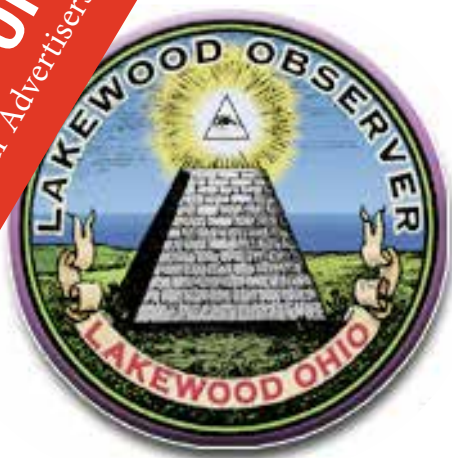


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Volume 14, Issue 24, December 19, 2018

Courts Rule On Essi vs City Public Records Case

by Jim O'Bryan

Last week Judge Kathleen Ann Keough ruled in the long running legal action between Brian Essi and the City of Lakewood. The action was begun in an effort for Mr. Essi to obtain Public Records, and the City of Lakewood refusing, saying that the records were protected.

Over a year ago the courts had written that they were indeed public records and should be turned over, but the City of Lakewood fought for the right to keep those documents secret.

This ruling broke it down where it really had been all along: "Any record created in Ohio Government is a public record," stated the courts.

Public records are defined as "any documents, device, or item in any form, including electronic records, that are kept by any public office, created or received by, or coming under the jurisdiction of any public office or political subdivision that serve to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office. Thus, personal, private matters that do not document work-related matters are outside the scope of public records."

While Judge Keough found that many of Essi's requests were too broad, and redundant, she also noted, "This case illustrates the problems and difficulties of public records cases. The citizens have the need and the right to know what their government is doing, especially on matters that affect the mental and physi-

cal well-being of the residents and the financial well-being of the community. They have the right and need to know whether their civil servants are effecting their duties properly and with integrity. However, they do not know what records are kept and how they are kept.

The judge also noted regarding Essi's 323 Requests for Public Documents: "Although it is understandable that Essi, a newspaper reporter for a small paper serving Lakewood, would wish to shed the full light on the sale of Lakewood Hospital, which is one of the most important transactions in the city's history and that many residents looked upon with suspicion and fear of a "sell out," Essi's numerous requests are problematic."

The Law Director and Lakewood's Information Technology Manager submitted affidavits that doing such searches on Lakewood's computers would be an oppressive burden that would cause the computers to crash. Moreover, Lakewood's network drivers and servers are not a permanent storage facility with documents, records, files, etc. being deleted. Essi responded with an expert's affidavit saying that that could not be true and suggested several ways in which the searches could be made.

In the end, Essi will get more documents with redactions removed. The City of Lakewood will be allowed to continue to hide/redact other documents. More questions will arise, more documents are still in dispute. Many dropped from the list to please the courts will come back. Who won? The Judgement sums it up: "Writ Granted In Part and Denied In Part." All I know is the residents of Lakewood lost if the outcome is the City of Lakewood successfully fighting legal public records requests, keeping public records hidden from the public any way they can. We all lost. For democracy to work, residents need transparency, honesty and accountability, honesty and accountability.



Aim your smart phone camera to the QR Code, and read the court document for yourself. See what it was all about with no spin.

**"A good conscience is a continual Christmas."
Benjamin Franklin**



Coach Andrew Toth with All-American Malvin Glbah.

LHS Senior Named Soccer All-American

by Christine Gordillo

Lakewood High School senior Malvin Glbah was recently selected as a member of the United Soccer Coaches All-America Team. Malvin is just one of 68 young men selected for the honor. The award is icing on a cake full of accolades for Malvin's play this year. His honors include All Lake Erie Regional Team, All Ohio First Team, Greater Cleveland Player of the Year, All Greater Cleveland First Team, and All Southwest Conference Second Team.

Malvin joined the LHS soccer program in 2015 during the start of his freshman

year at Lakewood High School. His road to Lakewood was not typical or easy. He was born in a refugee camp in Ivory Coast, his family displaced by the extreme civil war in his homeland of Liberia. His family endured refugee camps for many years before eventually coming to the US and finding a home in Lakewood.

Malvin attributes his success on the field directly to his supportive teammates and the soccer program at LHS led by Coach Andrew Toth. The culture of the team embraces diversity and caring, with players believing in helping each other to become success-

ful. Coach Toth saw something special with Malvin very early.

"I knew right away that Malvin was a player unlike others coming into our program," Coach Toth said. "His foot skills, ball mastery and game awareness are exceptional and have grown all four year in this program. He is incredibly committed to his team and the game. He will go on to do great things. We are proud to call him a Ranger."

When asked about his thoughts on soccer and his place on the Ranger team, Malvin said: "Play like someone is watching, that can change your life."

District to Renovate Taft for Curricular Expansion, Central Office Home

by Christine Gordillo

The Lakewood Board of Education has approved a proposal for the use of the former Taft Elementary School building that will address a number of space needs that were not included in the District's Ohio Facilities Construction Commission projects. The proposal will give the District space to expand programming that will result in students better prepared for academic success from preschool through college.

continued on page 3



Hot Off The Deck

Help The LO Find Holiday Decorations That Capture The Spirit Of The Holidays, And They Could Win

by Jim O'Bryan

Once again it is time for Christmas and the holidays. With the season comes holiday decorating of homes and businesses. The past four years we've had a contest; this year we have decided to make it an appreciation event. We are thankful for all who try to bring a

little joy, fun, and mirth into Lakewood with their decorating skills.

The true spirit of the holiday can be seen in small tasteful or fun gestures, to displays designed and installed by professionals. It doesn't matter, it is the effort we want to acknowledge and appreciate with over 30 presents from

us, to the homes you think deserve to be thanked and acknowledged. Our judges are Ian Andrews from LakewoodAlive, Dan O'Malley, Ward 4 Councilman, Michael Bentley from Bentley Wealth Management/Raymond James, Kim Walcheck from Lakewood Community Interest Forum, Dan Alaimo from the LO Deck and Stephen Davis, interested resident and one of the LO founders.

To enter a home go to the front page of the Lakewood Observer Website, and answer the "Question of the

Day? "Your Favorite Christmas House, (leave address)" <http://lakewoodobserver.com/daily-question/2018-10-30>. Or send the address or photos to production@lakewoodobserver.com.

Besides the 30 gifts, if you were the first to suggest the winning home you will win dinner for 2, and 2 Lakewood Observer Glow-in-the-Dark T-Shirts. The over-all winner as judged by panel and community will win dinner for four at Melt, Woodstock BBQ, India Garden, or Rood.



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OBSERVATIONS FROM THE DECK!				
Thread Title	Author	Posts	Reads	Date
St Edwards Over Lakewood	Jim O'Bryan	0	23	Mon Dec 03
Measuring The Damage	Mark Kindt	16	920	Mon Dec 03
Cove Church Plans	Bridget Conant	18	896	Mon Dec 03
The Road Not Taken	Mark Kindt	41	1175	Sun Dec 02
Lakewood Lights Up - 2018	Jim O'Bryan	0	1742	Sun Dec 02
Still waiting...	Dan Alaimo	4	426	Sun Dec 02
Lakewood Loses Again!	Brian Essi	10	806	Sat Dec 01
Thanks to Sam O'Leary Thinking in the Past				
Lakewood vs Lordstown?	Nadhal Eadeh	2	306	Fri Nov 30
Carjacking at McKinley Place?	Bridget Conant	7	1176	Wed Nov 28
City Art Installation at Sloane /Detroit	Bridget Conant	15	1944	Tue Nov 27
Recycling still worthwhile for Lakewood?	Dan Alaimo	9	805	Mon Nov 26
Essi claim blatantly false - immediate retraction and apology to the community demanded	David Anderson	49	2579	Mon Nov 26
Lakewood Law Department "Out-Foxes" Courts Again	Mark Kindt	13	1574	Sat Nov 24

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As a product of citizen journalism, The Lakewood Observer is looking for people, ages 3-100, to get involved in the paper and the city. We are looking for volunteer writers, photographers, designers, and illustrators to help with the production of the paper. It does not matter if you are a professional or amateur, our editorial staff will be glad to help you through the process. Register to our website Member Center where you can submit stories, press releases, letters to the editor, photos. No need to register to post online calendar or classified ads.

Upcoming Submission Deadline

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January 23, 2019

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Celebrating Over 10 Years of Community Discussion at: www.lakewoodobserver.com

City

Costly Sewer Upgrades In Lakewood’s Future

by Matt Kuhns

Lakewood will need to make expensive upgrades to the city’s water and sewer infrastructure, to comply with the Clean Water Act.

Just how expensive those upgrades are, how soon they must be made, and how they can be paid for are all the subject of ongoing discussions between Lakewood and regulators.

The city’s current ballpark estimate is \$300 million to reach full

compliance with Clean Water Act rules. That’s a little over twice the entire proposed city budget for 2019. Under any realistic scenario, Lakewood will need a number of years to fund all of the necessary upgrades. City officials hope to negotiate as much time and flexibility as they can for the process.

Lakewood water rates are almost certain to rise for years to come, whatever terms the city reaches with regulators.

Beyond this, Mayor Mike Summers and other officials representing the city indicated that few details are settled, as of a December 4 public meeting. The city could fund future sewer system upgrades with rate increases or taxes or other fees, structured in a variety of ways.

Public input will have a role in determining those ways, as well as the schedule and rule framework for making upgrades. Under the Clean Water Act, Lakewood will have to eliminate nearly all untreated wastewater flows into Lake Erie—but the Environmental Protection Agency has considerable discretionary power in how it compels the city to comply with the Act.

Given the projected cost of upgrades compared with the size of Lakewood’s budget, the EPA is negotiating with the city, with other federal and state agencies, and ultimately with the residents of Lakewood over how quickly the city can genuinely get into compliance.

The good news for residents is that, in addition to having some indirect say in these negotiations, the city has been building a case for flexibility.

While the Clean Water Act has been law since 1972, enforcement has

been a decades-long process, only reaching local water systems for cities the size of Lakewood relatively recently. In the intervening decades, Lakewood has maintained its water and sewer infrastructure in general, though the larger challenge is that the system was built long before the Clean Water Act, and even when working as designed is noncompliant.

For at least a decade, the city has been implementing a variety of remedies, from underground pipes to “bioswales” outside of new construction to a pilot project for retrofitting existing homes.

City officials have expressed hope that these improvements—while considerably short of full Clean Water Act compliance—will demonstrate enough good faith that Lakewood receives a new operating permit without a consent decree which would take a lot of decision-making out of local hands.

The current permit expires in 2019, and public input will weigh on regulators’ decisions. The next public discussion is planned for 7 p.m., January 16 in the Lakewood High School cafeteria. Visit onelakewood.com/cleanwaterlakewood for more information.

District to Renovate Taft for Curricular Expansion, Central Office Home

continued from page 1

The proposal calls for a renovation of Taft, which first opened in 1927 and had additions built in 1957 and 1970. The space will be configured to accommodate the relocation of the Central Office staff from the Board building at 1470 Warren Road, the expansion of the District’s preschool program and partnership program with higher education institutions.

The District already has partnerships with the University of Akron and Tri-C. District officials are currently in discussions with two other institutions

of higher learning that wish to partner with the District. These partnerships, as well as income generated through rental of a new flexible meeting space, will bring new revenue to the District that will help offset the cost of the renovation, which will be funded over 20 years.

Details of the preschool curricular programming will be developed over the next year with input from staff. Plans call for the renovation to be complete in time for Central Office staff to move into the building in January 2020

continued from page 5

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Positive Steps to Well-Being

Thursday, Dec. 27, 2018 | 11:30 a.m.

Help ring in the new year with complimentary craft making and lunch.

Presented by Jodi Maderitz, MSW, LSW,
Social Worker, O’Neill Healthcare Hospice

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Sibert at 216-912-0800 by Dec. 25, 2018

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Lakewood Public Library

Calendar Of Events

compiled by Elaine Rosenberger

Saturday, December 22, 2018

Film - “The Artist” (2011), Directed by Michel Hazanavicius

Silent-film star George Valentin (Jean Dujardin) is the idol of 1920s Hollywood. Aspiring young actress Peppy Miller (Bérénice Bejo) bumps into George and captures the attention of the studio executives. As Peppy rises to stardom, the motion picture agency shifts its focus from silent films to talkies, turning George’s world upside down. This film earned five Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Actor, and continues our series of Oscar Award winners.

6:00 p.m. in the Main Library Auditorium

Monday, December 24, 2018

Library closed in observance of Christmas Eve.

Tuesday, December 25, 2018

Library closed in observance of Christmas.

Monday, December 31, 2018

Library will close at 6:00 p.m. in observance of New Year’s Eve.

Tuesday, January 1, 2019

Library closed in observance of New Year’s Day.

Saturday, January 5, 2019

Film - “Wonder” (2017), Directed by Stephen Chbosky

Auggie Pullman (Jacob Tremblay), like other 10-year-old boys, loves all things Minecraft and Star Wars. But, unlike most fifth graders, Auggie is going to school for the first time. Born with facial differences, Auggie spends most of his time hiding underneath an astronaut helmet. His parents Isabel (Julia Roberts) and Nate (Owen Wilson) are supportive but apprehensive as he encounters his new classmates. School brings new challenges for Auggie as he encounters cruel bullies, however loyal friends and a supportive family give him the courage to choose kindness.

6:00 p.m. in the Main Library Auditorium

Sunday, January 6, 2019

Concert - Girl Singers Starring Eileen Burns

This special performance, Girl Singers, pays tribute to the classic female vocalists of the ‘40s and ‘50s. Take a trip down memory lane with the songs and stories of ladies like Doris Day, Rosemary Clooney, Billie Holiday, Peggy Lee and more. Eileen Burns is an accomplished vocalist specializing in jazz standards, swing and rhythm & blues. Join us for a perfect afternoon enjoying tunes from the Great American Songbook and the women who immortalized the songs.

2:00 p.m. in the Main Library Auditorium

Wednesday, January 9, 2019

Lakewood Historical Society - Who Killed RFK?: Fifty Years Later Presentation by Bev Sadowski

Robert F. Kennedy’s campaign for the presidency was reaching its zenith when he was struck down in Los Angeles in June 1968. What evidence exists to dispute the conclusion that Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was the assassin? Forensic, medico-legal, eyewitness and recently discovered acoustic evidence will be presented, some of which was never presented at the trial. This examination of the case, fifty years later, seriously calls into question Sirhan’s role in this tragic event.

7:00 p.m. in the Main Library Auditorium

Children & Youth Events

compiled by Jeffrey Siebert

Sunday, December 30

Lakewood LEGO® League

For youth in kindergarten through fifth grade (caregivers welcome)
Use LPL’s collection of Lego® Bricks and your own imagination to create fabulous new structures and designs each month. No registration, but numbered tickets will be given out first-come, first-served.

6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. in the Main Library Activity Room.

Friday, January 4

Stranger Things Escape Room

For students in sixth through twelfth grade.
Step back in time to 1980 and help your fellow fans escape the Upside Down in this Stranger Things inspired escape room.

3:00-5:00 p.m. in the Main Library Multipurpose Room.

Reader's Theater

by Jeffrey Siebert

Love reading and yearn for a life on the stage? Readers’ Theater combines both! Actors perform by reading scripts adapted from beloved children’s books, play theater games, and create props and costumes to culminate in a final performance. This four week program is for students in third through fifth grade and will take place Tuesdays from January 8, 2019 to January 29, 2019. Regular

sessions will be in the Main Library first floor multipurpose room from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. The final performance will take place on Tuesday, January 29, 2019 in the Main Library Auditorium from 4:30-5:00 p.m. Participants must be able to attend the final performance. Registration is required. Register online at www.lakewoodpubliclibrary.org or call Children’s and Youth Services at 216-226-8275x140.



Children model their upcycled creations.

The Magic Of Upcycling

by Fran Storch

Be future-friendly and make a new year’s resolution to upcycle. Start by bringing your children to Lakewood Public Library for some upcycling fun! We will show your kids how to repurpose old unwanted clothing and keep them busy over winter break. Students in third through eighth grade are invited to join us for Upcycling: From Rags to Riches on Thursday, January 3, 2019 from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m. in the Main Library First Floor Multipurpose Room.

What’s upcycling? Upcycling turns things into other things which is basically magic. It’s taking an item that is no longer wanted or needed and giving it new life as something useful or creative. Children will learn how to transform old clothing into new treasures. Turn an old t-shirt into a strand necklace,

infinity scarf or tote bag. Rework an old sweater into a slouch beanie with matching mittens to keep warm during the cold winter months. Participants learn more about the upcycling movement and then use their imagination to create unique wearable art.

No experience is necessary to participate in this program. Some materials are provided but registrants must bring an old t-shirt and/or sweater which will be cut up for upcycling projects.

Space is limited for this creative program and registration is required so sign up your children today. To register, stop by the Children’s & Youth Services desk at the Main Library, call (216) 226-8275, ext. 140 or visit www.lakewoodpubliclibrary.org, click on the Youth tab and Programs for School-Age Students.

Unseen, Unheard, Unknown: Documentaries At LPL

by Melinda Frank

From inclusion to local crime, broaden your concept of film with these upcoming documentary screenings at the library.

“Unseen” begins with a grisly discovery in an unassuming white duplex. The 2009 arrest of Anthony Sowell was a shock to Cleveland’s Mount Pleasant neighborhood, but his crimes came as no surprise to his surviving victims. Women who had previously raised concerns about Sowell were dismissed and discredited. Local director and producer Laura Paglin focuses the documentary on these women, living on the margins of society, dealing with the trauma of their experiences, and ultimately sharing their stories of survival. Paglin joins us for a discussion following the film on January 15, 2019.

“Alive & Well” follows the journey of seven people exploring the world of Huntington’s Disease. As Mandy hopes to start a family, Charles returns from war zones and Trey continues his music career, all while questioning the future before them. Meanwhile, researcher Dr. Michael Hayden searches for a cure and young advocates like Courtney strive to raise awareness of this disease. This documentary reminds us all of our ability to persevere with strength, despite difficult challenges. Hunting-



Local director Laura Paglin’s documentary “Unseen” focuses on the case of Anthony Sowell.

ton’s Disease Society of America will present the film on January 29, 2019.

“Deej” is the incredible portrayal of the life of DJ “Deej” Savarese. As a non-speaking autistic, DJ communicates using a text-to-voice synthesizer. Shot over a six-year period, this documentary follows the previously deemed incompetent DJ through high school and into his freshman year at Oberlin College. DJ and collaborator Robert Rooy present an unprecedented look at representation and inclusion as told by DJ himself. The film seeks to portray the idea that neurological diversity should not just be accepted, but celebrated. Peace by Piece Cleveland will present the film on February 12, 2019.

All documentary films will be shown at 6:30 p.m. in the Main Library Auditorium.

Lakewood Schools

Kindergarten Info Night Jan. 16; Registration Begins Jan. 17

by Christine Gordillo

Lakewood City Schools' kindergarten registration will take place at the Lakewood Board of Education at 1470 Warren Road, by appointment

only, starting on Thursday, January 17, 2019. Students must be 5 years old on or before September 30, 2019, in order to register for the 2019-2020 school year. A parent information meeting about

the district's kindergarten program will be held on Wednesday, January 16, 2019, at Grant Elementary School, 1470 Victoria Ave.

Registration materials can be found online at www.lakewoodcityschools.org

After collecting all required documents and completing all pre-registration forms online, you will be prompted to schedule an appointment to register your child. If you have any questions, please contact the registration secretary at 216-529-4279 or by email at patty.hays@lakewoodcityschools.org.

You will need to provide the following documents at registration:

Child's birth certificate, original or certified copy; passport or visa

Child's immunization record, doctor's name and phone number

Driver's license or State ID of the residential parent/legal guardian registering the student

Proofs of residency - provide two in the form of: utility bills (gas, electric, water), pay stub, valid signed lease, business mail, Section 8 documentation, voter registration card, municipal income tax return (RITA)

OR: When no other proofs of residency can be provided, the Owner Affidavit form must be completed by the landlord, owner, or manager and signed in the presence of a Notary Public.

Custody documents (if applicable): Only legal residents who are the parent or legal guardian of the child may complete the registration process. Applicable court documents must be a certified copy and contain any and all exhibits or attachments referenced to show custody.

Copy of a signed current IEP and ETR (if applicable)

Children attending the Lakewood City Schools' pre-kindergarten program are enrolled in the District and do not need to re-register. Kindergarten information will be given to these families.

West Shore Adds Sports Programs

by Christine Gordillo

The West Shore Career-Tech District is adding a Sports & Exercise Science program beginning with the 2019-2020 school year. It will be the 13th program that West Shore offers.

"We are always looking to add new programs," said West Shore Executive Director Bill DiMascio. "We are excited about this new offering and hope to have significant college credit tied to the program."

DiMascio said adding a sports and exercise science program made sense as students will be able to take advantage of the state-of-the-art fit-

ness/workout facilities complete with diagnostic and therapeutic equipment housed at Lakewood High School through partnerships with The Lakewood Recreation Department as well as other community partnerships.

The new program is not just for the student-athletes to consider. Those interested in sports, exercise, conditioning, nutrition and fitness may find a good fit in Sports & Exercise Science. This career pathway can lead you to careers in personal fitness, athletic training, therapeutic careers and more (see list below). Students who care for others and have an interest in human anatomy, science and math can excel in this career field.

The two-year course of study will be broken down into four courses with possible opportunities for early placement in paid and unpaid internships. Students may become credentialed as a physical therapy aide, in first aid, and in CPR.

The rate of employment in fields related to this program is much higher than the national average for all occupations with the demand attributed to several factors: An aging population and growing concern over one's health.

District to Renovate Taft for Curricular Expansion, Central Office Home

continued from page 3

and the preschool programming with the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

"This move will allow us to maximize a taxpayer-funded property that has been underutilized over the years since it closed as an elementary school while giving us the space needed to expand critical programming for our students and keep our Central Office staff in Board-owned property," said Superintendent Michael J. Barnes.

The curricular expansion fits into Superintendent Barnes' "PreK to 16" vision of offering the community educational options that enable students to go from PreK through college without having to leave the District.

The sale of the Board of Education properties on Warren Road to Liberty Development Company will continue to move forward and is expected to close in early 2019.

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LAKEWOOD CARES

Rotary Provides Third Graders With Dictionaries

by Lynn Donaldson

The Rotary Club of Lakewood and Rocky River continued its distribution of dictionaries to all third graders in Lakewood and Rocky River this fall, a project that the club began in 2005. A total of 606 dictionaries were distributed to students at 11 different school buildings.

Jay Rounds, project chair, with assistance from fellow Rotarian, Harlan Radford, stamped each dictionary with the Rotary logo and a place for the student's name.

The following Rotarians visited the schools for interaction with both students and teachers as the dictionaries were distributed: Mark Bacon, Matt Daugherty, Lynn Donaldson, Jon Fancher, George Frank, Pam Gallagher, Chuck Gustafson, Jim Harris, Harlan Radford, Jay and Jean Rounds, and Michael Shoaf.

Members were rewarded with smiles on the students' faces as they received their dictionaries and began to explore the contents. Both students and teachers are very appreciative in receiving these dictionaries and utilize them in the curriculum. A teacher shared that when asked to share something special with the class, one



Lakewood Catholic Academy students receive dictionaries from Lakewood and Rocky River Rotary Club past president Lynn Donaldson.

student brought in his sister's dictionary and said that he was excited to now be receiving his very own.

Thank you letters, written by the students, express their gratitude and enjoyment in owning their very own dictionary. One student wrote, "Thank you for our student dictionaries. I have been using this dictionary a lot and it's very helpful." Another said, "I liked that you added the maps and the presidents on the back of the dictionaries." A third student stated, "Thank you. I learned a lot of words. My favorite is the planet chapter."

Decking The Halls

by Jeff Fritz

Lezlee Patten likes to make people happy and see them smile. That's why she puts up an elaborate Christmas display every year at the end of the hall outside her suite at Lakewood's Westerly Apartments.

Many of the five-hundred-or-so residents of the senior living community come to see the spectacle and lots of them bring their grandchildren. The decorations were collected over a number of years from various sources including Pat Catan's, Joann Fabrics, yard sales and the Internet.

At the end of the season it all goes into storage at a friend's garage to await next Christmas, when it goes back up to be joined by new items that she finds



Lezlee Patten.

during the year. As Lezlee says, "Everybody deserves a smile and memories of Christmas."



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LIGHT UP LAKEWOOD 2018

LakewoodAlive’s “A-Team” Volunteers Find Fun In Helping Fellow Community Members

by Matt Bixenstine

For the residents who reap the benefits of their donated labor and expertise, this ultra-dedicated group seems too good to be true. Yet LakewoodAlive’s most experienced team of volunteers is as real and genuine as they come.

Lakewood residents Aaron Cooper, Jeff Davis, Jim Hayes, Carl Orban, Dana Paul and Allison Urbanek comprise the all-star squad of volunteers known as the “A Team.” This team spends various weekends throughout the year tackling major volunteer housing projects on behalf of the LakewoodAlive Housing Outreach Program.

Although they vary in age (ranging from early-thirties to upper-sixties) and employment (ranging from corporate professionals to retirees), all six members of the A Team share two distinct traits: A general level of expertise with building projects and a strong desire to use their talents to help fellow community members in need.

“What we do is rewarding and fulfilling far beyond any possible monetary compensation,” said Dana, a construction project manager in his day job. “At the end of a work session, I’m exhausted but my spirit is uplifted. It’s a great group and there’s a really cool synergy that goes on between us.”

In Need of a New Porch
Lifelong Lakewood resident Pam Schraff knew she had a major problem. The front porch at the Lakewood Avenue home she’s occupied for 41 years had deteriorated to the point where it had become a safety hazard, both for Pam and her visitors.

Thanks to the leadership of Allison Urbanek – LakewoodAlive’s Housing & Internal Operations Director – the group took on this ambitious project. On six occasions between the scorching heat of July and the chill of December, the A Team convened at Pam’s home to complete an extensive porch repair that consisted of replacing flooring, constructing new porch steps, incorporating a new step railing and installing a new storm door.

“If it weren’t for the A Team, my world right now would be totally different,” said Pam, who lives two doors away from her childhood home and has spent her entire life living on Lakewood Avenue. “They’ve renewed my ability to come and go from my home, and in doing so enriched my life. I don’t think I can ever thank them enough.”

A Tremendous Community Impact

2018 proved a banner year for the A Team. In addition to rebuilding Pam’s porch, the group successfully reconstructed a garage roof for an elderly couple on Rosewood Avenue by laying new sheathing and reshingling the roof. This 1907 home on Rosewood has been within the owner’s family for nearly seven decades.

“These are projects that people normally can’t do themselves and



A-Team members (clockwise from top left) Jim Hayes, Dana Paul, Carl Orban, Aaron Cooper and Allison Urbanek celebrate a successful year. (Photo Credit: Madeline Hayes)

would cost people a lot of money to hire someone,” said Jim, a retiree who discovered the A Team while exploring avenues for giving back to the community. “It’s often more difficult to rebuild existing infrastructure than it is to build something new, but we enjoy the challenge and enjoy each other’s company. I feel blessed to have gotten to know this group the last two years.”

In total, the A Team completed two major volunteer housing projects this year, accumulating 164 total volunteer hours and generating \$12,000 worth of economic impact for low-moderate homeowners within our community. Project materials were funded through LakewoodAlive’s 80/20 Volunteer Project Supply Fund, whereby the homeowner pays 20 percent of the cost and LakewoodAlive covers the remaining 80 percent using funding provided by First Federal Lakewood.

Fun on the Job
Despite their heavy volunteer workload, members of the A Team always manage to incorporate fun into their altruistic work experiences. They recently celebrated their successful 2018 with a get-together during which year-end awards were bestowed:

- Golden Banana Award** for best snack brought to a project: Jim Hayes
- Golden Nail Award** for keeping everyone together: Carl Orban
- Golden Pencil Award** for best design layout: Aaron Cooper
- Golden Hammer Award** for leadership: Allison Urbanek

“Jim brought this awesome crockpot of chili to the last day of our project, so he definitely deserved the Golden Banana Award,” said Dana. “But in all seriousness, this group is a lot of fun to be around.”

Pam observed the A Team’s camaraderie and knack for fun throughout the porch rebuild project. At one point the group discovered an old grocery store sign underneath her porch and took time to investigate its historical significance. On another occasion they found a knot in a piece of wood and

took time to consider how that would impact the porch over time.

“They get along so well and they all have a sense of humor,” said Pam. “It’s really a privilege to have received their help and I’ll be forever grateful to them.”

2018 A Team By The Numbers
Volunteer Housing Projects: 2
Number of Members: 6
Total Volunteer Hours: 164
Volunteer Hours Value: \$8,200
Total Economic Impact: \$12,000

A Team Member Profiles

Name: Aaron Cooper
Lakewood Residence: French Ave.
Hometown: Lakewood
Occupation: Mechanic – Division of Fleet


Name: Jeff Davis
Lakewood Residence: Carabel Ave.
Hometown: Rocky River
Occupation: Sales & Marketing

Name: Jim Hayes
Lakewood Residence: McKinley Place
Hometown: Cleveland
Occupation: Retired

Name: Carl Orban
Lakewood Residence: Lake Ave.
Hometown: Lakewood
Occupation: Retired

Name: Dana Paul
Lakewood Residence: Kenneth Drive
Hometown: Westlake
Occupation: Construction Project Manager

Name: Allison Urbanek
Lakewood Residence: Spring Garden Avenue
Hometown: North Olmsted
Occupation: LakewoodAlive Staff Member




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LAKEWOOD CARES

My First Tale Of Diversity

by Seth Smith

I originally thought to tell the story of when I backpacked throughout Europe in the late nineties with just a friend and a smile. I assure you I had many cross-cultural experiences, some of which I still tell to this day, twenty years later. However, I want to tell you a situation that really changed the course of how I see people, from the viewpoint of the color of their skin.

I was born in a suburb of Cleveland in the late seventies. I was that last of seven children so we were pretty packed in a five bedroom ranch style home with no garage and nine people living together. The city we lived in was Brecksville, a small affluent (although we were not) town on the far outskirts of the Cleveland metropolitan area. The city was predominantly white, I would say ninety percent or higher. I now tend (jokingly) to refer to it as white-town USA.

As a child I never thought of the racial issue. In my elementary school there were only two black kids in the whole school, who happened to be in my grade level. One of them, Luke, became my best friend. He was an adopted kid from a South American tribe and he lived with an all white family. Many of these facts I only know after the fact because you see, we never viewed things in color. My parents never spoke of these differences and

the other children in my grade loved Luke, he was one of the most popular kids in all of elementary school.

In kindergarten I had my first birthday party. Back in those days the parent went to the school and received an address list from the office of all the surrounding children that I wanted to invite to my party. Luke was on the top of the list. When the lady in the office saw the list, the first thing she said to my mother (which I only found out over twenty years later) was “you know Luke is a kid of color?” This startled my mother because for months I had been bragging about my new friend and how much fun we had in school, but not once did I mention the color of his skin. My mother didn’t mind and Luke and I had a wonderful friendship until I moved.

A few years later, my father’s job transferred him to Houston, Texas. We moved into a small suburb in the outskirts of Houston and I attended my first day of an Intermediate school that was three times the size of my school in Brecksville. Talk about culture shock! The minute I walked into the building my eyes and mind seemed to be transported to a Hollywood movie. There were kids with boots, tight fitting jeans, and cowboy hats. I had never seen such a thing, only in movies. In addition, the school was heavily populated with

black kids, none like my good friend Luke. They wore M.C. Hammer pants and had weird designs etched in their hair. It was bonkers!

So here is the kicker, up until this point in my life I had only heard the N-word used one time in my life. Ironically it came from my good friend Luke. We were in the third grade and playing kickball on the field when we started to play tug-of-war over the ball. He belted out, “fight, fight, the n****r and the white, the n****r starts to win and we all jump in!” I stopped and looked at him and asked him where he heard that, it sounded funny but I thought it seemed like a bad word (we were only in the third grade). He said he picked it up somewhere from the t.v. he thought, and we both laughed and continued to play.

Skip ahead several years, here I am in a brand new school surrounded by cowboys, pop-culture infused black kids and white yuppies such as myself. It was a cauldron of new ideas, hormones, and stupidity. This was the very

first time I ever heard someone use the N-word in a true derogatory fashion, and it was not from a white kid. As time went on I too heard it from the cowboys and even some yuppies but it was never used more than the black kids in my class. I was astonished at this from all sides of the aisles. What had happened to society? What, nothing, time had not elapsed, just my geography changed. I was not in Kansas anymore.

What I gained most from this experience was that our norms, attitudes, prejudices, and expectations come from the home. They are caught, not necessarily taught. We pick up what we think from other people. This is why, when I meet a person with prejudice or outright racial prejudice (as I have over the years) I feel sorry for them. Anger should be set aside for evil. Racial prejudice is not evil (although sometimes it leads to that) but stupidity inculcated by ignorance promulgated by diversity. How I long for the days where some of us really viewed people by the content of their character, and not the color of their skin.

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Foodwood©

The L' fuccello Os Singing In The Quartiere,
Pepper's Italian Restaurant

by Eva Starr

You don't need to take a trip to the eastside, Little Italy, or hop on a plane to Venice. Lakewood has its own Italian Ristorante in Birdtown, Pepper's. The green, white and red is happening here all year long, not just at Christmas.

Is it just me, or does everybody love everything Italian? OK, maybe I was Italian in a past life, because my dad's Irish and my mom's Polish but I can't get enough Italian in this life! I've been a fan of Dean Martin since the early 60s, listening to Martin LPs on my mom's stereo. Not to mention I've seen all 264 episodes of the Dean Martin show, (624 is my birthday, it's kismet).

In search of an authentic Veal Piccata and a little bit of Italian ambiance I headed to Pepper's. An old friend of mine, Sparky, and a Lakewood-ite, has been wanting to try the place for months. However, the timing was always off (they open at 5pm) or there was always a line out the door. Tonight's the night, bring it on.

Upon walking down the sidewalk to the entrance, off to the west side of the building is a quaint little patio, adorned with wrought-iron furniture and Christmas lights. Deano's "Baby, It's Cold Outside," was ringing in my ears, so we headed inside.

I was pleasantly pleased to find an enchanting mural of Venice, Italy (it's on my bucket list) painted on the main wall by our very own St. Ed's students.

On the opposite wall in the petite but cozy, dining room is Deano himself, with a framed picture of The Rat Pack. OK, I'm almost in heaven. All I need now is for Deano to come back from the dead and saunter over to my table.

I settled for a cup of Italian wedding soup instead, and a glass of Pinot Noir. We went early, 5:30pm, and on a Tuesday. We were lucky to get the last booth available. A friendly older gentleman was going around the tables chatting with various customers. I found out he was the owner, Bob Buck. My soup came, and I wasted no time. It was good, along with the little soft Italian rolls with real butter, (I have a thing about REAL butter).

Buck came over to our table and chatted with Sparky a little bit about the history of the place, since Sparky's lived in Lakewood his entire life. Seems Buck and his wife were regular customers and one night the former owner said, "the place is up for sale." "I'll buy it," Buck answered, and the rest is history.

Pepper's is twenty years plus now



Veal Piccata

in dishing out pasta, rolling dough for its award-winning pizzas, and they've developed quite the reputation for their in-house made grape pie. (I didn't have room). The crowd continued to roll in and the atmosphere still reminded me of the "feel" of a few family owned restaurants in Little Italy. Buck is to Pepper's what Sam Malone was to Cheers.

Alas, my Veal Piccata has arrived, Sparky ordered the Veal Parmesan. I

devoured mine, with class of course, lol...while Sparky had to ask for a to go box. I passed on the side of pasta, and ordered the broccoli instead, that helps save room for the real deal.

My piccata hit the spot. The menu also consists of traditional Italian dishes, appetizers, pizzas, pastas and desserts,

Sadly, I didn't have enough room for the infamous grape pie. We paid our check and chatted with Bob on the way out about his newest arrival, granddaughter Audrey Irene Buck, whose photo graces the wall.

Rush Inn:
Food Gem In Lakewood

by Ted Powers

I'm almost not sure I want to share this story for fear of too many people finding out about what I consider the best place to eat, drink, hang out, take your date, in all of Lakewood.

The Rush Inn has it all. Located on Detroit Ave. across from The Beck Center, it is easy to miss if you're not looking, as the burgundy awning with its name embossed is the only signage. Once inside, you'll see a long, inviting bar with enough tv's for the days sports, enough taps for the current draft beer of the week, plus your usual wines and spirits. Next to the bar is a row of booths for groups and/or diners.

Now, The Food! If you turn left you'll see a specials board next to a doorway that leads to a dining area with large wooden booths and tables. The specials board is always interesting and changing, it also lists their soup, or soups, of the day. The menu offers the typical fare of wings and burgers, except they are the most delicious wings and

burgers you've ever tasted. The wings are especially great, I can't find any better. The rest of the menu is where things get amazing. I can't list everything, but believe it when I say you'll see offerings you would not expect to see. You can google the menu or look it up, I only say this because I can not do it justice and would not want to do the establishment a disservice by trying to do so. There is also a seasonal menu that is ever changing and worth a look.

Next, the quality of the offerings is second to none in my opinion. I honestly have never had a bad meal at The Rush Inn, its almost as if Grandma is back in the kitchen. The care and pride they put into the food shows.

Lastly, the staff and servers could not be more friendly or cheerful. They always are welcoming and seem happy to be there. Believe me, I do visit many of the other fine places in and around Lakewood, all are pretty good, but this place always comes into the rotation frequently.

continued on next page



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Lakewood Is Art

Pffffffft: Reviews Of Recent Releases By Local Bands, Pt. 82

by Buzz Kompier
Chris Butler - Got It Togehter! - Future Fossil - 16 songs - CD

The title of this one is intentionally misspelled (it's a joke, you see), so please don't write in to say that the Lakewood Observer is a disgrace to the community or whatever. The first 12 songs on here are the album proper, plus four bonus tracks. I appreciate the sentiment of that, but if you're gonna do that, you need to also release a version that doesn't have bonus tracks, ya know? I mean, I guess I prefer that to Smog Veil leaving between 1 and 4 songs off of CDs for no reason at all

other than to have "download exclusive tracks," but still. Some songs here are contemplative, some are kinda weird (I mean, Chris was in Tin Huey), and the majority of them are pretty catchy (I mean, Chris was in (and wrote the songs for) The Waitresses). I would put the overall genre down as "alternative rock" in a sort of quirky, '90s way that's not entirely mainstream but also not entirely abstract or whatever, especially given the interesting instrumentation. Some have a bit of a They Might Be Giants feel, the "I can't I can't I can't I can't" etc. part of "Late For Work" kinda reminds me of Cake...you see what I'm

saying here? If you're familiar with Tin Huey— or actually, even if you just know The Waitresses— you know that Chris Butler writes with a definite sense of humor. I don't always find that sense of humor agreeing with me, (in the same way that sometimes I just can't get with The Tubes) but it's there and I'd rather have that than something that takes itself too seriously. My biggest complaint here is the length, which I touched on before with the bonus track thing, but actually just applies to the album proper as well. Mr. Butler posits on the inner cover that the problem with the CD format is that there isn't enough...space, which is a good visual joke, but I think sometimes the CD format (as in on the disc itself) has too much space. Oh well. The highlights (including "Songs For Guys," "Late For Work," and "Better Than I Ever Was" (though I actually like the bonus track demo better, funnily enough)) are pretty decent tunes. I don't know how often I'll pull this one out, but it's a perfectly okay listen and I know there are people who will love this kind of sense of humor far more than I, so there you go. One more thing: so, there should've been a version without the bonus tracks, like I said, and there also should've been a deluxe version with the bonus tracks and the cover for that should've been an actual puzzle. That would've been cool. 3.3/5
(chrisbutler1.bandcamp.com)

sings by himself on "Magic Child" is probably my favorite part of the song, even if it's perhaps the least '60s'd-out part. Both decent tunes, but the flip is my preferred side for sure. "Day Glow Lemon Yellow Colored Tongue," while not as rockin' as when I saw them do it live however long ago that was, is certainly a more upbeat one. Good lead guitar (at times it sounds a bit country even though there's some wah on it), good melody, good psychedelic bit at the end, just a good song all around. I would've made this the A side. Here's my big gripe, and maybe you saw this coming: it should rock a little bit more. I know they've got their vibes and whatever, and that's all well and good, but I'm looking for a bit more energy that I know they are capable of exhibiting. On the whole, this EP comes off a little more "indie rock" than their previous outings. That's not a complaint, merely an observation. It's a decent record, three pleasant tunes here and a worthy addition to their discography. 3.5/5
(bluearrowrecords.com)

The L' fuccello Os Singing In The Quartiere, Pepper's Italian Restaurant

continued from page 9

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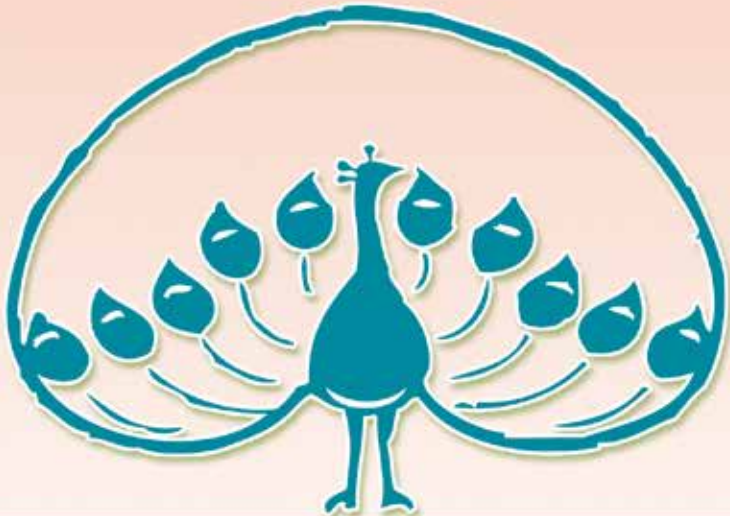
Next time you're in the mood and can't help singing "Everybody Loves Somebody Sometime" share the love and head over to Pepper's. Pepper's utilizes local businesses such as Thirsty Dog Brewery, Holiday Italian Sausage, KB Confections, Schober Vineyards and Fragapane Bakery. The menu is posted online at pepperslakewood.com and they also offer catering, go to pepperscateringlakewood.com. Pepper's Italian Restaurant is located at 12401 Detroit Avenue on the corner of Detroit and Ridgewood. Hours: Mon-Thurs 5pm-10pm, Friday/Saturday 5pm-11pm Sunday 5pm-9pm 216-226-6191

GALLERY LIFE Velvet Hearts Cleveland December 22

by Ivan Kende
Over the decades, their high energy, electrifying vocals, awe inspiring fashion and positive expression have encouraged us to be our UNDENIABLE and UNAPOLOGETIC selves. We celebrate diversity in all its forms, working hard in the LGBTQ community to create a safe haven for artists of all shades of grey. We feature artists, skilled in professional dance, drag, singing and more. Velvet Hearts were title winners in the 2017 Burlesque World Championship.



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Lakewood Fiction

The Rockport Miracles Part 3:
Episode 3 "On A Clear Day You Can Punch A Cleric"

Fiction by
Scott MacGregor

The bells of St. Swithun Church were ringing like mad as Father Marlowe left for his fateful meeting with the Bishop. As I traveled between the priest's residence and the church, a sight coming towards me sent chills up my spine. It was old Sister Mary Leviticus! Four feet and ten inches of sheer terror, she was the meanest, toughest nun to ever don the black muslin. In her glory days she'd commanded a platoon of nun lieutenants but, in 1970, her A-Team had long since hopped on their brooms and flown off to that final wherever it is they went.

We had many nicknames for Sister Mary Leviticus. "Sister Very LeViciousness," "Sister Stay Away From Us" and "Sister I Am Spartacus." Her method of capital punishment came in the form of a breadboard panel administered in the echoey hallways of the school. When she really hated you, she would broadcast your death over the school PA system. Now, in her sunset years, she looked like a hunched over and shriveled version of Godzilla. I knew all of her tricks so I gave her a wide berth. Sure enough, just as I was coming astride she took a swing at me with her cane and bleated, "NO RUNNING IN THE SCHOOLYARD!"

I entered the church vestibule and ascended the stairs that led to the bell-tower. My heart was beating fast and I was anxious to swap stories with Wren about all that had happened in the previous 24 hours. I didn't see Wren right away when I'd reached the top of the stairs but as I worked my way around the bells I saw her looking out a windowless opening in the tower.

I yelled, "Wren-It's me!" but she couldn't hear me. I worried that she'd gone deaf like some kind of drop-dead gorgeous version of Quasimodo. I threw my trusty ACE pocket comb at her and it bounced off the top of her head and flew out of the bell tower. Startled, she spun around and broke into a wide smile when she saw me. She pulled wads of cotton out of her ears and hugged me like I'd never been



hugged before. Then she took my hand and said, "QUICK-COME LOOK!! YOU'VE GOT TO SEE THIS!!"

Meanwhile, 10 miles away in downtown Cleveland, Father Marlowe paced impatiently outside the Bishop's office. "How much longer is he going to keep me waiting?" he barked at the Bishop's secretary. "I told you," she replied between puffs on her cigarette, "His Most Reverend Excellency will see you as soon as he finishes his phone call," Father Marlowe replied with a disgusted, "Hmmp!"

Finally, the old pastor was instructed to enter the elegant, mahogany paneled office of the Bishop. The man himself was seated on a gold-leaf throne chair in the corner by his desk. He was wearing his Bishop garb consisting of a white cassock with a fuchsia mini cape and a fuchsia beanie cap. "Please sit down, Jim" said the Bishop, "we have to talk." Father Marlowe pulled over an adjacent chair and sat down and said, "I sense a screw job coming down the pike," Unfazed, the Bishop asked, "Did the recent storms do any damage to the school or church?" Marlowe shook his head and said, "No, but I'm sure you heard about the deaths that occurred last night and perhaps they'll be more from this morning's storm." The Bishop shook his head with a look of concern and asked, "Will St. Swithun pick up any of that upcoming funeral business? The Parish could

use the money." Father Marlowe shook his head in disgust, took a long breath and said, "You really are an asshole."

"Hmmp!" said the Bishop. "Jim," he said, "I'll get to the point. The time has come to turn the reigns over to a younger man. If 'Swithun' is to have any chance, we'll need fresh blood with new ideas. It can only come from someone more youthful and better educated than yourself." Marlowe leaned forward in his chair and said, "You can't take me out now. I can still do this job!" The Bishop shook his head and replied, "You're done. Father St. Charles will be taking over immediately."

While Father Marlowe and the Bishop were arguing, Wren and I were staring out of the St. Swithun belltower. "Look" said Wren, "Look at the lake!!" "What lake?" I replied, "I can't see anything." Wren nudged me with her elbow and said, "That's the point, silly!" Just then, the droning noise that we woke up to that day began sounding: "Bweeeeeeee-Bomp... Bweeeeeeee-Bomp." It was the coastal foghorn singing its melancholy song again. An enormous fog bank was charging in over the north coast of the town. Within minutes, Rockport had been swallowed up by a giant white void. The windowless belltower offered no protection against the mist so we dropped to the floor with our backs to the wall, just as we had the night before

at Lakefront Park. The fog became so dense inside the tower that we could barely see each other. "Well," said Wren cheerfully, "Here we are again!"

Meanwhile, the eventful meeting going on at the Bishop's office had turned violent. Father Marlowe had grabbed the Bishop by his fuchsia mini-cape with one hand and was punching him in the face with the other. As the Bishop tried to defend himself, Marlowe slapped the beanie cap off his head and it sailed across the room like a Frisbee. It took three young seminarians to pull Father Marlowe off of the Bishop.

Bleeding profusely from his nose the Bishop cried out, "I told Mom & Dad to put you in the asylum years ago!!!" As the seminarians dragged Father Marlowe out the door, he screamed back, "OUR PARENTS SPOILED YOU ROTTEN-YOU LITTLE PUNK!" The Bishop yelled out, "YOU'RE DONE! YOU HEAR ME? YOU'RE DONE!!" Father Marlowe then issued the following warning, "If you put THAT CREATURE anywhere near St. Swithun, I WILL PERSONALLY SEND HIM TO HELL...WHERE HE BELONGS!!"

"WHAT ON EARTH DID YOU TELL HIM?" asked the secretary as she held pressure on the Bishop's bloody nose. "I told him he was losing his parish," said the Bishop in a faux Porky Pig voice. "But...", he continued, "I also told him that Father Fry was going live at St. Swithun for awhile." The secretary shook her head, "That was stupid. No wonder he broke your nose! The Father Fry announcement could have waited." The Bishop groaned in pain and asked, "Do you really think our parents spoiled me rotten?"

Next: Part 3: Episode 4: "Strangers In The Night"

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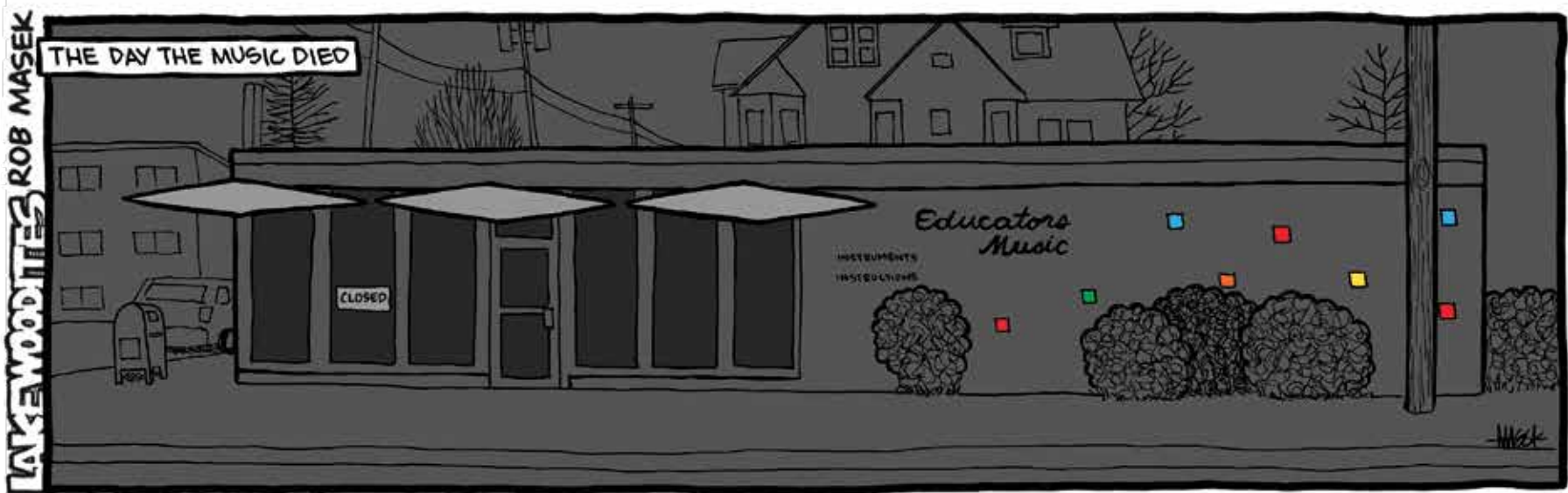
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