak said. "That's where the honesty comes in."

"You get creative with what you have. And that's the big thing on how with this place, the idea was eat like we used to eat. Eat those things that when they are in season, are coming out of the garden; that's what you had. And very much to the point of this is what we have tonight for dinner, and if you're hungry you can eat it. And if not, we'll probably have it tomorrow."

Mrs. Moore said most customers buy in to the changing menu and fresh ingredients mindset after being educated by restaurant staff and are grateful to know their food is being prepared with thought and care to the

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Continued from page 43

whole food production system. Mr. Balchak said there is an open-minded and intellectual buzz in the air of Aurelia because guests have been informed about where their dinner comes from and how it got there.

“What you really get is not just food and not just people, but an atmosphere, a buzz in the air that really is infectious. We have many tables that go from four people to six to eight people because they call people to come down,” Mr. Balchak said. “We turn a lot of people who don’t eat Brussels sprouts or don’t eat beets or ‘I don’t like mushrooms’ or things like that, but when they have them here they really enjoy them.”

In the neighborhood

Mr. Moore said he enjoys that the location of Aurelia allows it to be a walkable neighborhood bar and restaurant that has become a staple of the community.

“We’ve got a lot of regulars that come in, and they meet friends and have good food,” he said.

While the menu is ever-changing, Mrs. Moore said one of her favorite and the most popular menu items is the roasted Brussels sprouts, which are roasted in olive oil, fried in sunflower oil and tossed in a light sweet chili sauce.

“The Brussels sprouts make me giggle, because who would’ve thought the Brussels sprouts?” Mrs. Moore said. “We have people that walk in the door just for the Brussels sprouts. They bring family in because ‘I’ve told my entire family about these Brussels sprouts. I told them they have to come in, and I tried to make them but they just don’t taste the same.’”

Mrs. Balchak said some of her favorite menu

Pan-seared Lake Erie walleye with grits from Shagbark Seed and Mill is a favorite at Aurelia, an American-style bistro featuring Ohio-grown fresh foods.



items are the signature Aurelia mimosas and desserts, including a flourless chocolate torte.

“You know that’s the best part of this all, not only to name it, but to cook for [my mother],” Mr. Balchak said. “I figure I cooked for so many other people’s families in 20-some years of doing this, so to cook for

my family, that’s the best part of this. All of these dishes that I may have cooked before or styles that I’ve cooked, to be able to present them to them, it’s just wonderful to have that and have her try things that maybe she hasn’t had a chance to try in her life.”

As the family continues to serve up honest food and drink at Aurelia, the Moores and Mr. Balchak are leaving the option open to potentially open another restaurant in the future, whether it’s in Chagrin Falls or somewhere else in Northeast Ohio.

“I think I have 100 restaurants in my head of things, so I really believe that the opportunity of what comes next is going to depend on the site, what the place, the building looks like, what the market dictates, because a lot of times I think restaurants open kind of without that thought,” Mr. Balchak said. “What does this area need? That seems to be the part that people miss.”

In the meantime, Mrs. Balchak is thankful to see her family working together to make Aurelia the best it can be.

“The phrase it takes a village, in our case it took a family to stick together and stick to what their needs were or what their expertise is,” she said. “It really is more meaningful, that statement is so meaningful now, when I see [Mr. Balchak] doing his thing and [Mrs. and Mr. Moore] doing the very best at everything they all do. It’s so gratifying.” ■

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Helyne Walker considers helping people in community a high honor

By JOAN DEMIRJIAN

For the past almost two decades, Helyne Walker has been at the center of activities in Bainbridge's bustling Chagrin Falls Park Community Center.

The coordinator of supportive services said organizing the food pantry is one of her top priorities. "That's where my heart is," she said.

"It's our No. 1 concern," she said of providing food for those in need. "It's an honor to help people to eat every day and make sure they have what they need. Everyone is taken care of," she said of the food pantry started in the 1970s by Rose Motley.

The community center has a vegetable garden tended by volunteers and the produce



Photo by Michael Steinberg

Helyne Walker is a familiar face at Chagrin Falls Park Community Center in Bainbridge. As the coordinator of supportive services, Mrs. Walker organizes the food pantry and plans a host of activities for residents including children and adults.

is shared and given out as part of the food pantry offerings. "We truly believe in serving fresh items with the canned foods, so they can have a proper meal to share with their families," said Mrs. Walker, 55.

Local residents share bounty from their own garden produce with the community

center's pantry, she noted. One man delivers extra eggs from his chickens. Valley Presbyterian Church brings produce weekly from the congregation's garden to the community center pantry during the growing season. "They put in the garden just to give food

Continued on page 46



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Continued from page 45

away,” she said.

“Area churches give so much and so do people in the community. One lady brings in peanut butter and jelly on a regular basis,” said Mrs. Walker, who lives in Bainbridge. The personal donations make a difference, she added.

Children donate to the pantry as well, she said, including three girls who worked together selling lemonade to raise money for the community center.

“We ask people to give the way you live, and gluten-free people give gluten-free products, and the salt and sugar free people give the way they live. It works,” she said.

“We care about everyone,” Mrs. Walker said, noting the community center holds cooking classes for adults and the seniors, known as master chefs, help with the classes. “We teach the classes in the fall and winter and if it is spring, we can pick vegetables out of the garden. We come together to talk about foods, recipes and ideas,” she said.

“Our master cooks even teach children

how to scramble eggs, make grilled cheese sandwiches and create vegetable wraps and pancakes,” she said. “We have a wonderful time with the children. I love seeing the kids with the seniors.”

The center also offers classes for people on a budget. “Cook up pots of beans and lentils and you save time because you cook once and eat twice. It is an old way of thinking,” she advised.

Those on a strict budget even learn about making laundry detergent at \$3 for a five-gallon bucket, and about making fresh bread for pennies, she said. “It’s such a pleasure to learn these things,” she said.

New this year is a session on how to prepare for emergencies such as a weather disaster with tips on storing food and water for at least three days, she said.

“We started last year and it is about helping people empower themselves,” Mrs. Walker said.

“We help people to see things differently and to reduce stress through budgeting,” Mrs. Walker said. “It is about new ways to save money. We gave out piggy banks to

save coins and to show how that adds up. It is an emergency fund, and the goal is to show you can save money a little at a time.”

While she is in charge of the gardens, she noted, “I couldn’t do it without the love and support of the community. Everyone comes through. That’s how you build community. People weed the gardens and help put them to bed in the fall. We’ve had the gardens over 10 years,” she said. “We’re a very caring community.”

The center also has services for adults such as rides to shopping centers and after-school tutoring and summer programs for children.

“Watching (the children) do art is a feel good thing. I love it,” she said.

Mr. Walker also coordinates the community center’s Share It Shop. People bring in donations of clothes and small household items to share. “We sort it and help people find what they need. Sheets went to a young girl going to college,” she said of a recent donation. School clothing for children is always needed, she added.

“We also help out at Christmas time,” Mrs. Walker said of the annual North Pole event.

A room is set up with donated toys and groceries. “We get a list from parents of what they need and we match them up. My heart is with Christmas.”

Pajama donations are sought so each child receives two pairs of pajamas, she added. “We ask for donations of new pajamas, all sizes, even adults, because we have teenagers. In the end we always have enough.”

Mrs. Walker started at the center in 2000 when a friend came to her door and said the center needed help watching the babies at the day care. She brought her own two children and never left.

Today, her daughters Euneata and Kaila, now grown, participated in all the programs. “They have said the center helped prepare them for school.”

“This is the best experience of my life here. It is an amazing experience,” she said of the people she has met throughout the years. “I have never tired of people who come in and want to help and to give. The community center started in 1955, and people have always come together to help others. And it’s every day.

“I see the children come in the doors and watch them grow,” Mrs. Walker said.

“We are working hard to make sure this community center remains because it is special. We call each other family.” ■



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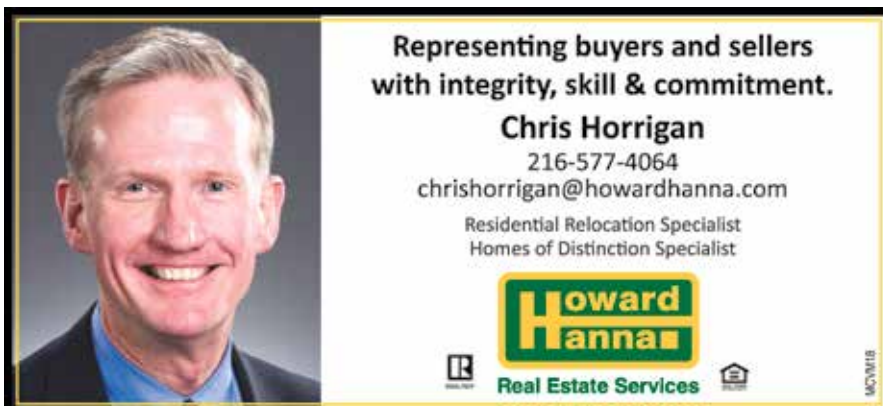
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Tri-C provost works to give students paths to success

By PARIS WOLFE

Karen Miller loves her job. “I love being in a role that can make change,” said the provost at Cuyahoga Community College, a role she took on in early 2017. “It’s an honor to lead the academic and student affairs decisions of the college, represent the college in the community and most particularly help to improve outcomes for students.”

As provost, which is the chief academic officer of a college, the Bainbridge Township resident has combined responsibility for student affairs and academic affairs. That means anything related to the classroom and student experience. It includes college-wide and program accreditation, faculty and faculty development, curriculum, enrollment services, student support services, data collection, analysis and reporting and all the early college and community programs.

“I didn’t aspire to this title. It wasn’t in my wildest dreams,” she said. “I thought I’d be working in the student affairs area supporting students and student development at a campus.”

In her provost role, Ms. Miller has the opportunity, even the responsibility, to lead the college to its best version. Under the leadership of President Alex Johnson, Ph.D, that includes continuing to improve the three-year graduation rate as tracked by the federal government. In 2013, this rate was 4.5 percent. In 2018, it grew to almost 19 percent. The goal for 2020 is to reach 22.5 percent.

That may sound low until you consider that only a small percentage of students at the community college take a traditional two- to three-year track to their associate degree. And that’s the statistic tracked by the government.

Most Tri-C students are non-traditional and require more time to matriculate because studies are only part of their schedules, she said. These students balance work, family and other responsibilities.

Ms. Miller is working to make this balance easier. To do so, people and dollars have been repurposed to build an infrastructure that supports improved graduation rates. “That process and positions to support a change in the way we help students through one-on-one assistance, internal process changes and technology improvements help students stay on track and complete credentials at higher rates,” Ms. Miller said.

Among support services, for example, is “Care Cash.” The new initiative gives front-line staff the power to help students solve problems that interfere with day-to-day education. For example, a flat tire might keep a student from class. The Care Cash – up to \$100 per need – can help solve the problem and get them back in the classroom. In the first year, students received more than



Karen Miller is provost at Cuyahoga Community College.

\$11,000 in Care Cash.

“I wish people saw Tri-C the way I see it. I wish they realized what we have to offer,” Ms. Miller says. “Many people don’t realize what’s available to them here. Students can save money, get the same quality education, and then transfer to any state or most private colleges in Ohio and beyond. We have quality programs, leadership and career experiences, and scholarships both while students are at Tri-

C and some that support students even after they transfer. The opportunities are endless.”

Ms. Miller has worked at Tri-C in various student affairs positions since 1998. Past positions include vice president of institutional research and enrollment management and dean of student affairs at the Metropolitan Campus in Cleveland. Prior to joining Tri-C, Ms. Miller worked at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and DeVry Institute of Technology in Columbus in various roles within student affairs.

Ms. Miller has a doctorate in higher education from the University of Toledo. She holds a master’s degree with a specialization in guidance and counseling from the University of Akron, where she also earned her bachelor’s degree. A resident of the Chagrin Valley for nearly 25 years, Ms. Miller lives with her husband and a Jack Russell terrier in the Lake Lucerne neighborhood. In her spare time, she likes to attend sporting events and travel. ■



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Photo by Michael Steinberg

U.S. Rep. Dave Joyce, R-Bainbridge, said his passion for the Great Lakes grew through family fishing trips and walks on the beach while growing up in Northeast Ohio. He is known today both locally and in Washington, D.C., for his advocacy of natural resources.

The Great Lakes guy

Congressman Dave Joyce proudly advocates for region's natural resources

By TIM TEDESCHI

Some of Dave Joyce's fondest childhood memories involve family vacations along Lake Erie, renting a cottage near Gem Beach on Catawba Island or at nearby lakeshore communities.

"One thing I remember as a little kid the most clearly were the two weeks we'd take on vacation," he said, "and the whole family being together, including the dog, and going down to the beach every day with my dad, and the arcade and all of those fun activities," he said.

His passion for the Great Lakes grew through fishing trips, walks on the beach

and working at a steel plant downtown that showed him how the lake powered industry. Today, he is now known as the "Great Lakes Guy" as an advocate for the natural resources of the region as a U.S. Representative for Ohio's 14th Congressional District.

Rep. Joyce, R-Bainbridge, said shortly after he was elected to his first term in Congress in 2012, he was encouraged by a colleague to first learn the rules of the building, then to become an expert in a topic and specialize in advocating for that topic. When he didn't see anyone speaking up for the Great Lakes, he decided to make them a major focus, even voting against his party in committee when a Great Lakes funding cut was proposed.

"So they had to bring the chairman down to override my vote, but it showed them that I was willing to stand up and do what's right and necessary to protect and preserve not just a lake or a series of lakes, but a national treasure," said Rep. Joyce, 62. "The Great Lakes are history, they're vacations, they're

family fun, they're the backdrop of weddings and beautiful things. It brings so many folks downtown and it brings a vibrancy to the cities all along the lake that you wouldn't have but for the lake and its magical qualities." On top of the recreation opportunities and beauty of the Great Lakes, the region is a boost to industry and also provides invaluable drinking water, he said.

The Ranking Member on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Environment, one of Rep. Joyce's top priorities in protecting and taking care of the Great Lakes has been his work to secure as much funding as possible for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative known as GLRI, a bipartisan, multiagency program that helps clean up polluted areas, restore wildlife habitats, combat threats of invasive species and algal blooms and encourages economic development on lakeshore communities.

While the program had been funded through appropriations since 2010, Rep.

Joyce authored the bill language for GLRI funding to be formally authorized by Congress at \$300 million annually in 2016.

Rep. Joyce said since the Great Lakes provide around 85 percent of North America's fresh water, protecting the lakes is more than just a Midwest issue, and areas like the Everglades in Florida and parts of California are dealing with similar problems and threats to their water sources. Research and best practices on how to conserve the Great Lakes can be applied across the country, he said.

"Now the hardest part is trying to continue to increase money to (GLRI) because as you know the problem hasn't gone away, and it's gotten worse in some other states," he said.

Some Ohio Environmental Protection Agency projects funded by GLRI have included re-establishing serpentine-style creeks near agricultural runoff rather than straightened streams that increase the runoff of manure, topsoil and phosphorous into creeks, rivers and lakes and restoring waters that suffered from serious contamination including the Maumee, Black, Cuyahoga and Ashtabula rivers, he said.

"You can never let down, because new problems come into place," Rep. Joyce said. "We polluted it and we've taken a long time to clean it. And nature has its own way of cleaning itself, too, but we had to make sure we weren't doing more things to hurt it than help it."

Rep. Joyce, who served as Geauga County prosecutor for 25 years before being elected to U.S. Congress, is also a founding member of the Bipartisan Task Force to End Sexual Violence which holds hearings, develops legislative priorities on the subject and educates fellow representatives and constituents on issues related to sexual violence. Through the task force, he worked with Cuyahoga County to test the backlog of sexual assault kits that were sitting on shelves for years.

"As the database grows, it's only as good as the data you have in it. So as they're taking samples from inmates, especially convictions (for sexual assault), we cleaned up serial rapists. You can find one guy who was responsible for 20 or 30 of these at a time," Rep. Joyce said. "And then they realize it was one

sick individual who committed that crime, and hopefully they're institutionalized so they never do it to anyone ever again."

The task force has also held hearings regarding sexual violence in the military, seeking to break the stigma that a service member cannot report assaults up the chain of command due to the risk of being retaliated against, punished or unable to progress in their careers.

"We have to stop that culture; that can't exist," Rep. Joyce said. "They should also have the ability to report it and know that their stories are going to be heard and the people that did it are going to be held responsible. The day they come in there and tell their story, we need to work with them and say we believe them and know that their story is credible and go after the perpetrators."

Rep. Joyce said while every level of government has a role to play in the fight against the opioid epidemic, he believes Congress should take time to listen to people on the ground in local communities about what the most effective programs have been. Through these conversations, he has worked to install scanners at the central Cleveland Post Office to reduce drugs being transported through the U.S. mail; advocated for local police and fire departments, schools and other community groups to have access to Narcan that can reverse the effects of an overdose and is pushing for local rehabilitation facilities to receive more federal funding, he said.

"Because a person is in possession of the drug makes it a crime, but they're not necessarily a criminal. They're addicted to a drug that they can't get away from, and most of the people you talk to say it's like the devil itself," Rep. Joyce said. "So you have to break these people from the addiction and try to get them back in to being the human being and member of society that they were before. That requires money and it requires a lot of counseling and time."

The son of a World War II veteran, Rep. Joyce has also committed to bringing awareness and helping lower suicide rates of veterans, with a current average of 22 veterans dying by suicide every day. He is working

to rename the Fairport Harbor Post Office to honor Marine Lance Corporal Andy Nowacki, who was killed while serving in Iraq in 2005.

"It's important that we celebrate these people for the heroes that they are instead of letting them come back and wonder what happened," he said. "They can't really talk to you about the gross and horrible things that they went through, and we need to make them and their reentry into society easier so that we don't have 22 suicides a day."

Even in a highly polarized political climate, Rep. Joyce said he has learned that bipartisanship is the only way real progress is made and goals are accomplished, including his work on the Great Lakes and the sexual violence task force.

"If you talk about the things you agree upon, then instead of starting out with your disagreements, you tend to work on getting something accomplished. And then, hopefully, in working through that process, you realize the things you disagree upon maybe we should hold off on that or maybe we could fund that partway or legislate something to work toward it and have common goals," he said. "But it takes that credibility, it takes working with folks, it takes listening, which is in short supply in Washington, D.C."

Rep. Joyce said he is proud to have grown up in the Chagrin Valley and now to be able to represent it in Congress while still calling the area home.

"It's home. It's just lovely. You're 45 minutes from anywhere. The wide open spaces are so nice," he said. "It's just the quality of life, the quality of the people who live here. People open up doors for each other, they say hello and actually wait to hear from you and they ask how you're doing to see how you are actually doing."

"I don't want to be a U.S. Senator. I don't want to be President. When I finish, I'm coming back here and I'll retire and be here with my wife."

Rep. Joyce and his wife Kelly, both West Geauga High School graduates, have three adult children, Trenton, Keighle, and Bridey, and a golden retriever, Winnie. ■

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Bryan Komlos of Auburn Township spends his vacation time on the softball diamond working with the Triceratops softball players. He has been head coach of the Cuyahoga Community College team since 2010.

Photo by Tanner Mondok

Coach from Auburn builds Tri-C softball into one of top programs in the nation

By TIM TEDESCHI

Some people like to spend their vacations on beaches, others enjoy hunting and fishing and some visit popular landmarks across the country. But Bryan Komlos spends his vacation on the softball diamond.

Mr. Komlos, 60, of Auburn has served as Cuyahoga Community College's head softball coach since 2010, but it's not his day

job. A First Energy employee for 41 years, Mr. Komlos now serves as a manager of multiple departments and has built up the flexibility to use his vacation time to work with the Triceratops softball team.

"I've got a wonderful wife, Wendy, that loves this as much as I do and cares about this as much as I do, so all of our vacation is pretty much scheduled around softball," he said. "I take vacation days for home

games and vacation days when we travel and it works out really well. The company has been very good to me for all these years, and being in the position I'm in, I'm able to use those vacation days."

After being involved in slow pitch softball leagues for company and recreation league teams, Mr. Komlos began coaching softball through the Kenston Athletic Association when his daughter, Rachel, now 31, started playing at age 8. He coached various travel leagues over the years and worked as an assistant coach at Hiram College and Ursuline College and a pitching and hitting instructor at Trinity High School before joining the Tri-C staff in 2008.

"The coaches at Tri-C wanted me to look at a couple of pitchers they had, so I went out one day and took a look at them," Mr. Komlos said. "I hung around for a few weeks and that slowly turned into a paid position at Tri-C that I accepted and that's where it started. Two years later, I was the head coach and building a program."

Tri-C Athletic Director Mark Rodriguez said Mr. Komlos's love for the sport was

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evident in the hiring process and helped confirm that he was the right person to lead the program.

"You will overcome a lot when you have that drive, and that will do things other people wouldn't do because they don't have as much passion," he said. "I sensed there was a passion and said, 'We'll give you a shot,' and he just took the ball and ran with it."

Over the past decade, Mr. Komlos has built Tri-C's program into one of the most successful in the nation, including three Ohio Community College Athletic Conference championships, a 2019 National Junior College Athletic Association District J championship and two national tournament appearances in 2013 and 2019. The team reached the national tournament just once in program history before Mr. Komlos took the reins.

Mr. Komlos said building a program for sustained success at a community college can be difficult, especially in Northeast Ohio with roughly 14 other local schools including Cleveland State University, Notre Dame College, Ursuline, Lake Erie College and more to compete against, but he has learned to highlight all of the different paths a student athlete can take and the potential cost savings of choosing Tri-C. Recruits have come from all over Ohio as well as Indiana, Michigan and as far as British Columbia, Canada, he said.

"We're a Division II school, so we offer a lot of the same benefits, scholarships, academic and athletic, and we play a pretty aggressive schedule now," he said. "You can get out in the workforce quickly, sometimes there's grade issues, you can stay close to home, so you have to pick and choose and recruit hard to get the right players to come to the school and take advantage of that two year program."

"It's a great program as a stepping stone for players that aren't sure what they want to do. It's a great school and a great opportunity."

Megan Mulhan, who was named a first-team All-American as a freshman catcher on the 2019 Triceratops squad with a NJCAA-leading 78 RBIs and a .458 average over 50 games, said Mr. Komlos's confidence and energy about his team drew her to play at Tri-C.

"When I first met Coach Bryan, he had such a great attitude and he was so positive about everything, so positive about his team and how great they are and how good they can be and if I were to join the team, how good my team would be, and he was right about all of it," she said. "His coaching style kind of comes from who he scouts. He scouts out the best girls. He's a fun coach, he can be tough when he needs to be and he's real with you, and I think that's the best thing about it."

Building relationships that go beyond the diamond with his players and their families is a priority for Mr. Komlos, he said, especially since his players are only at Tri-C for two years.

"The relationships with players and parents are short lived because it's a two year school, but we have a great time developing students," he said. "I'm pretty proud of that family-type atmosphere. We care about their grades and academic futures, and it shows. We have had all-conference academic players, all-American academic and athletic

players, all-region athletic players.

"So I like to think we're developing great young ladies that are going to be comfortable and feel good about getting out into the world and continuing to be good students at four-year schools and getting something out of their life."

Ms. Mulhan said the 2019 team excelled both academically and athletically under Mr. Komlos, with several sophomore players moving on to four-year schools to continue their education and softball careers.

"This year that I played on Tri-C has been the best team out of all of my years of playing. We meshed so well, we were a complete family and I've never been on a team better than that, so that was really cool," she said. "[Mr. Komlos is] just great. He's like another father figure to me."

Mr. Komlos said while recruiting, people sometimes question whether Tri-C even offers athletics, but he is grateful to be able to continue to build up the reputation of Triceratops sports.

"You've seen a lot on the baseball program and soccer is getting better and basketball is getting there, but Tri-C has had national champions in wrestling and in track," he said. "It's a great opportunity for students who can take advantage of a good local school and use it as a stepping stone for a four-year school or the workforce. People don't realize what's in their own backyard." ■


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Three destination shopping areas in the Chagrin Valley are, from left, downtown Chagrin Falls, Eton Chagrin Boulevard in Woodmere and Pinecrest in Orange Village.

Premier shopping

Browse boutiques, trendy stores in three valley destination districts

By SAMANTHA COTTRILL

Exclusive boutiques that cater to discerning tastes offer an experience like no other and have become the foundation and inspiration of popular shopping districts. In the Chagrin Valley, there are at least three notable shopping destinations that fit this bill and certainly are worth a perusal.

Downtown Chagrin Falls' historical shopping district offers the scenic falls of the Chagrin River as a backdrop to a mix of upscale boutiques, homey cafes and parks. Woodmere Village is home to the stately Eton Chagrin Boulevard, with local and national stores and restaurants both inside the semi-traditional mall and outside in adjacent buildings surrounded by well-manicured gardens. Pinecrest, which opened in 2018 in Orange Village, provides the urban downtown shopping experience smack in the middle of suburbia. Strolling down Pinecrest's glittering Park Avenue, patrons move past luxury offices and apartments, a national outdoor gear store, fine dining, high-end grocery store, bowling, movies and small shops, all appealing to the senses.

Downtown Chagrin Falls

Downtown Chagrin Falls' shopping district is a place for the whole family. Triangle Park and Riverside Park are backdrops for special community events throughout the year from

summer concerts to holiday lightings.

From a long-standing bookstore, to fine jewelry and men's better wear, to on-trend clothing for teens and young adults and even baby gear, there's a shop for everyone in the historic district by the upper and lower falls.

If you're tired from shopping, stop by the Popcorn Shop for some sweets or a cup of java. There's a cupcake store on the main drag and a bakery tucked on a side street. The scenic falls pulls you into the shopping district, but the historic architecture and independent shops beckon for you to stay awhile.

"It's two-fold," said Nancy Law, children's manager of Fireside Book Shop on Main Street. People visit the village to experience the waterfalls and surrounding greenery, she explained. "And to see the boutique-type stores that we have; not so much cookie cutter stores.

"People come, I think, maybe for the historic architecture as well," Ms. Law added. "It's an old town with so many historic buildings. Ours (Fireside) is one of them."

Fireside's building, Ms. Law said, dates back to the 1870s. The floorboards creak with every step as you shop a bolstering collection of paper products from new and used books, leather-bound journals, stationary gifts and so much more.

Ms. Law, having grown up in Chagrin Falls, said she remembers when the village "was a sleepy little town." She recollected

when the shopping district wasn't as "yup-pyized," or upscale. "It was just a little town, fairly quiet," she said.

While the downtown shopping district has welcomed more upscale shops and boutiques, the area still holds to its sense of community, where neighboring store owners would sooner recommend each other to customers than think of competing.

Samantha Probst, storeowner of the village's new Little Babet, said the shopping district is like a village within a village.

"It's more of that village, neighborhood-type feel," she said. "You're just going to have the friendliness, people helping you and getting to know you, which creates community in the shop."

Mrs. Probst explained that she hopes to have customers who start shopping in her baby boutique when they're pregnant and build long-lasting relationships with them as their children grow. She added that it's the little details like building personal relationships with visitors that make Chagrin Falls stand out.

"A large shop, they help you, but they don't know you, really," she said.

Eton Chagrin Boulevard

A balanced blend of boutiques pairs nicely with upscale national brands at Eton Chagrin Boulevard.

The indoor-outdoor hybrid shopping mall

in Woodmere offers lavish, local boutiques, such as Amy's Shoes and Apparel or Kilgore Trout, side-by-side with stately nationwide brands like Lucky Jean or Lululemon.

Need a break from shopping? Take a seat at Eton Shines for a "black tie shine" of a pair of shoes – "on or off the feet."

Eton isn't just for shopping, however. The family-friendly and pet-friendly estate engages the community, said Danielle Gross, Eton's marketing and communications manager.

"We have really unique dining options as well as entertainment all together in one beautiful location," Ms. Gross said.

Dining options include B Spot for burgers, Taza Lebanese Grill, Stone Oven café and Pacific East Sushi Bar, among others. Visitors can walk outside along the shops to enjoy the splendor of the Petiti Garden Center sponsored gardens and Eton's "aesthetic" décor details, such as a stacked bird hotel outside Barnes & Noble or the fountains at the mall's east and west entrances.

"Bob Stark (owner of Eton Chagrin Boulevard), and Stark Enterprises in general, his whole goal is to really make aesthetically pleasing, detail oriented properties," Ms. Gross said. The atmosphere and visuals of the mall are meant for visitors to "be engaged and to be kind of dazzled by the beauty of the lifestyle centers," she said, noting the gardens. "It's not just a shopping center, but really a very dynamic multi-use center that's very beautiful and very visual and really kind of has those community and event elements to engage people while they're here."

Ms. Gross said the center holds different events to target wide ranges of audiences.

"We have many different events," she said, noting Eton's boutique trick-or-treat event for families in the fall, two sidewalk sales, holiday lightings for Hanukkah and Christmas in December and more, along with classes and events held within the mall's vendor establishments. "It feels like a whole community getting together.

"I've been shopping at some of the local boutiques for 20-plus years. So, I think we really range pretty well, and we've done a really good job of achieving and kind of moving the needle and shifting to a wider range of audiences," Ms. Gross added. "You're able to shop, dine and play all at Eton, and you're able to really, really enjoy yourself when you step foot on the property."

Pinecrest

Pinecrest, a Fairmount Properties shopping scene still in its infancy, has the feel of an urban downtown without the sprawl.

Ample parking dotted with plenty of green space surrounds the stretch of entertainment, shopping and dining. Boutiques are nestled between national brands, some still to come, to remind visitors of its local inspirations.

Randy Ruttenberg, principal of Fairmount Properties, even paid homage to downtown Chagrin Falls.

"Chagrin Falls is, kind of, in a way the organic version of what so many developers try to create," he said. "It's really hard to try and copy a place like Chagrin Falls. As we look at the design opportunities at Pinecrest – and frankly, all of what we (Fairmount Properties) do throughout the country – we do take cues from great places like Chagrin Falls," he explained.

The property is perfect for daytime shopping, evening dining and nighttime entertainment for a full day of engagement into the "wee hours of the night," said Mr. Ruttenberg.

Pinecrest also is set to host up to 70 events – small, medium and large in scale – throughout the year, Mr. Ruttenberg added.

"Experience is at the crux of what we prioritize in every new initiative," he said of Fairmount Properties. He added that Pinecrest works to engage the senses of shoppers and visitors in "a highly digitized world.

"Now we must create something more inspiring, more compelling; now certainly more tactile and sensory overall if we expect to be successful," he added.

Hear the crash of bowling pins from Pin-stripes, smell the scents of Duck Donuts or feel wet clay between your fingers and paint pottery through one of the district's many

events throughout the year, Mr. Ruttenberg said.

"The best retailers understand that only through a great in-store experience, unique product differentiation and ongoing communication within their customer base can you create that magical alchemy that can withstand the constant digital front," he said.

Boutiques on Park Avenue, like Apricot Lane, Vernacular, Blackbird Fly and Scout and Molly's Boutique, offer trendy women's clothing, shoes and accessories in tight proximity of each other for convenient boutique variety between Third and Fourth streets.

Just down the street, Vineyard Vines, Homage, J. Crew and UNTUCKit are familiar upscale brands ranging in fashion from sporty to preppy. And let's not forget REI Co-op for outdoor clothing and gear. By the time you're through with these, you've only touched less than quarter of what Pinecrest has to offer. FOMO (fear of missing out) will certainly keep you on the property until you finish the night with a glass of wine and a Hollywood hit at Silverspot Cinema.

With shopping, dining, living and plenty of community events throughout the year, Pinecrest offers a bit of everything to just about everyone.

"We want Pinecrest to be as much about gathering as it is about commerce," Mr. Ruttenberg said. ■



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Surgeon Dr. Hull draws inspiration from family

By VALERI FURST

Dr. Tracy Hull is a busy woman. The 60-year-old Chagrin Falls resident is a nationally renowned surgeon, a wife and mom, and in her spare time, shows horses around the country. She was recently named president of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons, only the third woman to hold this designation. The fact that Dr. Hull became a surgeon is really no surprise considering that she grew up in Fremont, Ohio with her veterinarian father performing surgery on animals on the kitchen table.

Dr. Hull explained, "My dad started his practice at our house. My mom was a nurse and she would help out as a vet tech. I remember my dad doing surgery on one end of the kitchen table and me sitting in a high chair at the other end. He would hold up various organs and ask me what they were. Back then, animal diseases were relatively unknown so my dad would also perform autopsies in the garage. I was 3 when he started telling me to "sew 'em up!" and that's when I knew I wanted to be a surgeon."

Dr. Hull admits her practice and the fact that she ended up at the Cleveland Clinic

was not part of some grand plan. Quite the opposite. While in her fifth year as a surgical resident at Syracuse University, she was visiting a friend in Vermont who was a colorectal surgeon and he recommended she apply for a colorectal fellowship at the Clinic. Dr. Hull said she received the position almost by accident after many things fell into place.

"There were no cell phones back then so I used a pay phone to call for an interview and was told there were no more slots. Then a few days later I got a call saying there was a cancellation so I rearranged my schedule to handle two night shifts and went to Cleveland. The interview was terrible and I didn't get it. But then, a few people dropped out and eventually they made it to my name on the list and I have been here ever since."

When Dr. Hull started at the Clinic, she was the only woman in the colorectal department and it remained that way for ten years. But Dr. Hull didn't dwell on it much.

"My dad was very instrumental in my life and never allowed me to think of myself as a woman with obstacles to overcome. And the opportunities in the colorectal specialty have no bearing on your gender. You are asked to get the job done and it doesn't matter if you are a woman or a man."

Dr. Hull is known for taking tough cases. Her mentor, Dr. Victor Fazio, would get the cases that others said could not be handled. He would tell her to "think outside the box" which still holds true today.

"When treating a patient, they are scared and nervous, some have almost died," Dr. Hull said. "Every surgery is a little different and the planning is different as well but you have to remember you are helping this person. You are looking at some of their most vulnerable spots so you want to be respectful and make them feel comfortable."

Dr. Hull has been married for 33 years to Carl Engelman. Because of her crazy schedule, which included her electricity being turned off twice in the early years as she didn't have time to deposit her paycheck and make a payment, he left his job in the Chemistry Department at the Ohio State University to be a stay-at-home husband and dad. They have a son, Russell, 27, who is a paleontologist and with whom they have gone on some digs, including one where Dr. Hull found a dinosaur tooth.

Yet Dr. Hull's passion in her downtime is horses, and she tries to participate in a horse show at least once a month in a variety of classes, including hunter under saddle, dressage and driving. Dr. Hull has always owned



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“My dad was very instrumental in my life and never allowed me to think of myself as a woman with obstacles to overcome. And the opportunities in the colorectal specialty have no bearing on your gender. You are asked to get the job done and it doesn’t matter if you are a woman or a man.”

horses and currently has one that stays with her trainer and three that live on her property. That means she is up as early as 4 a.m. for feeding and then heads into work at the Clinic where there are days filled with rounds, consultations, meetings, surgeries and more. A couple of days a week she drives out to the trainer for practice. Show time is on the weekend and when we met, she had just returned from Tulsa, Oklahoma where she participated in 11 classes. More than a mere hobby, Dr. Hull wins many events and has photos in her office of her successes including Masters Amateur and Reserve Championships. Dr. Hull admits her schedule is crazy but adds it is lots of fun.

“To make it work, you have to be super, super organized. Lots of sticky notes and relying on other people when you can. I also sit on a lot of boards so there are a lot of things happening right now all at once, which is tough. My plan is to give this another five years. Then, I have a friend who has asked if I can come and be her nanny and help organize her house.” ■

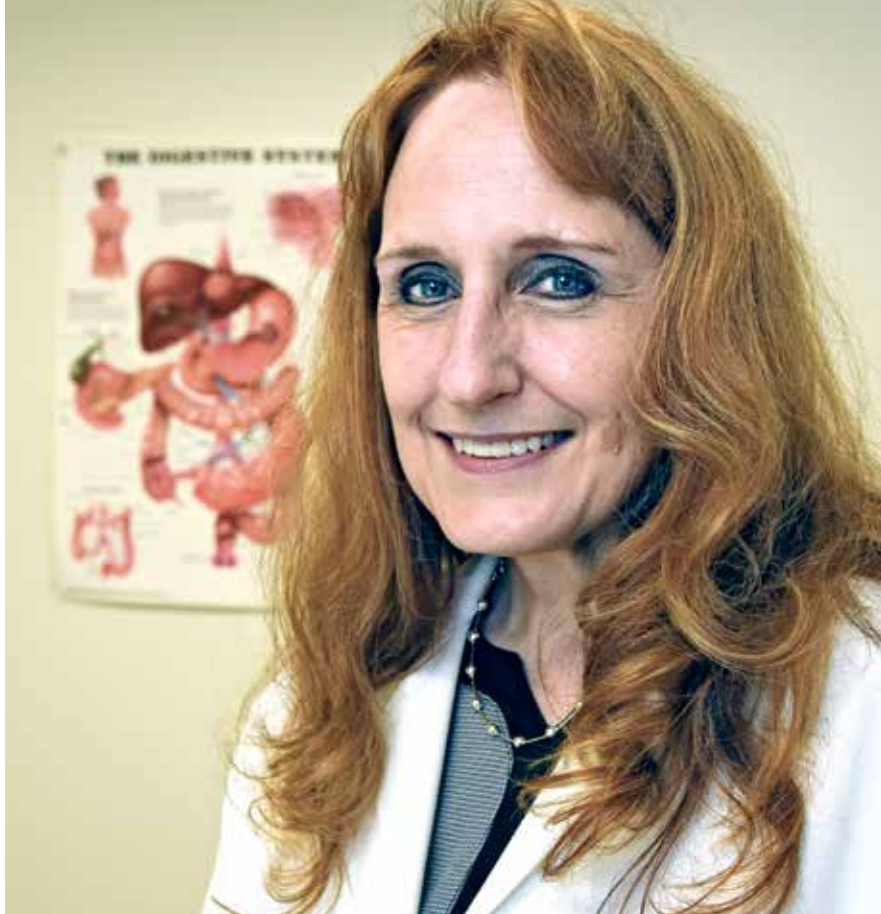


Photo by Peggy Turbett

Dr. Tracy Hull of Chagrin Falls recently was named president of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons. She is the third woman to hold this national designation.



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A full-page photograph of actor Tim Conway in a naval uniform. He is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved button-down shirt with two chest pockets, light-colored trousers, and a dark belt. He is also wearing a white officer's cap with a gold emblem. He has a surprised or concerned expression on his face, looking upwards and to the right. The background is a dimly lit room, possibly a ship's cabin, with a blue bag and some papers visible.

Chagrin Falls' favorite son

Tim Conway found success early in his career as the bumbling Ensign Parker in "McHale's Navy." But he never lost sight of his roots to his home town Chagrin Falls.

Comic genius Tim Conway never forgot hometown roots

BARBARA CHRISTIAN

After Tim Conway passed away on May 14, 2019 at the age of 85, his Hollywood peers would eulogize him as a “comic genius,” but back in his hometown of Chagrin Falls, Ohio those who knew him from way back remembered the time when he was just “Tom – Dan and Sophia Conway’s son.”

You read that right. His given name was Thomas Daniel Conway. He was forced to change it because back in the early 1960s when he arrived in Hollywood, there was already a working actor named Tom Conway and the rule was that there could not be two actors with the same name.

That is the reason Thomas Daniel Conway, from the Chagrin Falls High School class of 1952, became Tim Conway, master comedian.

He would first find success as the bumbling Ensign Parker in “McHale’s Navy” and later as a variety of memorable characters on the “Carol Burnett Show.”

Everyone’s favorite son

One of the first things he did as a Hollywood success was to renovate the East Orange Street home where he was raised and where his parents would live out their years.

It was an illustration of the kind of son he was and the kind and caring man he was. To the town, Tim Conway, the fall down funny comic actor, was the image of what a hometown hero looks like.

Mr. Conway would credit his parents for his humor, explaining how naturally funny they were without knowing it.

And then there was Chagrin Falls itself, with its illogical name, that inspired his sense of humor along with his teachers, coaches, friends and town characters that fed into some of the most memorable characters ever created.

There were other local accolades. In 2000, Mr. Conway was enshrined in the Chagrin Falls Alumni Association’s Achievement Hall of Fame.

It was Ensign Parker of McHale’s Navy TV show that had catapulted the hometown boy into becoming a famous personality. Townspeople adopted an unspoken rule about how to behave around him. Treat him like he never left.

During his career, Mr. Conway won three Emmys for co-starring in “The Carol Burnett Show” for the 1960s and ‘70s, and a fourth as a team writer for the show. He was in several Disney comedies and even did voiceovers for animated films including the popular “SpongeBob Squarepants.”

You can go home again

It was like he never left. Mr. Conway came home often in those days. Later, he would bring all or some of his six kids with him.

The summer visits, former neighbor Mike Carlton said, were meant to counterbalance to the Conway kids’ life in Los Angeles.

He never turned down requests for an interview with the local weekly newspaper. Mr. Conway talked about all sorts of things. He maintained Chagrin Falls had not changed a bit since his childhood then switched to his views on the state of television entertainment.

He loved to talk about his friendship with

Don Knotts, his co-star in the movie “The Apple Dumpling Gang” and a story about how, while on location, Mr. Knotts ended up in a real saloon dressed in women’s clothes.

There were anecdotes about the men Mr. Conway lunched with regularly, including fellow comedians like Bob Newhart and the late Don Rickles, who liked to swap Hollywood war stories.

During his visits to Ohio, Mr. Conway rarely missed the chance to stop by the hardware store, a place that is still revered in Chagrin Falls as is Mr. Conway himself. As


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Continued from page 57

a kid, he liked hanging out there. So much so that his mother thought it would be good employment for her son.

The Shutts family, owners of the hardware store still today, and the Conway family have a long history. Before getting into the hardware business, Ken Shutts worked with Dan Conway at Fram Gas in the village for many years.

Jack Shutts remembers during the 1950s that his dad sold black and white TVs – new to the market. He had several in the store windows to attract customers. They caught the attention of the young Conway who lingered to watch programs on his way to and from school.

“More than once my dad would have to go out and shoo him away with a ‘go on get outta here, you are going to be late for school,’” Mr. Shutts said.

Mr. Shutts clarified how Mr. Conway’s mother promoted the idea of her son getting a job at the hardware store. “She came to my dad and told him ‘I don’t want Tom going to California, can you give him a job?’”

The elder Mr. Shutts would later say that he had a hard time convincing her that there was no comparing a job weighing nails at the hardware store to one in Hollywood rubbing shoulders with the rich and famous, the younger Mr. Shutts said.

Two weeks before his death, Mr. Conway’s stepdaughter and step-granddaughter

stopped by the hardware store to take “something Chagrin” to him, Mr. Shutts said. They settled on a T-shirt featuring a drawing of the hardware store on the front.

Love you give is love you get

Mr. Conway never forgot where he came from or what it had given him, and he returned the favor many times over.

During one episode of McHale’s Navy, Mr. Conway as Ensign Parker can be seen reading a copy of the Chagrin Valley’s weekly newspaper of the day, its front page to the camera and its name flag in full view. It was as if he were waving to everyone back home.

He would give back to his hometown in other ways. In 1965 when “McHale’s Navy” was the hottest show on television Mr. Conway gladly climbed onto the Chagrin Valley Little Theatre stage for three benefit performances as Ensign Pulver, in “Mr. Roberts.”

The first local honor bestowed on the town’s favorite son came in 1965 when he was named honorary chief of the Chagrin Falls Suburban Fire Department during the annual Blossom Time celebration. The plaque he was given noted Mr. Conway – the soul of zany – possessed the qualities of a good firefighter, namely “the ability to stay calm and responsible in chaotic situations.”

While home that same year, he was asked to write the forward to the Zenith, the Cha-

grin High School yearbook. He took the task seriously. The theme was making new memories. In the final portion of his thoughts to the Class of 1965 it became clear how he felt about his hometown.

“You have unknowingly had the best pasture in which a child could romp. Now the gates are open and a world of challenging adventures awaits. Let me be the first to challenge you. I defy you to find a more pleasant memory than the one called Chagrin,” Mr. Conway wrote.

There would be many other visits to Chagrin Falls for the comedian. His last was in 2013 during a benefit for CVLT featuring a book signing for his “What’s So Funny – My Hilarious Life.”

Beyond Chagrin Falls

As it turns out, he was preordained to become a comic genius when he was named ‘class comedian’ in his 1952 yearbook.

Little did anyone know at the time that he would go on to fulfill the accolade and star in two hit television series “McHale’s Navy” and the wildly popular “The Carol Burnett” shows.

The characters he invented while a member of that cast are legendary. One will always stand out as classic – the “nervous dentist.” In it he manages to shoot Novocain into everything but the patient, including himself.

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The patient was played by his friend and co-comic conspirator Harvey Korman.

Mr. Conway later revealed this character was one of his comedy sketches because it was largely off-the-cuff. Mr. Korman did not know what to expect and in failed attempts to keep a straight face, he had “wet” himself.

It takes a strong bladder and athletic timing to be a comic and to pull off the fumbling ineptitude that infused so many of the characters he created. His creations “Mr. Tudball,” “Dorf” the golf guru, the “Old Man” were much loved by fans.

No stand-up comedian, Mr. Conway was a physical slapstick comic. That would take its toll later in life with back pain caused by

injuries during three seasons playing football for the Chagrin Falls High School Tigers.

He was the smallest tackle in the history of high school football, he would joke. It was a very small school at the time and the coach, Ralph Quesinberry, had to field a team somehow.

The visits home would be fewer and farther between after his mother passed away and the home on East Orange was sold. Some years later he talked about slowing down and moving back to Chagrin Falls, but that never happened.

Mr. Conway dropped out of sight in his later years even missing a Carol Burnett reunion show. Word came later that he was dealing with Alzheimer’s disease.

Within a day or two of his passing, the Little Theater in Chagrin Falls honored Mr.

Conway with a tribute posted on its marquee. “Thanks for the laughter Tim Conway,” it said.

Over at the Chagrin Falls Historical Society, staffers dipped into its collection and put together its own tribute, a small display of Conway memorabilia.

Former Chagrin Falls High School assistant principal Tom Moe took to the Chagrin Falls Alumni Association Facebook page to memorialize the “class clown.”

“I remember him walking into my office when I was assistant principal of the high school. He sat at my desk and typed a letter supporting a bond issue,” Mr. Moe said. “He told jokes non-stop. After he left, I found his cumulative record which included notes from his elementary teachers who all agreed he needed to settle down.”

Mike and Ruth Carlton lived across the street from the Conway home for many years and recall their boys playing with the Conway kids during their summertime visits on East Orange Street.

The world often underestimates contributions made by people from small towns in the middle of America, Mr. Carlton said, pointing to the career of Mr. Conway.

“He grew that sense of humor from what he learned growing up here, the values he was taught and the experiences he had,” Mr. Carlton said. ■

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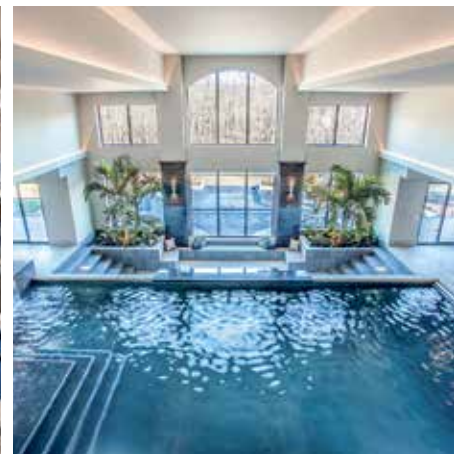
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