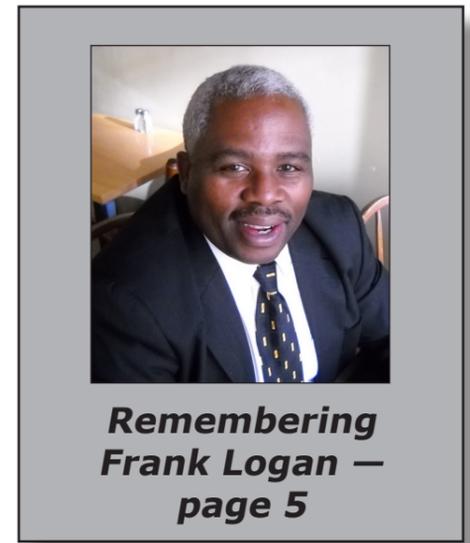


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The WEDGE

February/March 2024 | Vol. 46, No. 1

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LILAC FESTIVAL, MAY 10-19, GETS NEW PROMOTERS

Rochester's annual Lilac Festival — a South Wedge neighborhood showpiece and staple since 1898 — is under new management this year.

Jenny LoMaglio and PEC Management LLC have been tapped by the City of Rochester and Monroe County to co-produce the 126th annual event, which is slated for May 10–19. The fest, featuring more than 300 arts and crafts vendors and greater than 120 musical performances, is expected to draw 500,000 visitors.

As first reported, in December, by *Rochester Beacon*, longtime promoter Jeff Springut's firm, Springut Group Inc. (also known as Rochester Events), pulled out of the Lilac Festival after 11 years.

Springut told *The WEDGE* his decision to withdraw from the Highland-neighborhood fest was made to allow him to focus elsewhere. He plans to remain active with other area events, such as Rochester's Party In The Park.

"We had a great 11-year run, and we think we left it better than we found it," Springut said of the Lilac Festival. "It's time to give someone else the opportunity."

The good news for festival-goers: There will

be a full 10-day 2024 Lilac Festival.

"We're definitely going to have a Lilac Festival," Don Jeffries, president/CEO of Visit Rochester told *The WEDGE*. According to its

website, Visit Rochester is "the official tourism promotion agency for Monroe County."

Billed last year as "the largest free festival of its kind in North America" and featuring

"the most extensive collection of lilacs in the Northeast," the prior celebration, in mid-May, was the 125th Lilac Festival (there was no fest during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020).

Held in the 155-acre Frederick Law Olmstead-designed Highland Park and featuring more than 1,800 bushes and 500 different varieties covering 22 acres, the Lilac Festival annually attracts more than a half-million visitors, making it the largest single event within the Monroe County Parks System. In addition to its famed lilacs, the event, traditionally starting on Mother's Day weekend, features live music, the Lilac 10-K race, a 5-K run, food, arts-and-crafts and other vendors, and more.

LILAC FESTIVAL, p. 8



The pansy bed in Rochester's Highland Park as it appeared during the 2012 Lilac Festival.

126th annual Lilac Festival
May 10–19, 2024
Opening Ceremony: 10 a.m. May 10
Lilac Parade: 10:30 a.m. May 11
Seniors Day: May 14
Source: Lilac Festival
Related: Azalea neighbors' concerns — p. 6

Hotel St. Andrew Project On Pace For 2025 Completion

In 2017, when Calvary St. Andrews Church was designated a city landmark, the National Landmark Society of Western New York described the church on the level of a "Masterpiece Theatre village church."

For more than a century, the church was a spiritual beacon and a place of community activism, housed a food cupboard and opened its doors with welcoming inclusion.

If the City Preservation Board agrees, the development team of Patrick Dutton and family members will accelerate its \$2.5 million project and transform the historic church into the 11-room boutique Hotel St. Andrew, remodel the chapel and sanctuary into a banquet hall and possibly open a small restaurant.

The imposing brick church at the corner of Averill Avenue and Ashland Street was designed by Richard M. Upjohn for the Episcopal congregation and completed in 1880. The interior contains soaring stained-glass windows by artist George Haushalter and art commissioned by city notables and parishioners — the Sibley, Ellwanger and Andrews families.

The congregation changed over the decades, and by 2001 it held a single affiliation with the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. As the number of parishioners declined, the Presbytery dissolved the congregation while retaining the building and grounds.

In more recent years, Friends of Calvary St. Andrews kept its spirit alive by holding concerts and community events. While the church was already on the national and state registers of historic places, only local designation would give it the protection it needed to retain its historic interior and exterior. The group encouraged the Presbytery to recognize "its historic and aesthetic significance and support an application for local landmark designation," according to the Landmark Society.

In a Jan. 2 letter to the City Preservation Board about Hotel St. Andrew, the Rev. Judy Lee Hay, former pastor of the Calvary St. Andrews, added her support, with a few reservations. She noted Dutton Properties' good track record in restoring older properties and its financial capacity to do an excellent job of treating the historic structures with dignity. Ultimately, Hay wrote, "They are a good fit to re-envision new adaptive re-use for the former Historic Calvary St. Andrews campus."

She noted that the group was excited with plans for energy-efficient vertical geothermal to heat and cool Hotel St. Andrew (with the



Exterior rendering of Hotel St. Andrew.

possibility of extending it to the chapel and sanctuary). It was praised plans for a parking lot made of permeable material that allows for water drainage and retention. She said some neighbors had taken part in selecting plantings for the exterior landscaping.

While Hay's letter signaled approval, she listed concerns about how the historic church would be marketed and whether or not some original artifacts would be retained: Hiram Sibley and Watson families' donation of an Italian marble high altar, murals, bench, a pulpit that the esteemed Rev. Algernon Crapsey preached from, an eagle lectern, the 1916 Austin organ, high altar chairs, benches and choir pews and the stained-glass windows designed by George Haushalter.

One proposed renovation would install a railing in front of the chapel's altar. Hay asked



Interior rendering showing a planned banquet hall and event space in Hotel St. Andrew.

that this proposal be denied along with a decision to paint the Gothic church's ceiling white.

The project has received approval from the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service.

The Dutton group is aiming to start construction in the spring and open by mid-2025.▲

Nancy O'Donnell Hale
nodonnell@swpc.org

South Wedge Planning Committee
 224 Mt. Hope Ave.
 Rochester, NY 14620

The WEDGE Gets Read!

In Brief

Mayor elected chair of Civic League

Mayor Malik Evans recently was elected board chair of the National Civic League, which works to advance civic engagement and build stronger communities. Evans was previously vice chair of the organization, which includes 25 civic leaders from across the nation.

“I am honored to be chosen to lead this important board and look forward to advancing the National Civic League’s mission,” Evans said in a news release.

“We are very excited to have Mayor Evans as the chair of our Board of Directors,” National Civic League President Doug Linkhart said. “Rochester is an All-America City, and Mayor Evans has prioritized community engagement, youth involvement and economic prosperity in his work, making him a perfect candidate.”

PAB input sought

The Police Accountability Board will host public-input sessions about its Protest Policy Proposal for Change. The proposal analyzes the Rochester Police Department’s policies around protest or mass-gathering response. Meetings will be held 6–8 p.m. Feb. 8, 15 and 22 at 245 E. Main St. The proposal can be viewed at RocPAB.org/policy-and-oversight. Public comments will be accepted until March 3.

Assessment review deadlines set

City property owners who believe their new tentative assessment is inaccurate have until Feb. 9 to schedule an appointment with a city appraiser to review how the assessment was determined. The city re-assesses properties every four years. The Bureau of Assessment in mid-December began mailing disclosure notices to property owners with estimates reflecting new assessed values for residential and commercial properties. An increase in a property’s assessment doesn’t necessarily result in an increase in taxes.

March 19 is the last day to file a complaint with the Board of Assessment Review. Call 585-428-5990.

GTC accepting public comments

Genesee Transportation Council is accepting public comment on its next operating plan and annual budget, known as Unified Planning Work Program. A list of recommended transportation planning projects that the council, its member agencies and other municipalities in the nine-county Genesee-Finger Lakes Region will advance during the next fiscal year accompanies the document. The proposed plan and list of projects are available for public review and comment through Feb. 14. Go to publicinput.com/GTCUPWP.

Shelter hours set

Rochester Animal Shelter recently announced new public-friendly visitation hours. Through June 30, the Animal Services Center is open noon–6 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday (with the exception of the third Tuesday of each month when the shelter is closed for staff and volunteer training); and noon–3 p.m. Saturday through Monday. The shelter is closed Fridays. Adoption and visitation hours end 30 minutes before closing.

Skating rink open

The city’s outdoor ice-skating rink at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park, 353 Court St., will be open through March 10. Regular open skate sessions are noon–8:50 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon–7 p.m. Sunday. Adult-only free skate sessions are 1:50–3:10 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Individual admission is \$5 for adults and \$2 for youth (17 and under). Skate rental fee is \$3.

New roles in 2024 for councilmembers

City Council member LaShay Harris (D-South District) was elected vice president — a leadership role extending through Dec. 31, 2025 — at the body’s Jan. 2 biennial organizational meeting. Harris, along with Mary Lupien (D-East District) and other council members, were sworn in for terms ending Dec. 31, 2027. Miguel Meléndez Jr. was re-elected president through 2025.

Harris has served as South District representative since 2019.

“I do not take this appointment lightly,” Harris said in a news release, “and I promise to use my role to be a voice for all the people of the City of Rochester along with my constituents in the South District — particularly our most vulnerable residents whose voices all too often go unheard.”

In November, Harris was elected as a 2024 Regional Director for Region 2, covering New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, of the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials, a constituency group of the National League of Cities, at the organization’s conference in Atlanta.

Harris also recently joined fellow council members in sending a letter urging Gov. Kathy Hochul to enroll New York in the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program for Children. According to a news release, the program, set to launch this year, will provide children of low-income families in Rochester and across the state with needed support to combat food insecurity. Under the program, each child in a low-income family will receive \$40 a month to help with food costs when school is not in session.

Councilmember Lupien recently attended the Climate Emergency and Energy Security Summit on the Implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act, hosted in Washington, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Energy.

Talks scheduled

A new discussion series, “Thursday Thinkers: Insights Into Rochester,” designed to help city residents learn about available programs and services, will continue 6–7:30 p.m. Feb. 8 (Crisis Support: You Are Not Alone) and Feb. 15 (Healthy Eating on a Budget) at the Adams Street R-Center, 85 Adams St.

RCSD strategic plan to be unveiled

The Board of Education will host a special meeting and presentation of the City School District’s Strategic Plan at 6 p.m. Feb. 27 in the central office, 131 W. Broad St. During the session, the district’s Equity in Student Achievement Committee also will convene.

Co-op appointment

Abundance Food Co-op, 571 South Ave., recently announced the appointment of Lynne Zarpentine as general manager. For the past four years, Zarpentine has led the deli team at Abundance. She also has been a front-end manager and operations manager, working with all department managers. Zarpentine, whose food and retail-shopping career spans over 30 years, succeeds Brandon Kane.

The Co-op will host Neighbor Days, featuring vendor and recipe sampling, entertainment and an art/photography exhibit, Feb 12–13, 19–20 and 26–27.

Workshops slated

Visual Studies Workshop, 31 Prince St., released its Spring Salon programming schedule, covering a period through May. Workshop themes include archival engagement, choreography and movement, experimental gaming, imperialism, colonialism and more. Founded in 1969, the organization marks 55 years in 2024. For more information, go to vsw.org.▲



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Spice Up Your Life

Merriya Valleri
merriya@stuartsspices.com

Winter Comfort in a Cassoulet

The chillier months are here, and that means many of us are huddled around our slow cookers and Dutch ovens for warmth. This weather calls for comfort food, and we are here to recommend a Kielbasa & Bean Cassoulet!

For the ultimate comfort stew, cassoulet is an absolute winner in our cookbook. Originating in southern France, this is a wonderful, satisfying dish traditionally using beans and meat. There are many variations, but we thought we would share ours in case you'd like to make it yourself!

Ingredients:

- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 small carrots, diced
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2-½ teaspoons *Stuart's Spices Garlic Granules*
- 2 teaspoons *Stuart's Spices Herbes de Provence*
- 1 pound kielbasa sausage, thinly sliced
- 1 **10-ounce** can diced tomatoes (juice included)
- 1 can great northern beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste

- 1 cup broth (we suggest chicken or vegetable)
- 2 small bay leaves
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- Breadcrumbs

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 425° F
In a large cast-iron skillet, heat the olive oil and sauté the onions, carrots and pepper over medium heat for **five minutes** or until onion starts to look translucent.

Add the herbs and sliced kielbasa and sauté over medium-high heat until kielbasa begins to brown.

Add tomatoes, beans, broth, tomato paste and bay leaves, then stir and smooth out the top.

Spread breadcrumbs and Parmesan in a thin layer on the top.

Bake for **15 minutes** or until bubbly; remove from oven and add salt and pepper to taste.

Garnish with more Parmesan cheese and enjoy!▲

Long-time baker and amateur chef Merriya Valleri is a spice merchant and social-media manager at Stuart's Spices, 754 S. Clinton Ave. In her spare time, she enjoys trying out new recipes, writing on rainy days and going for walks with her family.



The
WEDGE
Card
2024

Cheesy Eddies, 5% off
602 South Ave.

Hedonist Artisan Chocolates & Ice Cream, 10% off
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Happy Earth Tea, 10% off
696 South Ave.

Mark's Texas Hots
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10% off reg. menu item
487 Monroe Ave.

SWPC Board Members

Lindsey Allen, acting chair
Anthony Sciarabba, treasurer
Joel Elliott
Alvin Lomibao
Jennifer Posey
Robert Marvin

Honorary Board Members

Mitchell Dannenberg, John Dennis,
Joe DiDonato, Cheryl Stevens

Staff

Glynis Valenti, executive director
Market manager (position to be filled)
Construction manager (position to be filled)

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.

Join SWPC in Community Building

The South Wedge Planning Committee (SWPC) invites you to help us make a difference in southeast Rochester by joining our board of directors or serving on a committee. Founded in 1978, SWPC, works as a conduit for federal or state repair grants that help keep people in their aging homes. It builds community through the South Wedge Farmers Market, South Wedge Victory Gardens on Hamilton and Cypress streets and *The WEDGE* newspaper that publishes six issues a year.

Your time, talent and commitment can help us to continue SWPC's work. If interested, call 256-1740, ext. 4, or contact Executive Director Glynis Valenti at gvalenti@swpc.org or 224 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester, NY 14620.

South Wedge Planning Committee Meetings

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

Feb./March Calendar

SWPC Board 6 p.m. Wednesday
Feb. 21 and March 20

Community Engagement

(Neighbors & Block Clubs)
5:30 p.m. Wednesday
Feb. 28 and March 27

For info, email:
gvalenti@swpc.org

The WEDGE Newspaper

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The *WEDGE* Newspaper is published by the South Wedge Planning Committee, a non-profit community development organization. Its mission is to provide accurate coverage of community news and local people and places. Printed bimonthly (February, June, August, October and December), *The WEDGE* reaches a wide readership (print and online at swpc.org/).

Send story ideas or news to: *The WEDGE*, 224 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620 or email to: thewedge@swpc.org. Advertising deadlines and rates are available online at swpc.org or by calling 585.256.1740, ext. 4.

Articles, columns and essays in *The WEDGE* do not reflect the views and/or opinions of the South Wedge Planning Committee.

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Business & Neighborhoods

Coffee House in New Hands

John White and Harry Bronson not only launched one of the first businesses in the South Wedge that reclaimed its business district, but they opened the first gay-centric shop in Rochester. Within a short time, the couple moved down the block to a space once home to the historic Lauterbach Hardware Store and expanded into a café and LGBTQ+ destination.

After limping through the pandemic, late last year the couple passed the baton to Monique Chatman, entrepreneur, mother of three and grandmother to one. Chatman is ready to put her mark on the historic business.

She opened her first Rochester shop, the Groom Room Men's Spa & Lounge in Corn Hill, some five years ago primarily because of her business acumen.

When Chatman graduated from cosmetology school as an aesthetician, she looked around and studied the "217 students all with the same idea." While her fellow graduates planned to offer services for women, Chatman looked to men. It helped that she had been marketing handmade beard oil, "Love Monkey Beards," at the Rochester Public Market for a few years. So opening a space catering to men made sense. The Groom Room offers spa treatments, including manicures, facials, massages, a "Drip Therapy 585 Detox Center," infrared sauna and a meditation space.

Chatman learned about Equal=Grounds last autumn when she was invited to talk to an assembly of state senators about how the Urban League had helped her in building her business.

"During my speech I mentioned that a café was part of my retirement plan," Chatman said. "Harry Bronson came up to me afterwards. Three weeks later I made an offer to purchase Equal=Grounds."

"I knew they weren't making a profit," Chatman said. "So, I came with a plan."

Before she took the leap to café owner, the Irondequoit resident stopped in for a coffee every day.

"I came in, and I fell in love," Chatman said. "I loved the ambiance. [The staff] talk to you. They remember you, ask 'How's your day?' I knew it needed a face lift to make it mine, but I want to keep the ambiance."

Chatman started to gather "little stuff."

"I knew where to place it. I felt this is mine."

Now firmly ensconced in the café, Chatman can often be found conducting business at a table in the back.

While she's keeping longstanding activities like Poetry Readings on the first Tuesday of every month, the Kona Open Mike and the Genesee Valley Gender Variance trans and ally social group, Chatman has plans for the months ahead starting with the menu.

"We've added a turkey option [for the breakfast sandwiches] and we're adding vegan options," she said. "I'll also be adding some after-work finger bites, mac and cheese, French fries or fried cauliflowers. We already have a wider choice of pastries from Stephanie Rose's With Love Bakery."

Chatman plans to replace the old tables and chairs in time for a grand opening on Feb. 24, which also happens to be her birthday."

Her children — Trenasia, 26, Kayshawn, 24, and Zahara, 17 — are big supporters of Chatman's new venture. Zahara will be working at the café on weekends later this year.

Her biggest booster, Chatman said, is 5-year-old grandson, Jace.

"He has his own little apron, and he's a big coffee drinker," said Chatman, laughing. Of course, his coffee is "really hot cocoa — but don't tell him that." ▲

► Nancy O'Donnell Hale
nodonnell@swpc.org

- Equal=Grounds Coffee House
- 750 South Ave.
- Hours: 8 a.m. –10 p.m. Monday-Friday;
9 a.m. –10 p.m. Saturday-Sunday
- 585-256-2362



New owner of Equal=Grounds Coffee House, Monique Chatman.



Swillburg Shoutout

Mike Henry
swillburg1@aol.com

Neighborhood group gearing up for full slate of spring activities

Happy New Year ... and, wow, it's already February!

Since our November Harvest Event, Swillburg neighbors have had one planning meeting and a couple of Lunch Bunch gatherings: At Crepe and Go, in November (see picture), and at Crisp Rochester in December. Both were fantastic!

Gearing up for the new year, we're planning on many more lunches (notices go out on Nextdoor and via email). The purpose for these get-togethers is to become acquainted with neighbors while supporting local restaurants. Please join us!

As for The Swillburg Neighborhood Association planning committee, we kicked off 2024 on January 18th to plan events for spring and summer. Activities included are hosting neighbors at Roc Cinema for a family-friendly movie in February; a pop-up sale of Swillburg swag (always popular)

in April; Clean Sweep (this spring); the United Way Day of Caring (May 23); and our annual summer picnic in June. Some of these are annual rituals celebrating our emergence from hibernation and the coming warm season.

"Neighborhoods are our most immediate civic sphere and it's satisfying to be involved and have a say."

More information will follow in the next edition of *The WEDGE*.

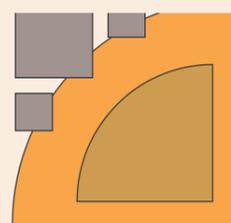
Also, a shout-out to Swillburg neighbors to join in on the planning committee. We're always looking for new people with different talents and connections. A few of us members are aging and have been at it going back 30 years or more. We'd like to know that younger neighbors would join us and assume leadership positions to continue our community's progress. Neighborhoods are our most immediate civic sphere and it's satisfying to be involved and have a say. If you're interested, contact us on the Swillburg website: swillburg.com. Also, if you haven't seen the extensive collection of Swillburg Swag, please view our online store at the same website.

Here's a big thanks to *The WEDGE* newspaper for providing us a column and making us a part of the South Wedge community! ▲

Mike Henry, a retired Monroe County social worker, has lived in Swillburg for 32 years and been intermittently active with the Swillburg Neighborhood Association since 1993.



Swillburg Neighborhood "Lunch Brunch" residents, from left, Mike Henry, Jack Mars, Jan Hickman, Bob Palmer and Judy Hay gathered Nov. 16 at Crepe and Go, 831 S. Clinton Ave.



Adjacent to the Wedge

Upper Mount Hope/College Town

Asian market opens in College Town

■ Joy Mart, 1347 Mt. Hope Ave. (College Town), an Asian food store, opened in January. University of Rochester alumna Yaofang (Vicki) Liang owns the business. Hours are 8:30 a.m.–9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 8:30 a.m.–9:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday.



■ Taco Bell, 1737 Mt. Hope Ave., opened in December on the former site of Rowe Photo, Video and Audio (the existing Rowe building was torn down last April). Construction of the new 2,000-square-foot restaurant, with drive-through, started last August. The eatery held its grand opening Dec. 13.

■ Bunga Burger Bar, 1370 Mt. Hope Ave., has closed. ▲

► Michael Saffran
msaffran@swpc.org

THE WEDGE GETS READ!

South Wedge Mourns Passing of Frank Logan

Longtime resident and neighborhood leader remembered for his advocacy and engagement

The first time Frank Logan drove to his new college, Alfred University, he saw the fields and cows, turned around, and drove back home to Providence, R.I.

FIRST-PERSON

“He was always a ‘city’ guy,” chuckles Anne Logan, his wife of 40-plus years. But he did go back to Alfred to study ceramic design and metal sculpture. He played football, too, and is in the Alfred University Football Hall of Fame for his accomplishments on the field. Anne says they met at a college bar before she even took her first freshman class at Alfred State, and they were together ever since.

They moved to Rochester after graduating because of work opportunities — the strong arts community for Frank and Xerox for Anne, who earned a computer science degree. Frank found a studio to rent on South Avenue and purchased a house around the corner on Comfort Street. For a while, Frank was a substitute teacher with Rochester City School District and bartended at night.

“Not everyone was willing to put their money and energy on the line to make that investment [in the early 1980s South Wedge],” recalls the Rev. Judy Hay, founder of South Wedge Planning Committee and NBN6 (a coalition of city neighborhoods). “Whether it was a gathering at Marie Daley Park, a block party or someone needing a helping hand, Frank was there to invest his time.”

In spite of guests from the (former) hotel behind them darting through their yard running from police, Frank liked the neighborhood and took pride in the South Wedge. Both Frank and Anne worked downtown, and many days he would come home for lunch. They raised two sons, Bryant and Evan, and now have two young grandsons.

He became involved with the South Wedge Planning Committee, using his talents and skills to benefit the community, especially for fundraisers and soliciting advertising for *The WEDGE* newspaper. He became chairman of the SWPC board.

Anthony “Tony” Sciarabba, board treasurer, noted Frank’s dedication: “He worked hard for the betterment of the neighborhood. He was willing to put in the effort and didn’t hesitate to contact companies or individuals for support and donations.”

In the late 1980s, Frank opened Greens & Things, a florist and interior land-

scape service on Monroe Avenue. In 1999, he joined Stephens Media Group, where he excelled at sales. In fact, his on-air friends at stations WARM 101.3, Fickle 93.3, and 94.1 The Zone, told listeners about Frank a few days after his passing:

Jon Goehring of 94.1 The Zone: “...such a kind soul. His infectious optimism and just his overall good-hearted nature will always make me remember Frank as a co-worker, as an individual, as a family man, as well.”

Dino Kay of Fickle 93.3: “We celebrated Mr. Big, because Frank was a big heart. He was a big man. He was a big personality. If you knew Frank, you loved him.”

Tony Infantino of WARM 101.3: “Being board chairman of the South Wedge Planning Committee was one of his most proud things he did in his life. He was proud of his neighborhood and put the South Wedge Festival on the map. He was a helluva guy.”

In 2010, Frank organized Wedgestock, a community festival. People still remember the two years of Wedgestock, and Frank and the SWPC board brought the festival back in 2022 and 2023 as the South Wedge Fest. Working with him on the South Wedge Fest, I can tell you he was tireless in securing sponsors; in contracting components like the stage, food trucks and security company; in distributing posters and parking fliers; in lining up radio spots; and in arriving five hours early to set up and staying until the last folding chair was back at the office.

Jayne Morgan, South Wedge resident and volunteer coordinator for the South Wedge Fest, notes his “amazing determination to bring the festival back and make it a success for the community.”

“It just shows his level of dedication and commitment to the neighborhood,” she adds.

Steve Grills, musician and South Wedge resident, met Frank 25 years ago when his band played at a local venue on Thursdays. More recently, Frank asked Steve to put



Longtime South Wedge Planning Committee Chair Frank Logan could always be found lending a hand and interacting with visitors at neighborhood events such as Wedge Waddle, held on Thanksgiving Day.

together the music line-ups for the South Wedge Festivals.

“He thought so much of the South Wedge,” Steve recalls. “His passing is a loss ... but he’ll continue to be an inspiration to celebrate this unique neighborhood.”

“Determination” and “dedication” are common descriptors for Frank. In his roles at work, at home and at SWPC, Frank faced any challenge. For instance, Frank hired Gary Loitsch, contractor and South Wedge resident, to renovate his kitchen.

“He wanted to learn everything,” Gary says. “He helped design it and helped with the work, too.”

Frank also showed determination last summer when two chairs and a table went missing from his porch. Neighbors clued him in on who would have some information, and he went around the corner and confronted the alleged culprit. The man fessed up, saying that he sold them to another tenant. Frank stormed into the building and

banged on doors until he got his chairs back. Anne smiled at this anecdote, saying: “He was fearless. Nothing could stop him.”

In the seven years I’ve been at SWPC, I saw Frank at the South Wedge Farmers Market nearly every week, supporting the program and our local vendors. Occasionally we would meet over lunch he picked up at Phillips European, one of his sales clients. When things got tough, he was always encouraging, always looking at solutions. He was the catalyst for a senior housing program we’re exploring. He is already missed.

I asked Anne what Frank’s biggest passion was: family, community, sales?

“All of the above,” she answered without hesitation.

The family requests that donations in his memory go to the Wilmot Cancer Institute. Please go to urmc.rochester.edu/cancer-institute/giving/make-a-gift.aspx.

► Glynis Valenti
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Assemblymember Harry B. Bronson



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Viewpoints

Azalea Neighbors Hope for Improved Relations With Lilac Fest Promoters

The Lilac Festival is a wonderful event celebrating beautiful Highland Park offering over 500 varieties of Lilacs. When weather conditions are just right and the bushes bloom together, the park becomes a scented delightful sight!

Having the opportunity to be a homeowner in a neighborhood close to Highland Park was exciting, especially at Lilac Festival time, and for years the festival was enjoyable; then the focus of the festival began to change.

The music events changed from folk, orchestra, school bands and choirs to rock bands. With the rock bands came stadium-size amplifiers with the volume of bass increasing to the point of rattling windows and dishes in the cupboards of houses closest to the park. Band practice started at 8:30 in the morning, and playing continued throughout the day till after 8 p.m. The volume and intensity of the bass would be so loud it was uncomfortable to sit outside, you couldn't listen to your own music or any other material because of the overwhelming constant thumping from the bass! You couldn't even escape the thumping from the bass in your home — it would interfere with television listening, even resting.

The weekend beer and wine tents in the parking lot right behind the Meadowbrook Road homes have added yet another loud sound source, though last year it was somewhat reduced. The greater frustration was contacting the festival promoter to have the bands decrease the volume of the bass year after year and not having any resolution. This has been the experience of some of the neighbors who live close to the Highland Park. Yes, there are some festival-goers who enjoy that type of music, but is it appropriate to have such high-decibel, volume-interfering noise in a residential area across from a nursing home and so close to family homes?

Over the years the neighborhoods close to Highland Park have met with the County Parks Department and the promoter prior to the festival to discuss concerns of the neighbors with the festival. Those concerns have ranged from parking in the neighborhoods, blocking of roads, increased trash, the volume of the bass

from the bands and fights breaking out in the festival grounds or in the street. The potential of fights breaking out at future festivals is a great concern and very important to consider addressing prior to the festival, as it affects festival attendees and neighbors, and it has the potential to increase costs for the festival promoters to provide greater security in the festival site, and a greater potential for police presence in the surrounding area at a time when Rochester Police are experiencing a decrease in their ranks.

The County Parks Department as well as the Rochester Police Department have worked to take neighbors' suggestions into consideration and resolve some of these issues. Neighborhoods closest to the park now receive a door hanger prior to the festival providing basic information that would directly affect people living in those homes such as the parade route, start and finish times and more. Suggestions regarding signage for parking were also improved, placing more trash receptacles along the major routes and in neighborhoods closest to the park, litter patrols coming through the neighborhoods at end of the day during the festival to pick up trash, and having placed barrels along one side of some of the smaller streets to prevent illegal parking are just a few of the suggestions that have been implemented.

But the intensity and volume of the bass from the rock bands has still not been resolved. With this history the neighbors decided to ask the County Parks Department in December to meet and discuss the noise issue with the hopes that something could be put into to place with the bands when they were contracted to play. That was when it was learned there would be a new promoter. The neighbors are excited about the possibility of working with a new promoter, the County Parks Department, Lilac Festival Inc., and the Rochester Police Department to have a successful, enjoyable, quiet festival for all! It is the hope of the neighborhoods surrounding Highland Park and the Lilac Festival that we can collaborate early in the planning of the festival to improve the festival outcome for all involved with the festival. ▀

Submitted by Azalea Neighborhood Association



Mary Lupien

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'Braving the Wilderness' of Public Service in Quests for Transformation

The primary factor sustaining the current state of affairs is the inherent human inclination to seek belonging. As social beings, humans naturally crave acceptance within their communities. This social aspect of human nature originated from the necessity for cooperation to ensure survival, where being liked translated to receiving food and protection.

While modern society allows for more independent living, the need for social connections persists. A robust social network contributes to both physical and mental well-being. However, this desire for acceptance can lead individuals to conform to group norms, even when they don't agree, and can deter them from taking risks or exploring new ideas to avoid being perceived as different or, God forbid, "radical."

Effecting change in the status quo requires the courage to introduce novel ideas or share dissenting opinions within a group. This is challenging as it demands one to step outside their comfort zone and risk potential rejection or ridicule. Just look to my X (formerly known as Twitter) account for evidence of that!

Human nature tends to be risk-averse, instinctively avoiding situations perceived as dangerous or threatening. While this trait can be beneficial in many scenarios, it can also hinder the taking of necessary risks crucial for personal and societal growth and transformation.

We must have the courage to accept the possibility of failure, a concept often embraced in business, because it means learning and growth and is necessary for success and innovation. However, in the public sphere failure is met with resistance to the fear that failure may result in a loss of support, especially at the ballot box, jeopardizing our very ability to enact change.

The potent combination of the fear of failure and the desire for social belonging can be formidable barriers to challenging the status quo. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that change is attainable, requiring courage, risk-taking, and a willingness to embrace our differences. Stepping beyond our comfort zone and embracing innovation can contribute to creating a better city and a better world.

In government, these dynamics are pervasive, with personal loyalties to a group or faction often taking precedence over sound decision-making. Prioritizing maintaining relationships with those in power can stifle new ideas and prevent accountability. The safeguard of our Democracy, rooted in the separation and balance of power, is compromised when the legislature fears angering the executive (i.e. the mayor, county executive and governor).

Quoting author Brené Brown's insights from *Braving the Wilderness*:

"When the culture of any organization mandates that it is more important to protect the reputation of a system and those in power than it is to protect the basic human dignity of the individuals who serve that system or who are served by that system, you can be certain that the shame is systemic, the money is driving ethics, and the accountability is all but dead."

People-centered policies like Universal Basic Income, Single-payer Health Care, Harm Reduction, Social Housing and Universal high-quality education are well-researched and where they exist, people are thriving. However,

the fear of being labeled "radical" or "socialist" prevents elected officials from championing them and when they do, they are retaliated against. The powerful in our society do not wish to relinquish their privileged position. Governing bodies must risk their relationships with the wealthy and powerful, even risk their positions, if we are to achieve progress toward a more equitable society.

If this is what we want in our elected officials, we must be willing to support them, and BE them. We all must be willing to challenge the status quo, take risks and embrace new ideas. The journey won't be easy, but it will be rewarding. It will require us to get comfortable with the uncomfortable and with uncertainty. But building that capacity within each of us and believing it is possible is what it will take to create a more beautiful world.

I'll leave you with this last quote from Brown's *Braving the Wilderness*:

"I won't sugar coat this: Standing on the precipice of the wilderness is bone-chilling.

Because belonging is so primal, so necessary, the threat of losing your tribe or going alone feels so terrifying as to keep most of us distanced from the wilderness our whole lives.

Human approval is one of our most treasured idols, and the offering we must lay at its hungry feet is keeping others comfortable. I'm convinced that discomfort is the great deterrent of our generation. Protecting the status quo against our internal convictions is obviously a luxury of the privileged, because the underdogs and outliers and marginalized have no choice but to experience the daily wilderness. But choosing the wily outpost over the security of the city gates takes a true act of courage. That first step will take your breath away.

"Speaking against the power structures that keep some inside and others outside has a cost, and the currency is most often drafted from belonging. Consequently, the wilderness sometimes feels very lonely and punishing, which is a powerful disincentive. But I've discovered something beautiful; the loneliest steps are the ones between the city walls and the heart of the wilderness, where safety is in the rear-view mirror, new territory remains to be seen and the path out of the unknown seems empty. But put one foot in front of the other enough times, stay the course long enough to actually tunnel into the wilderness, and you'll be shocked how many people already live out there — thriving, dancing, creating, celebrating, belonging. It is not a barren wasteland. It is not unprotected territory. It is not a void of human flourishing. The wilderness is where all the creatives and prophets and system-buckers and risk-takers have always lived, and it is stunningly vibrant. The walk out there is hard, but the authenticity out there is life." ▀

First elected to City Council in 2019, Mary Lupien serves on the Public Safety and the People, Parks & Public Works committees. Lupien is passionate about fighting poverty, institutional racism and climate change; and advocating for housing rights and improving the quality of life for all Rochesterians. She seeks to increase civic engagement by increasing transparency of the legislative process and to govern alongside the community.

Call for Submissions

In the spirit of encouraging lively conversation within the South Wedge and fostering discussion about vibrant topics relevant to the neighborhood and to readers of the newspaper, *The WEDGE* invites readers to consider submitting letters to the editor and/or to pitch ideas for potentially lengthier opinion essays.

Letters intended for publication should be civil in tone, concise and to the point (250 words maximum), timely (referring to content previously printed in *The WEDGE*) and signed by the author (including contact information).

Longer, more in-depth opinion essays (generally up to around 500-750 words) should demonstrate the writer's expertise on a given topic; and, similar to letters, should get to the point and be civil in tone, timely (related to a subject in the news or raising a topic of relevance to the South Wedge neighborhood and its citizens) and signed by the author (including contact information).

Anonymous submissions (letters and essays) will not be considered for publication. Contact Michael Saffran, editor, at msaffran@swpc.org.



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Perspectives



Sparklin' in the Wedge

Michele H. Martell
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Advice: Practice 'Mindful Listening'

To what are you listening right now? At this exact moment ... music, telephone and text conversations, thoughts inside your head? And where is that listening taking you?

As I write this, it's the end of the holiday season. I still have the classics playing (Andy Williams, to be exact); blissful Christmas music that resonates of beauty, peace, loveliness. And inside my head, I am pondering a sadness of the end of the sparkle season, while thinking of the year ahead and all I wish to accomplish.

With this brain wave moving forward, I come to the awareness that the thoughts I am listening to can carry me towards negativity or positivity; that I can choose to listen to the beautiful sounds of the moment, or to any thoughts I choose. I really believe that being intentionally aware and making the choice of listening has a full impact on the quality of life.

We all have had others speak over our lives telling us one thing or another. Those "tapes" may become internal listening that can rule our lives until we take ownership. If we are blessed to have "tapes" of acknowledgment, positivity, empowerment — what wonderful messaging to resonate throughout life! Conversely, every single one of us has had voices spoken during our lifetimes of negativity, bullying, jealousy. And we have a choice on what to listen to. We can listen to pessimism, or we can we listen to our inner voice of authentic self-love and who God says who we are.

In elementary school, I began a regular trek to the local library (yes, this was before the Internet) to discover some amazingly new ways of thinking, making some new choices of what I was listening to. Check out the timeless wisdom of Dale Carnegie and Norman Vincent Peale. It may just change your internal listening!

What is your music? I'm all for everything from rock to classical, sounds that move the spirit with energy and inspiration. Are you listening to music that fills your soul with vitality? Or are you listening to music that drains you and takes you down a rabbit hole of negativity? Switch it up and see what happens; the music to which you listen can make an incredible difference!

Similarly, what is your social media? If you are following those who are focused on growth, positivity and making a difference, it will similarly impact your own life. Try listening to positive podcasts daily. Personally, I choose to listen to Trent Shelton and Joel Osteen on a daily basis.

Are you surrounded by others who incessantly complain or diminish? Yes, there are times when we cannot separate ourselves from such individuals; but we can choose not to listen and not to participate. You can choose to play some music, or simply stay focused on your purpose.

Of course, listening to appropriate, constructive criticism is necessary for growth and improvement. We can listen with open ears and a positive, discerning mindset. It is the choice of how we listen that makes the difference.

I've read how plants that listen to soothing sounds respond by thriving and blooming. If that works with plants, imagine the effect on us when we choose to listen to optimism! And we see the effect on innocent children and animals when they can consistently listen to uplifting and encouraging words, thereby affecting their demeanor and behavior and their entire trajectory.

I hope that this piece has stimulated some introspection regarding the influence of listening choices. The choice of listening is a daily practice. There is

no perfection, only progress, that leads to a better, sparkling life. ▲

Michele H. Martell (MBA Walsh College, Rochester, Mich.) works at Veterans Outreach Center and is an independent consultant with Mary Kay Cosmetics. She volunteers at Rochester Animal Services and enjoys her kids, rescue dogs and everything that sparkles.



Photo from masterbotanist.com



From the Editor's Desk

Michael Saffran
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The WEDGE in 2024: The New Year Begins With a Modestly New 'Look'

You might've noticed the previous edition of *The WEDGE* looked a little bit different.

Or maybe you didn't.

Updates made to the December/January issue were intended as, primarily, a "freshening up" of the venerable print newspaper (entering, with this edition, its 46th volume of publication) — not as a re-invention (unnecessary, given that *The WEDGE* already is established and well-respected within the South Wedge community).

So, whether or not you noticed the changes, I thought it might be interesting to point out for you, the reader, some of the updates (and reasons behind them).

The December/January issue was my first as editor after assuming the role last fall from Nancy O'Donnell Hale (who has had a couple stints as *The WEDGE* editor and who remains on staff as a contributing writer and copy editor). In stepping down as editor, Nancy freed time to focus more on teaching English at Nazareth University (coincidentally, my recent stepping aside from a college-teaching role providentially led me to Glynis Valenti, executive director of South Wedge Planning Committee, publisher of *The WEDGE*, and to learning about its need for a new editor).

It might seem like the "new guy" (me) "putting my stamp" on the newspaper. While that could be partially true (in fact, Glynis and Nancy each expressed openness to the new editor embracing the publication in this way), I'd describe the motivation for the newspaper's updates as my simply bringing to the pages of *The WEDGE* my experience, including journalism and newswriting roots and publication-design (studied at RIT) background.

For the past approximately 15 years, I taught broadcast journalism, newswriting, radio and audio-media production, media management, event planning and public-relations writing (at SUNY Geneseo and RIT). Even when instructing non-writing courses, I often expressed to students: "Writing is my 'first love.'" It's an interest going as far back as I can remember (at least to my adolescence, when I'd write and record "pretend radio newscasts" — radio's another longtime love — and publish "make-believe newspapers").

Not a lifetime academic (*thankfully!*), I first brought my passions to a professional career, spanning more than 35 years, that took me to positions in radio, public relations and, eventually, college teaching. Along the way, I got to see my writing in the pages of *The Buffalo News* (where early in my career I was a "stringer"); *Business Strategies Magazine* (where, as a columnist, I melded loves of both radio and writing in my column, "On The Radio"); and numerous PR/news publications (such as RIT's *News & Events* and its digital cousin, *N&E Daily*, which I helped launch from scratch).

Getting back to *The WEDGE*, I'd summarize revisions, broadly, as an overall streamlining (including giving it a more orderly look), with goals of increased readability, consistency in presentation and a modestly enhanced "news feel." Some changes might be obvious, while others are more subtle (in other words, collectively the updates might lead some readers to sense something new and, it's hoped, good —

even if they don't know exactly why). A few include:

- A different typeface, for enhanced readability, for article body text. Plus, while the typeface used for most headlines is the same as before, some differentiation between headlines creates a certain hierarchy.

- Opinion columns each now have unique names and distinctive styling making them better stand out; plus, writers' photos and bios personalize them (putting faces and personalities to the names).

- The "In Brief" section serves as a "catch all" for smaller, but still important, news items. Quick aside: The prior issue included a news brief about the city's new online portal, 311 Live. While writing the brief, I decided to test the service by reporting a pothole that, for months, I'd been driving around. To my surprise, the pothole was filled within about a couple business days. Now, that's good city service! Moreover, it demonstrates the value in running a simple news item that can lead to the betterment of our community — even in such a small way as getting a pothole filled.

- A new "Wedge Adjacent" feature presents brief news items from nearby ("adjacent") neighborhoods.

- The overall design includes increased use of shaded boxes (helping to highlight certain articles); bylines and writer contact information at the end of most stories; and my personal favorites: No first-paragraph indents and tiny "wedge" symbols denoting the end of articles. On the former: The decision to not indent first paragraphs can be attributed to my RIT publication-design studies. Check out the best publications you know. I'm sure you'll now notice, if you didn't before, that most of them *don't* indent first paragraphs. Plus, you also might start seeing the ones that *do* indent first paragraphs (possibly making them stand out, too — but maybe for the opposite reason).

I hope readers also took note, in both the December/January and this issue, of the "Call for Submissions." It's my genuine desire to receive and print a greater number of readers' letter-to-the-editor and guest-essay submissions. By doing so, it will not only afford a platform for citizen voices on important topics and community interests (such as, in this issue, neighbors' concerns related to the Lilac Festival) — at a time when the city's one-time most prominent outlet for opinion pieces, the *Democrat and Chronicle*, unfortunately publishes fewer — but also, in fostering civil discourse and a free exchange of ideas (critically needed and part of what local, grassroots journalism can and should do best), it can enhance the vibrancy of the South Wedge and neighboring communities.

It's my sincere wish you like and appreciate these updates. But I also realize it can be a balancing act, via the newspaper's content and presentation, between serving as a serious, straightforward community-news source and a friendly, upbeat neighborhood promoter. *The WEDGE* isn't the "gray lady" (the sometimes derisive nickname, suggesting dullness, for *The New York Times*); nor is it the colorful, glossy, "flashier" *The South Wedge Magazine*, published twice a year by the Business Association

EDITOR'S DESK, p. 8

**THE WEDGE
GETS READ!**

LILAC FESTIVAL (from p. 1)

The event was plagued in recent years by gatherings of rowdy youth. At last year's festival, Rochester Police were called on opening night to assist private security after fights broke out and up to 300 juveniles initially refused to disperse, according to news reports. The incident prompted the organizer to require festival attendees under 18 to be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

The festival's new co-producers hope this year to foster a "family-friendly" atmosphere by introducing new safety measures. These include strengthened perimeter fencing and added security personnel at entrances and throughout the grounds.

Springut told WHEC-TV that security issues were not a factor in his decision to leave the festival.

This year, for the first time, a Highland Park-area neighborhood group has been proactive in raising concerns regarding festival planning. Azalea Neighborhood Association issues include the volume of live music (particularly loud bass), amount of alcohol sales, parking issues and fights among youths. A group, including City Councilmember LaShay Harris (D-South District), met in early December to discuss those concerns.

But Springut said the new promoters, with the proper background, should be up to the task of running this year's event.

"It's a big job — it's the biggest event in Monroe County," Springut said. "It's a lot of work."



Springut said the Lilac Festival required 10 months of advance planning. But, he predicted, the Lilac Festival is unlikely to suffer a similar fate of another of Rochester's former major annual events. The Park Avenue Summer Art Festival, which was organized by Springut's firm until 2019 (and, subsequently, was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic) hasn't been held since Springut withdrew.

Springut says that although he has "turned in [his] pruning shears," the Lilac Festival is still a viable event.

"It's a celebration of spring and the lilacs," Springut said. "The park is beautiful. Monroe County takes great care of the park and the lilacs. The Lilac Festival is a great event. The Lilacs will bloom ... and people will come and we'll have a good time. The Lilacs have always been the stars."

Sponsors of this year's Lilac Festival are Bully Hill Vineyards, Wilkins RV, Pepsi and the House of Guitars. Local businesses interested in partnering with the Lilac Festival can learn more by contacting info@roclilacfest.com.

"We're honored that the Lilac Festival Board has entrusted us with shepherding the festival into its 126th year, and we look forward to producing a safe and fun event for the whole family," co-producer Jenny LoMaglio said. "To achieve this, we're focusing this year's event on what makes the Lilac Festival a family affair: The beloved art-and-craft show, the Lilac Run, the Lilac Parade and, of course, all-day music." ▲

Michael Saffran
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EDITOR'S DESK (from p. 7)

of the South Wedge (a separate organization from South Wedge Planning Committee).

The South Wedge neighborhood is immensely fortunate to be served by two distinct publications. Without trying to narrowly define its scope, *The South Wedge Magazine* might be described as more of a "Chamber of Commerce"-like feature magazine (promotional, by nature — not a bad thing). It and *The WEDGE* serve unique niches. My goal for *The WEDGE* is trying to strike the right balance — within its pages and inside the neighborhood it serves.

For a little more context: Back when I worked, for 13 years, in higher-education news and public relations, we considered ourselves part of, foremost, a news office. College and university PR offices have an advantage over corporate PR departments and ad agencies that typically are selling something. Conversely, in higher-ed we had the luxury (or, maybe, the hubris) to believe we usually had *real news* (even if, in truth, PR was an underlying reason, too, behind our news releases).

So, in part due to my journalism background, I approach the editor's role with *The WEDGE* similarly: We have *real news*; we shouldn't be only a "cheerleader." But we'll still promote this vibrant, gem of a city neighborhood as part of the underlying mission of the South Wedge Planning Committee (plus, by credibly informing, I think we also promote). Moreover, I believe many readers — and Rochester citi-

zens as a whole — are truly hungry for trusted sources for objective neighborhood news at a time when some other local media outlets have, regrettably, faced cutbacks.

But don't take just my word for it. In a virtual "Town Hall," hosted Jan. 9 by the Rochester chapter of The NewsGuild — Communications Workers of America (the union representing some *Democrat and Chronicle* employees), the newspaper's state of affairs was presented: As Gannett, the nation's largest newspaper chain, slashed its workforce nationally, today the *D&C* has about 80% fewer local reporters (only 21) compared with a few years earlier. Reporter Justin Murphy described futilely trying to do the job with fewer resources (both human and financial) — with some former "beats" left uncovered.

In a scathing critique of the state of local news in Rochester, former Mayor William A. Johnson Jr. said: "What poses as news coverage today is a sham" — leaving citizens uninformed and leaders, both public and private, largely unaccountable. "All of us suffer as a result," he said.

But at least in our little "wedge" of the Flower City, you have outlets — for news, opinion and, yes, even occasional "cheerleading." I welcome your feedback at msaffran@swpc.org. ▲

Michael Saffran is editor of *The WEDGE*. A semi-retired former college media instructor, he previously worked in radio and higher-education and healthcare news/public relations.

"Many readers are truly hungry for trusted sources for objective neighborhood news."

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They'll say, 'I saw it in *The WEDGE!*'