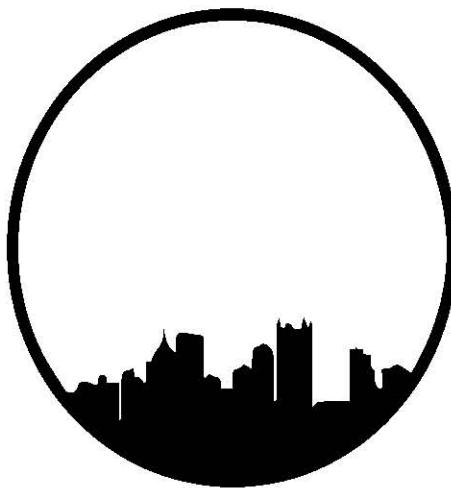




# BROOKLINE

PEOPLE | FOOD | CHANGE | CULTURE





**OFF  
THE  
BLUFF**

**Spring 2016**



**DUQUESNE  
UNIVERSITY**

Duquesne University's  
McAnulty College of Liberal Arts

A liberal arts education provides practical  
intellectual preparation for leaders of the 21st century.

Successful leaders must have the skills that a liberal arts education cultivates:

- *disciplined thought*
- *careful analysis*
- *articulate presentation of ideas*
- *organized and persuasive writing and speech*

They also need the human values and broad perspective that are hallmarks  
of graduates of the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts.

Dr. James Swindal, Dean

**Call 412.396.6400 for information about our programs  
or visit:  
<http://www.duq.edu/liberalarts>**

# Table of Contents

## People 3

- Casa San Jose is a locus of hope, love
- 824 Consignments home to unique treasures
- Boulevard beautifier vows to 'leave no trace'
- Gilfoyle, town crier, superstar of Boulevard
- Process of a portrait: Artist on the Boulevard
- Brookline's firehouse stands tall for over a century
- Sinagra shows another side to Brookline living
- Pioneer brings innovation to special education

## Food 20

- DeLuca family brings fresh face to old bakery
- Cafe de Noir continues to unite community
- Moonlite Cafe shines at heart of neighborhood
- Lebanese grocery store showcases diversity
- Fiori's boasts Pittsburgh's best slice
- Brookline Pub thrives under young bar manager
- 'Scoops' sweetens up Brookline Boulevard

## Change 33

- Brookline future looking bright, prosperous
- 'Charlie's Angels' takes punch at changing lives
- Lovers, fighters brawl on wedding day
- Boulevard revitalization key to town's success
- Tunnel vision: History of famed 'Liberty Tubes'

## Culture 42

- Reels of Brookline's rich cinema history
- Magic, games come to life at Geekadrome
- More than books: Library draws in all kinds
- Now trending: New stores strike hip vibe



**Editor-in-Chief**  
Rebekah Devorak

**Adviser**  
Dr. Mike Dillon

**Photo Credit**  
Seth Culp-Ressler  
Leah Devorak

## Contributors

Asia Buckley  
Carrie Garrison  
Joseph Guzy  
Yen-Mei Lin  
Katie Lipko  
Claire Murray  
Shannon Rodgers  
Grant Stoner  
Carley Thieret



To see more about these stories, including photos and videos, visit [www.offthebluff.com](http://www.offthebluff.com).

# Letter from the Editor



Pittsburgh is home to 92 neighborhoods, each of them unique and inspiring in its own way. But very few showcase the unyielding strength and love of community ties quite like Brookline. It's evident no matter where you go, no matter if you are a friend, a neighbor or a stranger.

From the organization that works to protect and serve immigrants in the basement of a church to the Middle Eastern grocery store that is a staple in the diets of Brookliners to the cannon statue that anchors the Boulevard, it doesn't matter where you are from. In Brookline, everyone is welcome.

Before working on *Off the Bluff*, I had never been to Brookline before. But the moment I stepped onto the Boulevard, lined with quaint shops and hometown restaurants, dotted with places of

worship, I knew this was a neighborhood not to be forgotten.

This was a town in the heart of the Steel City weathered by over a century of change but never broken by it. Brookline has an inherent resilience that reveals itself again and again, the latest time being the Boulevard revitalization project which stifled businesses and citizens with construction for over a year.

But Brookline survived and thrived, as it will continue to do for years to come. Of that, there is no question.

*Off the Bluff* magazine was introduced by Dr. Mike Dillon of the Duquesne Journalism and Multimedia Arts Department in 2005. In 2007, it took form as the Pittsburgh Neighborhoods Project, which showcases a different neighborhood each aca-

demic year.

Last fall, students in Dr. Dillon's magazine journalism class explored Brookline to discover the narrative of what makes this town truly great. The students took those tales of Brookline's history, culture, town figures and more and turned them into the stories you will see within these pages.

A huge thank you to Dr. Dillon for his support during these past few months of putting this issue together. Another thank you to all of the writers, photographers and editors who worked tirelessly to create the content within this magazine. Without you all, this never could have happened.

Thank you for taking the time to read this issue of *Off the Bluff*. I hope you come to love Brookline as much as I do.

- Rebekah Devorak

9

8

7

6

# Casa San Jose is a locus of hope, love

By Claire Murray

**D**iana Morales and her five-year-old daughter, Suye, left El Salvador in May 2015.

“They murdered her brother in their home. That was the turning point,” Flor de Maria translates, referring to the record-breaking gang violence that roils the small country and contributed to over 4,000 homicides in the past year.

Diana asked strangers for a ride out of El Salvador, into Guatemala and eventually into Mexico where the pair boarded a cramped train. After four months of travel, the train crossed into Arizona.

Immigration authorities arrested Diana and Suye, but fortunately allowed them temporary refuge at the Pio Decimo Center in Tucson, Arizona, a convent run by Sister Betty Adams. Sister Betty knew of an organization that could help them – an organization in Brookline.

One final trip on a Greyhound bus brought Diana and Suye to the conclusion of their journey. They soon met Sister Janice Vanderneck who brought them to the dimly-lit basement of St. Mark’s Evangelical Lutheran Church at the intersection of Glenarm Avenue and 933 Brookline Blvd. Inside is Casa San Jose, a nonprofit organization that helps Pittsburgh’s Latin American community.

On a recent Wednesday, Diana sits in Casa San Jose. Children’s toys fill the room along with a microwave, and Latin American flags



Sister Vanderneck stands in front of a picture of St. Joseph, for whom the organization is named.

hang from the ceiling. Flor de Maria, a volunteer at the organization, translates Diana’s words.

Recounting the dramatic story does not bother Diana. She talks freely and pokes at her white Asics, brand new, but too tight around the ankles. She is safe now thanks to Sister Janice and Casa San Jose.

On this particular day, nuns, clients, volunteers, paid employees and visitors bustle around the hallways. Everyone talks at once, and a flurry of Spanish and English crosses the air.

Amidst the chaos, one voice sets the tone. Sister Janice Vanderneck started Casa San Jose to provide social services to Pittsburgh’s Latin Americans after working with the growing population for ten years.

“In 2012, the Sisters of St. Joseph said to me, ‘There’s still a need for services to Latino peo-

ple. You have this passion in your heart. Let’s set up an office and call it what?’ Well I said ‘Casa San Jose.’ The house of St. Joseph,” Vanderneck explains.

Silhouetted cutouts of St. Joseph cover the main office’s bulletin board. Sister Janice pulls a tattered page of Spanish quotes off of the wall that describe St. Joseph as “a refugee without a country.”

“When he woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord told him to do. In other words, he believed in his dreams. We always tell our clients that. Have confidence, have hope, believe in your dreams. Our people can get very discouraged,” Sister Janice explains.

Diana is no stranger to discouragement. She personally dreams of one day opening a Salvadoran restaurant in Pittsburgh. However, Diana knows she is just begin-

ning another difficult journey.

The hardest part of adapting to American culture?

Diana laughs.

"Ingles," she says, no translation needed.

Diana, like other immigrants, must learn to speak, understand and read English before progressing with her American life. Without English, Diana cannot work. She can hardly take public transportation. She cannot talk to her doctor, her daughter's teacher or the lawyer who is helping her apply for citizenship.

"You can't make a person learn English, as much as they desire it. They have to be literate and edu-

organization and one said, 'There are no immigrants here. There are no refugees in Pittsburgh. There are illegal people that sneak their way in here.' It made me so sad... They are the most humble, hard-working people I've met."

Liz attends large gatherings where refugees, like Diana, recount their journeys to America. The emotional stories inspire Liz to continue working with Latinos despite harsh comments from others.

Sister Janice is motivated by something else – the children.

"It's very hopeful to work with them, getting kids enrolled in college, getting the Pittsburgh Promise Scholarship, when they do

***"We always tell our clients that.  
Have confidence, have hope,  
believe in your dreams."***

***- Sister Janice Vanderneck***

cated in their own language before they can learn another ... One of our big goals is to provide translation for people who are new to the country," explains Sister Janice.

Although the organization's volunteers and employees are bilingual, clients face rejection and discrimination outside the walls of Casa San Jose.

Liz volunteers at Casa San Jose every Thursday. She provides translation for clients at their appointments around the city. Liz prefers to remain anonymous due to harsh animosity she receives for her work at Casa San Jose.

"I went to dinner with certain people from my church – Christian, wonderful people. I told them about volunteering at the

well in school, get good grades. It's very encouraging," she says.

In addition to translation services, Casa San Jose runs several programs that target youth and adolescent. Sister Janice works with a group of teens that meets once a week.

"The whole point of that is to show them the importance of studying, of getting a high school degree and going on to a university possibly," Sister Janice explains. Youth also use this gathering as a chance to interact with bilingual students and maintain their Latino heritage.

Jeimy Sanchez-Ruiz, the organization's AmeriCorps worker, runs an after-school program at Beechwood Elementary School,

which has a 20 percent Latino population. The program teaches English to kindergarten and first-grade ESL learners.

"My first activity is to have them write their name and learn the letters of their name in English. One little step can make a big difference," Jeimy says.

Children often pick up a second language faster than their parents. Diana jokes that Suye will soon be teaching her English.

Suye attends kindergarten everyday at the convent in Beaver Falls where she and her mother live. The convent is, of course, also run by the Sisters of St. Joseph. The Sisters will house the pair until Diana learns enough English to work a steady job. In the meantime, Diana cleans the convent daily and visits the St. Mark's basement several times each week.

Diana enjoys the company of the organization's workers and the other immigrants. She walks down the halls showing pictures of her daughter's smiling face to anyone who will look.

"She says if it wasn't for Casa San Jose and Sister Janice, she doesn't know where she'd be right now," Flor translates.

Diana exudes a genuine excitement for her new life in America. She explains that Sister Janice frequently gives her money to call her mother in El Salvador, and last week, her doctor gave her \$20 to buy her daughter's lunch. Despite her tumultuous past, Diana radiates gratitude.

"She says she's happy. She's very happy that she ended up over here because most people don't have this blessing."



PHOTOS BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Geri Roberts, left, opened 824 Consignments, which offers a wide array of vintage homewear and knickknacks pictured at the right, in March of 2015.

# 824 Consignments home to unique treasures

By Rebekah Devorak

**A** shop born from hypothetical flames, 824 Consignments on Brookline Boulevard provides a shopping experience almost as worldly and cultured as its owner Geri Roberts.

"I live upstairs, and I was so disappointed when my landlady told me that the used furniture store [below] wasn't going to renew their lease," Geri says. "She said she had restaurants that were interested, and I'm a Scorpio. Scorpions are terrified of fire. I went to sleep thinking that I was going to perish in the middle of the night because of a kitchen fire. The next morning, my first thought was 'I can open a consignment shop!'"

Blonde with a warm smile and even warmer personality — and

no previous experience with consignments — Geri's decision to open her shop was spontaneous yet completely determined.

"I just thought the community needed something like this," she says. "Everyone needs to furnish their homes, right? It's good to change things in your house, to shake up the energy."

Looking around the shop, it's difficult to believe that the former Virginia Tech graduate teaching assistant didn't begin as a connoisseur of vintage knickknacks and little treasures. It's even more difficult to believe that 824 Consignments has only been opened since March of 2015, as it's packed full with goods from her 153 consignors, or suppliers.

On a crisp October afternoon, local art fills the walls, from inter-

preative female nudes to sweeping western landscapes, so much so that it's difficult to discern the shop's paint color. A golden brocade couch with quilted cushions and matching chairs sits at the front near the shop's window, arranged like a parlor room from days gone by. Modern CDs — like '90s one-hit wonder Eagle Eye Cherry — coexist on a wooden bookcase with vintage Nancy Drew novels.

"It's a mix of the old and the new," Geri says. "I love it because it's just like life: the mixing of the old with the new."

Further into the store homemade candles, handmade jewelry, artisan birdhouses, decorated fine china, porcelain cherubs and even a poster of Audrey Hepburn in Breakfast at Tiffany's intertwine on tables. There must be a thousand

items nestled into nooks and crannies, and every last one of them is tagged with a handwritten price.

"It's a personal touch," Geri says. "I always want to keep it personal. It lets customers know I care."

That care charmingly masks any of the store's quirks that Geri believes are less than perfect right now. Figuring out how to organize the store so it's eclectic but not cluttered is a somewhat of a struggle.

"I don't like mayhem, but somebody said this is the way consignment shops are supposed to look," she says. "I guess it's just my Type-A personality that wants everything in its place. But if things are like that, that means there's no activity. Things aren't coming in, things aren't going out. I just have to embrace the chaos."

To avoid stagnancy Geri makes mental notes of what sells, and more importantly, what does not. Forget about common clothes: Miniskirts and men's clothing will sit untouched for months in the store's open closet if accepted.

Plain household items don't sell well either. A painting of the Last Supper collects dust along the frame where it has hung on the wall since day one, while casserole dishes underwhelm next to a shiny silver serving dish and a vase of colorful fake flowers.

That last item always disappoints Geri, though.

"It's a pity that people don't use good china every day," she says. "It's not like it's expensive, so why not? It's special!"

Geri gestures to an odd candle holder that resembles a miniature coat rack with ceramic pears dangling off the ends. "I just like things

that are different. Like, where can you find something like that?"

The distinctive mix of items constantly lures customers off the Boulevard. Men and women poke their heads around the open door frame with slight uncertainty. But any skepticism of intense sales pitches or clingy associates dissolves when Geri greets them. It doesn't matter

"Geri is an honest person and she has a big heart," Ashley LaRobert, Geri's daughter-in-law, says. "She takes an old-school approach to buying and selling. My favorite thing about the shop is that I don't have to look around for more than five minutes to find something that is special and beautiful, just like Ms. Roberts herself."

***"It's a mix of the old and the new. I love it because it's just like life: the mixing of the old with the new."***  
***- Geri Roberts***

who walks into the store; everyone is treated like family.

"Honey, you dropped something!" Geri says, picking up a Visa card that fell while an older woman named Deena was marveling at the local art. "You don't want to lose that, my dear!"

Another man strolls in to tell Geri about a 100-year-old cedar chifferobe, a type of armoire, he just found. Geri recognizes him immediately and they chat like old friends; he helped a woman move a secretary desk the week before.

Later, she pauses to answer her cellphone. The caller ID reads 'Tom the Customer,' but the way she speaks sounds more like she's conversing with a son.

"I'm doing great, thank you dear for asking. Oh what is the matter? Why, that's terrible! Is the bank going to protect you? Okay, sweetheart, I hope it gets fixed. I appreciate it, my dear. Take care now, honey." It turns out Tom the Customer had his wallet stolen and he wouldn't be able to buy a vintage organ anymore.

Community lingers in the shop's air and manifests itself further in the creative events that Geri hosts at the store. From horoscope lessons to gallery crawls, tarot card readings, meditation sessions and mixology classes, she uses events to build strong relationships with Brookline residents. Geri has even planned fashion shows and batik (fabric dyeing) classes. These events also give Geri extra opportunities to socialize.

"With my first event, I thought 'Oh my gosh, the shop isn't making any money off of this!'" Geri says. "But it was beautiful and everyone had a great time. It kind of acts as a community center in a way."

Although running 824 Consignments by herself can sometimes prove difficult and time-consuming, Geri loves her new role in life.

"This shop is my life now. It's my social life, it's my work life. It's good that my shop is doing so well, but I never imagined that it would take off like this. I love it. It's fun and it's fabulous."



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Mercedes Faust works tirelessly to keep Brookline Boulevard clean in order to give back to her community. Faust says Brookline's new green spaces, resulting from the recent renovation of the Boulevard, are her favorite.

## Boulevard beautifier vows to 'leave no trace'

*By Katie Lipko*

**A**woman opens the door of Cafe de Noir on Brookline Boulevard. Abruptly, she stops. Glancing over her shoulder, she notices empty pizza boxes propped against a sidewalk trash can.

She leaves the entrance and makes her way to the boxes, stomping them down and folding them to fit in the trash can. She stands and brushes off her hands, satisfied by her work. She continues into the coffee shop where she orders hot tea, kindly returning her mug to the counter before leaving.

The woman is Mercedes Faust.

Her personal creed is to "leave no trace."

Mercedes not only embraces this value in her daily life but also teaches it as Boy Scout Unit Commissioner.

Amid her daily work at Community College of Allegheny County, Mercedes spends her free evenings cleaning up and weeding the grassy spots on the Boulevard, walking to the main road from her house near Freedom and Berkshire Avenue.

Mercedes has been a Brookline resident since the day she married Robert Mercedes in 1972. "When I first got married, [Brookline] was just a place," she says.

But now, Brookline has become a home she respects and cares for on a weekly basis.

Mercedes' cleaning efforts coincided with the renovation of Brookline Boulevard that occurred five years ago. Benches and grassy, green spots were added to give the street character.

"The green spaces have made a big difference," she said.

The largest new green space is the entry point into Brookline, located at the corner of Brookline Boulevard and Pioneer Avenue.

In an effort to make it look beautiful, Mercedes started her impromptu cleaning for a simple reason: "I wanted

someone to do it, and instead of pointing fingers, I just did it myself."

During the two year renovation, the tracks that were once used by streetcars were covered. Telephone wires were buried underground so a clear view of the Boulevard's buildings could easily be seen by all. In addition, the road was widened to create a parking lane which Mercedes notes as the biggest improvement to Brookline's main passageway.

"That has been a terrific change," she said. Mercedes explained that after renovations were complete, Brookline was left with a stunning main boulevard.

Mercedes began to fall in love with Brookline when her son Russell was born in 1989. At this time, Mercedes became fully aware of the town's sense of community. She joined the community enthusiastically, working with the schools and learning the local politics.

***"I want kids and people to say, 'This is where I live; isn't it a beautiful place?'"***  
***- Mercedes Faust***

Russell attended private schools outside of Brookline, but to ensure he built relationships in Brookline, Mercedes and Robert signed him up for Boy Scouts at age eight. Both Mercedes and her husband became involved with the organization.

Russell is now grown, but Mercedes's involvement in



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Daffodils bloom near the Brookline Boulevard cannon war memorial.

Boy Scouts and the Brookline community has not ceased. Mercedes is Unit Commissioner in Pleasant Hills, Dormont and Castle Shannon, and Robert holds the same position in Brookline.

For now, Mercedes is one of

two individuals who regularly clean the Boulevard. She focuses on one side of the street while another woman works on the opposite side. "I hope in the next few years that more people help clean up," she says.

Brookline does have a community group that is trying to get people to volunteer. "Hopefully more people will love it

and keep it clean," Mercedes says. "Hopefully more people will take over."

However, Mercedes is not ready yet to give up her weeding and cleaning efforts. "I will volunteer as long as needed," says Mercedes. "As long as I'm healthy."

A love of community is the only reward she wants. "I want kids and people to say, 'This is where I live; isn't it a beautiful place?'" she says. Being able to strengthen neighborhood bonds by taking an hour here and there to clean up the Boulevard is a sacrifice that Mercedes does not mind making.

"It's a matter of giving back," she says. "Giving back matters."

And at the end of the day, all that matters to Mercedes is that "[Brookline] is a really nice place to live."

# Gilfoyle, town crier, superstar of Boulevard

By Joseph Guzy

Walk down Brookline Boulevard during normal business hours and chances are you'll bump into George Gilfoyle. He'll be carrying his many patches from the fire department in his left hand and a yellow plastic bag in his right. Inside is a fleece just in case the weather takes a turn. Normally he has his fire department hat on, but today it's a casual baseball cap. He's on vacation, after all.

"I'm taking five days off," George says. "Including Columbus Day."

Even on an "off" day, walking with George transforms the neighborhood of Brookline into Hollywood. The Boulevard becomes the red carpet, and the star is none other than George himself. Adoring fans to his left and to his right wish him well.

His celebrity status is a long time coming.

George is developmentally disabled. He suffered oxygen deprivation when he was born in 1945. It left him with a disorder that hindered brain development but not physical development. And his "disability" hasn't hindered his ability to be great.

George's radiant smile showcases his gift before he can even say a word to fellow pedestrians eager to say hello. He even contributes to their safety: "Watch out!" George calls out to some pedestrians before crossing the street. "It's blocked up there you see? We have to go around this way."

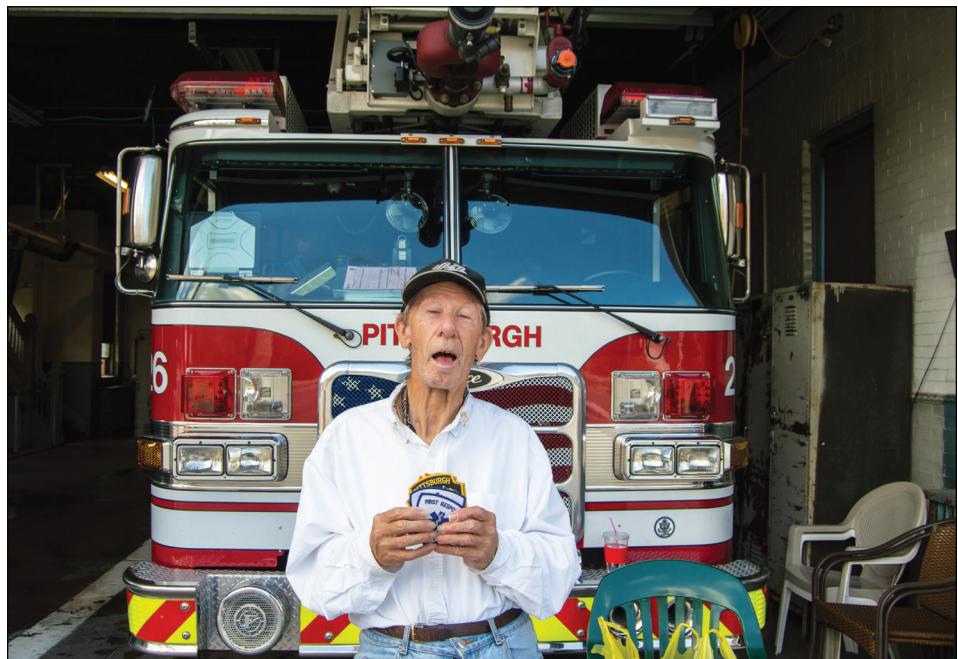


PHOTO BY JOSEPH GUZY

George shows off his numerous patches in front of one of Brookline's fire trucks at the firehouse.

You can find George's job description inside George's home away from home, the Brookline Firehouse — it's hard to miss the bronze plaque that honors him there. The plaque bears the inscription: "For a lifetime of dedication to the community of Brookline, for your many contributions to the public safety, and for sharing your gift of happiness with all of us."

Growing up, when he wasn't at the South Park Opportunity Center, you could expect to find a pre-teen George at the firehouse.

"He had this thing about fire engines, and he started hanging around the firehouse," Clint Burt said. Burt, the catalyst behind the plaque, knows a thing or two about George. "As he got older they would just start giving him little responsibilities to, you know, make him feel good."

"Whenever there would be a fire and they would start to get ready to go, he would tell everybody to get away from the doors so they could get the truck out," Linda Monteleone said. "You'd see him. He'd get all excited because there was a fire, and he was going to help."

Linda, a resident of Brookline during her high school years, vividly remembers George's involvement with the fire department.

"Then a couple of days would go on, and George would tell you about the fire," Linda said. "He would always say, 'Oh, I'm so glad everybody is okay.' He just reminded me of the town crier, the person who would just go around town and tell everybody everything he saw."

As the years went on, George went from clearing space for fire trucks to keeping the community of Brookline safe.

Before the regular convenience of telephones, if there was a fire, you'd run to the nearest fire alarm call box. These red boxes, stationed every few blocks, would ring the fire department when pulled. The department could identify which box the call came from and head to that area to put out the blaze.

George's first duty was to make sure these boxes were in working order. Not once a month, not once a week, but every single day.

"He always had his little notebook, clipboard and radio," Burt said. "He'd walk around and test these things. Tested every one in the neighborhood. He'd get to a different box, call in and let them know he was going to test the box."

Even though technology has done away with fire boxes, George is still very present at the firehouse.

His locker, right next to the door of the kitchen, reads, "Fire Chief General and Commander Chief Georgeo Armani Extraordinaire Director Commander and Instructor."

George's service with the fire department is also still very much present with him – literally in his hands.

After showing off his plaque, George puts down his yellow plastic bag in front of one of the sparkling red fire trucks. He shuffles through the patches, explaining the significance of each one.

"This one's the 'First Responder' patch," George says before hesitating for a moment. "Oh this is the same one, 'First Responder' again."

The shuffle continues. City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Safety. Pittsburgh Firefighter Bureau. Pittsburgh Fire. Pittsburgh

River Rescue. "Fighting Irish" with a leprechaun wearing a fire helmet and holding an axe.

Before he can finish, one of his friends from the fire department comes out to say hello.

"Wait until he hears I'm taking five days off," George laughs.

As the two exchange pleasantries, more pedestrians give George a wave or a friendly hello. A motorcyclist pulls off the street to join in on the conversation. It draws a crowd. The celebrity is more than happy to accommodate his fans. He is quite the crowd pleaser.

George never been afraid to go above and beyond, either.

great memory," Linda says. "He would see you from across the street and he would remember you. I can't imagine how many people he's met, but I do remember him calling everybody by name."

It's those stories and gifts that almost leave Burt speechless when trying to describe George. After pausing for a second, a light bulb seems to appear above his head.

"George is a legend," Burt says. "There are a lot of legends for various reasons. You have your crazy drug legends. You have your sports legends. Whatever, your business legends. George is a legend in his own right."

### ***"George is a legend in his own right."***

***- Clint Burt***

"This one time, I had a bright red sweater when I got off the school bus," Linda remembers. "George made such a big deal out of it. He was noticing something I wasn't paying attention to at all. He made it seem like it was such a special thing to have a big bright red sweater."

"He actually followed me home, telling everybody on the Boulevard 'Look at this red sweater! Look at how pretty it is! I wish I had one that color!' He was really excited about something so simple. My view of that sweater changed considerably because he was such a positive person and noticed everything you had."

George does have a knack for noticing and remembering everything and everyone.

"He's very intelligent and has a

"I guess his big legacy is just being a happy person that most everybody got to know one way or another. When you see George you just want so say hi."

Walking by the last few shops on the boulevard, George looks inside each one to see if there's anyone he needs to say hello to. A few pedestrians exchange pleasantries as he approaches the end of his walk.

"Well, this is my stop," George says pointing to the CVS Pharmacy.

The automatic doors open with a brief ding. But before George can advance, an exiting customer stops and says hello.

As the automatic doors return to a close, George can be heard striking up casual conversation.

"I'm taking five days off," George says. "Including Columbus Day."



Robert Daley, owner of South Hills Art Studio, poses in front of some of his many paintings.

PHOTO BY CLAIRE MURRAY

## Process of a Portrait: Artist on the Boulevard

*By Claire Murray*

**F**aces surround painter Robert Daley.

A profile of Pope Francis. The familiar face of George Washington. Robert's own face peeking out of a small canvas propped up against a desk. The outline of a little girl balances on an easel in the corner of the room. She has a pretty face, but no hands or feet — yet.

Robert sits on a stool in the South Hills Art Center, his personal studio and gallery on Brookline Boulevard, and tries to describe the process that he has done hundreds of times.

“You paint everything at the same time,” Robert explains. “It’s analogous to having a camera with the scene in the lens out of focus. You start out by bringing in the back-

ground and putting on the clothing and bringing in the skin tones — you put that all in roughly.”

A rough sketch of Robert’s own background would include a simple outline of Brookline Boulevard. In 1940, his parents built a small brick restaurant on the far end of the Boulevard. Thirty-nine years later, they gave the building to their son, who had just graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a degree in art.

Robert dubbed the building the South Hills Art Center. He sold art supplies until he was able to support himself by his true passion and innate talent — oil portrait painting.

The faces that hang from the walls of the gallery look as realistic as photographs, but with an impressionistic finesse that

only an artist of Robert’s talent could add.

“After you get everything down on the canvas, then you refine it,” Robert explains.

With his degree from Pitt and his “Italian hand” passed down from his artist father, Robert had all the ingredients of a distinguished artist. He refined his skills through decades of experience.

After 40 years in business, Robert’s paintings have received international praise. His collection of faces hangs everywhere from the entrance of Shady Side Academy to the Pope John Paul II Seminary in Washington D.C.

Robert glances over to his favorite portraits — two large canvases hanging above the gallery’s fire place. His father is on the left and his mother is on the right.

"It's just a matter of playing with eyes and eyebrows, corners of the mouth. They're subtle, but if you don't know the importance of them, they can make a person look lifeless," he says.

He explains the vital importance of every brush stroke. As he paints, he also critiques, evaluates and instructs anyone interested in learning from his passion.

After all, art is not just something you create. It's something you share.

Every Monday morning, Robert trades his gallery of motionless faces for a basement filled with equally familiar smiles.

For three hours, the bottom floor of Baldwin Presbyterian Church transforms into a microcosmic

dent of twenty years.

Robert rarely sits at the front of the room to direct his class. Rather, he spends the time walking around the church's basement, stopping at each easel and giving thorough advice to students on their paintings.

He talks them through the process, explaining step-by-step how he would refine the painting as if it were his own.

Robert tells Betty to use dark shadows and drastic contrast, even on subtle skin tones. He tells Debbie Greenawald, another student in the class, to just step back.

"We get too focused on one little thing, but when you step away you see something's really wrong," Debbie says. She admits

while," Robert says. He stays in business not for the money but for the moment his clients first see their loved ones on canvas — a fleeting expression that he cannot capture or explain.

A painted portrait celebrates and commemorates life. It is personal. A painted portrait allows for creative liberties, from the crown of butterflies that Debbie wove into her daughter's hair to the "great hair days" that student Patti Campbell gives to all of her subjects.

"The word grandiose is applicable because it is a special thing, something that not many people have...There is a certain mystique with a portrait, there is a certain tradition," says Robert.

On a weekend in late October, Robert sits in his gallery once more. The pretty girl without hands no longer waits on the easel. She is propped up on the floor, complete and ready to hang in a new home. In her place, an ear-less Cardinal Wuerl shakes hands with Pope Francis.

"That's me on the canvas," Robert says, nodding toward the half-finished painting, although his face is nowhere in sight. "Like a writer uses words, I use brush-strokes to tell a story."

To Robert, art is a hobby, a job, a skill and a language. He speaks art to his community of artists as he explains and advises their Monday morning brush strokes. He speaks art to every person who looks at one of his faces, framed and mounted. Robert communicates his passion of art through every line, every dark shadow and every subtle corner of the mouth.

***"The word grandiose is applicable because it is a special thing, something not many people have...There is a certain mystique with a portrait, there is a certain tradition."***

***- Robert Daley***

community of art. Robert has used the space for almost 20 years to teach his ongoing oil painting class to a group of 20 adults.

Neither Pittsburgh nor Brookline boasts a lucrative market for oil painters, but the students that gather under Robert's lead find friendship and solace in the company of other passionate artists.

"It doesn't matter sometimes about the art that you create so much as it is just going to class and being around the other people," says Betty Bennett, a stu-

to taking vacation days from work to attend the Monday morning session.

Refining can be done in a single brush stroke, or it can take the entire three hours of class. For Betty, who considers herself a slow painter, refining can span weeks or even months. Robert himself takes a brush to works that he "finished" years ago.

But what's the step after refining? Presentation.

"The satisfaction, that look on people's faces, makes it worth-



PHOTO BY JOSEPH GUZY

The top of the hose tower in Brookline's firehouse affords a beautiful view of the Boulevard below. Truck Company #26 has served the town since 1910.

## Brookline's firehouse stands tall for over a century

*By Joseph Guzy and  
Carley Thieret*

**T**he revitalization of Brookline Boulevard in 2014 gave new life and a modern look to the heart of the neighborhood. But on the corner of Brookline Boulevard and Castlegate Avenue, between the automatic doors of Pitaland and the sizzling tacos of Las Palmas, lies what could be considered a castle: Truck Company #26.

Originally named Engine Company #57, the firehouse was built in 1910. Before the department received its first fire truck in 1921, the crew would respond with a horse-drawn hose wagon.

Even though the station is now home to state-of-the-art

engine and ladder trucks, the structure holds decades upon decades of stories.

Out in the garage, the post that separated the original two doors is still visible. The combination of the kitchen and the living room in the back have extra boards on the wall, filling the void where the horses once waited for food of their own.

Of course, not all of the history dates back to 1910. The basement holds a gym with cream-colored equipment upholstered in the 1970s. Posters and magazine clippings of Arnold Schwarzenegger cover the mirrors. Around the corner is a junk room, highlighted by a vintage slot machine.

Just up the stairs are the living quarters. The fading green paint and brown floors are a stark contrast to the bright

white sheets on the beds. There is no décor, television nor even a night stand.

The iconic hose tower protruding from the southeast side of the building is commonly assumed to be a watchtower. While four windows up top do provide panoramic views of Brookline, the tower had a much more practical use than fire spotting.

Cotton hoses of the past needed to be dried after every use to prevent mildew from forming. Upon returning from a fire, a crew member would climb the near-vertical staircase and squeeze through the small opening at the top of the tower.

There, he would use the same pulley that still hangs from the tower's peak to raise the hoses from the basement. Once the hoses completed their ascent,



PHOTO BY SETH CULP-RESSLER

The American flag flies outside of Brookline's firehouse. Originally named Engine Company #57, the station now also serves surrounding neighborhoods.

they were hung over one of a few dozen pegs until they were dry and packed back onto the truck.

The rickety stairs and low-light conditions provide an adventure for anyone allowed to make the climb, which despite some renovations, is still scary.

But make no mistake, this

four crews consisting of eight firemen each, they are responsible for Brookline, Mt. Washington, Beechview, Overbrook, Carrick and Beltzhoover. The crews work 24 hours straight and have 72 hours off.

The job description has changed from the early days,

resident and fire chief, all new recruits are trained paramedics. Lewis says 75 percent of the crew is EMT certified, and the entire staff is AED certified. In recent years the crew has been able to administer glucose until paramedics arrive. The training is necessary as the majority of the crews' average 10 calls a day are medical related.

While the responsibilities have evolved, not to mention the entire urban sprawl surrounding it, the firehouse remains a constant of the neighborhood of Brookline.

Leaving the firehouse, a subtle reminder of its past can be seen above the garage door. Perhaps it was an oversight. Perhaps it was intentional. Regardless, the original engraving still stands.

"Engine House #57."

firehouse isn't about living in the past.

Today, Engine Company #26 is one 30 active stations in the City of Pittsburgh. Now with

as the fireman are no longer neighborhood greeters and night watchmen.

According to Captain David Lewis, a long-time Brookline

# Sinagra shows another side to Brookline living

By Grant Stoner

**B**rookline is proud of its sense of community. Recent renovations to the Boulevard revitalized the business district by widening the roadway and creating new sidewalks to encourage more pedestrian traffic.

However, for longtime Brookline resident Nick Sinagra, current Director of Technology at Bishop Canevin High School, most of the community remains off-limits.

Why? Inaccessibility.

From a young age, 31-year-old Nick has been wheelchair bound and ventilator dependent because of Spinal Muscular Atrophy, Type II. Commonly abbreviated as SMA II, the neuromuscular disease affects the strength of an individual's muscles. The ability to swallow or breathe without medical intervention are some of the challenges an affected person can encounter, while many basic day-to-day functions require assistance.

Despite the varied physical limitations of SMA II, everyone who requires a wheelchair understands one simple principle – there will always be areas that are inaccessible.

"I can't remember the last time I have strolled the Boulevard. They have recently renovated the streets and sidewalks, but the stores aren't always as accessible as they could be or as they should be," Nick says.

I understand him all too well.

At the age of 13 months, I was diagnosed with SMA II. Shortly after my second birthday, I, too, became wheelchair bound.



PHOTO BY GRANT STONER

While Brookline's renovations improved some aspects of daily transportation, Nick Sinagra still finds much of his neighborhood inaccessible.

Daily barriers and inaccessible areas are commonplace. Yet, Nick and I tend to approach each obstacle with a sense of humor.

"The sidewalks – let's just call the sidewalks interesting. Other phrases to describe them? Very bumpy, very hard to navigate. Lots of patches." That is how Nick describes Brookline Boulevard prior to the completion of the massive renovation.

In fact, the city's sidewalks have proved difficult to maneuver, even for the able-bodied.

According to a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article dated April 2, 2014, many deemed Brookline Boule-

vard as "one of the city's notoriously pockmarked thoroughfares."

Upgrades were completed in the summer of 2014. This massive renovation cost a total of \$5.35 million. The project widened sidewalks and made cut-outs easier to access, especially when crossing the street.

It should be noted that for a disabled individual, a patchy and bumpy sidewalk should be avoided. Navigating these pathways can be both dangerous and painful. Imagine a human bobble-head, teeth chattering, as one struggles to keep all four wheels in contact with the ground.

We must calculate our every move in order to prevent serious injury to ourselves and/or our wheelchairs.

Though these were legitimate concerns for Nick as he grew up in Brookline, he learned at an early age that his journey in life would be different, especially growing up in a family with two brothers, Ken, 33 and Eric, 27.

Both brothers played organized baseball at the Community Center. Nick often supported his brothers from the sidelines, mentioning that he would have loved to participate, but the team could not manage a young boy in a wheelchair.

So, Nick discovered another way to connect with the sport — by collecting baseball cards.

The young Sinagra brothers frequented a local store on the Boulevard, where the trio would purchase packs of cards.

Yet Nick recalls the frustration he encountered when they arrived at the store for the first time.

There were steps.

Steps are definitely the Achilles heel of a wheelchair-bound person.

“Eventually the store moved down the street, and the new store didn’t have any steps. But for the longest time, I remember I couldn’t get in because of those steps,” Nick says.

This became a defining moment for Nick. He realized that his disability prevented him from entering the majority of stores in Brookline. It became a necessity to call ahead to establishments, ensuring that they were wheelchair accessible.

The federal government finally

acknowledged these inequalities. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law.

According to the United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, businesses are required to make reasonable changes to accommodate the disabled, such as providing ramps at entrances, lowering counters, providing handicap accessible restrooms, etc.

Though improvements and/or changes to existing buildings are required, the federal government recognizes that for some businesses, these alterations may be cost prohibitive.

challenge as the families, friends and advocates for people with disabilities is to educate others. We need to make sure that they understand why things need to be accessible and how it affects others.”

Brookline didn’t consult with PathVu during the renovations.

Although the city’s construction project yielded positive results for the future growth of the business district, it still left Nick with some concerns regarding the safety of the sidewalks and Boulevard.

“Before the renovation, well, that would have been a dream for my brother to work on because it

**“For the longest time, I remember I couldn’t get in because of those steps.”**

**- Nick Sinagra**

In other words, unless Nick or disability advocates approach store owners with inclusion concerns, it is likely that the barriers will remain.

Until that time, he will be left waiting on the sidewalk.

Fortunately for Nick, family remains his biggest advocate. His brother Eric’s memories of Nick’s struggles and frustrations were the catalyst for his future career path. He studied rehabilitation sciences and later created a company, PathVu. Its goal is to promote safe and accessible sidewalks, pathways and trails by providing communities with the necessary tools to improve walkability, regardless of a person’s capabilities.

“Nick’s disability is definitely the motivation for starting my own company,” Eric says. “Part of our

was a mess. Even after the renovation, he probably still could test the sidewalks for height, cut-outs to the street, etc.,” Nick laments.

These reasons are why his shopping excursions on the Boulevard are few and far between. There remain numerous areas that are just too difficult to manage for someone with physical limitations.

This is Nick’s reality.

Sadly, the sense of community is not something that Nick can ever fully experience. Not when so much of Brookline continues to remain inaccessible.

As he spins his wheelchair around, a smile slowly spreads across his face and he emits a barely audible chuckle.

“Hey, it’s easier to go down steps than up — just let gravity take you down!”



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Pioneer Education Center houses many interactive facilities for students with disabilities, including this garden outside of the school's entrance.

## Pioneer brings innovation to special education

*By Shannon Rodgers*

**P**rincipal David Lott made sure the halls of Pioneer Education Center could be in any school: Orange and black posters with “Boo!” and “Happy Halloween” line the hallway in preparation for the upcoming holiday. A television monitor hangs in the lobby reviewing the year in photographs. Student artwork is displayed on almost every wall surrounding the classrooms.

But, in fact, the school is unlike any other in the city.

David started as principal at

the Pioneer Education Center two years ago. It's the only school in Pittsburgh designed specifically for students with disabilities.

These disabilities range from cerebral palsy to developmental delays. David walks in the outdoor garden and stops at the wheelchair accessible swing set. He believes every child should swing.

“We do everything any other school does, but we make it adaptive for the kids,” he says.

That adaptive approach even means a prom including everything from promenades to dinner. The school provides tuxedos,

alters dresses and accommodates dietary needs.

“If a student needs their food pureed, we do that,” David says. “Some students can't self-feed, so we accommodate that.”

David was asked to switch from Oliver Citywide Academy to Pioneer Education Center two years ago. Wrapping up his second year at the Academy, he felt as if he was just getting started. Despite his hesitancy, the switch happened anyway.

David notes, “In the 21 years I've been in this field, this is one of the most challenging jobs I've had.

But it's also the most rewarding."

The school had a harvest festival this past fall, where students rode horses and picked pumpkins. Cynthia Marsh, an occupational therapist at the school, highlights the importance of celebrating the holiday.

"A lot of our kids due to their situation don't get to go out and do trick-or-treating so we make sure we have trick-or-treat here. We just had a harvest festival so they could come here and go through the pumpkin patch and get a pumpkin. We try to provide them with those same types of activities," she says.

Through both the events and the everyday school setting, David notes, "It reminds you of why you went into education in the first place."

Many places for kids with disabilities are medical facilities with educational components added in. However, the school is an educational center with physical and medical facilities.

It has occupational therapy, physical therapy, hearing, vision, art and music education, as well as a pre-vocational workshop.

David adds that before his time as principal at the school is up, he wants to add an aquatic therapy pool to the center.

An important part of the school is the outdoor area. With a sensory friendly garden, multiple swing sets and a circular track for walking or bicycles, the students spend a lot of time outdoors.

Debra Harris, who has been at the school for 20 years, explains, "Many of our kids are medically fragile so they can't tolerate being



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Pittsburgh's Pioneer Education Center, located in Brookline, has been a part of Pittsburgh Public Schools for over 50 years.

in the sun too long but for many of our kids, they get outside here more than they ever do."

"The garden is set up for all ages. It's set up so that all the kids from the whole school, whether you're at a three-month-old level, or if you're able to move around and interact more, can come out here and listen to the wind chimes and touch the different plants," Debra says.

Employees work with students to plan for an individual lifestyle after graduation. The pre-vocational workshop helps the students figure out which direction they would like to go in after graduation. Here, a student learns different skills for future jobs and employees work to find any adaptations the student might need for the job.

If an independent living situation isn't a possibility, long-term care living arrangements are made. Patrick Ferrell has worked at the school for over 30 years and emphasizes how important planning for the future is.

"When our kids leave Pioneer, we want to make sure they have a place to go that, instead of just sitting at home, they can continue to get out of the house every day," Patrick says.

It's clear the employees help the students experience school just like any other child, whether it's a tour of the vegetable garden or a visit to the school gym. By focusing on individualized education programs, students are given opportunities that are unheard of in other schools.

LU

G

Z

AT

IT

G



---

CHANGE

---

# Brookline future looking bright, prosperous

*By Grant Stoner and  
Asia Buckley*

**T**he future of Brookline is promising.

The results of the 2014 revitalization of Brookline Boulevard are twofold – there's a beautiful new main street, and the rejuvenation of the business district creates opportunities for community growth.

This is exciting news for resident Tim Reitmeyer. The 64-year-old Howard Hanna realtor is a specialist in the South Hills and City of Pittsburgh markets. As an advocate for the developing area, Reitmeyer is personally invested in promoting the benefits of purchasing a home in Brookline.

According to the November 2015 listings of realtor.com, roughly 79 homes are currently for sale in Brookline. With affordable pricing ranging from \$33,000 to \$199,000, Reitmeyer views his hometown as a potential market for younger couples.

"I've had couples who could have afforded places in the wealthier suburbs of Mt. Lebanon and Upper St. Clair, yet they wanted to specifically live in Brookline," Reitmeyer notes.

He also mentions that the community's close proximity to Downtown Pittsburgh is a huge draw for buyers, especially when commuters can readily access major highways that connect to the city.

Ultimately though, it is the strong sense of community in



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

The new Brookline Boulevard made way for the neighborhood to prosper.

Brookline that Reitmeyer is quick to mention to prospective buyers. After all, he has resided in the city his entire life. So, it is understandable for him to hold some biases regarding life in Brookline.

But, he is not alone.

Brookline residents joined forces in 1992 to form The South Pittsburgh Development Corporation. The non-profit SPDC tirelessly promotes Brookline's attributes. According to its Facebook page, its mission is to assist in the neighborhood's growth and expansion efforts.

SPDC hold monthly board meetings which cater toward discussing possible projects to promote the neighborhood. It also publishes a monthly magazine to profile businesses on the Bou-

levard and report on upcoming community events. Additionally, the group arranges numerous functions which center on Brookline's betterment.

During a visionary study completed during 2014, the SPDC recognized a large presence of ethnic businesses located on the boulevard. According to the report, the SPDC will be focusing on ways to encourage even more ethnic groups to establish roots within the neighborhood.

According to the president of the SPDC, Ryan Askey, the South Hills of Pittsburgh has seen an increase in ethnic populations within recent years.

"Diversity drives both culture and economic growth, and Brookline's own Pitaland and Las Pal-

mas are a testament to how ideas by immigrant families can become neighborhood icons,” he explains.

The group also discussed how to “brand” Brookline and how the implementation of neighborhood events might accomplish that goal. The Bash on the Boulevard, a summer concert series, premiered in 2015. Businesses have also increased their sidewalk presence by providing outdoor areas.

Also included in the SPDC’s vision is the potential for residents to purchase athletic equipment for their active lifestyles.

“Brookline already has one of the highest youth populations of any City neighborhoods,” Askey states. “And the parks already established in the neighborhood provide for a lot of varied athletic activities.”

The good news is that several businesses have emerged in Brookline.

One such store, West Liberty Cycles, opened in February 2015. A fixture on West Liberty Avenue for over 50 years, it is now under new ownership and has moved. Rob Riddell decided that relocating to Brookline Boulevard connected more with his vision of the bike shop.

“Heck,” says Rob. “We were a neighborhood-focused bike shop down on West Liberty Avenue, and it’s much nicer to actually be in a neighborhood,” he explained to reporter Dan Kaczmarski in the April 2015 edition of *The Brookline*.

Just as the Boulevard went through a renovation process, so too did some of the businesses. The Cafe de Noir, formally Can-



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Cafe de Noir, formerly known as Cannon Coffee, is one business that changed with the Boulevard.

non Coffee, quickly became a meeting place for the community. Neither a bar nor restaurant, the laid back atmosphere provides Brookline residents with a unique place to socialize.

Looking For Group, also known as LFG, opened its doors on the Boulevard in November 2015. Catering toward the Brookline gaming community, LFG is a video arcade that offers a place for gamers to interact in a homey setting. Looking For Group is also partnered with Stage AE and organizes gaming tournaments, offering concert tickets to the winners.

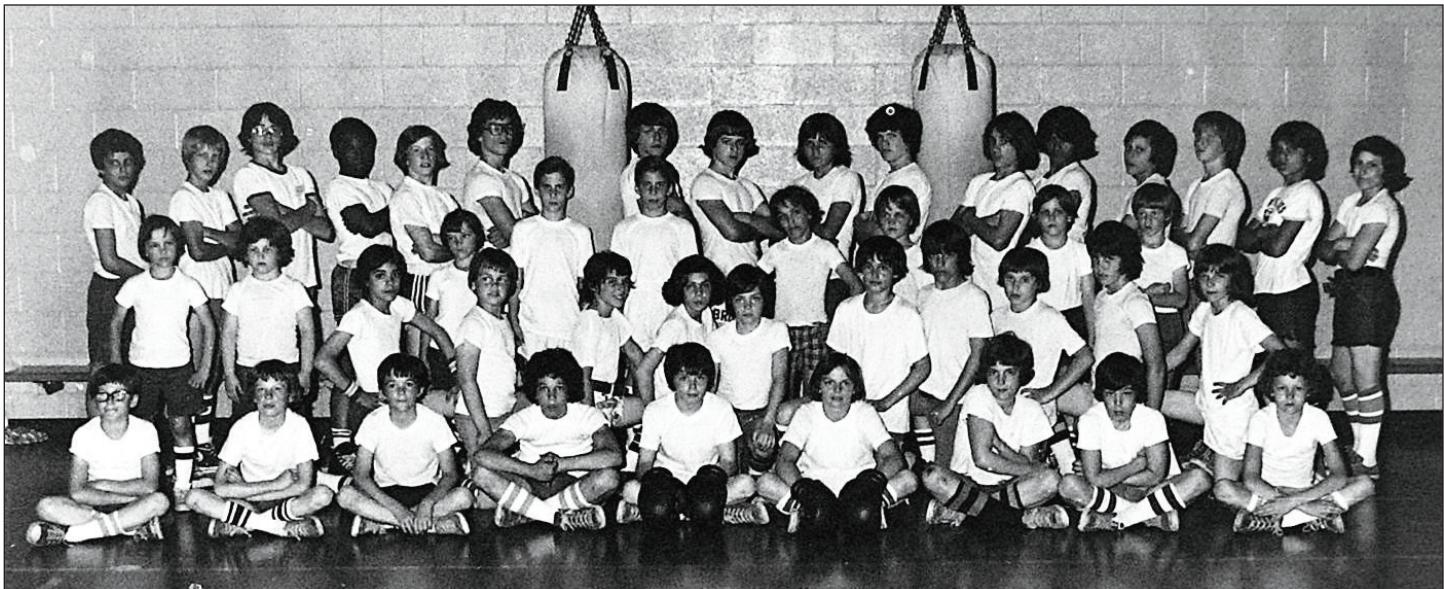
There are hopes for a bookstore to open on the Boulevard at some point in the near future. City Books is committed to securing a location after their original selection for the storefront

became unavailable. This store would be an addition to the international marketplace, since City Books plans to offer books written in English and Spanish. The owners also plan to sell books that are locally written and published.

Brookline has a lot to offer: strong community foundation, reasonable real estate and local businesses that benefit residents. The community is expected to grow and prosper for many years to come.

Reitmeyer sums it up best.

“While surprising to many, I have known Brookline’s value all along,” he writes in *The Brookline*. “Brookline has benefits over most all other city neighborhoods. Brookline is the city’s gem of the South Hills!”



COURTESY OF BROOKLINE CONNECTION

The Brookline Boxing Club during its 1977/1978 season. The club, commonly known as "Charlie's Angels," ran from 1971 to 2003.

## 'Charlie's Angels' takes punch at changing lives

By Joseph Guzy

**T**hink of "Charlie's Angels" and you think of Kate Jackson, Jaclyn Smith and Cheryl Ladd, right?

Not in Brookline.

"Charlie's Angels" was the name given to the very successful Brookline Boxing Club that existed from 1971 until 2003.

The club's roots can be traced back to Moore Park Boxing. Before the addition of the Brookline Recreation Center in 1970, the club operated out of the Moore Park Recreation Center starting in 1958.

From the club's beginning in 1958 as "Moore Park Boxing" until the temporary closure of the recreation centers — marking the end of "Charlie's Angels" — they were no stranger to success.

Golden Gloves champion Clint Burton, who currently works at the Brookline Recreation Cen-

ter, says, "Probably 50 or so team championships and how many hundreds kids actually won titles. Wow."

The club's success wouldn't have been possible without Director Chuck Senft.

Chuck was not only the director of the boxing club for all 45 years of its existence; he oversaw and managed the entire recreation program. At the Moore Park Recreation Center, Chuck led track, basketball, football, volleyball, softball and baseball teams to many championships.

But the boxing program was special.

"The boxing program sort of became his life," Burton says. "His home away from home. Probably more like his home."

The program also became the home of the kids whose lives it changed for the better.

"A lot of these people were kids

that probably didn't have that fighting spirit to them," Burton says. "He brought it out in a good way. He made them better people.

"A lot of the lessons they learned through the boxing program transferred over to their adulthood and made better people of them."

Even though the era of "Charlie's Angels" may have ended, the legacy lives on.

The club restructured and relaunched in 2005 as the Pittsburgh Boxing Club. The club currently operates out of Dilworth Park in Mount Washington, the renovated Overbrook Fire House, and, of course, at the Brookline Recreation center.

It's only appropriate that some of Chuck's former champions, Bob Healy, Bob Brown and Carlos Shrader currently run the program.

Chuck may have handed them more than boxing skills and life lessons. He handed them a legacy.

# Lovers, fighters brawl on wedding day

By Carley Thieret

In August of 1982, a blue-collar Brookline wedding party traded its tuxes for fist-cuffs and bandages – and made Brookline famous nationally in the process.

Newspapers throughout America described bleeding, broken heads, broken lips and even broken teeth. A reception that began with over 300 people ended in a brawl involving over 100.

Guests filled the Case DeFredo banquet hall on August 20, 1982, to celebrate the wedding of Lisa Colonna and Bob “Muscles” Healy.

According to *The Schenectady Gazette*, the reception had just ended when the fight broke out. The bride and groom had already departed for their Lake Erie honeymoon and missed out on what turned to be an eventful end to their wedding.

“Muscles” was a formidable welterweight boxer, and many of the guests were members of the Brookline boxing club, often known as Charlie’s Angels.

Boxing has a long-standing history in the neighborhood, and members of the club, including Muscles, dominated in tournaments such as the Golden Gloves, Silver Gloves and Junior Olympics.

According to the bride, Lisa Healy, guests were playing a common wedding game where one pays a dollar, takes a shot and gets a dance with the bride.

“People were getting a little



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA HEALY

The bride's parents, Annanina and Joseph Colonna, are pictured with the married couple.

smashed, you could say. My Italian cousin pinched Bob's Irish cousin on the ass; the fighting erupted from there,” Lisa explained.

The bride and groom did not hear about the brawl until the next morning when Lisa awoke to a phone call from her mother.

She explained that her cousin was in intensive care and let her know that they owed the

hall \$600 in damages. “She was able to save my box of wedding envelopes, but couldn't salvage the cake.”

Police from three different departments were called to quell the disturbance.

“I think when you put Italians and Irish together you get lovers and fighters, and that's exactly what we got,” Lisa said.



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

The Brookline Boulevard Revitalization Program allowed for smoother paved concrete and new head-in parking along the main street.

## Boulevard revitalization key to town's success

*By Claire Murray and  
Rebekah Devorak*

**B**rookline Boulevard looks much different today than it did just three years ago with its wide-sweeping sidewalks, ample angled parking and smoothly paved roads.

Back in 2012, before the Brookline Boulevard Revitalization Program kicked off, the Boulevard's many obstacles were testimony to the town's rich history. It had the widest main street in Pittsburgh, with two sets of trolley tracks lining the Boulevard in addition to pavement for automobiles and space for head-in parking.

In order to know Brookline's future, it is important to under-

stand its history.

Painter and business owner Robert Daley has lived in Brookline for all 65 years of his life. In fact, his parents were among the first to settle the town in the early 1900s when it was still farmland. He distinctly remembers the Boulevard's early days and even created a replica of the red and white trolleys that ran through his town.

"We used to ride into town or go down to Forbes Field to see sporting events," Daley recalls, adding that the ride cost only a nickel.

Brookline residents were not the only ones using the trolleys. The town's thriving stretch of small businesses attracted consumers from all over the city to travel into the suburban shopping district.

Brookline lost its trolley transportation in 1968 as more people turned to malls for shopping, although the streetcars still ran through neighboring towns such as Dormont and Beechview. For the decades that followed, the unused tracks rendered the roads bumpy and uneven. Overhead electrical wires appeared haphazard, making the rows of business look crowded rather than charming.

It was time for a change.

"The revitalization was huge for Brookline," Nathan Mallory, former owner of Cannon Coffee and current president of the Brookline Chamber of Commerce, says. "It was really in need of a change."

The change that Brookline desperately needed, though, almost

didn't happen.

Originally, representatives from the City of Pittsburgh proposed design plans for reconstruction of the Boulevard back in spring of 2000. However, the project abruptly halted and never moved beyond sketches due to a financial crisis in the city. But in 2008, the Brookline Chamber of Commerce suggested the plans again.

After securing the funding for the \$5.35 million project, construction workers broke ground on the half-mile main street on Feb. 23, 2015.

Throughout the 18 months of construction, workers poured new concrete sidewalks on both the business and residential sides of the Boulevard, installed new traffic signals, paved the existing road and added new streetlights and parking meters, among a slew of other improvements.

While Brookline residents' daily commutes were hindered by the ensuing roadwork, the business owners on the Boulevard took the hardest hit. Large wire fences guarding construction zones blocked the entrances of almost every store. The roadwork made parking nearly impossible. The revitalization process deterred the flow of customers that sustained the town's small businesses.

"Cannon Coffee lost over \$80,000 in revenue over the 18-month construction period," Mallory says. "It's humbling to still be around."

In an effort to rejuvenate the local businesses along the Boulevard, the community began to preach a "three/50" mentality. Brookliners are encouraged to



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

The Brookline Boulevard construction took over 18 months to complete.

spend \$50 three times a month at their favorite hometown stores to help sustain them.

Geri Roberts, owner of 824 Consignments, loves shopping in the neighborhood stores on the Boulevard.

"I sold my car," Roberts says. "I don't need it. I can get everything I need right here on the Boulevard. I threw a fabulous holiday dinner for my family last year, and I purchased everything for it right here."

"It's so awesome to see people come out and support the small businesses," Mallory says. "That's what makes it worth it. We are a unique business district, full of mom-and-pop shops. It was really difficult to get to the Boulevard, with no real parking or sidewalks for 18 months. But [the businesses] are around because the community values them. That's what makes our town the greatest neighborhood in Pittsburgh. There's a sense of security, access – it's an easy neighborhood to live in."

Daley, who has witnessed all

of Brookline's highs and lows in the past half-century, praises the promising leadership that Mallory brings to Brookline.

"The main thing that he brought was a youthful kind of atmosphere and energy to the Boulevard that hasn't been there for a long time," says Daley, specifically noting Mallory's coffee shop and housing initiatives that target university students and young families.

Despite its harsh years of revitalizing construction, Brookline Boulevard is currently home to about 80 small businesses, three churches and a row of residential housing. The town's demographic is slowly shifting as several organizations in the town offer services to a growing population of resettled refugees.

Although many great changes have come to the wide, half-mile stretch of the Boulevard, Brookline adapts to its many obstacles and will continue thrive as the place of culture and entrepreneurial success that it has always been.

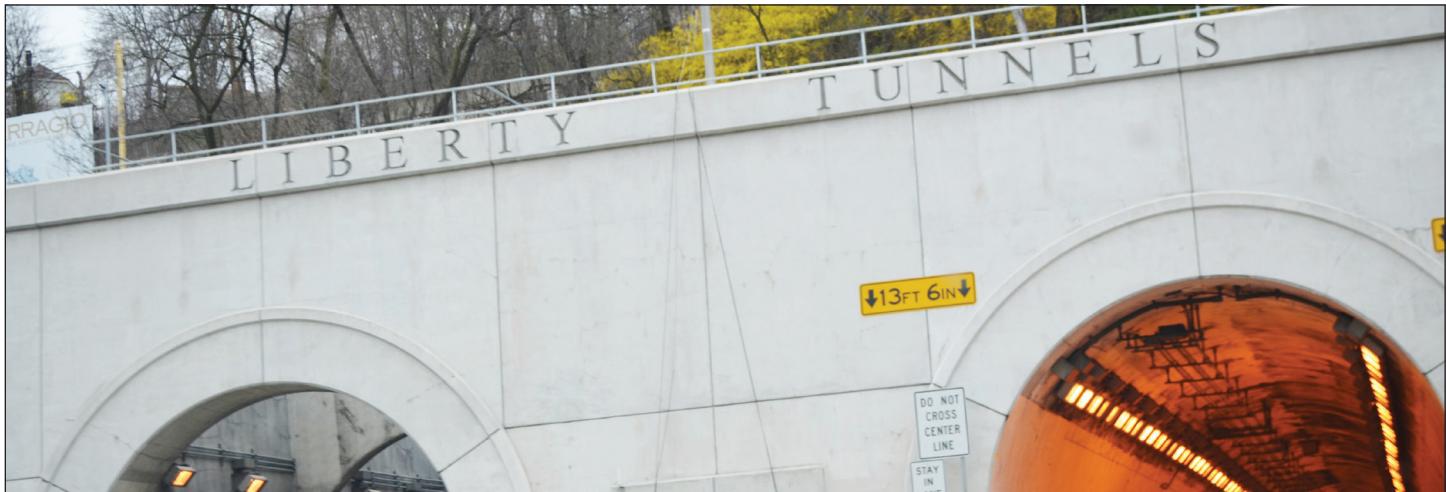


PHOTO BY LEAH DEVORAK

The Liberty Tunnels provide citizens an easy way to travel between Pittsburgh and the surrounding South Hills areas, including Brookline.

## Tunnel vision: History of famed 'Liberty Tubes'

*By Carrie Garrison*

**P**ittsburgh, often touted as the "City of Bridges," is also home to an engineering marvel: the Liberty Tunnels.

Opened to traffic in 1924, the "Liberty Tubes" go through Mount Washington and lead to many suburban areas, including Brookline.

The Tunnels were originally proposed in 1909 as a way to ease commuter access to the South Hills. There were two plans proposed: the "high tunnel" and the "low tunnel."

The "high tunnel" placed both the northern and southern ends of the tunnel higher than they are today. The "low tunnel" would have allowed access to Saw Mill Run Valley and had no direct link to a Monongahela River crossing.

After much debate the "low tunnel" was adopted, but the Allegheny County Commissioners ruled it would link with a bridge across the Monongahela, today's Liberty Bridge. The plans were approved,

and Pittsburgh's South Hills saw rapid economic expansion.

"Because of the new Twin Tubes, as they were commonly called, real estate sales and housing development in the southern communities entered another boom phase," according to the Brookline Connection. "Three farms in Brookline that were appraised at \$68,000 in 1920 saw their property valuation increase to \$1.3 million."

The tunnel's rather hasty opening led to a life-threatening error. Five months after its unveiling drivers caught in congestion experienced carbon monoxide poisoning within the tunnel.

"While vehicles idled inside the tunnels, many motorists succumbed to the dangerous buildup of carbon monoxide gas and literally passed out at the wheel of their cars," according to Brookline Connection. "Engineers worked with the U.S Bureau of Mines to install a ventilation system consisting of two pairs of 200-foot

vertical shafts that continuously pumped fresh air into the tunnels.

By 1925 the tunnel's new ventilation system made it safe for commuters. As a result, the Brookline community was officially opened to economic growth and population expansion.

"Suburban areas such as Brookline ... and other communities grew substantially after the \$6 million Liberty Tubes opened," according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

Courtney Stosko, librarian at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Brookline branch, agreed that the tunnels have opened the South Hills to the rest of Pittsburgh.

"The development of the Liberty Tunnels definitely gives people an awareness to Brookline," Stosko said.

Audrey Lacome, library services manager at the library's Beechview branch, said that the tunnels have saved Pittsburgh residents from overwhelming commuter traffic.

"Where would we be without the Liberty Tunnels? Rush hour would be crazy!"



# DeLuca family brings fresh face to old bakery

By Asia Buckley

**V**ictor and Nancy DeLuca have turned their passion into a livelihood.

Born in Naples, Italy, Victor began work as a bread baker at the age of 16. Fifty years later, he is "semi-retired" but can still be found at 546 Brookline Blvd. on a near-daily basis.

DeLuca is not a name the town has known for long, but is surely one that will be embraced. Last October, Victor and his wife Nancy, along with their two sons Bart and Robert, purchased a bakery formerly owned by the Kribel family.

The DeLucas had been searching for a bakery to buy for the past 10 years. Bart explained that it was more practical to buy a bakery that had been in business rather than to build one from the ground up.

Because Kribel's had been a fixture in the community for such a long period, the DeLucas did not rush to completely change the way the business was run.

"First and foremost, our goal is to provide traditional bakery products with a mix of something new and more modern," Bart explains.

Since purchasing the bakery in October 2014, Bart and Rob have introduced some new products while still offering Brookline favorites, such as Kribel's thumbprints and buttercream frosting.

Bart is proud of how the bakery has grown over the past year and enjoys the challenge of broadening his baking knowledge. "Bread we know. Cakes? Well, that was



PHOTO BY LEAH DEVORAK

All of the cookies, like these thumbprints, in DeLuca's Bakery are baked in-house by Nancy DeLuca.

something new for us."

Bread is baked fresh in the early hours of each morning and its aroma entices potential customers. Freshness is a priority, therefore small batches of breads and sweets are made multiple times throughout the day. Customers are often delighted to walk in and purchase baked goods that are still warm from the ovens.

As business partners, Victor, Bart and Rob share in the responsibilities of baking, keeping up with business details and maintaining the store front. Rob has also picked up cake decorating.

Responsible for baking all the cookies sold in store, Nancy is involved behind the scenes. She may not be in the bakery as often as her sons and husband, though, as she also operates a cookie business in the North Hills.

The DeLucas are looking to add more to the business to better serve the community. In addition

to selling fresh bread and sweets, DeLuca's carries DeLallo's products as well as a selection of Boar's Head deli meats and cheeses.

In the near future, the DeLuca family is planning to remodel the store front to add a new attraction: A deli counter to sell delectable sandwiches with a selection of fresh produce and condiments.

Bart and Rob have also expressed an interest in expanding the business to include café tables outside. The brothers feel that this will benefit the community by adding another spot that is social and family-friendly.

Running a bakery is no small task, and all three men start work at 3 a.m., often toiling late into the following night.

Rob, Bart and Victor can often be found in the store chatting with customers whom they know by name. The store has quickly become part of the fabric of the Boulevard.



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Elias Kassab, left, stands with his wife Neveen in front of a gleaming cappuccino machine. Elias is the new owner of Brookline's former Cannon Coffee.

## Cafe de Noir continues to unite community

By Rebekah Devorak

Just outside of 802 Brookline Blvd., the rich, indulgent aroma of fresh-pressed coffee tangles with the crisp fall air, tempting those strolling the concrete sidewalks with the promise of hot lattes and pastries.

Inside Cafe de Noir, formerly known as Cannon Coffee, current owner Elias Kassab skillfully works the large, gleaming silver espresso machine that sits behind the main counter. As the contraption whistles out steam like a 19th century locomotive, Elias pulls at intricate levers to dispense ground up coffee beans into something that resembles a measuring cup.

He sticks that cup into a compartment, and the machine works its magic. Churning and groaning, it's not long before dark espresso shoots into brightly-colored ce-

ramic mugs. "I've never worked with coffee before," Elias says as he hands a woman her cappuccino. "I worked for three weeks to learn everything. I know I can't make it like a professional would, but so far no one has complained."

Elias also owns a Middle Eastern restaurant steeped in his family's Lebanese heritage. He came to own Cafe de Noir after his regular customers kept asking him to open a café. Elias heard that Nathan Mallory, Cafe de Noir's original owner, was looking to sell so he jumped at the opportunity. That was back in August.

"I've lived in Brookline for many years, so this move made sense," Elias says. "I brought my recipes here from the other restaurant. All of the desserts are homemade except for the biscotti."

Elias' most famous pastry – flaky baklava sweetened to perfection –

is displayed in an acrylic case on the main counter. While coffee isn't his forte, it doesn't seem to matter as men and women of all ages pour into the shop for their caffeine fix. Cafe de Noir is fairly small, but the atmosphere is cozy rather than crowded.

A couple dressed in sweatpants lounge at one of the many wooden tables, sipping out of to-go cups while they deliberate over the daily newspaper. A pair of women, each with a box of reusable shopping bags in tow, burst through the shop's door and chatter all the way to where Elias stands behind the counter.

"I'm all coffee-d out for the day," the one woman says as she gestures with her shoulder to her friend. "But she wants three."

Elias' immediate success with Cafe de Noir comes, to a point, off the coattails of Nathan's original

endeavors that catapulted the shop from a basic coffee joint to the heart of Brookline society.

When Nathan, a 2012 Pittsburgh Magazine “40 Under 40” honoree, first had the idea to open a coffee shop, it was nothing more than a daydream.

“I knew I wanted to create a place where the community could come together,” Nathan says. “But I wasn’t sure of how it would work. So I called my mom and she said ‘Just do it!’ I was like, yeah, I can just do this.”

After working to get the idea off the ground, Cannon Coffee opened its doors for the first time in 2010. Coffee was a bit of a guise; while Nathan enjoys a good cup of java, people were always the main focus.

“This wasn’t going to be another smarmy coffee shop,” Nathan says. “It’s community first, coffee second. This was a chance to give a voice to the community at large and meet people from all walks of life. People often want to get involved with helping the community, but they don’t know how. Coffee can be that link.”

Acting as both a barista and an activist, Nathan used Cannon Coffee to get people talking about controversial issues like food scarcity and drug abuse. The shop organized art shows, community cleanups and held open-mic nights every Wednesday, where local performers could play in front of a usually hearty crowd.

Steve Macevic, a regular back when Nathan owned the shop, loved Cannon Coffee because of its ability to bring people together. He first learned about the place while



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Cafe de Noir offers a wide array of desserts and drinks, including baklava and cappuccinos.

looking for an open-mic spot. He drove to Brookline on a whim to try it out and never looked back.

“I didn’t know a soul, and then something amazing happened,” Steve says. “They opened their coffee shop to me and welcomed me with open arms. Since that day, the people of Cannon Coffee are extended family to me. It was like they caught lightning in a bottle.”

But after five years of running the shop, Nathan decided he wanted to sell. He was looking for the right person to take over when Elias called.

“He’s a family man who has lived in Brookline for a while now,” Nathan says. “I thought it was just time for me to step down and let him start a new adventure.”

Cafe de Noir is currently facing a natural transition period. Some aspects are bound to be different, such as the name and Middle Eastern-inspired dessert selection, while others will remain the same. Elias is hoping to have weekly performers similar to the

popular open-mic nights.

The customers have embraced Elias and his family. His wife Neveen helps to run the store alongside Elias while their three children interact with the patrons. The boys are especially fond of getting the customers to guess their names, and they beam with innocent pride when someone gets them correct.

“I would take the route of ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,’ ” Steve says. “Nate did a remarkable job of not only making a successful coffee shop but revitalizing the community. I do think it can be just as important to the community under the new owner. It wouldn’t take much, just that same drive, motivation and passion.”

Only time will tell if Cafe de Noir will remain the same community powerhouse it was under Nathan, but by the looks of how things are going for Elias right now, there’s a good chance that it will be.



PHOTO BY SETH CULP-RESSLER

Owner Luciano Defelice opened Moonlite Cafe on Brookline Boulevard in 1997.

## Moonlite Café shines at heart of neighborhood

By Carley Thieret

**L**uciano Defelice, known by most as Lou, moved to the United States from Pizzoferrato, Italy — three hours east of Rome — in 1983.

“And I’m never leaving Brookline,” Lou says with a toothy smile.

Lou is the owner of Brookline restaurant and bar Moonlite Café, where he combines his love for Italian food and culture with the neighborhood that he considers his home in Pittsburgh.

Lou met his wife Toni in Brookline. He enjoys seeing other young couples migrate to the area to start a family, just as he did.

Lou’s sister was living in

Brookline when he arrived in the United States. Because he didn’t know anything about Pittsburgh’s neighborhoods, he decided to trust his sister and the positive things she had to say about Brookline.

“I liked the community, it mirrored my town in Italy, so that’s why I stayed,” he says.

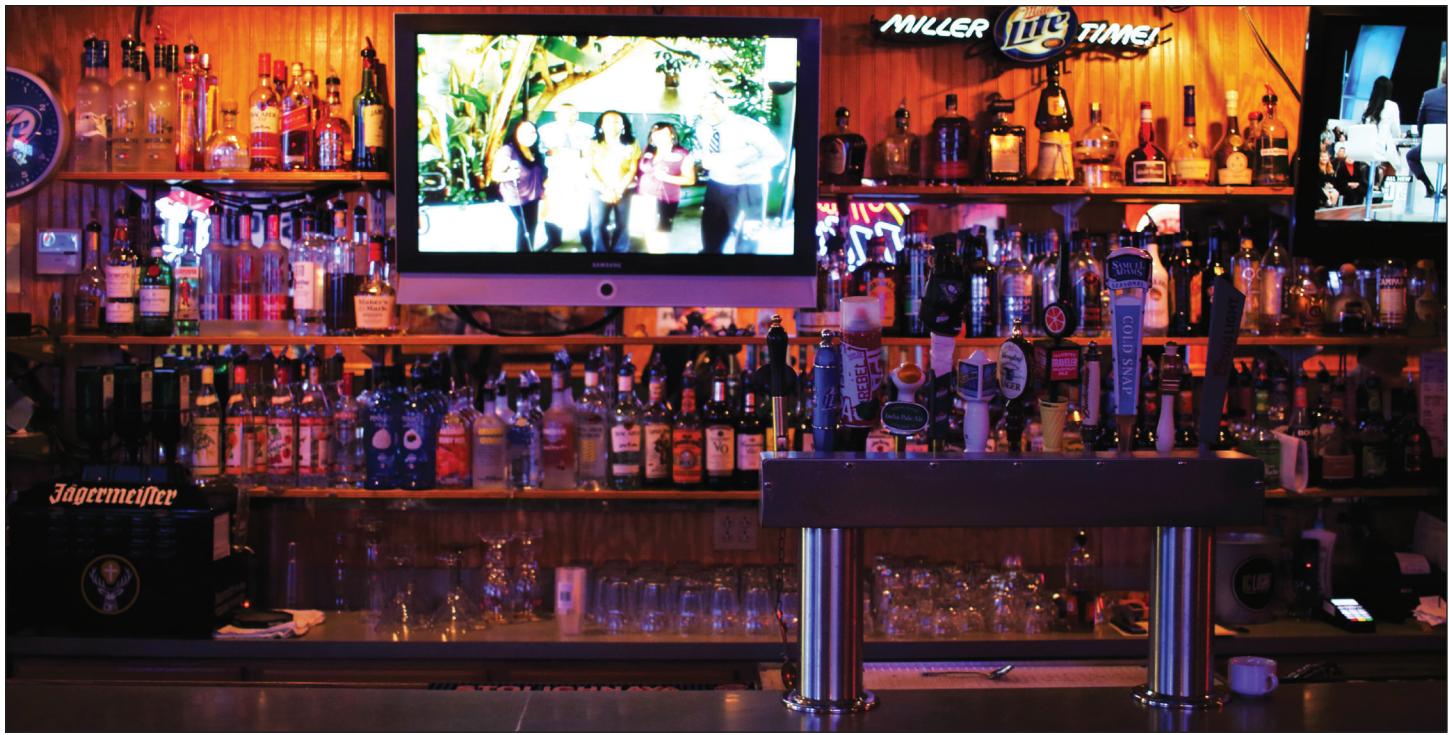
In 1997, he decided to open a restaurant on Brookline Boulevard that displayed his Italian culture. Although Lou has made Brookline his home, his Italian accent remains strong. It’s evident especially when he asks customers, “What are we drinking tonight?” He has evolved into a “yinzer” in his 22 years in Pittsburgh. The walls

of Moonlite are decorated with Steelers memorabilia, and Sunday game days are Lou’s favorite at the lounge.

“Lou wears his jersey every Sunday, he talks football with the guys at the bar and every TV is turned to the Steelers game,” a regular says while winking at Lou.

The bar is crowded on a Steelers’ Sunday, with customers enjoying the game, drinks, community and food. Among the Terrible Towels hanging, there are old pictures of Lou and his family. He may be a Pittsburgher now, but the food served at Moonlite reflects his Italian heritage.

He is often found cooking authentic Italian recipes in the



Moonlite Cafe has an ample bar, including a wide variety of beers on tap.

PHOTO BY SETH CULP-RESSLER

back. His favorite thing to make for regular customers is stuffed peppers with scallops in a garlic butter sauce, something he calls "The Mother-In-Law."

Lou has seen new customers migrate to his business in recent years as the landscape of Brookline changes. Lou has noticed an increase in young professionals moving to the area, looking for a place to start their family. He has noticed more people moving from out of state as well as coming from the suburbs to be closer to downtown.

"It's closer for people to work. Downtown Pittsburgh is waking up and so is Brookline," he says.

Although younger people are beginning to come to Brookline, Lou and other business owners saw struggle in previous years despite the growth of the community. The recently-completed recon-

struction of Brookline Boulevard nearly put Lou out of business. As the work dragged on, Lou had to lay several employees off.

"My wife Toni had to do a lot more around the restaurant, 'Honey do this, honey do that' type of thing. I did a lot more cooking, my son cooked and bartended," Lou says.

Businesses were not given a tax break during the project, which limited traffic. Lou explained that he used to get a nice crowd for dinner, but since the construction, his business has evolved into more of a bar.

"The construction of the Boulevard was the hardest time my business faced in 18 years. It was to the point I thought we would have to close," Lou says.

The strength of community is what Lou believes kept him in business. Locals are loyal to the

Moonlite Cafe and his family. He has seen an increase of business from young people, especially those in their 20s and early 30s.

Lou explained that young people from Brookline are getting tired of going to South Side on the weekend and prefer to stay within the neighborhood to experience the nightlife there.

His wife Toni agreed, explaining that there is less trouble from locals in Brookline, where the same regulars gather every weekend to have a few drinks and enjoy each other's company.

Lou enjoys having them. "I see Brookline growing. It's a place for people to come, work, live and have a life with their family. A lot of people don't know about the area, but the ones that are coming keep coming back, and they are here to stay."



PHOTO BY CARRIE GARRISON

Pitaland is a Brookline Mediterranean-style bakery and grocery store. Currently owned by Joe Chahine, Pitaland has been a popular shopping spot on the Boulevard since 1980.

## Lebanese grocery store showcases diversity

*By Carrie Garrison*

**I**t's hard to miss the burnt red, tile roof that marks Brookline Boulevard's only Mediterranean grocery, Pitaland. The smell of spices entices customers into the store where a mesmerizing pita bread machine sits behind a glass wall, allowing customers to view the process first-hand.

The cream-colored walls and wire racks give the store a tidy feel. Olives of different shapes and colors in bins line the walls and smell like vinegar and the Mediterranean Sea. The employees chat in their native tongues, including Aramaic, Greek and Arabic.

Owner Joe Chahine bustles through the store, overseeing employees and his family mem-

bers. He is short in stature, but his warm personality fills the whole store. He loves to tell stories about Lebanon in his heavily accented English.

"I was a school teacher back home in Lebanon," Joe says. "My wife was a student in the high school next door, and that's it, that's when it started."

Joe was planning to return to Lebanon after spending his honeymoon in America in 1974, but the Lebanese Civil War, which lasted from 1975 to 1990, made it too dangerous for them to return.

"My brother built the brick oven right here on [704 Brookline Blvd.], and he started making pita bread with a shovel," Joe says. "I worked for him until 1980. In 1980 I bought the busi-

ness from him ... and in 1990 I bought the building here."

Joe's radiant smile and positive attitude complement his hard-working nature. He is proud of his sought-after pita bread.

Joe bought his pita bread machine in Beirut after purchasing the building and began making Pittsburgh's best pita bread. Joe said that growing up he never imagined he would end up where he is today.

"Listen, honest to God, it was like an accident. I had no other choice," Joe says. "But, now I am happy. My kids love this business, and they've worked hard to make it better, and it's already better!"

Joe's shop incorporates its Lebanese roots but also welcomes other cultures. The café displays currency of many differ-

ent nationalities on the outside surface of its stainless steel fan. Bill Vankirk, cook at Pitaland's café, said customers always ask about the currency.

"It started a few years ago when one customer brought in some money from Europe," Bill says. "We decided to put it on the wall and ever since then people give us their money from different countries."

Gray brick accents the walls adjacent to the café. It sports trendy light fixtures, dark granite countertops and black barstools. Opened in May 2013, the café has become popular.

"Our hummus goes like crazy," Joe says. "We fill the cooler five times a day ... really, we are doing super."

Refrigerated display cases line the walls closet to the cashiers. They tempt with spinach, cheese and meat pies — a best-seller — and cheeses, including Akkawi cheese in a jar of brine and Nabulsi cheese.

Wooden barrels with white plastic lids are lined up in the front of the store. They hold bulgur wheat, shelled wheat, green lentils and dried chickpeas. The tempting bakery case stands next to this displaying baklava in a variety of flavors, dried figs and peaches, apple rolls and almond chocolate rolls.

Light brown wooden carts line the middle of the shop, creating two aisles. They hold biscuits, hazelnut wafers and date-filled cookies. On metal racks towards the middle of the shop Nutella is found nested between Joray Middle Eastern fruit rolls.

The diversity of the food is mirrored in the employees' ethnic diversity. Pita baker Fred Wachira came to Brookline from Kenya. "I taught a college in Japan, but I felt like I needed more knowledge. So, I came to the United States to be in school," Fred says. "The community here is great ... I live here, and I walk to work."

Joe's 21 employees are all from Brookline, and he boasts that they all walk to work. The employees encompass many different races including Lebanese, Arab, Afri-

Joe in America. As a Christian, he said he is safer in America.

"I worked here a few days after moving to America," Marvin says. "First day rest, second day rest, third day work."

Brookline's hard-working community is tight-knit, Joe says. Customers know Joe and his family. He loves when customers ask for workers by name.

"Brookline is a beautiful community," Joe says. "I know everyone by their first name after 41 years spent here."

***"I think that the best part of working here, too, is that everyone knows you, everyone knows everybody ... It's very rewarding."***

***- Joe Chahine***

can and South African.

Marvin Wilson, houseware manager, was born in Iraq, raised in Turkey and lived in Lebanon. He wears a black and white turban and lights up when talking about the Brookline neighborhood.

"My neighbors are so cool ... I have American and Lebanese on the right hand and on the left hand I have Syrian. I have beautiful neighbors," Marvin says. "We have a lot of different ethnicities here in the store. Some are from Syria, America, South Africa and we have Lebanese as well."

Marvin is Assyrian and found himself in Brookline when he no longer felt safe in Lebanon due to the civil war, that also kept

Joe says he has no inclination of slowing down. His white hair is the only sign of his age, 69, but his enthusiasm for his culture and his shop is evident.

"I still show up every morning at 4:30," Joe says. "I come here, have my coffee, read the paper ... I show up every day."

Joe enjoys that his shop is family owned and run. It has the profit and reputation of a chain, but a ma-and-pop feel.

"We grew up working here, so we know most of the customers that come in," Joe says. "I think that the best part of working here, too, is that everyone knows you, everyone knows everybody ... It's very rewarding."



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Even though it's not located directly on the Boulevard, Fiori's Pizzaria has been a Brookline staple ever since it opened in 1979.

## Fiori's boasts Pittsburgh's best slice

By Asia Buckley

**N**ew York has Lombardi's. Chicago has Capo's. Pittsburgh has Fiori's.

Pittsburghers are particular about their pizza. Proud Brookline residents argue that Fiori's is the best of the best. Located at 103 Capital Ave., right off West Liberty Avenue, Fiori's straddles the edges of Brookline and Beechview.

Like many Brookline business owners, Fiori Moscatiello came to Brookline by pure chance and has chosen to stay for the long haul. Opening his doors in 1979, Fiori quickly be-

came a name known throughout the neighborhood.

Fiori was born and raised in Naples, Italy. He immigrated to the United States in 1972. His youngest son, Luciano, pegs the restaurant's story as a "typical immigrant story construction." Fiori had been searching for a location to open his business for a few years, and when 103 Capital Ave. became available, he knew it was the spot.

Priding himself on using the freshest ingredients, Fiori claims, "It is the sauce that makes the pizza." The sauce is unique in that it is a sweeter,

smoother consistency of tomato paste.

"A lot of people, they don't want to spend the money," Fiori says. "They use the cheap stuff and put the money in their pocket. You gotta buy the best ingredients."

The Moscatiello family would never consider changing their method of making pizza. "We make everything ourselves, we take it seriously; it's our livelihood ... fresh every day," Luciano explains.

Customers have the opportunity to watch the pizza made right before their eyes, mouths watering as an abundance of

fresh ingredients from cheese and pepperoni to olives and anchovies is piled on.

Fiori's also sells pizza by the slice and a familiar Brookline phrase that can be heard is "cut' n' tea." With this phrase, customers can expect a slice of steaming pizza served on a pizza tin along with a carton of Turner's iced tea, which seems to fly out of the cooler on a busy Friday evening.

Like many other businesses in the neighborhood, Fiori's relies on repeat customers. He created the slogan, "We fix you up," meaning, "We'll make sure you get something great."

Fiori's sons, Fabrizo and Luciano, and daughter, Melinda, have also worked their way into the family business and couldn't imagine life any other way. Fabrizo manages the newer location in Peters Township, which opened in 2011, while Melinda and Luciano work in Brookline.

Luciano remembers his work in the pizza shop began at the young age of four. "The put a mop in my hands and let me



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Fiori's Pizzaria lives by the slogan "We fix you up," and customers can expect to get only the best pizza.

tomers or manning the ovens.

"To make a good pizza, you gotta work," said Fiori, who sometimes works 16-hour days making sure everything is perfect for his customers. "That's what it's all about."

customers. Luciano's favorite thing about working in the family business is getting to know everyone. "You start to know what they like, what their kids' like and you watch [the kids] grow up."

There is rarely a slow day at Fiori's — the place can be found packed with Steelers fans on a Sunday afternoon in October or filled with families on a Friday evening. The shop is only closed four days a year: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and Independence Day.

Luciano says they are discussing opening a shop in the North Hills. "We'll give them a taste of real pizza," he says with a grin.

move it around."

Fiori can be found in the Brookline shop daily. He is often behind the counter greeting cus-

Having been in Brookline for nearly 37 years, the Moscatiello family is on a first name basis with a majority of their

***"A lot of people, they don't want to spend the money. They use the cheap stuff and put the money in their pocket."***  
- Fiori Moscatiello



PHOTO BY SETH CULP-RESSLER

Taylor Hughes, the 22-year-old bar manager of The Brookline Pub, has utilized her Bachelor's degree in psychology by turning the bar into a center for the community. She has implemented creative events to draw crowds like weekly trivia nights and holiday themed parties.

## Brookline Pub thrives under young bar manager

*By Carley Thieret*

**W**hen 22-year-old Brookline resident Taylor Hughes began her freshman year at Point Park University, she was interested in psychology. Helping out at her parents' bar, the Brookline Pub, was just a job she did for extra money.

Taylor will graduate in May, but now she can't imagine leaving the Pub. Her career plans, and her role at the family business, have changed dramatically.

While most college students spend their weekend nights drinking at bars, Taylor spends hers serving drinks as the bartender and bar manager of the Brookline Pub. She works four nights a week and does every-

thing including bartending, waiting tables, scheduling and ordering.

"I am trying to make this the place where people my age want to hang out. I've lived in Brookline my entire life, and I want the Pub to be a gathering place for nightlife here," Taylor says.

Taylor's family bought the Pub when she was 14. They had no prior experience owning a bar.

"My parents came home one day and out of the blue said 'We bought a bar.' The place was kind of a dump when they bought it. We've done a lot to make it what it is today," she says.

Doing a lot means they created an incredibly spacious bar with a dining area. The Pub offers daily specials that Taylor and her dad, Leo, cre-

ate. Another project since the Hughes family took over the bar is remodeling the upstairs. As they had success with the downstairs portion of the bar and restaurant, they decided to expand in 2013. The upstairs portion of the Pub offers additional seating and a smaller bar, but with the same food and beverage options as downstairs.

Taylor sees herself using what she learns in her psychology classes to benefit the bar and the direction she sees it heading. The Pub sits at the center of the newly-renovated Brookline Boulevard. As more young people move to Brookline, Taylor wants the bar to grow along with the community. She engages the young new-

comers, as well as the “same old barstools,” to find ways to create new specials and events for the bar.

Trivia Night is one of Taylor’s most successful events. It is held every Tuesday, and she sees a growing turnout from week to week.

“In creating events like trivia night, I see myself using my degree in a roundabout way. People use psychology in advertising and promotion, and I try to find new ways to promote the events of the bar,” Taylor says.

Her techniques are working. Taylor’s dad Leo says that Trivia Tuesdays are sometimes even busier than weekends at the bar.

“We sometimes need three bartenders behind the bar on Tuesdays,” Leo says. “People come to eat, drink and play. It’s a really good time. That was Taylor’s thing, and it has brought us a lot of success.”

Taylor also dreamed up an an-



PHOTO BY SETH CULP-RESSLER

The Brookline Pub always has at least 70 different beers available for customers to choose from.

nual “Boos and Booze” Halloween party. She hopes to create similar events in upcoming months.

Being the bar manager has made Taylor curious about craft beers. Taylor attends beer festivals and tasting events, where she has met people who

share her passion for craft beer and have offered suggestions for new draft beer options.

The cooler behind the bar is constantly changing with a variety of new bottled beers, and there is always something innovative on tap. There is everything from light beer to seasonal and hoppy IPAs. There are always at least 70 beers available, and Taylor takes both customers’ and her dad Leo’s suggestions to heart.

That psychology degree comes in handy with dealing with fellow bartenders, as well. The Brookline Pub is a family owned restaurant in every sense of the word. There are eight bartenders, and six of them are related to Taylor.

“You can only imagine how it gets back there when it’s busy,” she said with a laugh. “I go from manager to shrink.”



PHOTO BY SETH CULP-RESSLER

The Brookline Pub underwent expansion in 2013, which added new seating and a small bar upstairs.

# 'Scoops' sweetens up Brookline Boulevard

By Yen-Mei Lin

**E**very neighborhood needs an ice cream parlor, and Brookline has a great one: Scoops. Don't let its dark gray exterior fool you; Scoops is full of color.

Scoops offers 48 flavors ranging from staples like Rocky Road to seasonal favorites like Pumpkin Pie and Candy Cane. Scoops goes beyond ice cream with a variety of colorful cakes and a menu of classic American food like pizza and hot dogs.

When you walk into Scoops, the vibrant decor gives the shop a warm, welcoming feel. The store has a vintage look, complete with a chalk board and black-and-white floor tiles. Scoops is often so busy that it can be hard to find a place to sit.

Employees clad in royal blue uniform shirts displaying the company's logo help customers decide which flavor to choose. When customers cannot decide, employees offer samples on clear tiny spoons.

Marissa Nicholas has been working at Scoops on the Boulevard for a year and a half. She grew up in Brookline, and the ice cream shop has been a part of her life ever since she was a little girl.

"I used to come here when I was a kid," Marissa says. "So I thought it would be fun if I worked here."

Owner Mike Collins bought this store in 2010, back when it was called Boulevard Ice Cream. The former owner was going to sell it, so he asked Mike if he wanted to purchase it. Mike felt apprehensive when deciding to purchase the



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

Scoops on the Boulevard boasts a plethora of unique ice cream flavors, such as Blue Moon.

store. Eventually, he decided to buy and remodel the entire store.

When the community learned the previous shop might go under, many people, including customer Mia Coulson, were worried that the only ice cream store on Brookline Boulevard would be gone forever.

"I was very sad when I knew the store was about to close," Mia says. "I'm so happy to see the other owner bought the store and remodeled it."

Since there are so many flavors in Scoops, it's difficult to guess which one is the best-seller. But Mike can tell you Blue Moon is an all-time favorite flavor. It is blue and tastes like a Sour Patch Kid.

Mike also has businesses in Mt. Lebanon and Bloomfield, called Scoops On The Beverly and Scoops in Bloomfield. Scoops On The Beverly is the busiest store among the three. Yet, surprisingly, Blue Moon is twice as popular in Brookline than the other stores.

"You can always tell how popular a flavor is by when you sell out of it," Mike says. "[Customers] are disappointed when you sell out."

Mike's sincere personality brings as much joy to his customers as his sugary ice cream. He really enjoys being part of the community. The reason he likes to run businesses in small communities is that he has known many of his customers for years.

"I have the same customers for many years in the community," Mike says. "There are also many children who come around after school. These kids may ask me to give them a job in the future."

Mike's favorite part about his job is talking to customers and making sure they are happy.

"I'd rather talk to customers," Mike laughs. "That's my personality."

An all-around business man, Mike has little time for chit-chat. But he always makes time for his loyal customers.

у  
к  
е  
и  
з



# BROOKLINESE

By Asia Buckley  
Graphic by Leah Devorak

The city of Pittsburgh is known for its unique lingo, with words such as "Yinz," meaning "you all," or "Redd up," meaning "to clean up." However, Brookline has developed a vernacular specific to the neighborhood and its occupants. Walking around Brookline, or "B-line" as it is lovingly referred to by natives, one may hear terms or phrases for people, places and things:



**The Bullie**  
Brookline Boulevard

**Calling on Mary**  
Can "Mary" come out to play?

**Resi**  
Shorthand for Resurrection, a now-closed Catholic School

**Dahn the Bullie**  
To be on Brookline Boulevard; favored by residents  
who live near Creedmoor Street

**Cut**  
To take a shortcut

**Cuz**  
Short for cousin; everyone  
in B-line is related

**FugginA**  
A phrase used whenever the guys agreed with  
something, primarily used by teenagers

**Meet Me at the Cannon**  
The war memorial wedge at the corner of  
"The Bullie" and Queensboro Avenue

**Newsies**  
A store that sold newspapers, candy,  
comic books and was a general hub of  
Boulevard activity

**The Center**  
Brookline Recreational Center

**Horse**  
A name men use to greet each other

**Cut'n'Tea**  
A slice of pizza and iced tea from Fiori's

**Going up Street**  
To be on Brookline Boulevard

**Down the Park**  
To be at Moore Park

**Kid**  
What people call their friends

**Cut Outta Here**  
To leave

**The Little Store**

Pioneer Quality Market, which was located on Pioneer Ave and sometimes affectionately called "Mom's." As in most Pittsburgh neighborhoods, long-time residents use old landmarks when giving directions. The "Little Store" is a prime example.

Phrases such as these distinguish Brookline from many of the surrounding neighborhoods. True Brookliners will greet each other with "What's up?" rather than "How are you doing?" Brookliners say they have coined many more terms that have spread through the South Hills and, in some cases, the rest of the city. Brookline's inhabitants are very proud to share their neighborhood and its lingo with others and often say, "If you can drive Brookline Boulevard without an accident, you can drive anywhere."



COURTESY OF BROOKLINE CONNECTION

This 1928 photograph depicts the Boulevard Theater, which was refurbished by Warner Bros. in 1937. It is the second building from the right.

## Reels of Brookline's rich cinema history

By Claire Murray

**B**efore Netflix and Internet streaming, local cinemas provided small-town entertainment. In the early 1900s, Brookline Boulevard boasted two movie houses: the Brookline Theater and the Boulevard Theater. The theaters sat just one block from each other, sharing an equal flow of audiences — a testament to Pittsburgh's rich film history.

The theaters projected vintage, silent films through their early years until Warner Brothers Studios galvanized Pittsburgh's film industry in the 1930s.

"Warner Brothers were originally from Ohio, but they started one of the first film exchanges here in Pittsburgh. While they distributed films, they also began purchasing locally owned theaters throughout the city,"

explains Duquesne University film professor John Fried.

Warner Bros. swept up the Boulevard Theater in 1937 and the Brookline Theater in 1938. The company refurbished the buildings, equipping them with new projectors and advanced sound technology.

Throughout the following decades, the theaters became Brookline's cultural hubs. According to the Brookline Connection, local schools and clubs often took day trips to the theaters to watch films and plays. The Boulevard Theater even had a bowling alley in its basement.

In the mid-1900s, the era of vintage cinemas dwindled to its end as audiences opted for bigger screens in Dormont or the city. The theaters have changed ownership several times since closing their doors, housing everything from kara-

te studios to thrift stores. Currently, CompuLink Technologies inhabits the old Boulevard Theater. One block down the street, residents can grab a beer at the Brookline Pub where the Brookline Theater once projected films.

The Pub owners want to take the theater back to its early days. After a remodeling in 2015, a giant white screen once more hangs in the upstairs balcony.

"The movie theater opened in 1921...so we wanted to capture that 1920s speakeasy feel, but still be a local Brookline bar," explains Taylor Hughes, the Pub owner's daughter.

The Brookline Pub hopes to continue the town's cinematic legacy by projecting black-and-white films on their new screen. They ran vintage horror films through October and planned additional cinematic classics for all-year round.

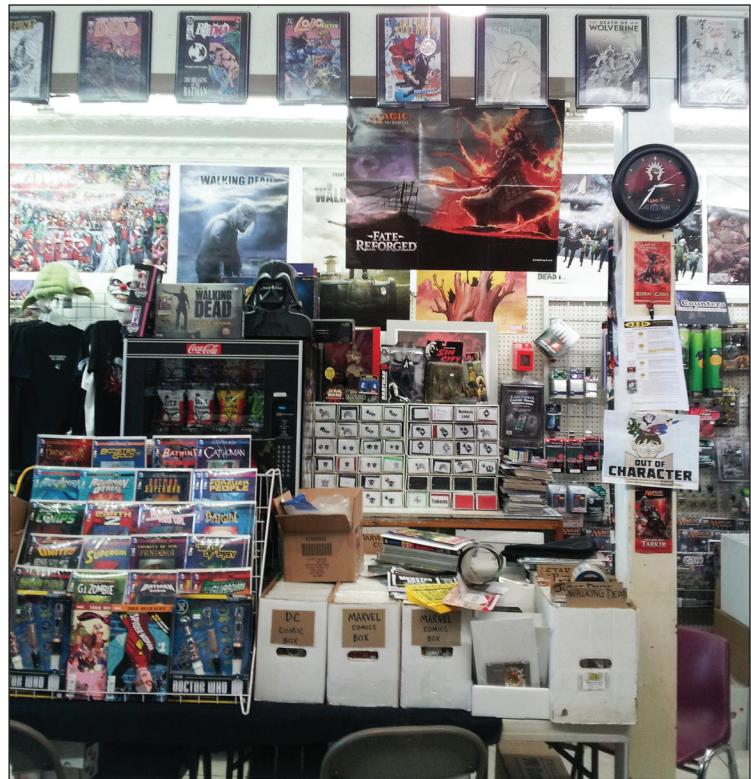


PHOTO BY GRANT STONER

A group of people play "Magic: The Gathering" inside Geekadrome. Geekadrome offers an assortment of comic books and card games.

## Magic, games come to life at Geekadrome

By Grant Stoner

For many, magic means nothing more than sleight-of-hand. However, to the customers of Geekadrome, a shop located at 534 Brookline Blvd., magic is something that is tangible and believable.

Passersby of the small, ash-gray building may notice something out of the ordinary. Behind the front windows of the store, various cardboard cutouts of heroic figures advertise fantasy games. Their expressions entice newcomers and veterans alike to explore new and magical realms. Those who are curious enough to enter are greeted by the chime of a bell, signaling that they have

crossed an otherworldly dimension into a strange and wonderful world.

Beyond the glass door, past two rows of long tables, stands the ruler of the Geekadrome kingdom, Paul Drabick. Originally from Sharon, Pa., Paul decided to move 75 miles down to Brookline for the love of a girl. That relationship did not last, but a new one was forged with his adopted hometown.

Soon thereafter, he decided to open a small comic book and game shop for those who shared his passion for all things "geeky."

"When I opened the store roughly 10 years ago, I realized that the Brookline area had been unexplored as far as comic books

and gaming are concerned," he said. "After Geekadrome opened, more and more people began showing up."

The shop specializes in the sale of comics, games and various pop culture merchandise. One of the biggest draws for customers is the gaming, and Paul sponsors plenty of opportunities for gatherings by providing events six days a week.

Sitting at one of the long tables, an intense duel is taking place. No one is wearing armor forged by mystical deities, nor is anyone rifling through a big book, casting ancient and powerful spells. Yet, people can be seen and heard playing with magic and speaking their own

strange language.

"I'd have to find another creature with impact," a young man mutters as he examines his hand of playing cards, nervously eyeing his opponent from across the table.

"Magic: The Gathering," a card game created in 1995 by Wizards of the Coast, tasks players with placing exotic lands, summoning bizarre beasts and slinging mesmerizing incantations. The object of the game is simple. Participants for each round start with a total of 20 life points, as well as draw a hand of seven cards. The ultimate goal is to utilize your deck of 60 cards in order to deplete your opponent's life points.

The match between the two competitors intensifies. Cards are being placed on the battlefield in rapid succession. "Smoldering Marsh" is followed by a "Sunken Hollow." A "Felidar Cub," a blue and grey cat-like creature enters the fray, has the capability to deal two life points worth of damage to the enemy. Thinking fast, the opposing player places a "Fortified Rampart," a creature which protects its master from any attack that deals less than six points of damage. Then, at the beginning of the next turn, a single card determines the victor.

"Master of Cruelties," the champion grins as he slowly places the card onto the table.

"Such a good card," the loser gasps, as he stares at the imposing red-armored demonic knight.

After the battle ends, both players direct their attention toward the far side of the compact store. Paul rests behind a glass counter full of "Magic" cards as well as vin-

tage gaming systems and game titles, including "Super Mario Bros. 3" and "Final Fantasy V." With a few clicks on his laptop, Paul enters the results of the match, signaling for a new round to begin.

As Paul leaves the confines of the glass case to return some items back to their designated areas, he has to squeeze past a labyrinth of boxes and books.

Not one bit of space is wasted — stacks of comics, figurines, cards and posters seemingly reach to the height of the tin paneled ceiling. Long, narrow tables are littered with playing cards and pizza boxes, remnants of the bountiful feast that energized the players. The aisles are so narrow, that a person has to step aside to let another pass by.

Throughout the entirety of the building, comic books from Marvel, DC and independent publishers are displayed on shelved racks, or placed in long cardboard boxes which are stacked in various places. Issues featuring heroes such as Batman, Spiderman and even Superman, sit alongside books boasting iconic villains including The Joker, Green Goblin and Lex Luthor.

Surrounded by racks and heaps of comics, it would only be natural for Paul to have his favorites.

"I tend to follow specific artists and writers, rather than publishers," he says, describing his comic book reading habits.

As the enchanting bell rings yet again, Paul makes eye contact with a middle-aged man trying to maneuver the narrow aisle

with his cane.

"I've never been in a comic book store before," he says to Paul with a curious tone, as he approaches the glass counter.

After a brief conversation, the man wanders over to a wall filled with action figures of various members of "The Justice League." He picks up a box containing The Flash, DC's famed super speedster. His white circular emblem with a bolt of lightning in the middle is prominently shown, a symbol of hope for the inhabitants of Central City.

As he places the Scarlet Speedster back onto the wall, the cash register rings up a transaction.

A young girl hands Paul some money before receiving a large box, filled to the brim with a vast amount of "Magic" playing cards. She maneuvers the awkward box back to a table and just as she begins sorting through her newly acquired treasures, a phone call disrupts her concentration.

"I wish I never had to go home," she says with a deep sigh as she lifts the box.

After a quick goodbye, she exits through the door. The bell rings yet again, alerting the inhabitants of the store that one of their own has departed the wondrous realm.

As the door closes behind her, the establishment at 534 Brookline Blvd. is a constant reminder that magic exists within the confines of the store. Thanks to Paul Drabick and Geekadrome, the residents of Brookline no longer have to dream about fantasies.

All they have to do is listen for the ringing of a bell.

# More than books: Library draws in all kinds

By Katie Lipko

**C**ommunity. Connection. Engagement.

This description of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh in Brookline comes from Jessica Clark, library services manager who believes that the library is as much an anchor in the Brookline community as the community is an anchor to the library.

"A community is its people," says Clark. "While [Brookline] has its businesses, its organizations, its heart is its people. And this is how we think about the library, too."

To draw on this belief, the library contains a "community living room" by the front windows that face Brookline Boulevard. Every day this spot is filled with individuals reading, talking or hanging out, according to Clark who loves seeing the people interact with each other.

While books are still a main focus to any library, Clark explains that helping people build connections within the community and with each other is a main focus of the Brookline library.

Annette Ferrieri, President of the Brookline Area Community Council (BACC), says that the Brookline Library has historically been a place for families and groups of all kinds to gather, and that attribute still stands today. "[The library] is for many, not only physically but socially, the center of the Boulevard."

The Boulevard has helped the success of the library in more



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEVORAK

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is home to books, movies, music and more for Brookliners.

than one way.

"Brookline still has that main street kind of feel to it," says Clark, who likes that the Boulevard is a one-stop street for the community. The reconstruction of the Boulevard made the street so beautiful, she says, creating that "small town within a city feel." Since many use the Boulevard, traffic in and out of the library is constant.

The library sees about 12,000

people each month and about 450 a day. Clark explains that the library circulates 6,300 books, magazines, DVDs, music CDs and other items each month. EBooks have become increasingly popular and Clark says that technology is the biggest change the library has seen in addition to the change in way individuals learn.

"Supporting people all along the spectrum of their lives" is a way Clark says the library fo-

cuses on helping the community. "We are now much more mindful that 'not one size does fit all.'"

Making all library users happy is a difficulty for Clark. "When successful, it is very rewarding, but it is a challenge making sure everyone is getting what they need," she says. Every individual is different. Clark sees some kids who are looking for a place to do homework, while others want the computer to play Minecraft. Efficiency of space was the solution.

When the library moved to its current building in 1991 from down the street, the lower level was an unusable basement, and the building was being leased. 2003 saw the renovations of the building which took a year to complete.

The BACC raised the funds to buy the property on which the library sits, and the Carnegie Library system contributed money which completed renovations.

"One of my proudest moments was putting on the commemorative hard hat and swinging a sledge hammer into the old wall to start the construction," said Ferrieri.

Previously a congested and crowded single floor space, in 2004 when the library reopened, a full separate level for children's services and meeting rooms had been created.

Clark believes that to folks who live in Brookline, the transformation of the building was incredible. The library was now able to give all users their individual space, allowing them to help and reach more people in the community.

Promoting community, literacy and learning is a goal of the

library, and in Clark's words, literacy is more than making sure individuals can read and write.

There are various types of literacy needs. Clark sees many older individuals confused over using computers. To help all individuals with their specific needs during different stages in their lives, the library offers many programs. Guitar classes, yoga classes, English classes, computer classes, book readings and various children's after school programs are just a few.

Strong community connections are apparent in class offerings like Intro to Guitar, which

and electronic devices to fill the children's section of the library. Gaming is a big aspect of the library and Clark says that there would be no gaming section without Geekadrome.

The BACC has also been a solid support system for the library for many years.

Ferrieri says that the BACC stepped in to help develop a permanent, community-friendly home for the Brookline library because the Carnegie Library system has a history of being a place in which all Brookline community members can count.

Ferrieri believes "the renova-

***"While [Brookline] has its businesses, its organizations, its heart is its people."***  
***- Jessica Clark***

is able to be offered because of community members who have guitar skills wanted to share them. Clark says that while the library does not always teach various classes, they provide the space and offer the program at no charge to participants.

Connections with local organizations and businesses also help the library accomplish their goals. "Partnering magnifies the potential to help people," Clark says since each partner has their own area of expertise.

The Brookline library has good relationships with area schools, The Seton Center, Casa San Jose and the nearby Geekadrome store. This business specifically has donated many video games

tion of the library was a positive change on Brookline Boulevard that started the current upswing." She says, "[the library] was and is a true asset in every way."

An active member and user of the library, Ferrieri sees the library staff's cooperation within the community and says their efforts to help all have paid off. The computers at the library are lifelines for some and convenience for others but busy most of the time as is the children's center which is always filled with kids and laughter.

"[The library] is a vital part of our community," said Ferrieri, who does not know where Brookline would be without it.

# Now Trending: New stores strike hip vibe

By Katie Lipko and  
Carrie Garrison

**B**rookline's diverse neighborhood is reflected in the colorful shops that flank the Boulevard.

Each store showcases its own facet of the community and contributes to the friendly and unique nature of Brookline. And there's also its diversity; while only a small percentage of Brookline is comprised of immigrants, businesses like Jolina's show the welcoming nature of the neighborhood. Their conjoined efforts and spirits to maintain their cultural identity have helped the Boulevard become what it is today.

## **Alterations By Rina**

Halfway down the Boulevard hangs a white sign with blue letters: "Alterations By Rina." Rina Constantine, a native of Melbourne, Australia, is inside between piles of dresses, fabric and thread. Her warm personality and friendly nature bring many customers to her shop for alterations, or just to chat.

"I get a lot of people that come here; that's why those two chairs are there," Constantine said, motioning to two chairs in front of her sewing machine. "We'll just chat and have lunch together."

Constantine enjoys pursuing her passion of sewing and having a shop on the Boulevard. She said the community is the best part about her shop.

"The community is beautiful. I love it!"



PHOTO BY CARRIE GARRISON

Alterations by Rina is just one of many unique businesses that Brookline Boulevard offers.

## **Jolina's Mediterranean Cuisine**

Across from Brookline's famous Cannon Statue is a new quaint restaurant, Jolina's Mediterranean Cuisine. Owners Randa and Antoine Ghassa moved to Pittsburgh from Syria five years ago. Their shop opened in October 2015 and features dishes including shish taouk, chicken shawarma and the ever popular gyro.

"My husband and I have been working with restaurants all of our life; this is all we know how to do," Randa Ghassa said. "We had our own restaurant back home in Syria, and so whenever we had the chance to open our own restaurant [here], we did so."

The restaurant, named after their daughter, is one of the only

Mediterranean restaurants on the Boulevard. Ghassa said she enjoys being part of the Brookline community, even though they reside in Brentwood.

"I love the Brookline community," she said. "They are so friendly, very supportive and very nice."

## **Looking For Group Pittsburgh**

A little further down the Boulevard is another business that opened in October 2015, Looking For Group Pittsburgh. This unique shop incorporates 10 desktop computers, four PlayStations and Xbox consoles, board games, many red gaming chairs and a space in the back for co-working. Five high school friends came up with the idea for this business, which they like to think of as a modern arca-

de. They also incorporated the co-working space to broaden appeal in the market. Co-working space has become a trending business venture in recent years.

"The concept behind it is that if you're in a working environment with people also trying to get work done, then you can network better," John Lange, owner, said.

Lange said the Brookline community has responded well to Looking For Group Pittsburgh.

"Everyone that's around here is super excited about our shop," Lange said. "That there's something new here because they've been here forever."

### ***Violet Bouquet Flower Shop***

Walk into Violet Bouquet Flower Shop, and the smell of fresh flowers instantly surrounds you. Floral arrangements of all shapes, sizes and colors decorate the shop and provide a warm welcoming to anyone who walks through the door.

Kathy Saldutte, owner of Violet Bouquet Flower Shop, explains that this business was established 30 years ago. Saldutte decided to buy the place around 20 years ago.

Why did she make this decision? Simply because, "it was for sale."

Saldutte knows Brookline's floral needs inside and out. She explains that while flower arrangements are available for any occasion, flowers for weddings seem to be her most popular service.

In recent years, Saldutte's floral shop has gained popularity and received positive reviews online on *The Knot*, a well-known wedding publication. Brookline residents frequently seek Saldutte's help for their wedding floral arrangements.



PHOTO BY CARRIE GARRISON

A row of empty video game chairs at Looking for Group Pittsburgh wait for players to take a seat.

Saldutte says that location at 931 Brookline Blvd. has helped the business. "The majority of our customers are from Brookline," she says but explains the shop will also deliver to the surrounding areas.

### ***SMOQ Pitt***

SMOQ Pitt lives by this motto: "Rub. Smoke. Love."

This barbecue restaurant that opened on April 11, 2015, is located at 600 Brookline Blvd. and will have you craving their flavorful food before you even step inside the door. From the street you can smell the smoked delicacies.

A "farm-to-table BBQ restaurant," all of their meats come from local farms and are smoked in-house. In addition to their BBQ offerings, SMOQ Pitt is proud to say all of their sauces, sides and desserts are made from scratch daily.

Mitch Liebovich, the manager,

says he looked all over Pittsburgh for a place to open a BBQ restaurant and Brookline fit his criteria.

"It's a close-knit community," he says, "and there is a lot of walking traffic and activity from the street."

While they are located in Brookline, Liebovich says SMOQ Pitt will deliver to neighboring communities and was sure to mention that SMOQ Pitt is social media friendly, with accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and GrubHub.

*A sense of community is apparent in all the businesses in Brookline. Owners have kind and supportive words for each other, reflecting their tight-knit and communal nature. Instead of competition, an ethos of common cause is seen in the trendy businesses that have found a home in Brookline.*



**DUQUESNE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

Duquesne University's  
McAnulty College of Liberal Arts

A liberal arts education provides practical  
intellectual preparation for leaders of the 21st century.

Successful leaders must have the skills that a liberal arts education cultivates:

- *disciplined thought*
- *careful analysis*
- *articulate presentation of ideas*
- *organized and persuasive writing and speech*

They also need the human values and broad perspective that are hallmarks  
of graduates of the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts.

Dr. James Swindal, Dean

**Call 412.396.6400 for information about our programs  
or visit:  
<http://www.duq.edu/liberalarts>**