

FREE

The

August/September 2024 | Vol. 46, No. 4

# WEDGE

Official Newspaper of the South Wedge Since 1982  
Published by The South Wedge Planning Committee, Rochester, N.Y.

See you at  
Wedge Fest!  
11 a.m.-5 p.m. Aug. 17



## WEDGE FEST RETURNS AUG. 17 TO SOUTH WEDGE

The annual South Wedge Festival — commonly known as Wedge Fest — is back! The yearly neighborhood party will be held **11 a.m.–5 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 17**, on South Avenue between Averill Avenue and Gregory Street.

The afternoon-long event will feature music, food trucks, artists and vendors, while also spotlighting some of the eclectic businesses on South Avenue.

Wedge Fest once again kicks off with the popular Pet Parade, starting at 11 a.m. in Marie Daley Park, 160 Gregory St. (corner of Ashland Street). According to organizers, the parade is open to “crawling, running, digging, climbing, jumping, flying, trotting or galloping” (did we leave anything out?) pets. Winners will be judged for most unique, most energetic, best

dressed, best owner look-alike and best built, with first-place and second-place awards presented. Participants should arrive by 10:30 a.m. for sign-in, judging and formation.



Young visitors enjoy a prior South Wedge Festival.

**The music lineup includes:**

11:30 a.m.–1 p.m. Sam Schaeffer (jazz)

1:30–3 p.m. Joe Beard (blues)

3:30–5 p.m. Candy (retro-country)

Each performance will be on the music stage at the north end of the festival area.

Food trucks include Melt, Schutt’s Apple Mill Fried Cake Mobile and Vasko’s On Wheels.

Wedge Fest aims to bring the community together for a fun event while celebrating the vitality and uniqueness of the South Wedge neighborhood of Rochester. This year’s festival is the third annual event (although prior neighborhood festivals by different names have been held).

Wedge Fest is presented by the South Wedge

Planning Committee. Sponsors include UR/Highland Hospital, First Student, Abundance Food Co-op, Goodwill of the Finger Lakes, Ryan Plumbing, Heating, Air Conditioning and Fire Protection, Veterans Outreach Center, St. Joseph’s Neighborhood Center, Canandaigua National Bank & Trust, and the City of Rochester.

To make a donation in support of future South Wedge Festivals, go to [swpc.org](http://swpc.org) and scroll down to the “Donate” button. The South Wedge Planning Committee is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization. For more information, go to [swpc.org/south-wedge-fest-2024](http://swpc.org/south-wedge-fest-2024).

Michael Saffran  
[msaffran@swpc.org](mailto:msaffran@swpc.org)

SOUTH WEDGE FESTIVAL

A FREE EVENT CELEBRATING THE SOUTH WEDGE

SATURDAY  
AUGUST 17TH  
11AM – 5PM  
SOUTH AVENUE  
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SPREAD  
THE  
WORD  
BIRD



08  
17  
24

SOUTH WEDGE  
PLANNING COMMITTEE

The WEDGE Gets Read!

# In Brief

## PAB director named

The City of Rochester's Police Accountability Board in June announced the selection of Lesli Myers-Small as executive director, effective June 24, pending City Council confirmation. Myers-Small replaces Sherry Walker-Cowart, who served as interim executive director since January 2023.



Lesli Myers-Small

Myers-Small has a master's degree in urban educational administration and a doctorate of education in executive leadership from Saint John Fisher University. She served as Rochester City School District superintendent 2020-2022.

## City, RPD reach contract agreement

The city and the Rochester Police Locust Club recently reached agreement on a new four-year contract calling for annual pay hikes averaging 3.875% per year. The collective-bargaining deal was effective July 1. Mayor Malik Evans said in a statement, "This 2024 contract is competitive, fair and a win for our city, our police officers and our community."

## Hearings set on proposed legislation

City Council will hold public hearings on proposed Good Cause Eviction legislation. Introduced in June and currently before City Council, the measure would adopt the state's Good Cause Eviction law (portions enacted in April and August), restricting evictions without good reason and curtailing the denial of lease renewals. The first hearing was held in July. Others are scheduled for 6 p.m. Aug. 13 at the Public Market, 280 N. Union St.; Aug. 14 at Ryan R-Center, 530 Webster Ave.; and Aug. 27 at Edgerton R-Center, 41 Backus St.

## RCSD hearing slated

The Rochester City School District Board of Education will hold a public hearing about the district-wide Safety Plan at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 13 at Central Administrative Offices (conference room 3A/B), 131 W. Broad St. The plan can be read at rcsdk12.org/safetyplan. Anyone wishing to speak at the meeting is asked to call 262-8525 or send an email to publichearing@rcsdk12.org by noon Aug. 13.

## Ads target gun crime

The ROC Against Gun Violence Coalition, headed by City Council member Willie Lightfoot Sr., is relaunching its "Think About It" anti-violence campaign, aimed at curbing gun violence. The initiative uses billboards and radio ads bearing the slogan, "A Shot From A Gun Can't Be Undone." They will run throughout the summer.

## Job fair, RPD exam

Roc the Block Community Employment Fairs, featuring about 80 employers, continue 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Aug. 14 at Wilson High School, 501 Genesee St., and Sept. 25 at Parcel 5, 285 E. Main St. For more information, go to cityof-rochester.gov/workforce-development.

The Rochester Police Department is hosting an open competitive exam Sept. 28 for full-time police officers. For a job description, minimum qualifications and other requirements, go to governmentjobs.com/careers/cityofrochester and search for "Police Officer." Closing date is Sept. 4.

## Parcel 5 to stay green

Parcel 5, on the former downtown Midtown Plaza location, will remain permanent green-space, Mayor Evans and City Council announced in June. The site has been used for events including the Rochester International Jazz Festival, Fringe Festival and concerts and as a recreational area for area residents.

Planned improvements include increased access to electricity and water for vendors, enhanced Wi-Fi connectivity, installation of low fencing, addition of permanent bicycle racks and creation of a designated pet area. Some work is slated to begin this fall.

Meanwhile, the city has completed its Urban Forest Master Plan, a comprehensive document establishing policies for managing the care and maintenance of about 67,000 trees along city streets and in parks and cemeteries. It was last updated in 2012. The city also created a citizen advisory committee. For more information and to access the plan, go to cityofrochester.gov/departments/department-environmental-services/urban-forest-master-plan.

## New URMC president

The University of Rochester Medical Center has named Kathy Parrinello as Strong Memorial Hospital president/CEO, effective July 1, and to the same role at Highland Hospital effective



Kathy Parrinello

later this year. Parrinello had been executive vice president and chief operating officer since 2000. She replaces Steven Goldstein, who remains at URMC as a vice president, according to a published report.

"I am honored for the trust given to me to lead two of our region's leading hospitals," Parrinello said.

## City music events set

Rochester's Party in the Park concert series continues at 7 p.m. Aug. 8 (featuring Cruel Summer: A live Taylor Swift Band Experience and Dial Up) and Aug. 15 (Everclear and Shamarr Allen), in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park, 353 Court St. General admission is \$7. Gates open at 6 p.m.

The 29th Rochester Summer Soul Music Festival will be held 3-10 p.m. Aug. 24 at Innovative Field, 1 Morrie Silver Way. Performers include Baltimore-based R&B group Dru Hill, Regina Belle and Ruff Endz. General admission tickets cost \$25. Gates open at 2 p.m. For more information, go to rocsummersoulfest.com.

Rochester Rhapsody, a women's chorus, is hosting its Summer Serenade chorus-audition information night at 7 p.m. Aug. 19 at Temple Beth El, 139 Winton Rd. S. To learn more, contact Sue Melvin at rochesterrhapsody@yahoo.com.

## Priest remembered

Former associate pastor of St. Boniface Church, 330 Gregory St., the Rev. Joseph Sasso died April 30. Father Sasso, a Roman Catholic priest for 65 years, was 91.

A Rochester native, he was a graduate of Aquinas High School, attended St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries, and he earned a master's degree in education from the University of Rochester. He was ordained by Bishop James Kearney in 1958 and served at St. Boniface in 1978. He also served, from 1994 to 1998, at St. Anne Church, 1600 Mt. Hope Ave., where his funeral liturgy was held in May. ▲

Michael Saffran  
msaffran@swpc.org



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Jaslynn is a Registered Nurse and has worked in the Observation Unit for 4 years.

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**Spice Up Your Life**

**Merriya Valleri**  
merriya@stuartsspices.com

**Try it ... Garlic Brined Chicken**

**B**ringing is such an incredibly important part of the cooking process, and we've got some great news for you — you can do it right at home!

Not only is our garlic brine a personal favorite at the shop, it's also a top seller. Our brine imparts an incredible amount of flavor into any meat, poultry or vegetable you desire. The bay and allspice harmonize well with the garlic, providing a depth of savory flavor that can't be achieved just from an external sauce or rub.

We really do believe brining should be for everyone, so we've made a quick recipe that also provides measurements for the brine itself.

**Ingredients:**

- 3-4 pounds chicken, patted dry and trimmed of fat
- 1/4 cup Stuart's Spices Garlic Brine
- 4 cups water or brining liquid of choice
- Olive oil for the grill
- Brining note: We recommend 1 tablespoon of brine mix per 1 cup of water being used.

**Instructions:**

- Bring 2 cups of water to a boil, immediately reduce the heat to low and then add 1/4 cup brine. Don't forget to reduce the heat, otherwise it will boil over!
- Once dissolved, remove from heat and add in the last 2 cups of water and then chill/bring to room temperature so that you're not putting chicken into hot brine.
- Submerge chicken in cold brine in a non-reactive container or brining bag, making sure it's totally covered.
- For brining time, we recommend 1 hour per pound of meat or overnight, but you can do a quick brine for 15-20 minutes and still get a good amount of flavor.
- Once you're ready to cook, remove chicken from the brine and pat completely dry before slathering in your favorite sauce or dry rub.

*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**  
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- Joel Elliot
- Alvin Lomibao
- Jennifer Posey
- Robert Marvin

**Honorary Board Members**

- Mitchell Dannenberg, John Dennis, Joe DiDonato, Cheryl Stevens

**Staff**

- Glynis Valenti, executive director
- Bridget Portune, market manager
- Construction manager (position to be filled)

**The WEDGE Newspaper**

**Michael Saffran, editor**  
msaffran@swpc.org  
585-256-1740, ext. 4

**Writers**

- Mike Henry, Michele H. Martell, Nancy O'Donnell Hale, Michael Saffran, Glynis Valenti, Merriya Valleri

**Photographers**

- Nancy O'Donnell Hale, Michael Saffran, Glynis Valenti

**Copy editor**

- Nancy O'Donnell Hale

**CONTACT**

E-mail staff, type first initial, last name@swpc.org  
South Wedge Planning Committee  
224 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester, NY 14620  
585-256-1740, ext. 4

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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.

**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)

**August/September:**

SWPC Board 6 p.m. Wednesday  
Aug. 21 and Sept. 18

**Community Engagement (Neighbors & Block Clubs)**

5:30 p.m. Wednesday  
Aug. 28 and Sept. 25

For info, email:  
gvalenti@swpc.org

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## Neighborhoods

# Church Cluster Pondering Smaller 'Footprint'

South Wedge-area churches face divergent challenges: Too much space vs. not enough

**T**HE FUTURES OF THREE NEIGHBORHOOD CATHOLIC CHURCHES — including one in the South Wedge — are being studied by parishioners and parish leadership (with help from an outside consultant).

The houses of worship — St. Boniface Church, 330 Gregory St. (in the South Wedge); Blessed Sacrament Church, 534 Oxford St. (at the corner of Monroe Avenue); and St. Mary's Church, 15 St. Mary's Place (downtown) — comprise the Southeast Rochester Catholic Community, a cluster of onetime distinct parishes within the Diocese of Rochester.

Over the past approximately five years, the cluster's Pastoral Parish Council, including representatives from each of the churches, has been exploring potential contraction options amid growing expenses and, after a brief uptick around a year ago, declining weekly Mass attendance and falling income from collections. The body has developed three potential strategies based on perceived viability and support.

The options for possible consolidation were detailed to churchgoers in March presentations, followed by question-and-answer sessions.

"No decisions have been made," Amy Voelkl, a St. Mary's council member, told a group of about 50 people gathered for the formal presentation and Q&A period following Mass on March 10 at Blessed Sacrament. Additional feedback would be sought from parishioners before a recommendation is made to church leadership and the diocese, she said.

In a follow-up message sent to parishioners in July, Voelkl wrote, in part: "We want you to know that a consensus on our future has not been reached and we have made no decisions to close a church or buildings. Working toward such a weighty recommendation and in light of the feedback we have received, we are taking a step back to review and consolidate the information we have."

Voelkl also led presentations — drawing similar-sized groups — after March 17 Masses at St. Boniface and St. Mary's churches. She detailed the three scenarios under consideration, including consolidating the trio of churches to one, contracting to two or keeping all three open. In each plan, buyers potentially would be sought for select adjacent assets.

**'Current model not sustainable'**  
Collectively, the cluster has 14 buildings. St. Boniface assets include the church (its third such structure, built in 1960 after fire destroyed an older church in 1957), rectory, convent, school (currently rented to Nativity Preparatory Academy), parking lot and two stand-alone garages.

"Our current model is not sustainable," Voelkl told those gathered March 17 at St. Boniface.

Local commercial real-estate firm The Cabot Group, engaged by the cluster as a consultant, told the parish council that churches generally are not easily sold (short of interest from another religious entity, which is regarded as possibly unlikely). Factors influencing the marketability of some church properties include needed upgrades and possible asbestos-abatement in older structures. The presence of as-

bestos in aging buildings makes razing them problematic, and simply "mothballing" them (in essence, not using the structures) isn't viable due to potential liability issues, parishioners were told.

"I've been thinking about this since I came here," the Rev. John Loncle, Southeast Rochester Catholic Community pastor, said. Upon his appointment in 2017, he said, he was told by the bishop that the three parishes collectively have too many buildings.

"Maintaining all of these buildings is a challenge," Loncle said at the March 10 gathering at Blessed Sacrament. But he acknowledged the congregations' passionate sentiments toward each of the three churches and the likelihood that closure of any one of them could result in parishioner attrition.

**'Historic' older churches — and newer dilemmas**

St. Mary's Church (built in 1853) and rectory were added in 1992 to the National Register of Historic Places. The designation, along with the need to "follow Church law governing the sale of church buildings that will no longer be used for worship" (according to the Anno Domini Advisors website) could impact the marketability of church properties.

In a recent web search on commercial real-estate online marketplace LoopNet, three current or former church/religious facilities locally were listed for sale, including one just outside the South Wedge at 159 Alexander Street (formerly the South Congregational Church, founded in 1886).

Evan Schaefer of Benchmark Realty Advisors, 898 S. Clinton Ave., the agent for the Alexander Street property, said the church is vacant, has been on the market for more than a year and is in need of updates. There has been some interest in the property among potential buyers, he said. A developer potentially could consider such a structure for redevelopment into unique housing (possibly with tax incentives), Schaefer said.

Former church-property listings are rare, he said. In the first couple weeks after Benchmark added it, in March of this year, he had given at least a half dozen tours. Other religious groups that might have outgrown their space are common prospects, he said.

Schaefer said the marketability of old church buildings is largely dependent upon how much they're in need of repair. "It really depends on the condition of them," he said. "A lot of the older churches that are in really bad condition tend to sit around awhile."

A local Free Methodist church — facing a problem opposite that of the Southeast Rochester Catholic cluster — is outgrowing its space and has considered unused former church properties in the Rochester area for possible relocation.

Community of the Savior, 4 E. Henrietta Road (in the Upper Mount Hope neighborhood, adjacent to the South Wedge), is unable to add on to its existing structure, and its site also has some accessibility issues, Kent Gardner, the congregation's finance-committee leader, said.

Representatives of the church have looked at, among others, the old South Congregational Church site on Alexander Street. Gardner described it as "interesting," but in need of significant repair (so not currently under consideration by Community of the Savior).

Gardner said despite current space issues, he expects Community of the Savior to stay in its present location (the former South Presbyterian



St. Boniface Church, 330 Gregory St., is part of the Southeast Rochester Catholic Community cluster in the Diocese of Rochester. (File photo.)

Church, built in 1925, and its home since 2014) for the foreseeable future.

Despite maintenance costs associated with an older building, the church is strong financially, he said. "We're not awash in cash, but we can pay our bills."

In addition to income generated from renting antenna space to the Dish Network, the church also hosts longtime tenant, Ellwanger Barry Nursery School (a parent-run cooperative-style school that's housed in a newer structure built in 1951).

"It's been a good location for us," Kent Gardner said. "We're really committed to this neighborhood."



Kent Gardner

Another South Wedge place of worship, also housed in an older, traditional red-brick building, Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit, 835 South Ave., is faring generally well, according to its pastor, the Rev. James Berends.

When the congregation moved into the former South Avenue Baptist Church in 1998, the structure (built in 1909) was given updates. Since then, regular maintenance (some performed by churchgoers) and periodic major projects (such as, a few years ago, window replacements) have been completed.

Similar to Community of the Savior's predicament, Greek Orthodox Church is restricted from expansion by its physical location. "We're sort of land-locked," Berends said. Unlike Community of the Savior, it generates no rental income (its only tenant, St. John the Theologian Bookstore, is part of the church). Greek Orthodox has no immediate plans to resume its popular annual Greek Festival, which hasn't been held since before the COVID-19 pandemic, Berends said.

Sunday church attendance, he said, is still bouncing back from pre-lockdown levels, but it's generally holding up, Berends said.

While Com-

munity of the Savior is outgrowing its limited space, Southeast Rochester Catholic Community, awash in more space than it currently needs, faces another challenge beyond older structures, shrinking congregations and smaller collections.

At the March 17 presentation at St. Boniface, the Rev. Loncle highlighted the current problem of a priest shortage, which is likely to grow more dire due to a number of priests locally who already are in their 70s and 80s. "The reality is really going to hit hard," Loncle said.

Whereas 25 years ago, each of the three parishes in the Catholic cluster had its own priest, since 2000 the three churches have been run by a single pastor (typically assisted by other priests). In addition to Loncle, the cluster is served today by the Rev. Ed Palumbos (a senior priest), three deacons and laypeople.

**Church's long history in the Wedge**

St. Boniface Church parish, in the South Wedge, formed in 1859. The congregation's second church was constructed 1886–1887. The 1957 fire, started during a roof-repair project, destroyed the edifice. Its replacement, the current St. Boniface Church building, was completed in 1960. Current annual expenses run \$831,450. For the fiscal year ending June 30, it took in \$180,434 in collections.

The cluster's two-church option (which would realize estimated annual savings of \$298,400) under consideration would keep St. Boniface and St. Mary's open, while scaling back Blessed Sacrament (despite the latter having the largest seating capacity and, in general, the most weekly churchgoers and largest collection income: \$388,387 for the fiscal year ended June 30). Blessed Sacrament, which, according to Loncle, needs repairs and has the highest expenses among the three churches, would be used as a parish center for offices, a community center, meeting space and a chapel. Blessed Sacrament's convent, rectory and adjacent Talbot House (a residence currently leased to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester) would be designated for sale.

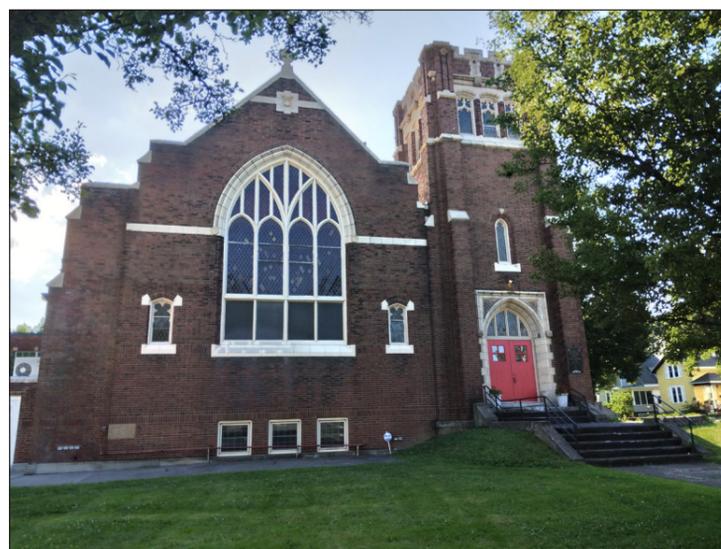
In the single-church option (estimated savings of \$1.4 million), Blessed Sacrament (built in 1912) would be the only church staying open (with renovations, including ADA compliance). Its supper program and annual next-to-new sales would be unaffected, and Talbot House would be converted to a priests' residence.

The former Blessed Sacrament School, currently partially leased to Innova Girls Academy Charter School (a tax-funded K–6 charter school that opened last fall), generates market-rate income for the cluster. In contrast, Nativity Preparatory Academy, at St. Boniface, shares expenses with the parish, but it doesn't generate income beyond costs associated with maintaining the building, Loncle said. Nativity's lease recently ran out and was currently being renegotiated, he said.

Church Cluster, p. 8



Community of the Savior, a Free Methodist-affiliated church at 4 E. Henrietta Road (just outside the South Wedge).



Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit at 835 South Ave.

# Neighborhoods

## SWPC EXEC. DIRECTOR PLANS TO LEAVE POST

Glynis Valenti, executive director of the South Wedge Planning Committee (publisher of *The WEDGE*) since 2018, is leaving the position, effective Sept. 1. She informed the nonprofit neighborhood group's board of directors of her decision at the board's regular July 17 meeting.

Valenti started at SWPC in 2016 as assistant director and assumed the top role two years later in succeeding Executive Director John Page.

Valenti plans to return to her home state of Ohio to be near family. She intends to work on photography, writing and teaching creative classes (as she did prior to joining SWPC).

"It's been a privilege to work with SWPC," Valenti said. "The volunteers are savvy community advocates, the board has been very supportive — all good people. It will be exciting to see the next era of SWPC and the South Wedge develop."

South Wedge Planning Committee Board of Directors Acting Chair Lindsey Allen said search plans for a new executive director are underway.

"It has been a pleasure to know Glynis over the last three years, especially since becoming acting chair in early 2024," Allen said. "Over this brief time, I've witnessed her continuous commitment to the mission of the South Wedge and have been inspired by her career in and passion for community engagement. She has been an important anchor for the South Wedge Planning Committee during organizational transitions and tough challenges of COVID — we are grateful for her steadfast commitment. I will miss her passion for SWPC and wish her the best of luck in this next chapter."



Glynis Valenti

South Wedge residents are invited to contact info@swpc.org with questions or concerns. ▲

▼ **Michael Saffran**  
msaffran@swpc.org

## Highland Park Seeks Garden Stewards

Ever wonder who those people are crawling under bushes and digging out weeds in Highland Park? They're part of the Highland Park Conservancy's Steward Program, helping to fulfill the Conservancy's mission: "We advocate for, and facilitate the public's appreciation of and active engagement with, Highland Park and its preservation, restoration and enhancement as an historic Olmsted-designed world-class arboretum."

You can contribute your time and talents to the ongoing stewardship of Highland Park under the direction of Milli Piccione, a South Wedge neighbor and Highland Park Conservancy Board Member. As the nonprofit partner of the Monroe County Parks Department, the conservancy "shares the authentic story of Highland Park to inspire and ensure its preservation as a signature public space for the enjoyment of all."

In 2023, garden stewards logged about 2,200 hours. Working in collaboration with the Parks Department, Milli organizes the volunteers and sends weekly emails to the participants. All levels of experience are welcome.

There are several weekly time slots people can show up for with opportunities for select individual projects. The annual work schedule (running approximately from April through early November) is dictated by the weather. Cornell Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners can accrue their volunteer hours work-

ing alongside the conservancy's teams. You can complete the volunteer form found on their Web page and you'll receive an email with details. Volunteer as much or as little as your schedule allows.

Learn to identify and remove some of the "Most Wanted" invasive plants in the park. Invasives are aggressive — they crowd out and/or cover desirable plants. Some are: Pale Swallow-wort (*Cynanchum rossicum*); the shallow, dense root systems must be dug out before the seedheads ripen and split, or the seedpods must be removed before they spread like milkweed seeds on the wind. Black Swallow-wort and Pokeweeds (*Phytolacca americana*) also are a problem. Then there is Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), which can cover a small shrub in less than one season.

The volunteers also tackle unwanted vines: Wild Grape (*Vitis* spp.) and Porcelain Berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*). Birds eat the fruit and disperse the seeds throughout the park. Stewards never run out of projects! ▲

Submitted by Lisa Reagan and Milli Piccione.



Swallow-wort (Photo courtesy of Highland Park Conservancy.)



### Swillburg Shoutout

Mike Henry  
swillburg1@aol.com

## Annual 'Pig Party' delights group of Swillburg neighbors

The Swillburg community had its annual Pig Party, sponsored by the Swillburg Neighborhood Association, June 15 at Otto Henderberg Park. Some 120 neighbors reconnected, enjoying great food, live entertainment and lots of activities and games for the children.

The day was perfectly sunny and dry with a refreshing cool breeze. We were lucky to have the Rochester Police Department Mounted Patrol Unit visit and a Rochester Fire Department truck for everyone to inspect. The music, by Absolute Maybe (Janet Grillo and Daniel Hoh), added a nice mix of blues, country and pop, creating an ambiance to relax and visit. Kiki Smith from the South East Area Coalition distributed information about the agency's tool loan program. Aladdin's Natural Eatery, on Monroe Avenue, was our very popular food source (thanks to neighbor Sarah Keys!). While provided to picnickers for free (thanks to a generous donation from the Greater Rochester Area Foundation), many neighbors generously deposited well over \$200 in the donation jar. Also, free ice cream was provided jointly by SEAC and the Swillburg Neighborhood Association. Plus, the association gave the kids free Swillburg Frisbees.

This event was no doubt a fun gathering reflecting our community's unique generosity and celebrating life in Rochester! Our inspirational committee chair, Judy Lee Hay (to whom great thanks is due), welcomed everyone and thanked all agencies and parties involved in the event's creation. Very special thanks go out to neighbor Jen Green, who lives adjacent to the park and allowed us to plug into her home's electric to power the sound system (she's done this for many years). It's all about community!

Have you seen the new Swillburg website at Swillburg.org? It features all the essential information about our neighborhood and the neighborhood association's projects and activities and includes a special page

offering all the popular Swillburg Swag available for purchase online! Special thanks go out to neighbors Josh Jacobs and Collin Henrie for creating this artistic new site!

Swillburg lunch bunch gatherings continued: Eight neighbors gathered June 18 at Addis Ababa for enjoyable Ethiopian food and a fun visit. Events are announced on Nextdoor social network, as well as via neighborhood email. Please join in if you can!

A special thanks of gratitude needs to go out to American Plumbing, Heating & Cooling, who repaired our Bloom Garden's sprinkler system, completely replacing one they installed a few years ago. We so appreciate their following-up on the warranty they'd provided. And thanks to neighbor Dave Fergusson, who worked with them to make it happen!

I always get excited writing this column because it causes me to recognize what a positive community we live in! Thanks to all — including *The WEDGE* — for giving us space! Have a safe and fun remainder of summer! ▲

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.

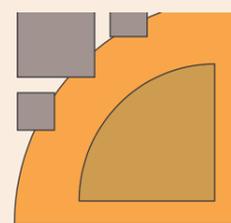


From left, Bob Palmer, Judy Hay, Collin Henrie and Josh Jacobs at the annual Swillburg Pig Party on June 15. (Photo by Sarah Higgins.)

## \$20M City Park Upgrade Completed



Mayor Malik Evans welcomed Lt. Gov. Antonio Delgado (above, to the mayor's right) and other officials, July 9, for a ribbon-cutting and dedication of Austin Steward Plaza, along the west bank of the Genesee River between Main and Andrews streets. The event marked completion of a \$20 million renovation of the park (formerly known as Major Charles Carroll Plaza), featuring seating, a public promenade, green space and area for public art. At left, flanking the mayor, are City Council VP LaShay Harris and State Assemblyman Harry Bronson.



### Adjacent to the Wedge

Upper Mount Hope/College Town

## New businesses open in College Town area

■ **Chuy's Taqueria**, 1754 Mt. Hope Ave. (former long-vacant Papa John's location), featuring "authentic Mexican cuisine" (burritos, tacos, quesadillas and more), opened Feb. 13. Hours are 11 a.m.–8 p.m. Monday–Thursday and 11 a.m.–9 p.m. Friday–Saturday. Phone 270-5350 or go to chuystaqueriaroc.com.

■ **Mr. Shoe's Pizza**, 1687 Mt. Hope Ave. (Mount Hope Plaza), has relocated from 1921 South Ave., replacing Bay & Goodman Pizza (which had opened in September in the former Pontillo's Pizzeria location). Open 11 a.m.–8:30 p.m. Sunday–Thursday and 11 a.m.–9:30 p.m. Friday–Saturday. Phone 442-1000 or go to mrshoespizza.com.

■ **PrimoHoagies**, 1337 Mt. Hope Ave.

(College Town), held its grand opening on June 13. Originally from Philadelphia, the chain now has 117 U.S. locations. In a 2023 "Readers Choice" survey by *USA Today*, it was voted "Best Sandwich or Sub Shop" in America. Open 10 a.m.–8 p.m. (seven days a week). Phone 319-3800 or go to primohoagies.com/location/Rochester-NY.

■ **Take 5 Oil Change**, 1471 Mt. Hope Ave., opened in June in the former Mount Hope Service Center location. The property was purchased by Quattro Development LLC of Oak Brook, Ill., and long-term leased to Take 5 (Quattro and Take 5 have another location at 1300 Hylan Drive, Henrietta). Open 7 a.m.–8 p.m. Monday–Saturday and 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Sunday. Phone 510-0151. ▲

# Viewpoints

## Reading and Learning Hints for Pre-Kindergarten Families

Selecting books for our youngest readers offers many possibilities for developmentally appropriate learning experiences. The adult can model many skills in a relaxed and playful manner. For tips on engaging children we'll use the following two books from our vast collection at Hipo-campo Children's Books. This is a starting point for what will be a wonderful journey in children's literature.

*This Good Night/Buenas Noches* by Meritxell Martí and Xavier Salomó (Gibbs Smith) is an interactive bilingual board book. Children pull the tabs to open and close eyes while enjoying the story that encourages them to relax and get ready for bed. We have in our collection board books that present multiple languages. They can serve as an introduction to a heritage or a second language. Many are interactive. You pull tabs, spin a wheel in an interactive and fun reading experience.

*TouchThinkLearn: ABC* by Xavier Deneux (Becker & Mayer) is a sensory heavy-duty board book that introduces the alphabet in an interactive manner. The child can touch the letters, name the picture and begin to learn the name, sound and picture on the page. The design is eye catching with engaging bold primary colors.

These two books are examples of how adults can offer opportunities to prepare the child for pre-kindergarten learning skills. Pre-K is aimed for children as young as three years of age. Whether you decide to enroll in a program or home teach, the skills are universal.

Here are a few tips:

- Create a relaxed and fun environment.
- There is no right or wrong.
- Celebrate-celebrate-celebrate all responses from the child!
- Take a break when attention span is maxed out — come back to it later.
- Children love repetition — especially if it's enjoyable.
- Make the story come alive with your voice and facial expressions.
- Elicit feedback from the child.
- Have fun and be patient!

Learning opportunities:

- Bring the illustrations to life: If sad or happy, read as such (the same with questions or exclamations).
- Model reading from left to right by pointing to the words/sentences.
- Highlight colors, sounds and numbers.
- If pages are numbered, point to them and count.
- Identify the characters.
- With alphabet books, focus on the name-sound-picture relationship.
- Let the child self-select the book to read.
- Emphasize letters, words, sentences.



**Book Notes**  
Henry Padrón-Morales and Pamela Bailie

As with any co-learning activity, one has to create a nurturing shared space. You can develop a ritual and routine that sets the tone for what comes next. Make it predictable. Empathy, caring and trust are some of the non-cognitive skills that can be nurtured. After all, you are creating the child's earliest memories of the joy of learning.

Just as important is the realization that the child is also teaching you using their evolving awareness of books and reading. The child may even do "invented reading" where they pretend they are reading to you. Celebrate this as another step on the road to reading!

The tips I suggest are derived from my years as an early childhood educator. They are not the end-all, but simply some suggestions. Try them out to see what works with you and your child. You are the best judge of your own abilities. Put your expectations aside and be led by the child's energy and curiosity. It is you who has to learn to be patient.

There is nothing more exciting than when it all starts to click. I loved that magical moment when the child exclaimed "I can read!" — whether it was an actual or invented word! Have fun!▲

*This issue's "Book Notes" was written by Henry Padrón-Morales, co-owner of Hipo-campo Children's Books, 638 South Ave., a women/Latine-run independent bookstore. Our mission is to reflect the cultures and languages that make up our diverse region.*



Mary Lupien

Rochester City Council, East District  
Mary.Lupien@cityofrochester.gov

## Good Cause Eviction Protections: A Necessity for Rochester's Stability

As we grapple with the realities of housing instability in Rochester, the need for Good Cause Eviction Protections has never been clearer. These protections, also known as the "Right to Remain," are essential for ensuring that our neighbors can stay in their homes without the constant threat of eviction due to retaliation or gentrification. This basic tenant protection will improve the health and well-being of our neighbors and our neighborhoods.

Right now, Rochester is facing a housing crisis. Sixty-three percent of our residents rent their homes, and *one in four moves every year*. Many of these moves are due to evictions without legitimate reasons, creating a cycle of displacement that hinders community growth. This instability disrupts the ability for both tenants and homeowners to build and maintain relationships with their neighbors.

Recent research has shown that evictions lead to a 40% increase in mortality rates. Children without stable housing struggle academically, have lower graduation rates, face greater risks of mental health and behavioral problems, and suffer from poorer overall health. This instability hits our most vulnerable residents, especially impacting students in our schools and the overall well-being of our community.

Annually in Rochester, more than 1,200 tenants face holdover evictions in court. Thousands more are forced out without any legal recourse. Landlords can end tenancies without cause, leaving tenants in a precarious position. This uncertainty discourages tenants from reporting substandard living conditions, which in turn lowers the quality of housing citywide. Exorbitant rent hikes — sometimes as high as 40% — are pricing people out of their homes, often following the sale of properties to new investors who prioritize profits over people.

**Good news about Good Cause**  
Good Cause Eviction Protections would grant tenants the right to renew their leases as long as they are paying rent and adhering to lease

terms. This security allows tenants to address issues like poor maintenance without fear of losing their homes. It also restricts arbitrary evictions and prevents landlords from implementing steep rent increases. Currently, only about 20% of Rochester's tenants benefit from these protections. Expanding Good Cause could potentially extend security to over 98% of tenants, making a significant impact on housing stability.

**"Good Cause Eviction Protections will help ensure our community members can live with dignity and stability."**

The legislation does not block all evictions. Acceptable reasons for eviction would still include nonpayment of rent (except when rent increases are unreasonable), lease violations, creating a nuisance and a landlord's need to reclaim the property for personal use.

Good Cause Eviction Protection isn't just for the benefit of tenants. These protections ensure that tenant-landlord relationships are built on mutual trust and stability. By preventing arbitrary evictions, we create a more predictable and harmonious living environment. When tenants feel secure in their homes, they are more likely to take care of the property, pay rent on time and contribute positively to the community. Supporting these protections fosters a sense of shared responsibility and pride in our neighborhoods, ultimately benefiting everyone involved.

Unfortunately, the proposed law doesn't protect most of Rochester's renters, but it can be fixed. The current proposal exempts landlords who own up to 10 units, potentially leaving out 10,000 properties in Rochester. Without 'LLC transparency' in New York state, tenants can't easily find out how many units their landlord owns. Cities like Albany, Kingston and Ithaca have already passed stronger Good Cause Eviction Protection laws with fewer exemptions, protecting more of their residents. We can too! By aligning our definition of a small landlord with our peers, and limiting the exemption to a single unit, we can extend these vital protections to the greatest number of Rochesterians.

Lupien, p. 8



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# Perspectives



## Sparklin' in the Wedge

Michele H. Martell  
MHMartell@outlook.com

### 'Just Be ... and Trust the Process'

Everything in life is a process — including work, relationships, growth. It can be challenging to remember this truth, which can get buried under the busyness of everyday life, worries, responsibilities and a desire to fast-forward for an instant fix. What a blessing it is when we have an opportunity to be reminded that sometimes we need to just be and trust the process.

I've been a volunteer with Rochester Animal Services Verona Street Animal Society (vsas.org) for more than eight years and have collaborated with many phenomenal rescue groups. Having worked with, personally rescued, fostered and adopted many canine souls in need, nothing has prepared me for the new and fulfilling experiences and inspiration that I'm grateful to share from my newest foster, whom I've named Honey. She has exemplified a journey of trusting the process, one day — if not one moment — at a time.

Honey came to me through an astonishing rescue group, Second Chance Boxer and Friends, that rescues dogs no longer needed by "commercial breeding facilities." Honey is a 5-year-old fashion-breed mama, and I have such gratitude for the enlightenment this beautiful girl continues to inspire. Honey has opened my eyes to the face and reality of the often unknown and common dismal life of breeding animal parents who live life in a cage for profit as their babies are sold — a life that ultimately can end in abandonment or a cruel death. These gratifying, transforming weeks that we have spent together have gone from carrying her defeated spirit from corners of my yard and house to watching her learn to run freely and eat from a bowl, and to her tentatively learning that people and other animals can be kind. Most importantly, she's now recognizing that she's a valuable individual with a name.

As I watch Honey realize that she has the intrinsic right to have legs to freely run on, I think about how many of us have lived in a "cage" of being internally constricted by our experiences and/or by how others have treated us — a comfortable, maybe accepted perspective that is false and not in alignment with who we really are. While Honey is learning to simply be a dog, I think about many who yearn to genuinely live with peace and purpose, to feel valued, to become unstuck from their own cage. With each step, Honey is exactly where she needs to be in this moment. It's a matter of being

patient with the process, which is sometimes one step forward and two steps back. Honey is a real-life example that where we came from is not who we are and that a traumatic history is truly separate from each soul's inherent value.

"Trust the process." I ask Honey daily to trust, "Just be, it will be OK." Really, isn't this what everyone wants — a peaceful knowing that it will be OK? As I watch over Honey, I think about the powers above that see us, encouraging us to just be and trust the process. Honey has been through hell, as many have been, but she has a sparkling future ahead ... a beautiful redemption of which she is not yet fully aware. She has a face of resilience that is now becoming regal. Nothing that has bound Honey in the past is part of her future. And it's likewise for us. I believe that we all have this guidance available to us: a sacred surrender, if we're willing, to just be and trust the process and know that with patience and time all will be OK, one day at a time.

Thank you for reading this piece and for "supporting local" with the South Wedge Planning Committee, which helps our community thrive. Maybe this article will inspire you to foster or adopt a precious soul and save a life. Thank you Second Chance Boxer and Friends (secondchanceboxer.com) for the incredible work you do to save the voiceless who give so much in return.▲

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.



Michele Martell and Honey



## From the Editor's Desk

Michael Saffran  
msaffran@swpc.org

### A Little More About the 'Long and Winding Road' Leading to *The WEDGE*

In my past two columns, I shared part of the story of my road to the editor's role at *The WEDGE*.

I told you how, in early 2023 (prior to my formal retirement from college teaching), I took to prayer my desire for my "dream job" in semi-retirement: Writing from home (and how that prayer was answered).

Now, let me take you back a bit further — and a little deeper (I hope readers of this secular newspaper can take it, I say with tongue firmly in cheek!).

As mentioned last time, I'm Catholic — or what some describe as a "cradle Catholic" (meaning baptized as an infant). A former altar boy, I attended eight years of Catholic school in the Rochester Diocese (playing the part of Joseph in a 2nd-grade production) and I was church-going into my 30s.

But beginning in around the late-'90s and for close to probably a couple decades, I regret to say I became somewhat of a fallen-away Catholic (no longer regularly attending Mass, for starters). For no single reason, I'd grown somewhat skeptical (not unlike other people) of organized religion, generally. But I still considered myself Catholic (even if not a great one).

Then, in 2018 (or thereabouts), I rediscovered local Catholic radio station WHIC (run by The Station of the Cross Media Network, based in Buffalo). I was drawn to many of its talk shows (some originating from the national EWTN Catholic Radio Network), and I found myself regularly tuning in. Rochester "old tim-

ers" would recall the frequency, at 1460 on the AM dial, as the old Top-40 station WAXC. The station can be heard in the South Wedge also at 92.9 FM. (See, there is a media connection, too, to this column!)

A couple years or so later came the social, political and cultural tumult of 2020. By then, having been listening on and off to Catholic radio, I was reminded of the importance of going to church ... and confession (*egad!*). So, as the chaos of 2020 turned into 2021, I thought to myself: "*This is the year ... I'll get back to going to church.*"

But I put it off (of course I did — I first needed to get through spring semester, after all; at least that's what I told myself). Then summer started passing quickly, too (as it always does). I think my hesitancy about

returning stemmed from a few understandable (in my mind, that is) reasons: a.) I didn't want to go to church just once, and then possibly fall back into a lazy habit of not attending; b.) Conversely, I didn't want to keep going, but possibly only begrudgingly; and c.) *Confession*.

But, finally, a couple weeks into August, on a beautiful Saturday afternoon, I went to a Vigil Mass and confession at a church here in Rochester.

In my next column, I'll share with you what happened next (yes, the narrow path led through the South Wedge).▲

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

PART THREE

"I didn't want to go to church just once, and then possibly fall back into a lazy habit of not attending."

*The WEDGE* invites readers to submit letters to the editor. Letters should be civil in tone, concise and to the point, timely and signed by the author.

Contact Michael Saffran, editor, at [msaffran@swpc.org](mailto:msaffran@swpc.org).



585-256-1740, ext. 4 ▲ [thewedge@swpc.org](mailto:thewedge@swpc.org)

*Church Cluster (from p. 4)*

If the three-church option (estimated savings of \$373,800) — keeping the trio of churches open as regular worship places serving distinct city neighborhoods — is selected, it's likely the St. Boniface convent eventually would be put up for sale. A hindrance in finding a buyer, however, could be the structure's limited parking and street access.

**Parishioners voice their opinions**

Although some people who spoke at the March 10 meeting expressed reservations about any of the churches closing, one parishioner advocated for the "most radical" single-church option in order to both create a unified community and to put the issue to rest for the foreseeable future, instead of needing to potentially revisit it again a few years down the road.

A parishioner at the March 17 gathering at St. Mary's called on laypeople to do more, including possibly administratively running the parishes (potentially freeing the priest to focus more on pastoral concerns). Another attendee highlighted the importance of maintaining a church presence downtown. Loncle pointed out that center city's working population is lower compared with a few years ago and its rising residential population in places such as Innovation Square (formerly Xerox Tower) is young and, often, non-Christian/Catholic.

A speaker seemingly referring to the presentation's emphasis on the cluster's physical assets reminded the group, "We are people, not buildings."

Summarizing the cluster's current predicament, Loncle said: "We need to be realistic about where we're going with our buildings. We have to deal with the reality of the situation."

A representative of The Cabot Group did not return phone calls from *The WEDGE* seeking additional information.

The Pastoral Parish Council will continue

to evaluate feedback gathered from parishioners after the March presentations. "We want to listen to what you have to say," Voelkl told parishioners. She said a recommendation regarding one of the three options could possibly come within a year. The Diocese of Rochester would then be advised, with any final decision resting with Bishop Salvatore Matano. There's no precise timeline, however, partly due to the diocese's bankruptcy and reorganization, along with Matano's expected retirement.

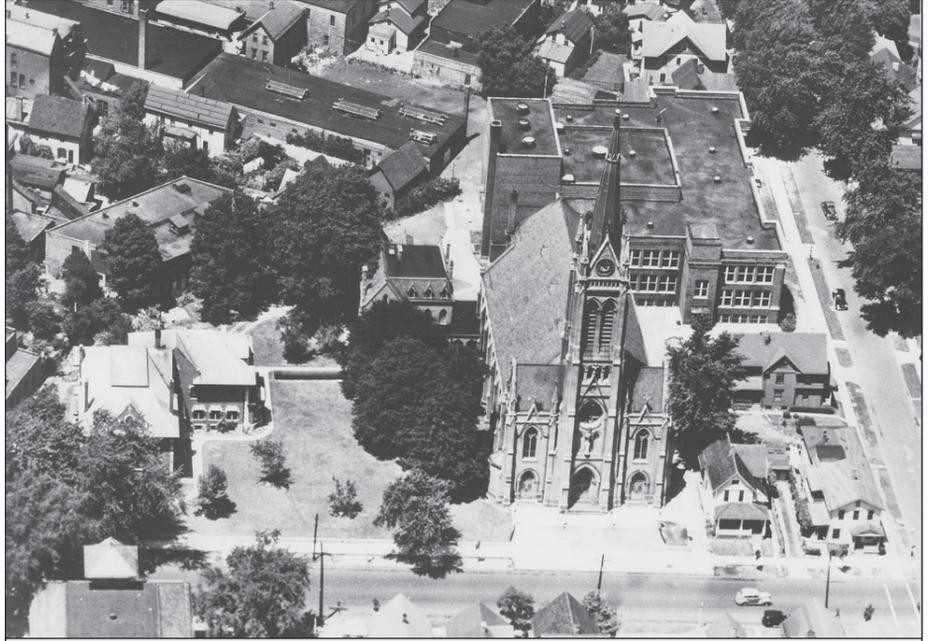
In June, the cluster announced an initial contraction step (attributed to the priest shortage): The elimination of one Sunday Mass. Effective July 1, its Mass schedule dropped to three Sunday Masses (one each at Blessed Sacrament, St. Boniface and St. Mary's), plus a Saturday Vigil Mass (rotating between St. Boniface and St. Mary's).

Other nearby Roman Catholic parish clusters — including one comprising St. Anne Church, 1600 Mt. Hope Ave., and Our Lady of Lourdes in Brighton — announced in April that they, too, would soon begin studying the future of four parishes. Similarly, they cited as concerns fewer and aging priests, building maintenance and available financial resources. The other two parishes are Our Lady Queen of Peace and St. Thomas More (each in Brighton).

Other U.S. dioceses, including Buffalo's, have announced planned diocesan-wide contractions. According to published reports, the Diocese of Buffalo intends to merge more than a third of its parishes — citing the priest shortage, declining Mass attendance and financial struggles. The Archdioceses of Baltimore and Seattle and the Diocese of Peoria, Ill., this year announced similar plans for upcoming parish consolidations. Meanwhile, in St. Louis, the planned merger of two parishes was halted after an appeal to the Vatican was upheld.▲

► **Michael Saffran**  
msaffran@swpc.org

**Somewhere in the Wedge...**



Do you know where this is/was? (Email [thewedge@swpc.org](mailto:thewedge@swpc.org))

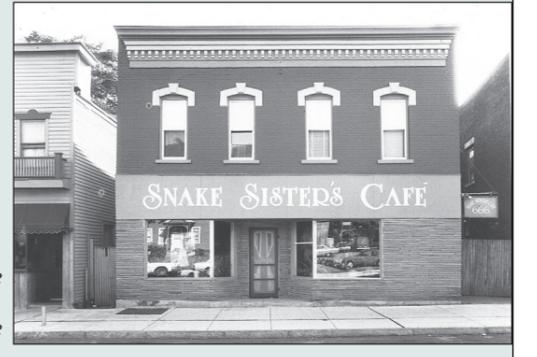
**June/July photo:**

Last issue's "Somewhere in the Wedge ..." featured photo (below) showed the facade of the former Snake Sister's Café, 666 South Ave. The location today is home to Lux Lounge (and upstairs offices and green room for performers). The building and business are owned by Karrie Laughton. Before Lux moved in, in 2002, other establishments through the years included Bosco's Bombay Bicycle Club, Village Hut & Restaurant and Hungerford's restaurant. Laughton said the site, built in 1910, originally might have been home to a hardware store.

"Snake Sister's was the first bar I ever stepped into back when I was 16 years old," Laughton shared. "My best friend at the time was turning 16, and we had her birthday party at Snake Sister's. I walked in and immediately fell in love with the place and apparently said to my group of friends at the party, 'I'm going to own this place one

day.' That was back in 1985 and I purchased the building in 2002. Kind of cool how that all came around."

Lux Lounge bills itself on its website ([lux666.com](http://lux666.com)) as "The Best Little Dive Bar in Rochester." The nightspot offers food, drinks and occasional live music. It features a pool table, jukebox, board games and backyard fire pit. Lux Lounge is open 365 days a year, from 4 p.m. to 2 a.m.



**St. Mary's Marks 190 Years**



During and after Mass on July 13, St. Mary's Church, 15 St. Mary's Place, marked the 190th anniversary of its first Mass. Celebrated by the Rev. John Loncle (St. Mary's pastor since 2017), the anniversary Mass, accompanied by the church choir, was attended by former parish pastors the Rev. James Lawlor (1980–1997), the Rev. William Donnelly (1997–2007) and the Rev. Robert Kennedy (2000–2017), along with senior priest, the Rev. Ed Palumbos; hospital chaplain, the Rev. David Tedesche; and deacons. When it was first established (at a different location), St. Mary's was the Rochester Diocese's second Roman Catholic Church. (St. Patrick Cathedral, since demolished but then on land near where Kodak Office now stands, was the first.) St. Mary's is Rochester's oldest and still active Catholic church. Numbering around 250, the day's congregation clustered afterwards in the center of the historic church (built in 1853) for a group photo. (Photo by John Myers/Myers Creative Imaging.)

*Lupien (from p. 6)*

**Take action now for fair housing**

Passing strong Good Cause Eviction Protections will help ensure our community members can live with dignity and stability. This legislation is a crucial step toward creating a more equitable and resilient city where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Email [citycouncilmembers@cityofrochester.gov](mailto:citycouncilmembers@cityofrochester.gov) and demand a strong Good Cause Eviction Protection bill that defines a small landlord as owning just one unit. Your voice can make the difference in the long-term health of our community, but only if you use it!▲

Mary Lupien serves on the Public Safety and the People, Parks & Public Works committees. She is passionate about fighting poverty, institutional racism and climate change; and advocating for housing rights and improving the quality of life for all Rochesterians.

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

**See you at Wedge Fest!**  
11 a.m.-5 p.m. Aug. 17



The South Wedge Planning Committee, a nonprofit community-development and neighborhood-preservation organization, serves Rochester's South Wedge through:

- Building community:**
- Sponsoring two community gardens
  - Supporting block groups, neighborhood associations & volunteer groups
  - Promoting affordable-housing opportunities and building preservation
  - Fostering an urban village

- Supporting businesses and nonprofits:**
- Including start-ups and other small businesses

Hosting **South Wedge Farmers Market**

Planning annual **South Wedge Fest**

Publishing **The WEDGE** newspaper

If you need help, have any questions or want to get involved, contact us at: 585-256-1740 or [info@swpc.org](mailto:info@swpc.org). Or, visit us online at: [swpc.org](http://swpc.org).

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