

The WEDGE

The Official Newspaper of the South Wedge Since 1982
 South Wedge Planning Committee, publisher

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Time for Wine & Spirits Closes its Doors on South Ave.

By Nancy O'Donnell Hale

Tom Williams is keeping his spirits up despite plans to shut the doors on his South Ave. business, Time for Wine & Spirits.

The windows to 661 South Ave. are papered with closing signs. Inside, the ever-present medley of Beatles songs play while empty spaces grow on the shelves.

"The empire is coming to a close," said Williams, laughing. "I made the decision during the holidays. My overall feeling is that I loved having the store here. I met a lot of good people. But there's not enough support for the store, there's not enough business."

Williams was optimistic when he opened in the South Wedge almost six years ago.

He'd already owned a liquor store in Buffalo before he and



Owner Tom Williams in his store. (Nancy O'Donnell Hale)

his family moved to Fairport, when his wife took a new job.

"I was told the South Wedge was the new Park Avenue, an up-and-coming area," and he could expect business to be good.

"It's not. The neighborhood plateaued. I knew that 2 years in," Williams said. "It has a very young demographic, 21-30, and they're all working or in school during the week. There's no daytime business. Since January, six customers have come in to say goodbye, that they're moving away. At the end of the spring semester, people move out. I get a new customer base each year."

And for the future? Williams seems not completely sure — or at least, not ready to say. "I'm moving to a Caribbean island to write my rock opera," Williams joked, once again laughing. "Tommy Part 2."

Meanwhile Williams continues to say goodbye to the South Wedge and mark his merch down — wines are on sale from 10-50% and spirits are marked down up to 30%.

Mt. Hope Cemetery Old Chapel on '5 to Revive' list

By Hailie Higgins

In the 1860s, downtown Rochester was bustling. City life was in full swing, businesses were popping up (although Wegmans hadn't been founded yet) and sewer systems were just being installed. As exciting as it all was, sometimes residents wanted a reprieve from their urban excitement. To get away from it all, Rochestarians of the 19th century would visit: the cemetery.

While a cemetery may not be at the forefront of today's residents, tour guide Chris Grooms explained that Mt. Hope Cemetery functioned as a natural escape where people could picnic, walk around, and view extravagant mausoleums and markers.

"This is a rural park cemetery, and it was meant to be a park -- it was before park systems were created," Grooms explained. "This was meant to be a getaway for the citizens of Rochester[...]an outdoor museum."

To commemorate this museum-like nature, a gorgeous chapel was built. Known today as the Old Chapel, this building is one of the park's biggest and most beautiful amenities. Today, it's in trouble, and has made the Landmark Society's "Five to Revive" list. The Landmark Society of Western New York puts out an annual list of five beautiful buildings on the brink. They highlight important pieces of New York History in danger of being lost forever, in the hopes of generating support and funding to save them.

(Cont. on pg. 4)

Lilac Fest Celebrates 125 Years

By Hailie Higgins

Rochester's very own Lilac Festival is hitting a milestone this year. The 125th annual festival will be spread out over May 12-21, with ten days of fantastic floral (and FREE) fun. Hundreds of arts and craft vendors, musical performances, and kids activities will pop up as usual around the beautiful bushes in Highland Park, celebrating the sights and smells of spring.

Festival Producer Jeff Springut is the man behind much of the festival's magic. He is part of the team at Rochester Events, who have also historically helped plan

events such as Park Ave Festival. charcuterie boards and sweets.)

He said that there won't be anything too flashy or out-of-the-norm to celebrate 125 years.

"We don't have any fireworks planned or anything," he joked, adding that the lilacs are "always the stars, anyway."

They do, of course, have plenty of surprises and new features this year, as they do every year.

One of the larger newer features will be the Bully Hill Wine Grove.

The purple arches will be taken over by Bully Hill wine, who will be offering a wide selection of wines by the glass and carafe, as well as some light food options (such as

Bully Hill doesn't make the official wine of the Lilac Festival (that title is held by Casa Larga), but Springut says there are so many great vendors and small businesses to feature, the Lilac Festival is more than happy to spread the wealth.

The more than 500,000 guests will also see some extra social good this year, through the festival's Partners with a Purpose initiative. Many of the festival's sponsors -- both local businesses and national franchises -- already had initiatives in place to donate to various charitable organizations.

(Cont. on pg. 2)

Business Buzz

Lilac Fest Celebrates 125 Years

The Lilac Festival organizers have decided to feature and celebrate some of these great causes, encouraging visitors to support the businesses as well as their giving back campaigns. Springut said he'd noticed organizations were already doing social good, and wanted the festival to shine a spotlight on this great work, to encourage more of it.

The biggest departure for the festival this year is the structure. Instead of its usual three long weekends (where the festival closes Monday-Wednesday) the festivities will start on a Friday and continue ten days straight through Sunday, May 21. Springut said that this decision came from city hall. He explained that the festival has changed formats a few times in its 125 years, but adopted the three-weekend format after the COVID-19 pandemic. He said this weekend seemed to be the best for vendors and turnout.

"The festival closes down at 8:30 p.m. every day," Springut said. "If you leave work at 5, 5:30 p.m., that's not enough time to go home, change, then come back out again to the festival." But not everyone was happy with the longer festival format. Neighbors' noise complaints pushed the city to take action, resulting in the

move back to ten straight days. As the city owns the festival, Springut said they didn't have much of a say in the matter, but he expects this won't push many people away, and they're still planning for some big numbers this year. One of Springut's personal favorite components is the live music. He highlighted the opportunity to see dozens of local bands during the festival, from several different stages, entirely for free. "This festival will be one for the record books, with national weekday headliners and special anniversary collectibles," Springut said. He offered an insider tip to make your festival experience more enjoyable: look into getting a VIP deck pass. This \$35 pass gets you a great raised view of the bands on the VIP deck, a full cash bar with shorter lines, free chair massages, a five dollar coupon, and -- most importantly -- access to climate controlled restrooms. While the festival does have some other changes, many classics will stick around, including the Art in the Park craft vendors, delicious wine tasting expos, the Lilac Parade, and the Lilac 10k on the last day. To see a full list of what's new and what's coming back, visit Rochesterevents.com.



Lilacs in bloom at Rochester's Highland Park. (Lilac Festival) Prints are available here: <http://nyfalls.com/prints>



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The WEDGE Newspaper

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Articles or letters in this paper do not reflect the view and/or opinions of the South Wedge Planning Committee.

The WEDGE Newspaper, a not-for-profit newspaper, is published by the South Wedge Planning Committee, a community development organization. Its mission is to provide accurate coverage of community news. Printed bimonthly, The WEDGE has a readership of 13,500. Originally a print publication, it publishes electronically at www.swpc.org in Spring 2020, and is today posted to multiple outlets and listservs. It also provides a hard copy to members.

Please send story ideas or news to the WEDGE, 224 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, New York 14620 or email thewedge@swpc.org. Advertising deadlines & rates are available online at www.swpc.org or call 585.256.1740, ext. 4.

SWPC Mission Statement

SWPC builds community in the South Wedge, encourages a full range of housing opportunities and promotes a diverse, historically significant, commercially sustainable urban village.

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Chad Flint, market manager
Hailie Higgins, The WEDGE editor

South Wedge Planning Committee Meetings

The community is invited to attend all SWPC meetings held at 224 Mount Hope Ave. (Hamilton St. entrance).

April/May Calendar

SWPC Board
Wed. 6 p.m. April 19, May 17
For info, email flogan@rochester.rr.com

Community Engagement (Neighbors & Block Clubs)
Wed. 5:30 p.m. April. 26, May 24
For info, email gvalenti@swpc.org

Business Buzz

'Weddings to Wine Festivals': Developer Talks Plans for Calvary St. Andrews Church

By Hailie Higgins

Something new may be coming to the South Wedge: a boutique hotel and banquet hall, renovated into what used to be the Calvary St. Andrews Presbyterian church.

Built in 1873, the historic structure on the corner of Ashland St. and Averill Ave. hasn't seen a congregation since 2017. Developer Patrick Dutton hopes to bring different clientele to enjoy the building's beauty.

"There's a term in real estate development, especially re-development, called highest and best use," Dutton said. "And we really believe the highest and best use for this building [...] is a 12-room boutique hotel connected to a really unique and exceptional event space."

For the past five or so years, the Friends of Calvary St. Andrews have been taking care of the structure, which boasts a designation on the National Register of Historic Places. The Friends have sponsored all kinds of events (including weddings) at the old church, and maintained various gardens and programs.

But after the COVID-19 pandemic, the building went up for sale again, when it was bought by Dutton and his team for \$349,000. Dutton said that while he specializes in the "thoughtful redevelopment of historic buildings," this project is a bit of a new endeavor.

"I'm not a hotel developer by any stretch," he said. For Dutton, one of the biggest changes from previous projects is the strong input from the community.

Dutton has worked in Neighbor-

hood Of The Arts, Corn Hill, and primarily Downtown Rochester. He said that working with such an involved community was a new — but positive — experience.

"It was a little nerve wracking, because most of our projects downtown [...] there's no permission aside from building permits," he said. "Here, it was kind of exciting to work with an existing neighborhood that is so passionate about their community, their neighbors. There's just this kind of throwback, and there's so many interested parties, and everyone has been awesome."

From concerned citizens to excited neighbors to local non-profits, many have attended the two community meetings to discuss the plans, Dutton said.

Outside of AirBnBs and the Ellwanger Estate B&B, the South

Wedge doesn't have lodging like what their plans propose. "We think it's a great opportunity for the neighborhood — to provide something that doesn't exist in the South Wedge," Dutton said.

And most people — including the owner and innkeeper of Ellwanger, Rosemary Janofsky — are on board.

"I wholeheartedly embrace any new hospitality offering, that provides exceptional service, impeccable standards, and follows the letter of the law and Monroe County codes," Janofsky stated. "It's all about creating extraordinary experiences, and giving people more than they could ever possibly expect."

Janofsky said that the namesake of the inn even has a connection to Calvary St. Andrews: George Ellwanger's son, Henry Brooks



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News

(Cont.) Calvary St. Andrew's Boutique Hotel

Ellwanger, was choir director at Cavalry St. Andrews for years. Given the building's spot on the State and National Historic Registry, there are many, many hoops to jump through before any construction can begin. Dutton emphasized that he hopes to keep the spirit of the building's history alive with these new plans, saying that he wants to keep it as a "community asset, versus.. well, something that's anything but."

The plans are not yet set in stone, as the team has to get approval from several government offices, from City Hall right here in Rochester all the way down to DC. Currently, everything's good at city hall, and Dutton is waiting on the State Historic Preservation of-

...fice to review the proposal. Once that is completed (anticipated sometime in May) the idea goes down to Washington D.C., where it will join a long line of similar plans from around the country. Three to four months after that, all of the necessary paperwork will be in, and construction can begin. Dutton said that he doesn't anticipate any issues or points of concerns with his plans, meaning that construction could begin in August. He emphasized that they are always seeking community input. "I want there to be a continual invitation to everybody to provide comment," he said. "There is still some concern, and that's fair — we are interested in being strong contributors to this neighborhood."



Renderings of the plan for the property's backyard. (Courtesy Patrick Dutton)

The South Wedge Planning Committee (SWPC) invites you to join us in making a difference in southeast Rochester. Join our board of directors or serve on a committee. Founded in 1978, SWPC acts as a conduit for federal or state repair grants that help keep people in their aging homes.

SWPC works in a myriad of ways to build community through the annual South Wedge Farmers Market (June-September), South Wedge Victory Gardens on Hamilton and Cypress Streets and The WEDGE Newspaper that publishes six issues each year. Your time, talent and passion can help us to continue SWPC's work. If interested, please call 256-1740 or e-mail gvalenti@swpc.org or board chair Frank Logan at flogan@rochester.



Veterans Outreach Center is committed to ensuring veterans and their families have access to the supplies they need, completely free of charge. Our Quartermaster is open to veterans and their families who need food, clothing, and hygiene items, while supplies last. Below is a list of our most-needed items for donations. To schedule a donation, please contact our Quartermaster program manager, Gabe Marciano, at Gabriel.Marciano@vocroc.org or at 585-546-1081. Thank you.

Most-Needed Items:

- Canned food
- Soups (pop-top lid)
- Non-perishable ready-to-eat meals
- Protein Bars
- Pasta & Rice
- Peanut Butter
- Clothing (brand new & excellent condition preferred)
- Men's underclothes (brand new only)
- Winter gloves
- Hygiene products (Full-size preferred)
- Cleaning supplies
- Grocery & pet store giftcards
- backpacks

We are unable to take furniture and medical equipment or supplies.



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Features

(Cont.) The Old Chapel is in Trouble

By Hailie Higgins

According to Grooms and the rest of the Friends of Mt. Hope, the Old Chapel is in dire need of repair., thought you wouldn't think so from the outside.

The gothic revival building was built by a father and son duo, Henry Searle Sr. and Jr. In 1912, a crematorium was added by J. Foster Warner.

"They knew exactly what they were doing when they built this structure," he said. "But if it's not taken care of properly it's not going to withstand the ravages of time."

Inside, it is clear that time has not been gentle to this space. One of the oldest municipally-owned cemeteries in the nation, the crematorium shut down in 1974.

"When we were given access in 2019 to the building [...] and saw the condition that the building was in, we knew we had to do something," Grooms said.

Inside, the chapel is empty, with rotting wooden walls, crumbled marbled facades, and large holes where stained glass used to shine. The building has sustained significant water damage, destroying the wood paneling that used to line the main space.

The chapel is small, and the damage has made many parts inaccessible, making it feel smaller. "We salvaged all the architectural pieces that we could," Grooms said, gesturing to a large pile of ornate carved wood.

Looking around, it's easy to imagine a once-glorious space. The shards of stained glass and chunks of pink marble indicate a grandeur of days gone by. One that, according to Grooms, was completely non-denominational in nature.

"Because the city owns the cemetery, the cemetery's non-denominational," Grooms explained. "Non-denominational churches wouldn't have been a thing back then, so that would have been a rarity."

Since 2018, the Friends have been bringing the chapel to the attention of anyone who would listen.

"We started working with the Landmark Society, basically lobbying them to recognize this building,



The peeling wood paneling and crumbled marble facade on the entrance to the crematorium. (Hailie Higgins)

and they've worked very closely with us, they've been very gracious."

Finally, recognition came this past year, and the chapel was added to the list. Despite the best efforts of the Friends, the chapel nears the point of no return.

"It's been mothballed but not maintained," he said. "A designation on the "Five to Revive" list really means that the building is on the brink. We either act now, or we're going to lose it. And, you can see just by looking around, it's on the brink."

Renovation would open a whole host of possibilities, Groom said, from art exhibits to historical lectures. Musical performances are even on the table.

"We've been told the space has excellent acoustics." In the back, the vault space could possibly be converted into a columbarium – a place where cremated remains are held and displayed for friends and family to visit.

That idea would also generate income for the city, allowing for funding to help maintain the space.

Regardless of what the chapel is used for, Grooms and the Friends are hoping the Five to Revive title will result in one thing:

"Restoring it to what it was, and opening it up to the community to what it was meant to be."

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The exterior of the old chapel is in surprisingly good condition, designed to withstand time. (Hailie Higgins)



The main interior wall in the chapel space, separating the chapel from the entrance to the crematorium. (Hailie Higgins)

Features

Meet Hailie, The New Editor of The WEDGE

By Gylnis Valenti

Hailie Higgins is actively pursuing the life that she wants. Fostering her interest in journalism, in high school, she began working as an intern at her county newspaper, *The Doylestown Intelligencer*.

When she came to the University of Rochester to pursue a degree in English and Political Science, Hailie landed at the *Campus Times*, working first as the Opinions Editor and finishing as Editor-in-Chief.

After graduation in May 2022, she realized that — thanks to a busy academic schedule and the pandemic — she hadn't done as much exploring around her new city as she'd hoped and wasn't ready to leave without getting to know Rochester a little better.

Hailie began working for WROC-TV Channel 8, helping run their website and social media.

She moved to the South Wedge — a “cute, cozy, and connected” neighborhood where

she said the architecture, little libraries, and community gardens made an impression on her. Always community-minded, Hailie looked for opportunities to get involved and approached the South Wedge Planning Committee about volunteering on *The WEDGE*.

She worked with Nancy O'Donnell on the December/January and February/March issues, and is now the Editor, officially, beginning with this issue. She brings her skills and experience with InDesign, social media, and websites.

“*The WEDGE* stands out because it's driven by people in the community,” Hailie points out. “It encourages participation and boosts the neighborhood, making people feel like they have a voice with us, in addition to us getting information out to the community, too.”

She hopes to develop the paper as a vehicle for making connections and meeting people, expanding its

readership footprint and drawing people together. In the short-term, *The WEDGE* is hoping to return to printing hard copies for distribution throughout the community again, to bring in new and old readers, and especially for those who don't or can't use the internet.

There are challenges, though. Printing costs have doubled, and available printing companies have dwindled since the pandemic too. *The WEDGE* went digital-only in 2020. The hope is that increasing circulation will increase advertising and provide resources for print runs and to compensate *WEDGE* contributors.

Long-term, Hailie says she looks forward to building the paper up as a “go-to resource that's hyper-local” and continuing to strengthen connections and increase its visibility. Talking about *The WEDGE*'s history as a 40-year-old icon for the South Wedge neighborhood, she smiles, adding “I want to make it an icon for the next generation, too.”

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Plots Available in South Wedge Victory Gardens

By The South Wedge Garden Managers

Got a green thumb? Consider getting a plot in one of the South Wedge Victory Gardens, located on Cypress St. and Hamilton St.

Hamilton St. houses roughly 30 four by eight foot raised beds. Last year, the space had 19 gardeners, according to organizers. They expect to have open plots this year.

Over on Cypress St. there are 22 four by eight foot beds. Organizers said they will also be working to repair some of the older beds, increasing the number of usable plots.

A plot will run you \$25 in either space, which covers the costs of water (spigots are present in each space), and miscellaneous garden supplies and upkeep. Some residents are long-term gardeners who enjoy the same plots each year, but there are always a few new spots. Please be aware that,

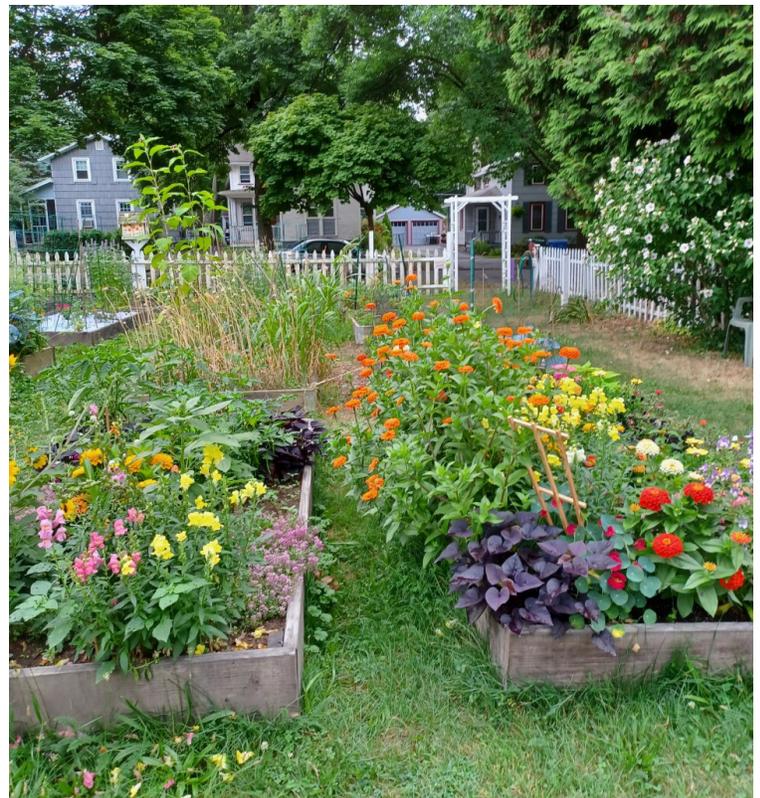
to see successful growth of your plants, frequent watering is required when we don't get much rain.

Thanks to a donation from Impact Earth, there is some compost available for gardeners, but depending on your needs, it may be BYOTS (bring your own top soil) for some!

Gardeners are also asked to help out with weeding around the garden areas and occasional mowing of the lawn. To apply for a plot in either garden, visit swpc.org, email info@swpc.org, or scan the QR code below for the Google Form application.



The Cypress Street garden (right) in full bloom last year. (Courtesy Jo Cummings)



Opinion

What is the mission of the South Wedge Mission?

By Rev. Matthew Nickloff

This past September, I quietly observed the anniversary of having served a decade in our neighborhood as the priest and developer of the South Wedge Mission. We hope, by the gracious and committed work of a beautiful community of members and friends, to formally incorporate as an organized parish of the Lutheran and Episcopal church sometime this year. Doing so is less the birth of something new — the fine folks of the Lutheran Church of Peace labored for over a century at 125 Caroline St., feeding neighbors, welcoming immigrants, and providing a place for worship and for meaningful work — and more the latest little shoot in the centuries-long project of trying to love God and love neighbor that long precedes any of us.

I share this not looking for congratulations or cards (though, if you'd like to support the work of the Mission, by all means!), but because one conundrum that has both perplexed and at times promoted our presence here: what exactly is the mission of The Mission?

Is it a church? A community space? A concert hall? A free store? A food program? A homeless shelter?

Judging by the endless variety of inquiries I receive in any given week, the answer remains as elusive today as it was ten years ago. And, in a simpler world, the answer would just be, "yes, all of the above." But our mission runs deeper. We do all of that.

We're kind of our own spectrum of engagement, a safe haven for the religiously homeless and a purveyor of meaningful work for the spiritually underemployed. Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah saying that "my house should be a place of prayer for all peoples," and at the heart of it all, if the Mission has been successful at all, I hope it's because we have made our teacher's vision our own.

It's also true that we are, at the heart of it all, a church. We are committed to cultivating life as a Christian that is person-centered, practice-based, and prophetically-engaged, while

taking seriously that embodying these commitments means being as honest and direct as possible about who we are, and allowing others the space to do the same. If there's anything we can say we all believe within the church membership, it's that everyone thrives when everyone thrives, and that there are as many beliefs in God or not-God as there are human experiences.

Knowing who we are does not limit our capacity to engage with or work alongside others any more than playing the trumpet precludes being in an orchestra with a cellist. If you're looking to fill this world with more music, then you are a part of the Mission too.

We need what you know of reality in order to be who we are. The Glory of God is humanity full of life, and fully alive.

We also readily acknowledge that — having as our God the non-violent, anti-imperial, and pro-human-being first-century Jew, Jesus of Nazareth — those of us who came after Jesus have, needless to say, not lived up to the directives of our calling. Many Christians over the millennia have left the world around them, not a second Eden, but a living hell of trauma, abuse, and destruction.

Despite essentially creating social welfare and serving as the foundation of most accounts of human rights and dignity in the West, Christians are more known for the ways we have undermined and violated the legacies of our saints and prophets. Jesus envisioned a flourishing garden at the heart of which is "a tree whose

leaves are for the healing of the nations." But more often, we his followers have left behind us a brownfield — land and lives not only destroyed, but poisoned and unusable for those who will come after. We are not the only ones who have done so, but to pretend as if being in such bad company exonerates us is one of the true original sins of our tradition.

The mission of the Mission is to serve as a catalyst for the remediation of the brownfield in our immediate place. Like the mushroom's mycelium that grow miraculous un-

derground networks which, unseen, not only remove toxins from the dirt, but also convert them into connectivity and possibility, we hope, even if unseen, to be part of the healing of our ancestors' violence. God-willing, we will restore some of the once rich soil of the way of Jesus so that those who come after us might plant seeds of peace and flourishing. We hope to realize best we can Jesus' vision of the garden restored, where the "nations" — those from any and every religion, sexuality, gender, age, race, ethnicity, ability, and species too — may find shelter and a place of peace in the world.

We do this through: advocating for solitary confinement reform, championing the rights and dignity of our homeless neighbors, supporting and helping to found Rochester's Police Accountability Board, joining the Fight for Fifteen, helping open the Rochester Free Store, enjoying diverse and talented musicians and artists who fill our sanctuary with magic, providing space for recovery, mutual aid, and relief, and simply trying to practice our spirituality in ways that are even slightly less violent than they might have been otherwise.

I share this also with you, not because we are perfect at this, but because this is the mission we aspire to.

And we want you to be a part of it. We want you to hold us accountable for the repair and reconciliation that is mandated both by our teacher and by our tradition's failures. We want to hear your music, see your art, listen to your voices, and enjoy your company, both in our space and in the work we share in cultivating the life of the spiritual ecology of our neighborhood and city. We want to rejoice together in the beauty of Highland Park, delight in the ways the light dances between the herons and the egrets on the Genesee River.

We want to labor together to love our neglected neighbors, support our students and schools, and create a community where safety, acceptance and dignity are not debates, but indisputable facts of our life together. We want you to be a part of the mission of the Mission,

and not just our target audience.

Before each liturgy, my mentor, Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber, was always careful to remind newcomers to her church in Denver that, "we will disappoint you at some point." A decade after learning from her there, I offer the same caveat here. Building on her way of doing things, before every liturgy, we remind ourselves that the table around which we celebrate our weekly Eucharist is not our table. We didn't make it. We didn't set it.

We don't get to make the rules, or decide who God loves. It belongs to Jesus, who said, "come unto me, any who are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." If you feel something awakened and enlivened in your heart and soul, longing to partake, then we do not want to stand in your way.

Our job is just to do the best we can to keep up, and live up, remembering that we are not the arbiters of inclusion, but only some among the infinitely included.

If something in you has wondered, "what exactly is the Mission?" or, perhaps more personally, "what is my own mission?" we invite you to respond to that nudge. What do you want a church in our community to be about? What is broken that needs mending, and what is beautiful, that needs to be blessed and beatified? What or who is being ignored, and in need of recognition and celebration? Who is grieving and groaning, and in need of support and solidarity? How can we continue to be partners and co-creators of the kind of neighborhood that is truly a place of prayer for all people, and, daring to dream, how can we wage peace together upon injustice and despair, for the sake of living together in justice and equality?

What is the mission of the Mission? Help us discover this for our next year, our next decade, our next century. Together, help us live towards that vision. You can reach out to me to share your thoughts at mnickolo@gmail.com, or find out more www.southwedgemission.org. We'll see you at Ellwanger-Barry Park on Saturday, April 8 at 10 a.m. for the annual neighborhood egg hunt!

From Your Councilmembers - OP/ED

RG&E Needs a Public Buyout

By Mary Lupien



Mary Lupien (above) is VP & East District Rep for City Council.

Rochester Gas And Electric is a private company that holds a monopoly over an essential community service. Their primary goal is to maximize profits for their shareholders. Nearly \$100M makes its way out of Rochester and into the pockets of shareholders each year — \$100M that could be empowering our community.

Rochester needs to take bold and innovative action to bring power and control over our future back to the people by creating a publicly-owned, co-operatively-run energy utility.

A public buyout of a privatized utility is not a new concept. In fact, Fairport, Churchville and Spencerport are all long-standing local examples of municipally-owned utilities. I thank the people at Metro Justice and the Rochester for Energy Democracy (RED) Campaign for the work they are doing towards Energy democracy. Not only are they building awareness of public power in the community, but they are also researching and advocating for a workable solution to reduce the financial impact on families for these and other critical services.

The next step is for Rochester and/or Monroe Co. to step up and commission the implementation study so leaders and the community can understand how to transition and ultimately to give the public the informa-

tion they need to express their will via a ballot referendum.

I've never seen an issue that has such broad support and has united city, suburbs, low-income and wealthy alike.

The political will is there, yet our leaders at the city and county are reluctant to commission the study, pointing fingers at the other for who should take the lead. What City Council can do in the meantime is to set aside \$500K in the budget right now. And that is what I'll be advocating for, with your help.

This implementation plan should include a fair and just transition for employees, as well as a community benefits agreement that ensures that the benefits of this public power utility are shared equitably across our community.

Energy democracy will be a crucial step in rebuilding strength in our community. Decades of disinvestment have created inequality that disproportionately impacts marginalized communities, and we must make sure that our efforts to address these issues are equitable and inclusive.

We are facing a crisis of inequality, where many of our neighbors struggle with housing insecurity, substance abuse, mental health issues, youth and domestic violence, police brutality, and more.

A public utility would invest in clean, renewable energy and invest its profits in people. It will not only act globally and reduce regional emissions, but act locally to create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and improve public health outcomes.

The RED Campaign for Public Power is not just about energy, it's about creating a more just and equitable society. It's about investing in our community and ensuring that everyone has access to the resources they need to thrive. It's about creating a better future for all of us. Let's work together to make it happen. You can find out more about the RED Campaign at www.metrojustice.org/red

A Message to Members of the South Wedge

By LaShay Harris

South Wedge Residents,

I have been extended the opportunity to provide periodic content to your neighborhood publication and am happy to do so!

I have served City Council's South District since 2019 and look forward to engaging with the South Wedge Community differently. As your City Council Representative, I vowed to support neighborhoods, and small businesses, stimulate economic growth and work on public safety initiatives to keep our communities safe.

I have served my community for nearly 30 years as a paramedic and emergency medical service educator.

Today, I work as a Career Technical Education Teacher in addition to serving on the City Council. In my city council role, I serve on the Public Safety, Neighborhood Business Development Committees, and I am the Chair of the Recreation and Human Service Committee.

Serving on the Landbank Board, Person-In-Crisis (PIC) Advisory Board and Monroe County Fire Board are additional commitments I have as a council representative.

It is my hope that residents of the South Wedge engage with city government by attending council meetings, sending us feedback, and participating in activities to support



LaShay Harris (above) represents the South District in City Council.

a positive City of Rochester.

I am currently working with residents of Pinnacle Place to resolve housing-related issues and working to improve communication and engagement for the residents of Parkway Manor.

In addition, I intend to have a series of mini-clean sweeps, mainly as the winter turns to spring.

Lastly, I will host a public safety meeting to share news about the various city public safety departments and anything related to public safety, public health, parks, and public works.

I am excited as we look ahead to share what we have done and look forward to what we will accomplish - together!



Harry B. Bronson



New York State Assembly
138th District

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From Your Neighbors

Liv in the Wedge: Creativity is the Mother of Insecurity

By Olivia Alger

Welcome back, WEDGE readers. In my last article, I introduced you to myself (Liv), my age (24), my position in life (newly minted college graduate turned South Wedge resident), along with the kind of musings I'll be presenting as this column progresses (cultural, emotional, residential). This time, I'm thinking about my greatest passion and simultaneous worst enemy: my writing.

Before I was granted the opportunity to write for The WEDGE, I wrote a weekly column for my college newspaper, and both of these journalistic experiences dredged up feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty. I've been writing for most of my life. Thus, my relationship with myself has synchronized somewhat with my relationship with writing. When I don't feel good about my writing, I don't feel good about myself, either.

Producing an article I'm not proud of is not only a poor reflection of my artistic skill, but also my credibility as a human being. How do I stop this feeling? Am I supposed to stop it? Or is this feeling one of the many curses of being an artist?

I don't necessarily believe that last part is true, that there is such a thing as the "curse of an artist," but it's a phrase I've heard people throw around quite often. In a city such as ours, surrounded by art on all sides, it's hard to believe that you're putting forth valuable material. Rochester, and the world around us, is already full of highly skilled artists producing highly skilled work. What makes my work better than anyone else's?

I suppose I have to stop asking these questions because I don't think they warrant any answers. I think my experiences as a Creative Writing major in college formed a restless spirit of competition inside of me that I must work to unravel as I make my way through young adulthood. There's hundreds, no, thousands, of reasons to keep producing work, and only one of them is to be the "best" (besides, what does being the "best" even look like?) When I feel inadequate about my writing, I have to take a breath and remind myself why I continue with this work. I make art because it makes me feel good. I make art because I have things to say. I make art because I want to. Writing this column for *The WEDGE* is something that makes me feel good. It makes me feel like I'm contributing to a local conversation about what it feels like to live in this neighborhood, to be connected with your community, to be alive. If any of you are artists, too, I hope you take these sentiments into consideration. Just because you make a piece of bad art doesn't mean you're a bad human. Put it in your art bin, or in your folder, or on your shelf, or in the back of your sketchbook, and start again.

Alignment.

By Michele H. Martell

Have you ever noticed when things just don't seem right with your car? When it seems a little off balance, or just not right but you can't put your finger on why?

Like maybe you hit some bumps and your car just doesn't seem to have the same smooth flow. If you let it go on, things only get worse, until you have to just stop and get it taken care of. You finally take it to your mechanic, and you hear that an alignment is needed.

Like your car, if you're in a place of feeling unsettled and in an operational funk, perhaps that's where you need to be. Sometimes, you need to get so out-of-alignment so that you can move forward with a reassessment. In their song "Ride," the talented musicians Twenty One Pilots sing:

*I just wanna stay in somewhere I find,
I know it's hard sometimes.
Pieces of peace in the sun's peace of mind,
I know it's hard sometimes.
...So I'm takin' my time on my ride,
Takin' my time on my ride...
I've been thinkin' too much.*

On people's deathbeds, I've heard it said that they wished they had just taken more time to be happy. Thinking back to my last article on our current Year of the Rabbit, perhaps we've all had enough of last year's tumultuous Year of the Tiger. We could use a year of peacefulness, happiness, and alignment.

Lately, I've been listening most mornings to podcasts by Trent Shelton, NFL player turned motivational speaker. His podcasts revolve around the theme PYP, or "Protect Your Peace." Listening to his positive words each

morning has been helping me set my own alignment for each day. Seeking and maintaining personal peace is the foundation that keeps our own personal vehicle of life in alignment.

What are your priorities and what brings you peace? Once you authentically decide upon what you really want, alignment can follow. You will notice synchronicities that will show you that you're on the right track. Similarly, you'll see things, people, activities, and thought processes that steal that peace fall away. Then, and it becomes easier to say no to them. And just like our cars, we need our regular adjustments to stay on the right path.

Taking some time each day for physical movement and rest, meditation and prayer, having a positive mantra, are just a few ways to get back into alignment during the business of the day-

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Michele H. Martell (above) is a columnist for *The WEDGE*. She works at the Veterans' Outreach Center on South Ave.

to-day. Spending some time in the space of children and animals and uplifting people, in nature, in music that moves you, are some other suggestions to help get to a place of alignment. My kids are involved in a lot of sports and physical activity. In the sports world, you have to keep an aligned stance in order to be tactical and a winner. Without that alignment, you can get knocked off your feet. No worries, you just pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and get back into that stance.

What provides you with your own personal alignment? The universe conspires to give you what you want, and what's meant for you will never leave you. Here's to you taking your time on your ride, keeping your feet on the ground, and claiming the sparkling alignment that's meant to be yours.

Culture

Banana Blueberry Peanut Butter Overnight Oats

By Charlene Phillips

Employee At Abundance Food Co-Op

Easy-to-make, easy to eat! Overnight oats are a great choice for a healthy, make ahead breakfast.

Ingredients

- 2 medium ripe bananas
- 1 1/4 cup Silk Soy Original soy milk
- 1 container (5 oz.) Forager Project Blueberry Cashew Milk Yogurt
- 1 cup of old-fashioned organic oats
- 1 tablespoon organic chia seeds
- 1 cup organic blueberries
- 5 tablespoons Once Again Nut Butter, organic natural peanut butter

Instructions

1. Mash one banana in a bowl with soy milk and yogurt.
2. Stir in oats and chia seeds.
3. Layer in three small mason jars, alternating oat mixture, sliced bananas, blueberries, and peanut butter.
4. Cover with lid and refrigerate for two hours or overnight.



French Toast featuring Confection Perfection



By Merriya Valleri

Employee At Stuart's Spices

Talk about decadence in a single dish! We adore making this for brunch, but we're not above serving it as a weeknight dessert either.

This is a favorite at the shop because it's so warm and comforting. The notes of cardamom, cinnamon, and nutmeg from the Confection Perfection really shine through.

Highly recommend making the night before a gathering so the bread soaks in all the flavor.

Ingredients

- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 tbsp Stuart's Spices Confection Perfection
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 2 tbsp light corn syrup, agave or maple syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 10-12 slices French bread, 1-inch thick
- 8 eggs
- 2 cups half & half

Instructions

1. In a small saucepan, bring brown sugar, butter, and corn syrup to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly
2. Pour mixture into a greased 13x9 inch baking pan
3. Lightly brown French bread in oven, then place on top of the caramel mixture, filling gaps with any remaining bread
4. Sprinkle 1 tbsp of the Confection Perfection over the bread, let rest
5. In a large bowl mix eggs, half & half, vanilla, and remaining Confection Perfection
6. Pour over bread slowly to keep the bread from floating up
7. Cover and chill for 8 hours or overnight, removing from fridge about 30 minutes before baking
8. Bake uncovered at 350° for 40-50 minutes or until the custard has set
9. Let cool for five minutes and then serve, bottom side facing upward
10. Become the favorite person at the table

The WEDGE Wants You!

Do you have a story you want to tell? A photo you want to share?

We want to hear from you.

Please email thewedge@swpc.org or call 585.256.1740

SAVE THE DATE

Save the date — Saturday, August 19 — for the second annual South Wedge Fest! Last year's festival was a great hit, with food, live music, and plenty of local vendors. SWPC is still looking for vendors, sponsors, and volunteers. Interested in participating? Reach out to info@swpc.org or call 585 - 256 - 1740 ext. 2

Culture

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Frederick Douglass Library's Artist of the Month: Ian Williams



Each month, Frederick Douglass ic tracing of neon light is an in-Library highlights the work of a lo- cursion of civilization into the cal creator in their library. For April, natural space, a second-growth Rochester artist Ian Williams will be in the vacant hollow of needless featured! Williams graduated with cutting. Future ruins are rem-a degree from Rhode Island School nants of a lost society whose of Design, and has worked in ex- glowing lights still burn bright in hibit fabrication for museums and the uninhabited wild. The natural institutions across the country. You world restores its hierarchy over can even find some of his outdoor temporary human adornments, stone sculptures around the city. absorbing the histories of aban-

Artist Statement: My work is doned objects. Irradiated sunsets a memory of things destroyed, send a wave of color through an attempt to restore vibrance gamma-soaked forests. New to something dulled. The organ- Growth becomes Old Growth.

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