

Southeast OHIO

WINTER | SPRING 2016

Brushcreek's Boy Wonder

Meet one local
racetrack's drivers,
cars and community

The Wilds in Winter



Relics and Restoration
in Shawnee's
Tecumseh Theater

Tattoo artworks,
a tool-sharing library and
a scrapbooking B&B are all
In Your Neighborhood

The lingering lore of
**The Counterfeit
House**

Behind the Bite
with pizza and
donut entrepreneurs,
spirited distillers and
vineyard venturers



Notes from the Editor

Between the scores of roadways and the seemingly endless rolling hills of Southeast Ohio, there are always plenty of surprises tucked amongst its seemingly consistent settings. It seems a common thread among these untold stories about unseen landmarks, unexplored areas and under-the-radar restaurants and drinking establishments is the concept of reinvention.

Reinvention can manifest itself in the most literal of ways, with the restoration of Shawnee's Tecumseh Theater (pg. 29), or the creation of Athens boutique, Honey, one shop-owner's response to a devastating fire. It can be the raising of a buzzing, busy winery from the former fields of cows and cud, with the Hocking Hills Winery being the best example (pg. 5).

Reinvention can also be a response to the cycles of time, age, and season. Bob Lutz (pg. 43) sought a new direction in retirement, taking a journey from bleachers to beaches.

We see this willingness to adapt elsewhere in our region. If you've ever wondered what happens to the animals of The Wilds when winter

chills hit, we have those insights (pg. 35) And (spoiler alert!) we felt warm and fuzzy learning about the work of the animals' dedicated caretakers.

For some, reinvention is a means of survival, a way of honoring the past while creating a new hope for the future. Dogwood Pass' Frog and Sharlene Montgomery (pg. 27) use their Wild West-style town and its constant additions to ensure a future for their family. In Peebles, one racer at Brush Creek Motorsports Complex (pg. 19) drives on, ever forward, to honor the family and friends who have fought or fallen in the United States military.

Reinvention can even mean turning legal gains into financial and business assets, with some seeking to gain some green with Ohio's marijuana laws (pg. 15) or a signature brew from a newly-legal, local micro-distillery (pg. 7).

Reinvention is rarely easy and is often impossible without determination, strength and a sense of community. This issue of *Southeast Ohio* illustrates how our region maintains a remarkable meeting of all three attributes.

We hope you enjoy these stories about moving forward, all of which are inherently rooted in our collective past.





A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louis Baragona".

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Louis Baragona

MISSION STATEMENT

Southeast Ohio strives to spotlight the culture and community within our 21-county region. The student-run magazine aims to inform, entertain and inspire readers with stories that hit close to home.

GIVE US A SHOUT

 @SEOOhioMagazine
 Southeast Ohio Magazine

EDITORIAL OFFICE

E.W. Scripps School of Journalism
1 Ohio University
Athens, OH 45701-2979

ON THE COVER

11-year-old Harrison Hall sports a winning smile for good reason, see page 19.
Photo by Andrew Downing

ON THE BACK

Dresden's Village Victoria Scrapbook Retreat inspires hearts and crafts, see page 10.
Photo by Alexandria Polanosky



Southeast OHIO

WINTER | SPRING 2016

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Louis Baragona

MANAGING EDITOR

Isabella Karamol

COPY CHIEF

Carissa Mavec

DEPARTMENT

EDITORS

Kelly Fisher
Katherine Pinter
Natascha Toft

WELL FEATURES

EDITORS

Louis Baragona
Isabella Karamol

WRITERS

Travis Boswell
Corttany Brooks
Maria DeVito
Andrew Downing
Andrew Gaug
Cassie Kelly
Danielle Podlaski

DESIGN DIRECTOR

Lizzie Settineri

DESIGNERS

Kayla Breeden
Andie Danesi
Sarah Erickson

DIGITAL EDITOR

Suhyeon Park

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Rob Berry
Royle Mast
Alexandria Polanosky
Logan Riely
Tyler Ross

FACULTY ADVISER

Dr. Elizabeth Hendrickson

CONTENTS

3 VIEW: The Streetside Spectacle of Athens' Halloween

BEHIND THE BITE

- 5** Hocking Hills Winery's Vintage Venture
- 6** The Dough That Binds McHappy's and Napoli's
- 7** The Micro Magic of Local Distilleries
- 8** Steiner's Speakeasy is License to Chill

IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- 9** Athen's Bead Store a Tour of Beauty
- 10** Dresden's B&B a scrapbooking paradise
- 11** Bidwell's Tattoo Museum Shows Ink Through the Ages
- 12** It's Hammer Time for the Athens Tool Library
- 13** Jackson County's Riddle on the Rocks

TALKING POINTS

- 15** Marijuana legislation—Ohio's Burning Issue
- 16** The Queen Bee of Athens Lingerie Store, Honey
- 17** Deep Concerns for Buckeye Lake's Businesses
- 18** Food Bankrupt in Vinton County

FEATURES

- 19** The Cars and Drivers of Brushcreek Motorsports Complex
- 23** Blennerhassett Legends of the Isles
- 27** Old West replica Dogwood Pass is One Family's Frontier
- 29** Shawnee's Tecumseh Theater a Diamond in the Dust
- 35** Where The Wilds' Things Are (when it's cold out)
- 37** The Feigned Fortune of Adams County's Counterfeit House
- 41** WHAT'S YOUR STORY? Coaching Legend Bob Lutz

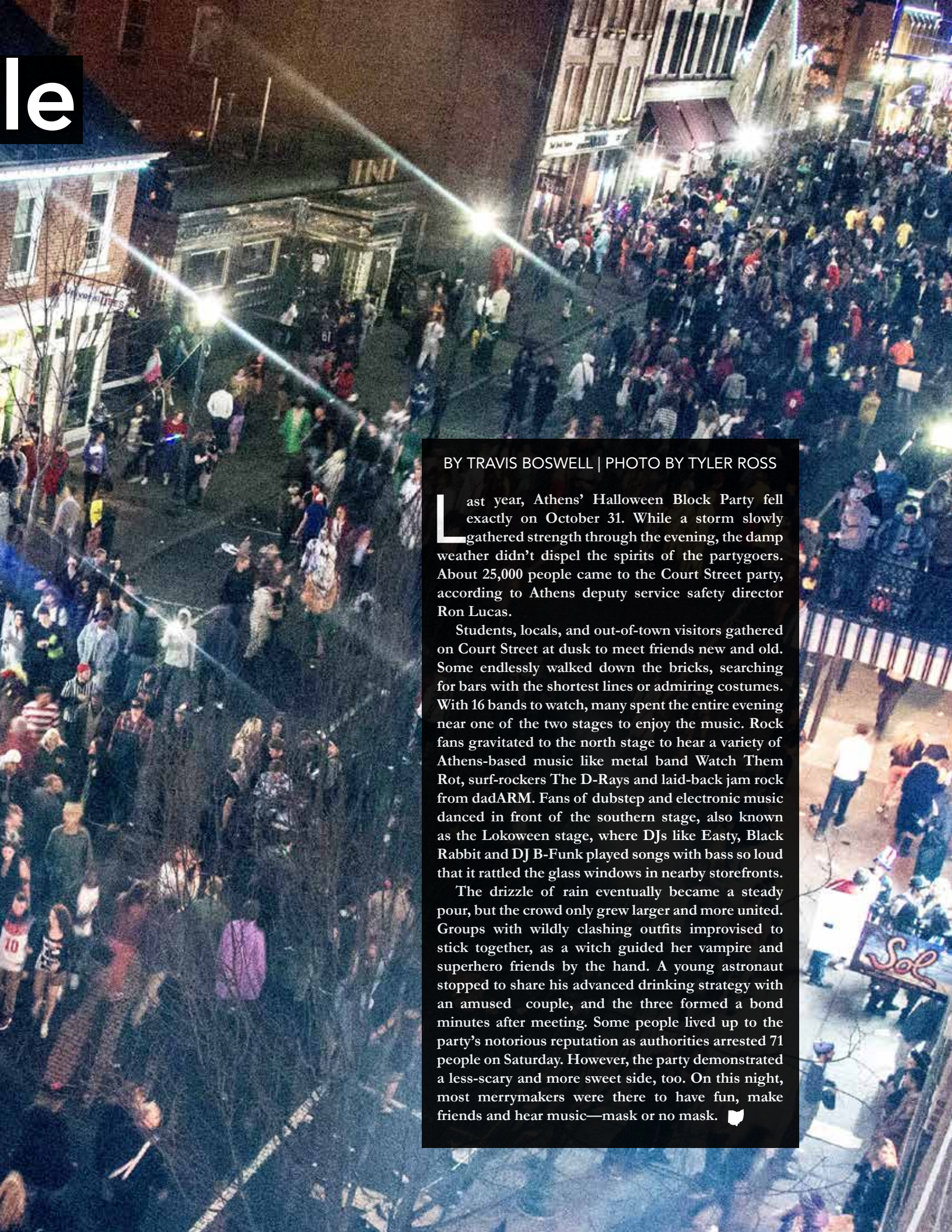
Streetside Spectac

Athens' Halloween night block party is always people-watching paradise



PHOTO | Court Street filled with costumed partiers on Halloween night.

le



BY TRAVIS BOSWELL | PHOTO BY TYLER ROSS

Last year, Athens' Halloween Block Party fell exactly on October 31. While a storm slowly gathered strength through the evening, the damp weather didn't dispel the spirits of the partygoers. About 25,000 people came to the Court Street party, according to Athens deputy service safety director Ron Lucas.

Students, locals, and out-of-town visitors gathered on Court Street at dusk to meet friends new and old. Some endlessly walked down the bricks, searching for bars with the shortest lines or admiring costumes. With 16 bands to watch, many spent the entire evening near one of the two stages to enjoy the music. Rock fans gravitated to the north stage to hear a variety of Athens-based music like metal band Watch Them Rot, surf-rockers The D-Rays and laid-back jam rock from dadARM. Fans of dubstep and electronic music danced in front of the southern stage, also known as the Lokoween stage, where DJs like Easty, Black Rabbit and DJ B-Funk played songs with bass so loud that it rattled the glass windows in nearby storefronts.

The drizzle of rain eventually became a steady pour, but the crowd only grew larger and more united. Groups with wildly clashing outfits improvised to stick together, as a witch guided her vampire and superhero friends by the hand. A young astronaut stopped to share his advanced drinking strategy with an amused couple, and the three formed a bond minutes after meeting. Some people lived up to the party's notorious reputation as authorities arrested 71 people on Saturday. However, the party demonstrated a less-scary and more sweet side, too. On this night, most merrymakers were there to have fun, make friends and hear music—mask or no mask. 🇺🇸



Vintage Venture

Hocking Hills Winery owners cultivate family roots to land into growing vineyard.

BY ANDREW GAUG

LEFT | Blaine Davidson gives a tour of the winery's fermentation facilities. Photo provided by Hocking Hills Winery.

You could say that Max and Loris Davidson's legacy is growing in spirit. The now-deceased patriarch and matriarch once operated a cattle farm for over 30 years on the 110-acre, Logan-Hocking land that is now the Hocking Hills Winery. And the business owners are the direct descendants of the couple.

"All my family members are investors," says CEO and winemaker of Hocking Hills Winery Blaine Davidson, Max and Loris's grandson. "My parents are all owners. I, my wife, brother and sister-in-law are the managers. We [four] run it on a day-to-day basis, but if we are doing something like bottling or picking grapes or anything like that, the whole rest of the family is involved."

By 2008, Blaine's grandparents had passed away and the farm—at that point mostly hay-producing—was left to the rest of the family. They knew they wanted to keep the land agricultural, but wanted to try something different. They chose to start a vineyard, and the family planted their first 600 grapevines in May 2008.

Then, Blaine and Allison were living in Columbus, where their full-time jobs were located. The couple commuted to Logan several nights during the week and every weekend to tend to the grapes.

"Basically, during the months of May through November, the plants need touched at least once a week," Allison says. "Touching" the plants entails pruning and training vines, thinning clusters of grapes and pulling off excess leaves.

The couple soon realized the importance of daily vineyard maintenance, and in February 2009 they moved to Logan and commuted to work. Last October, Blaine left his job with Nationwide Insurance to make managing the winery his full-time job.

For the first few years of business, the Davidsons sold their grapes to local wineries like Shade Winery in Shade. But by 2011, the family began discussing starting their own, and in 2013, they family had the money to begin planning.

Two years later, when doors opened for the winery's April 4 grand opening, family members considered their journey. "It was a great feeling to say we've made it this far,

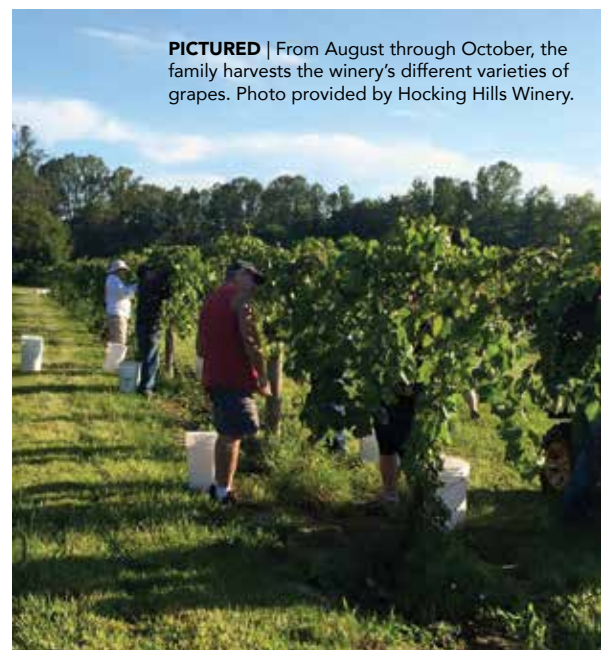
and to say that we used to be a cattle field and now here we are with our winery," Blaine says.

Today, Blaine's wife, Allison, is the tasting room manager. His brother, Drew, serves as CFO, and Drew's wife, Laura, takes care of human resources. The vineyard now holds about 2,000 vines, and the winery employs two part-time workers to maintain the vineyard.

The winery has yet to sell wine 100 percent produced on site. It offers wines produced from its own grapes, but crushed at Shade, and other grapes and juices are imported from California and Chile. However, the fermentation process and bottling occur at the winery.

At the time of the opening wine's production, the winery did not have a full yield of grapes due to issues like birds and frigid winters damaging vines. Since, the grapes have been netted to keep animals from feeding, and the plants are rebounding from damaging winters.

The land, it appears, is still in very good hands. 🇺🇸



PICTURED | From August through October, the family harvests the winery's different varieties of grapes. Photo provided by Hocking Hills Winery.

The Dough that Binds Us



From humble beginnings, one family's business maintains a simple ingredient: love

BY ANDREW GAUG
PHOTO BY ANDREW DOWNING

LEFT | Desserts vie for attention in a Parkersburg McHappy's. The stores receive fresh product every day by 5 a.m., and food production for both McHappy's and Napoli's Pizza is 24/7/365, except Christmas day.

Wayne Waldeck asserts the success of Napoli's Pizza and McHappy's Donuts was not his initial goal—rather a business opportunity to help his mother Madge find purpose. The two companies that he and his brother, William, started have expanded from their two original locations to 14. They now serve Athens and Washington Counties and West Virginia's Wood County.

The Waldeck family business narrative begins in 1961, in Belpre, when the brothers lost their father, Ralph, in a construction accident. Five years later, while Wayne was working for the Internal Revenue Service and William was attending the University of Cincinnati, their mother continued to struggle with the loss of her husband.

By 1966, Wayne's job had him traveling around the world, but William decided to leave college and return home to Belpre to help open a little pizza shop called Giovanni's—Napoli's original name. The brothers, as partners, wanted to help their mother cope with the loss of her husband and keep her busy. They established Giovanni's with that goal in mind.

"She made the world's best pizza in our opinion," Wayne says. "So we said, 'Okay let's open up mom a pizza shop.' [We had] no intent to go in there to make a business out of it."

Wayne says in 1966, pizza was more novelty than convenience, and in Belpre, their store was "the only game in town." One year later, the Waldecks opened a second Napoli's across the river in Parkersburg, West Virginia. Today, Napoli's has nine locations.

By 1970, managing the stores had become so demanding that Wayne left his job with the IRS to make Napoli's his full-time commitment. Two years later, the Waldecks were hungry for another culinary challenge, so the trio dusted off her old donut recipes and went to work again.

When Wayne and William were growing up in Belpre, their mother made donuts early in the mornings and

sold them at restaurants for additional income. So after the family opened a Napoli's store on Seventh Street in Parkersburg, they decided to use the building's extra space to establish the first McHappy's. The family wanted to call their bake shop Happy's Donuts, but because of previous trademarks, they added "Mc" to the title.

Wayne says there are only two food companies in the world whose trademark starts with "Mc," and in the 1990s, McHappy's—with five stores—was a big enough success that the other one took notice. "We spent almost a half-a-million dollars fighting [McDonalds]," Wayne said. "When you're fighting a company as big as McDonalds, it's tough, but to make a long story short, we won our case."

To be able to stick around for so long, not to mention go toe-to-toe with national chains, the Waldecks have maintained original tastes in their food. Their recipes, which were all created by Madge before she died in 1979, have been only slightly adjusted to compensate for healthier ingredients. All bread products are preservative-free and the businesses are in the process of using exclusively non-GMO flours. The companies already use non-GMO tomatoes, trans-fat-free oils, and they are working towards using all hormone-free meats. "Using all that is expensive, but we feel it's worth it to give our customers the best quality," Wayne says.

Donuts, pizza dough, pasta, buns, sauces and more are made around-the-clock at the stores' commissary in Belpre, and fresh product is shipped out to all 14 stores every morning via their own delivery trucks. "We operate like the big chain stores as far our business format is concerned, but when it comes to the production of our food, it is like a mom-and-pop [store] where all our food is fresh and natural," Wayne says.

Napoli's and McHappy's may have started out as small endeavors, but 50 years of successful operation seem proof of the Waldeck's enduring legacy. 🍷



LEFT | Kelly Sauber explains his distilling process while tasting a sample of his home-made gin.

Ohio's recent micro-distilling laws make waves in the local spirit world.

BY ISABELLA KARAMOL
PHOTO BY PAUL DEL GESSO

Micro Magic

In the four years since House Bill 243 passed, Ohio micro-distilleries have more than merely grown in spirit, they've increased ten-fold.

The bill allows distilleries that manufacture less than 10,000 gallons of spirituous liquor to sell to a personal consumer. Permits, ranging in price from \$2 to \$400, are obtained through Ohio's Department of Commerce Division of Liquor Control.

Prior to the bill, two micro-distilleries operated within the state, and now Ohio is host to over 30 micro-distilleries. While many of these new businesses face financial challenges associated with hefty state spirit taxes, micro-distillery owners such as Kelly Sauber, owner and founder of Fifth Element Spirits, continues to see the glass half full.

Sauber, a master zymurgist—a scientist who studies the chemical process of fermentation in brewing and distilling—discovered his passion for fermentation in 1991 when he began brewing in the comfort of his own home. His studies included all areas of fermentation, including cider, mead, wine, beer, whiskey, tequila, rum and vodka.

Today, Fifth Element Spirits sits on 200 acres of land, located amidst Shade's winding roads and secluded hills. Sauber says his goal for the distillery is perfecting the fermentation process, while bringing local, near-at-hand grains, fruit, herbs and roots into all of their products.

To that end, Fifth Element Spirits' suppliers are all within a 22-mile radius of the distillery. "We are trying to use our friends' and neighbors' products," Sauber says. "If we can be successful, we are hoping to bring up our neighborhood, our region and our friends up, as well."

Cowdery Farms, a fifth generation family farm in Meigs County 20-miles from the distillery, provides the corn for Fifth Element's vodka and gin. "Kelly has been a friend of mine for a long time, and he said he was going to open his distillery and needed corn," Larry Cowdery, of Cowdery Farms says. "I said, 'I grow corn,' and he said he would buy it if I could grow what he needs." Cowdery Farms also provides produce to other Southeast Ohio businesses, including Casa Nueva in Athens and several small businesses in Nelsonville.

Sauber says 85 percent of the distillery's produce is sourced from regional farms and businesses, such as Shade Winery, Integration Acres in Albany, Starline Organics in Coolville and several other nearby farms and businesses. The other 15 percent, which is mainly malted barley, is imported from Wisconsin.

In addition to the distillery, Sauber and his wife, Deanna Schwartz, also own and operate the West End Ciderhouse in Athens. "It's two full-time jobs for both of us," Sauber says with a laugh.

Sauber says that they hope to eventually hire one full-time employee, preferably someone with a chemical engineering background, who understands the science inherent to the distilling process.

Next on Fifth Element's product roster is barrel-aged bourbon and brandy this upcoming winter and summer. "We will be getting some new varieties with the barrel-aged spirits that are fuller flavored and colored from the wood," Sauber explains.

For a master zymurgist such as Sauber, such enterprise is intellectually stimulating. But for Fifth Element Spirits' patrons, it is mainly delicious. 🍷



ABOVE | Steiner's Speakeasy storefront.



ABOVE | Steiner's Speakeasy owner, Tara Gillum, proudly shows off a tattoo on her arm of her late grandfather, Benjamin Steiner.

License to Chill

Steiner's Speakeasy serves locally sourced concoctions in a prohibition-style ambience, no password required.

BY CARISSA MAVEC | PHOTOS BY NATASCHA TOFT

Tara Gillum, the 33-year-old owner of Steiner's Speakeasy in Chillicothe, says her idea for the retro drinking establishment derives from a plan she and her now-deceased grandfather shared. "I just happened to see this place come up for sale the very next month after he passed, and I kind of thought that was an omen," Gillum says. "It was time to make that step."

Steiner's Speakeasy opened June 2, 2014. Steiner's is named after Gillum's grandfather, Benjamin Steiner, and Speakeasy comes from her love for the prohibition era evidenced by prohibition bottle and lantern lighting. "We're that modern-day renegade," Gillum says.

But don't expect bathtub gin here. Steiner's specializes in handcrafted cocktails and craft beer. The cocktails menu changes seasonally, so last summer's choices were infused with berries and pineapples. For winter, Gillum's drinks will use homemade simple syrups, for example, vanilla salted-caramel simple syrup and figs. "Think rich in spices and layers of flavor," Gillum says.

Steiner's also specializes in made-to-order mule cocktails, which use ginger beer as their base. Gillum says that any liquor a customer wants can be put into a mule of his or her choosing. Steiner's buys most of its ingredients from farmer's markets so weekend drink specials are based on those ingredients.

But one drink always served in Steiner's is General Sherman's Hooch, the speakeasy's special and secret punch.

The pink concoction comes served in a mason jar. "We don't let people have more than three of them," Gillum says about this signature—and strong—drink.

But the drinks are not the establishment's only draw. Steiner's was named the no. 5 Americana music venue in the country by American Roots magazine, and its stage hosts both local artists and nationally touring artists, such as Zach Deputy. "I feel like the community has embraced our music program in general. It's almost like if we have music, people are here, and that's exciting," Gillum says.

Steiner's Speakeasy is a small bar, with only two staff members and no televisions. Gillum says the idea is that customers talk to the people around them, listen to music together and bring back that sense of community. Pictures of family align the walls, including a photograph of Gillum's late grandfather and his wife on their wedding day. There is a small stage to the left of the main entrance, enhancing the space. The bar is set in the back of the room, taking up almost the entire left side. Steiner's small space lends it an intimate and easy feel.

Gillum says her true motivations reside in the idea of community. "We care about our customers; they aren't just money in our pocket. We want people to feel like they're friends here, that they can come here and be comfortable," Gillum says.

No doubt, such sentiment would make Benjamin Steiner proud. 🍷



PHOTO | Jo Merkle, co-owner of Beads & Things, clasps a necklace made with a Tigers Eye stone in her shop on a Saturday morning.

Tour of Beauty

Bead shop owners build culture and craft connections.

BY KELLY FISHER | PHOTOS BY KATE HILLER

In the little pink house with white trim on North Shafer Street, just beyond the buzzing patio of West End Ciderhouse, the contents of a craft store—Beads & Things—likely represent more cultures than all other Athens-based businesses.

Although co-owners Jo Merkle and Phil Berry shy from attempting an accurate tally of how many countries they have traveled to in the 25 years since their store opened, the global influence is everywhere.

Upon entering the store, customers hear soft, rhythmic music and see walls and shelves lined with bowls and strands of colorful, tiny beads. Jewelry, artwork and beads from the U.S. and countries such as China, Morocco and Peru coexist within the store's two adjoining rooms.

Quartz crystal from Arkansas, Native American masks and Mexican wood carvings share the spotlight with the individual beads and strings of beads shoppers buy to make a bracelet, necklace or anything else.

The craft store area, or “parts store,” as Merkle refers to it, sells items like string and clasps to create jewelry. “Possibilities are paralyzing,” she says. “You can make all sorts of stuff.”

It can certainly feel overwhelming to walk into the store Merkle bought 25 years ago for her business and see endless troves of colorful beads, some dating from the 1800s, knowing you will only select a few for a project.



ABOVE | Customers chose beads displayed throughout the store in baskets, jars, cabinets and on hanging strings.

Customers can either work on projects in-store with the help of the Beads and Things staff or take the parts home.

Merkle and Berry say they enjoy seeing international students come into the store and find something from their home country. “It’s like ‘world unite,’” Merkle says.

The two recalled interacting with a woman from Nigeria shopping in the store one day, and a graduate student from Indonesia the day before that.

But the shop’s co-owners cite their travels abroad as an additional opportunity for priceless cultural exchange. Berry recalls the time they were in the Moroccan desert.

“We’d show them pictures of the store, and the house,” Berry says. “And the guys there were like, ‘I can’t believe there’s all those trees!’ It’s a nice way to connect with people.”

Hearts and Crafts

An old Victorian house in Dresden creates the perfect retreat for relaxing and memory-making.

BY MARIA DEVITO | PHOTOS BY ALEXANDRIA POLANOSKY

Sometimes starting a new chapter of one's life seems akin to reading a mystery novel. What happens next? Will she find happiness? Yvonne Hammond asked herself such questions in 2008 after moving to Newark from Chillicothe and she was struggling emotionally. "I left my job, my family, my church, everything," Yvonne says. "I didn't realize how depressed I had gotten."

With both her children raised, Yvonne says she felt unsettled, until she attended a quiet church retreat through a women's church group in January 2013. "My dreams were to have a family, I raised them and then that was it."

But the retreat did inspire Yvonne to think beyond the ordinary.

After journaling and praying, Yvonne realized that her dream was to open a business where guests could come together to create memory filled albums. "Just like that, it was like God just said that's what you're doing," she says.

Her husband, Ron, says he suggested to Yvonne, in the past, that owning and operating a scrapbook retreat was the perfect fit for her. "It just made a lot of sense," Ron says. "And I just thought ... not only would (she) be very, very good at it, but very, very happy doing it."

In May 2013, she and Ron purchased a nearly 150 year old home in Dresden—the Village Victorian Bed and Breakfast—and renamed it the Village Victorian Scrapbook Retreat. Three months later, they welcomed their first guests. "There have been a few headaches, but it's been such a joy," Yvonne says. "I just absolutely love it."


The small bed and breakfast sleeps eight guests, and there is a separate living area for Ron and Yvonne. All of the guest rooms have a theme: ocean, garden and angel. The front rooms of the house are set up for scrapbooking and have eight stations, complete with lamps for extra light. Most guests stay for a weekend, Yvonne says. And while women are busy decorating pages or doing other crafts, Yvonne cooks all the meals for guests—something the guests love.

Rosie Lozano and five of her friends stayed at the retreat for a second time in September, and she says Yvonne's cooking is what brought them back. Lozano and her friends have tried going to other hotels to scrapbook, but she says the Village Victorian, "just feels like home."

Yvonne reports similar regulars. "I have a couple ladies, that they've been here, I think, five times," she says.

She says guests come to relax and have a good time, aspects Yvonne tries to deliver. "I love to hear the laughter because then I know they're having fun," she says. "They

don't have to do anything, and when you're a mom that's the whole thing, that you don't have to cook. People want to clear the table, and I'm like 'no just go!' They don't have to do anything but just enjoy themselves."

She says when they were starting the business, some people thought she was taking on too big a commitment. Now, two years in, they can see it is her passion and that it works. "Every time somebody says to me you've found your calling, then I know that I've done the right thing," she says. 



TOP | The nearly 150-year-old house sits in the quiet streets of Dresden. **MIDDLE** | Yvonne Hammond, owner of the Village Victoria Scrapbook Retreat poses for a portrait on its porch. **BOTTOM** | Rosie Lozano (bottom right corner) and friends make use of the retreat's scrapbooking stations.



Ink Through the Ages

Tattoo museum a tribute to body arts work.

BY KATHERINE PINTER
PHOTO BY MARIE SWARTZ

LEFT | Amidst his vast collection of flash tattoo sheets, museum owner Rich Thomas admires a vintage magazine print about tattoos.

Tucked away in the rolling hills, off of US-35 W, just west of Gallipolis, a small, golden building sticks out among the neutral green and brown scenery. Were it not for its striking yellow exterior, the boxy structure might blend into the bound of shops along Jackson Pike in Bidwell. However, its eye-catching color belies its distinct content: all things tattoo.

However, if you want to book an appointment, look elsewhere. The Ohio Tattoo Museum is a showcase for tattoo history, and its adjoining Bicknee Tattoo Supply Company only sells to licensed tattoo artists. Owner Rich Thomas took over the location two years ago, but he has 20 years of experience in the tattoo industry.

Thomas says his interest in body art started in high school after his friend performed a free hand style tattoo on him. He soon evolved from hand poked pieces and joined the artistic side of the industry. By the 90s, Thomas was a seasoned tattoo artist himself. He cites this time as the beginning of his museum aspirations.

In 1999, Thomas acquired a vast collection of tattoo design sheets—“flash sheets”—that once belonged to legendary collector Al Cooke, a Cleveland business man. According to Thomas, Cooke himself was never tattooed; however, he was on friendly terms with many prominent tattoo artists, during the Roaring 20s and on to the 1950s. Thomas says attaining even a portion of Cooke’s collection was akin to finding the holy grail of tattoo history.

“I thought, ‘I’ve got to display this stuff.’ I just kind of had a room in the back of the shop, and I’d already been collecting stuff since the mid-80s,” Thomas says. “I was crazy about tattoo sheets. I had a big collection of machines already, antique and otherwise.”


As Thomas’ collection grew and expanded beyond the Cooke collection, so did its prominence in his life. Eventually, he closed his tattoo parlor and refocused solely on the museum and supply business. Today, the museum’s plush, red velvet ropes encircle the perimeter of the room,

highlighting the classic color scheme of the design sheets behind their glass cases. Black and white photographs are dispersed throughout the room, detailing iconic individuals in the tattoo industry, along with the standing cases placed throughout the center of the room that showcase antique tattooing machines and other artifacts.

Thomas’ friend and museum supporter Kevin Riley sees the museum as an asset to the tattoo community. “It’s really important that the people who have awesome collections of artwork don’t just keep it a secret and not allow the public to get a chance to appreciate it,” Riley says.

Since its opening, visitors from Australia, Europe and South America, among others, have travelled to the museum. With the recent reopening of the museum, Thomas expects the attendance to continue in a similar fashion. George Keeler, an employee and longtime friend of Thomas’, also feels that the new location will entice guests. “The response has been good. It’s a destination point for tattooers ... It’s impressive the amount of people that have made the journey to come,” Keeler says.

Those supporters are key figures in the museum’s most recent chapter. In February 2015, Thomas started a Kickstarter campaign that raised \$15,739 for the museum in just 45 days. “It’s been a heartwarming experience. People I had no idea would help came out from the tattoo world,” Thomas says. Because of the campaign, the museum is entirely patron-backed, and their names grace the plaques hanging next to the museum’s entrance.

While the funds allowed Thomas cushion to expand his operation, the project was never about extra flow. “It’s like a labor of love, not really a money maker,” Thomas says. But despite the success of the reopening, one of the most surprising elements of the experience goes beyond the museum itself, but the very nature of its contents. “I’ve been collecting long enough that stuff I didn’t think was an antique is now becoming an antique,” Thomas says with a chuckle. And given the ever-evolving nature of the museum’s contents, his work has infinite potential. 

Hammer Time!

The Athens Tool Library builds opportunities to share and sustain.

STORY AND PHOTO
BY NATASCHA TOFT

Ever wish you had full and legal access to your neighbor's tools? Such sentiments align with the philosophy of Athens Tool Library, the first of its kind in the Appalachian region. Located next to the ReUse Industries on Columbus Road, the library offers locals and non-profit organizations an opportunity to borrow a wide variety of tools through an annual membership.

Inspired by the concept of MakerSpaces—the idea of having a place where people can gather to share knowledge and resources while working on projects—the tool library's executive director, Zach Holl, and his coworkers want to provide local people with essential tools they otherwise cannot afford or store. Holl says the space is for community sharing and community building, literally. “We have an interest in creating economic development from the waste stream, in a way that reduces our communities’ carbon footprint,” Holl says. By upcycling old tools, “You extend the lifecycle of materials and the energy embodied in those materials.”

The project was created after exploring similar programs and is funded by Athens area sponsors. “It is a local project, but it is based on lessons we have learned from other communities,” Holl says. The ReUse thrift store next door is also one of the project's main generators. “The revenue we earn from thrift store sales supports rent, insurance, utilities, staff costs and other forms of overhead,” Holl says.

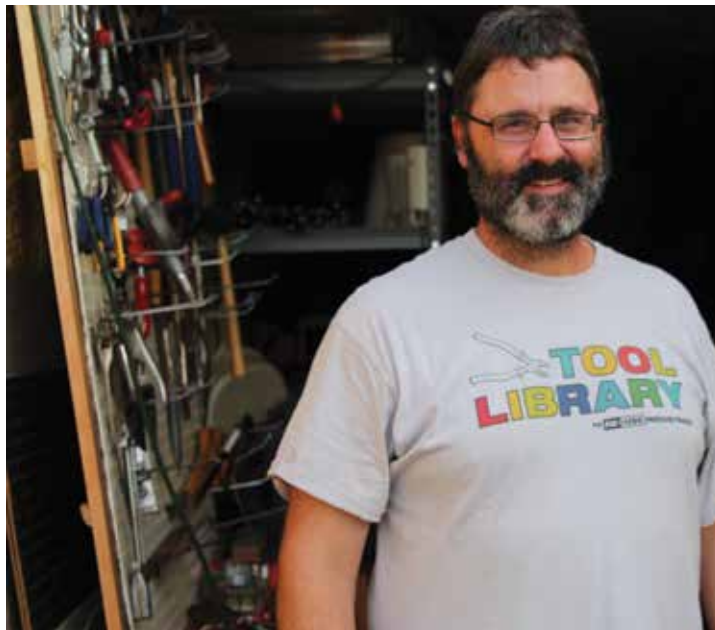
According to Holl there is more than 70 tool libraries in America, however Athens Tool Library is one of the very few located in a rural area. “It is very hard to support something like this with the very low population density in a rural area,” Holl says. However, the founders raised enough resources to attract Zachary Swick from the Appalachian Transition Fellowship (ATF) Program to help them start the project. “The ATF program was set up by a group of philanthropic entities to recruit young potential leaders who have an interest in changing the economic future of this region,” Holl explains. “He [Swick] gets a lot of credit for this.”

With more than 20 years of being a homeowner, Holl understands the struggle of not only buying, but also storing tools at home. “People are coming who can't afford the tools, or they see it's good value. Maybe they don't have a place to store it or they have some kind of community sharing ethic,” Holl says. “Some people just think it's a cool project.”

According to employee Luke Black, there are over 500 tools available. “A little less than half were paid for brand new, some of them were bought used, and then we have a whole section of donated tools,” Black says. Athens Tool Library signed up several annual members within its first few weeks of opening. The yearlong membership costs \$100 and allows members to borrow 10 tools for up to a week. But the tool library is just one building block in Holl's community plan. “The vision is to create a workspace along with tools and equipment ... This is just the first step in that direction,” Holl says. 🇺🇸

“It is a local project, but it is based on lessons we have learned from other communities,”

Zach Holl, Executive Director



ABOVE| Zachary Holl stands in the Athens Tool Library, the third rural tool library in the country.

Athens Tool Library information

Tuesday-Thursday: 5-8 pm
Saturday: 9 am- 2 pm

740-589-7160
reusetoollibrary@gmail.com

100 Columbus Road — Athens, Ohio 45701
(Located with ReUse Industries Thrift Store)



PHOTO | Michael Strothe of Jackson County's historical society and his son mark the petroglyphs with charcoal to darken them up for a photo that would capture all 37 drawings in one photograph, the only time it's ever been done. Strothe says using charcoal will not speed up erosion because it is organic and soft.

A Riddle on the Rocks

Mysterious markings by the Fort Ancient Indians are an enduring Jackson County enigma.

BY KELLY FISHER | PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JACKSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Amidst the twists and turns of Jackson County's backroads, near the village of Leo, is a wooden pavilion next to a nature trail. The wooden shelter's bannisters feature past visitors' carved initials.

But the markings from approximately 1,000 years ago are the real draw.

The Leo Petroglyphs are a collection of about 37 drawings carved into the rocky ground under the shelter. The engravings depict animals, people and an array of symbols, but their individual and collective meanings remain an enigma. Under the roof of the nearly 80-year-old structure, the carvings are protected from eroding elements such as

rain and snow. The site, the Leo Petroglyphs State Memorial, is owned by the Ohio Historical Society and Ohio History Connection and managed by the Jackson Historical Society.

The petroglyphs are credited to the Fort Ancient Indian tribe, which has no known written language, Michael Strothe of the Jackson Historical Society says. This aspect is central to why the petroglyphs remain a mystery.

"It's said that Native Americans can interpret those, but if they can, they don't mention it," Strothe says. "But they seem to know a lot more about this than what we're familiar with."

This riddle dates back to 1892, when a farmer who owned the land took a walk and noticed a piece of loose



LEFT | Historians have guessed that this marking, perhaps the most famous petroglyph, is meant to resemble a buffalo because a nearby trail intersected with what used to be known as the Great Buffalo Path. However, it is difficult to uncover any meanings because the Fort Ancient Indians have no known written language.

BELOW | This birds-eye view of the petroglyphs shows all of the encryptions--resembling birds, buffalo, foot prints and more--in a single photograph, the first and only time it's ever been done. Toward the center of the site, it is still evident where someone chiseled out one of the petroglyphs and stole it. The encryptions are protected by a tall fence in a pavilion-like structure that has been standing strong for 80 years. It is a federal crime to deface Native American property, such as the petroglyphs.



sod on a rock. After the farmer kicked away the sod, he discovered the first petroglyph. He contacted F.E. Bingman, an amateur archaeologist in Jackson, who uncovered the rest of the petroglyphs.


But before any other archaeologists could investigate, someone took a chisel and cut out one of the drawings from the rock. Strothe says no one ever identified the person or the petroglyph, but the chisel marks are still visible at the site today.

The theft induced Bingman to use cheesecloth and muslin to trace the remaining petroglyphs so they would always exist, and today, those reside at the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus.

By 1896, William Mills of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society conducted an exploratory investigation of the area, taking many photographs of the

petroglyphs that are now located at the Historical Society in Columbus. He then published an extensive research paper about the petroglyphs.

Strothe says that he and his colleagues believe that it would make sense if the Fort Ancient Indians had their village on higher ground, perhaps the hill next to the petroglyph pavilion. He says they plan to invite Jarrod Burks, Ph.D., director of geophysical surveys at Ohio Valley Archaeology Inc, to survey the surface of the hill to search for signs of a village.

They hope it could lead to more answers about the Fort Ancient tribe and the petroglyphs. "This is one of the smallest parks that the historical center owns, but I think it's one of the most beautiful," Strothe says. "It's really quite magnificent. The area right here is alive with history." 



Ohio's Burning Issue

The ballot box blues of marijuana legalization.

BY TRAVIS BOSWELL

Talking Points

The past decade's debate on marijuana legalization showed America's great diversity of ideas and beliefs. Attempts at legalization didn't gather much traction until Californians in 1996 voted to legalize medical marijuana throughout the state. Since then, most states have taken some action toward legalizing marijuana.

Today, medical marijuana is legal in 23 states. Four states have legalized marijuana for medical and recreational use, allowing its sale in some retail stores. However, Ohio lags behind on the trend, with no official legislation allowing sales of marijuana in the state. One group was behind the push to make Ohio the first state to legalize both forms of marijuana at once.

ENTER RESPONSIBLEOHIO

ResponsibleOhio was the main group pushing legal marijuana in the state. The group's investors spent millions and gathered 306,000 signatures to get the Issue 3, the Marijuana Legalization Amendment on the 2015 ballot. Even with the support they gathered, the amendment's plan for distribution divided voters. ResponsibleOhio secured 10 facilities to grow marijuana, with 10 separate investors paying at least \$2 million each to own a facility. The amendment would allow 1,100 retail stores to sell marijuana in Ohio. The amendment also had a provision allowing Ohioans to grow a small amount of marijuana plants for personal use. The possibilities for tax revenue and employment were touted by the group, especially in the poorer countries of southeast Ohio.

"We are estimating that we'll add about 30,000 jobs in retail and product manufacturing," said Faith Oltman, ResponsibleOhio's spokeswoman. "There is a testing facility slated for Athens that will add jobs. By the time, the market stabilizes in 2020, we're expecting to bring Ohio \$545 million annually in tax revenue."

ResponsibleOhio implemented a highly organized and well-funded campaign to gain support, including television ads and bus tours to Ohio colleges. However, their support was never absolute. Some Ohio citizens agreed that legal marijuana is long overdue, but disagreed with some of the unclear details of Issue 3. They disagreed with allowing one company to control all marijuana trade, and some even took issue with the group's mascot "Buddie," an costumed, cartoonish superhero with a marijuana plant for a head. This uncertainty led to an opposing marijuana legalization group, and the issue that was meant to stop Issue 3.

MARIJUANA MONOPOLY

Legalize Ohio 2016 is a group that supports legalizing marijuana, but not in the way ResponsibleOhio detailed. They campaigned with materials reading "Yes on 2, No on 3" for the past few months.

Issue 2 appeared alongside the Marijuana Legalization Amendment on November's ballot. Its text prohibits the creation of a monopoly, oligopoly or cartel when selling a controlled substance. It's a direct counter to Issue 3, even if the language doesn't mention marijuana sales or ResponsibleOhio by name. Issue 2 was mostly proposed to stop ResponsibleOhio from having sole ownership of marijuana production and sale as a countermeasure against the "marijuana monopoly." Legalize Ohio 2016 has also created their own amendment for next year's ballot as an alternative to this year's Issue 3.

Instead of locking down commercial growing to 10 facilities, business owners will be able to obtain a license to grow and sell. Legalize Ohio saw that hemp farming and sale weren't included on Issue 3, so they added it to their amendment so farmers could profit from hemp. Legalize Ohio 2016 organizers are still gathering the necessary signatures to add their amendment to a future ballot. This year's conflict was between voters who fully supported Issue 3 and those who want to wait for an amendment that suits their views better, without the controversy of a monopoly attached.

NOVEMBER DILEMMA

At the 2015 state election, Issue 3 failed to pass and the countering Issue 2 passed. For now, recreational and medical marijuana is prohibited in Ohio. ResponsibleOhio is planning to return to the ballot in 2016 and is surveying voters about amendment changes.

Opposing group Legalize Ohio 2016 organizers are still gathering signatures in support of the Cannabis Control Amendment, and it's possible that both amendments will compete on the same ballot in a few years.

The early support gathered by ResponsibleOhio indicated that Ohio voters are ready for legal marijuana, but election day polls showed that voters are willing to wait until the amendment's terms are reasonable and not complicated with unclear terms. If an amendment makes Ohio the first state to legalize medical and recreational marijuana at the same time, the results in this swing state will likely influence how the rest of the country votes on this burning issue. 🍃

Queen Bee

“Honey” owner Meredith Allen builds up both her business and her customer’s self-confidence.

BY CORTTANY BROOKS
PHOTO BY ROYLE MAST

Left | Meredith Allen, co-owner of Honey, strives for a female-friendly take on lingerie and sex toys—she wants it to be about female empowerment.

If “kismet” refers to destiny or fate and “honey” is a term of endearment, the story behind Athens’ newest lingerie store seems poignant. Meredith Allen, who previously managed now-closed Kismet, found her solace in opening Honey—a women’s boutique in Athens that sells a diverse collection of lingerie and clothing, and jewelry just waiting to be paired with any purchase. Tucked in the store’s back is a small, private adult specialty section, “Wild Honey.”

Honey doesn’t replicate Kismet, but is in part Allen’s response to the fire that burned out Kismet’s building and multiple others on West Union Street in November 2014. “It puts things into perspective. I never expected that a year later I would be here looking out at the burned remains of my old life,” Allen says, wiping a tear from her eye.

Allen co-owns the store with her boyfriend, Wes Thompson. The store, which opened in mid-July on West Union Street, approaches a woman’s sexuality as something to embrace, and Allen says she wants to create a positive and comfortable atmosphere for women. “It’s nice to shop in a place that promotes a female-friendly environment,” Allen says.

She emphasizes merchandise, while sexual in nature, doesn’t necessarily have to be about how another person perceives you. Allen believes her items are an avenue of confidence for any woman. “I want it to be about female empowerment,” Allen says. “You don’t need a boyfriend to wear lingerie. Whether you’re going out at night or to a business meeting, it’s about loving your body.”

Allen says she wants Honey to be a store devoid of the often-negative images of women on product packaging. To achieve this, she removes what she feels are disempowering images from displayed products.

She keeps adult products such as vibrators in the store’s “Wild Honey” section behind a white-shuttered partition for customers 18 years and older. Allen, who grew up in a Catholic household, says she understands that such material



isn’t something all customers want to talk with their moms about. Although Allen doesn’t display these products up front, she is upfront with her thoughts about their use. “It should be something that you can shop for and not feel shameful,” Allen says. “Every girl should own a vibrator.”

The majority of items and products in Honey are either fair trade or made in the United States, and merchandise sizes are mindfully inclusive. With that being said, Allen is more than happy to special order any size or design of lingerie for customers who can’t find it in-store. “Models in general are smaller, and I think that sends the wrong message,” she says. “You should be able to decorate your body, no matter what size you are.”

The fact that the store is half a block from Ohio University’s gateway aligns with her personal philosophy. “It’s important to have something like this on campus where it feels safe and comfortable. A place you can ask questions, and it’s not weird,” Allen says.

Mallory Ferguson, a senior studying health administration echoes such sentiments, adding, “Honey is a place where you can find things you normally wouldn’t in Athens. The owner really wants to create an environment where her customers feel comfortable and find what they are looking for.”

By offering vintage high-waisted pin-up panties to the contemporary chic little black dress, Honey seems to hit an underdressed fashion sweet spot. 🍯



Deep Concerns

Buckeye Lake's businesses face murky waters after state sanctioned conditions.

BY MARIA DEVITO
PHOTO BY PATRICK CONNOLLY

LEFT | Chris Alexander poses for a portrait inside his Buckeye Lake marina, Alexander's Landing, which has been in his family since 1870.

Chris Alexander has spent his entire 60 years living and working on Buckeye Lake, the 2,363 acre body of water that straddles the Licking, Fairfield and Perry County borders. Alexander—owner of the marina Alexander's Landing—says the restaurants, bars and marinas lining Buckeye Lake's coasts are what draw people to it. "That's what everyone likes about the lake: something to do, besides just ride around in circles in your boat," he says. "That gets old pretty quickly."

But for the lake's business owners, what's really old—and financially devastating—is the lake's dam. Their predicament started in March 2015, after a United States Army Corps of Engineers report detailed the serious deficiencies in Buckeye Lake's earthen dam. The state is replacing the dam, but the process will take years. In the meantime, the lake's water level has been left at winter pool level to minimize the chances of the dam failing.

The winter pool level, however, is three to four feet less than the summer level, Alexander says, which makes a big difference on the already shallow lake. "They've made the lake basically unusable," Alexander says. "You can get small boats out there if you're very careful and know the lake, but it's scared off 99 percent of the people."

According to Alexander, last summer's boat traffic was akin to that during the winter. He says that historically, the Fourth of July is their high season. "It's almost dangerous, there are so many boats out here," he says. "There was no one out this year. We saw maybe a couple kayaks."

With less traffic on the lake, businesses on the water are struggling. "We're working ... three times harder for less than half the money," Alexander says. "I don't mind work-

ing. We put in long hours our whole lives here, but it's the reduced revenue that really hurts."

Alexander and his wife, Grace, own and operate the marina—his family's business since 1870. To cut operating costs, the two didn't hire their normal help this past summer.

And they weren't alone. Tracy Higginbotham, who owns the Buckeye Lake Winery with his wife Laura, says they reduced their staff from 54 in 2014 to 23 last summer. He says he and his teenage sons have picked up jobs like lawn care at the winery to save money.

Unlike the Alexander's long history at the lake, the Higginbothams opened their winery in July 2013. "I think I'm faring better than most out there," Higginbotham says. "But we definitely saw a 50 percent decrease ... from Memorial Day through Labor Day for sure."

Mark Bernhard, an owner of The Port Lounge and Smokehouse, says although he appreciates customers who continue visiting the lake's businesses, "it just takes a lot more people than that."

Bernhard estimates his business was down 60 percent last summer from previous summers.

"Before, I never knew how much money came in off the lake because the cash register doesn't determine that," Bernhard says. "But now you know which door they're coming through, so I learned a lot this year."

Despite the unspecified timetable for dam repairs, Alexander, Bernhard and Higginbotham say they want to stick it out. "We don't have a choice. We're all in," Higginbotham says, adding he and his wife have leveraged everything for the business. "The alternative is unthinkable." 🍷

Food Bankrupt

Imagine driving 30 minutes to the nearest grocery store. For Vinton County residents, it's a reality.

BY CASSIE KELLY | PHOTO PROVIDED BY ASTI PAYNE

The United States Department of Agriculture defines a “food desert” as an urban or rural area without access to fresh produce and healthy food. The USDA measures rural access as within 10 miles, placing Vinton County squarely in this category. There has not been a grocery store in the county since early 2014, but several different groups have come together to provide sustenance.

The Southeastern Ohio Foodbank, which serves Athens, Hocking and Vinton counties, has organized a few different options for Vinton County residents with the surplus food they purchase from Ohio farmers through federal and state funding. In August, the food bank through the help of Hocking Athens Perry Community Action Program (HAPCAP), hosted its first Vinton County mobile market.

The market, held in McArthur, sold over 13,000 pounds of food in a two-hour period. Asti Payne, development coordinator for the food bank, says residents loved it and that some were even purchasing extra for canning and freezing. “We thought that was pretty awesome to see them being resourceful and making it last and taking advantage of the opportunity,” Payne says.

Organizers say they hope to schedule more mobile markets. However, the food bank has a limited number of trucks, making it challenging to transport produce out to rural areas.

Another HAPCAP outreach is to provide daily nutrition to children who rely on free and reduced lunches during the school year. The organization’s Summer Feeding Program provides the region’s shelters, churches and food pantries with access to these meals. “There is no enrollment or application process, kids can just show up and have a meal,” Payne says.

The elderly in Athens also struggle with limited access to nutrition. The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a long-standing program for low-income residents over 60 years old. Carla Saum, CSFP operations specialist, says that the program has seen a recent increase in participants since the grocery store closed its doors.

About 200 residents in Vinton currently receive a monthly box of groceries from the CSFP. The parcels contain two boxes of dry cereal, two bottles of fruit juice, four cans of vegetables, two cans of fruit, two pounds of cheese, milk, rice or pasta, peanut butter or beans, beef chili, beef stew or canned chicken, and salmon or tuna. Saum says the boxes are worth between \$50 and \$60. “They always thank us so much and say how much they rely on the food we give them,” Saum says.

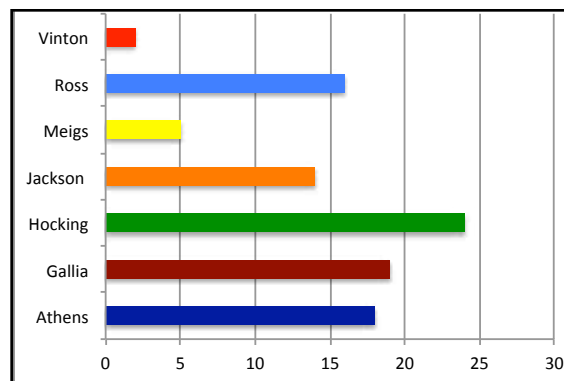


ABOVE | The summer feeding program provides children with lunches five days a week during the school break.

Many homes in Vinton are multi-generational, making it especially difficult to afford to put food on the table. Saum says although food stamps are an adequate option, many residents feel stigmatized by them. “This program seems to draw more than food stamps because they don’t feel like such a close eye is watching them,” she says. “A lot of times it’s either going for medicine or food and they don’t have to make that choice with this program.”

For now, the residents of Vinton hold out hope for a new grocery store. State Representative Ryan Smith, has applied for the Healthy Food Financing Fund, which subsidizes grocery stores in low-income areas in need. But, in the meantime, the community is working together to feed each other, proving that the power of neighborhood friendliness still lives on. 🇺🇸

Total number: Grocery and convenience stores per county



CARS AND DRIVERS

One small racetrack in Peebles brings together drivers and fans to share their love for racing.

But here at Brushcreek Motorsports, that passion transcends any need for speed.





PHOTOS AND STORY BY ANDREW DOWNING

To find a rural racecar track at night, you can either look for the glow of industrial floodlights or listen for the low decibel rumble of high performance engines. However, this particular group of very loyal racing enthusiasts who gather just south of highway 32 near Peebles every Friday and Saturday night during the summer and early fall, need no directions.

This is a dirt track race, and much like a NASCAR race, fans have their favorite drivers, whom they support by waving signs and wearing t-shirts bearing the driver's number. The men and women yell in excitement and curse with frustration as the cars speed on late into the night until the final race is over. This is Brushcreek Motorsports Complex and it's driven by tradition, passion and sheer energy.

Finishing up its 15th year, Brushcreek is a well-oiled machine, much like the cars that race on its 3/10 of a mile track. And similar to how a racecar's parts must seamlessly work together to ensue optimal performance, Brushcreek demands a careful coordination between its employees and participants.

On race nights, concession stand workers hand out tacos-in-a-bag (their bestselling item) and ice-cold Pepsi (their official sponsor). Tom Partin, who started the complex 15 years ago, takes care of the business financials and waters the track before racetime. His wife, Melissa, handles the tickets, guides the drivers and cars into the pit and ushers the audience into the track's wooden bleachers that look like they're straight out of a high school football stadium.

But perhaps the most insightful route to this rural racetrack experience is through the key individuals of Brushcreek; in this case, promotor, Steven Partin, driver and army veteran, Glenn East and 11-year-old driver, Harrison Hall.

STEVEN PARTIN: BRUSHCREEK'S ENGINE

Prior to start time, every night at 6:30, all drivers must gather for a meeting about the night's rules and regulations. This is when everyone's gaze focuses on Tom and Melissa's son, Steven, who has been the site's promotor since he was 14.

Standing high on a rock that sits in front of one of the concession stands, the 18-year-old gives the orders for the rest of the evening. Drivers listen to be sure they correctly hear the times of their events. The night's races follow a schedule, so the spectators know when to expect the different classes of cars. At Brushcreek, there are five different classes of cars typically raced: modified, sport modified, sprint, mini-sprint and legend. Modified cars are the largest, engine-wise; sport modifieds are the next step below; sprint cars are the fastest and most recognizable by their wing-like side features; and legend cars are built to resemble automobiles from the 1930s.

After the meeting is adjourned, drivers hurry back to their cars while Partin bolts up into a wooden box at the top of one of the sets of bleachers. He readies for his second role as the race announcer, a position he's unwillingly worked toward since he was a child. "Every night I would sit on the ground and play with the cars. I would have a race set up, and I would just play for hours and practice announcing," Partin says. "I would copy what they said on the videos of some of the races that my parents would buy."

These days, anywhere between 200 and 300 people might hear Partin's race night commentary, and he doesn't disappoint. As the cars come around the turns, Partin yells with enthusiasm-soaked metaphors that bring the crowd to its feet. And when Partin is firing on all cylinders, that is when Brushcreek is at its best.

Partin often works with other local racetrack promoters to create events that could bring in spectators for everyone. Although Brushcreek is much smaller in size and attendance than the other tracks, Partin sees it as something that makes Brushcreek distinct.

"Everybody knows each other, whether they race in the same class or not. You see the other drivers around town," Partin says. "They race with each other; they go to work with each other. These teams and drivers save up their money all week and all month long sometimes to bring the whole family out to race. It's a home away from home for some of these guys."

GLENN EAST: A RACE FOR REMEMBERING

Under the brim of a worn, red hat that features a bald eagle holding an American flag in its talons, is a pair of eyes that have seen life's losses. These eyes, the ones that witnessed the first hours of the 9/11 attacks at Ground Zero and

months later saw best friends die in Afghanistan, belong to Glenn East. For nearly half of his life—1987-2011—East was enlisted in the military. If asked, he'll proudly recite the exact time that he served his country; 23 years, 8 months and 22 days. At the time of his retirement, East was listed as Sgt. First Class. Now, four years into his civilian life, East finds serenity in dirt track racing at Brushcreek.

"For me, it's a stress reliever. I really love it and look forward to it every weekend," East says, as he checks his car's valves before a race.

In a field of vehicles that offers an array of colors and designs, East's car stands out among the pack. The yellow coat of paint covering the majority of it shows support for the military troops that fight for freedom, he explains. But as he begins describing the meaning of the red bars that hold the car together, he pauses and looks away. The surrounding activities buzz while East collects his thoughts as he fights back emotions evoked from his combat memories. "I get messed up when I think about it," he says. "It's for the blood that we shed. I lost some good friends over there."

Each of the decals covering East's modified car tell stories about his life. There's the sticker that shows the silhouette of a man with the words "Free Fallin'" under him, symbolizing the 850 foot fall that East encountered after his primary and backup parachutes didn't deploy during a jump. There's a decal on the car's back that lists all 15 members of his family and extended family who have served in the military. Beneath the names is a decal showing a group of soldiers hoisting an American flag against the backdrop of a sunrise over the ocean's horizon. The number 87 decals on both sides of his car represent the year that he—at 18 years old—joined the military.



ABOVE | Partin looks on from the press box as he announces the night's race, **TOP RIGHT** | East observes the pit as it fills up with cars and their drivers, **RIGHT** | The decal on the back of East's car shows his family members and their military careers, **OPPOSITE PAGE** | Hall stands ready for a night of racing.



With his head back in tonight's race, East sips a Mountain Dew under the stadium lights that shine bright off his POW patch on the left shoulder of his race suit. He watches as his car gets fine-tuned for the feature race later in the night. For East, Brushcreek's weekly races are a family affair, much akin to military service. His daughter, Acacia, and his son, Thomas, are there every week to help with the car, along with his cousin Ray—who had the car waiting for him when he retired in 2011. His wife of 25 years, Velora East, sits on a hill that overlooks the track to watch him compete.

This summer, with the help of his family, East took control of the lead at Brushcreek in his respective class, only to finish second because of a crash in the final race. Winning isn't everything to him, it's about fun.

"We're just a low budget team running against the big boys," East explains, with a grin on his face. "We have a blast. My daughter always tells me before I go out to have fun."

The big boys that he refers to are the racers that bring in trailers that have as much money put into them as East does into his car. They often have two levels that can transport two cars at once; a stark contrast to the small, raggedy trailer that East hauls around.

East, now in his late 40s, says he plans to drive for the long haul. "When I die, I'll be watching from heaven."

HARRISON HALL: A DREAM RACER

About 100 feet away from where East and his family have parked their cars, a brown-haired boy wanders around, at the moment more intrigued by his Green Apple flavored Blowpop than racing. The lollipop-toting 11-year-old is Harrison Hall, a fifth grader from Circleville, who has over 7,000 likes on a Facebook page dedicated to his racing. Hall is hardly a novelty act; in fact, he's a mini-celebrity.

He has been a boy amongst men since he was eight years old, when he started racing go-karts and won 9 out of

the 12 races he entered. He has since moved to the "sport modified" and "modified" classes, increasingly showing his prowess on the dirt tracks. And when it's race time, Hall switches off the childlike attitude and focuses on one thing: speed. "I love going fast. It's like sliding on ice, I love it," Hall says with a smile.

What makes Hall so special is not the mere fact that he is racing—and winning—at such a young age, it's what he does with his winnings. Every dollar Hall earns here is donated to the Children's Dream Racer foundation, which provides small NASCAR simulators for children going through cancer and dialysis treatment.

The machines Hall funds are Dream Racers, equipped with an IV pole and a flat screen TV so the kids can play games and pretend to be a driver during the medical procedure. The simulators cost approximately \$9,500, and the ones from Hall are painted orange with the number 99 on both sides, resembling the car that Hall drives at Brushcreek.

Hall sounds like a seasoned professional when he describes his contributions. "They deserve to have fun at the hospital while they're getting treatment so they can keep their mind off of it," Hall says. "I think I would probably want to make a hospital for sick kids when I get older."


Between races, Hall plays with his younger brother, Jackson and eats candy with adolescent zeal. As the night progresses, his attention shifts toward winning the last race of the evening, the feature race. As he climbs into his car, he concentrates on his end game. "What I really think about is how it is in the hospital, and I just wonder how they're [kids] doing," Hall says. "Sometimes, I really wonder if they are in the Dream Racer."

BRUSHCREEK IN THE FUTURE

If one pokes around Brushcreek's website, they'll see an advertisement that lists the complex for sale, with an asking price of nearly a half a million dollars. However, it doesn't mean that the track is going under or is facing any money woes; rather, the family likes to keep options open. The Partins have plenty of financial stability through their six other family businesses, so the listing for Brushcreek is merely an indicator of their passion for the complex's possibility.

"The track has been for sale for 15 years," Partin says. "If somebody else could come along and has bigger and better ideas, we are not aside from letting them take over. I still will be in racing for the rest of my life, no matter if we sell the race track or not."

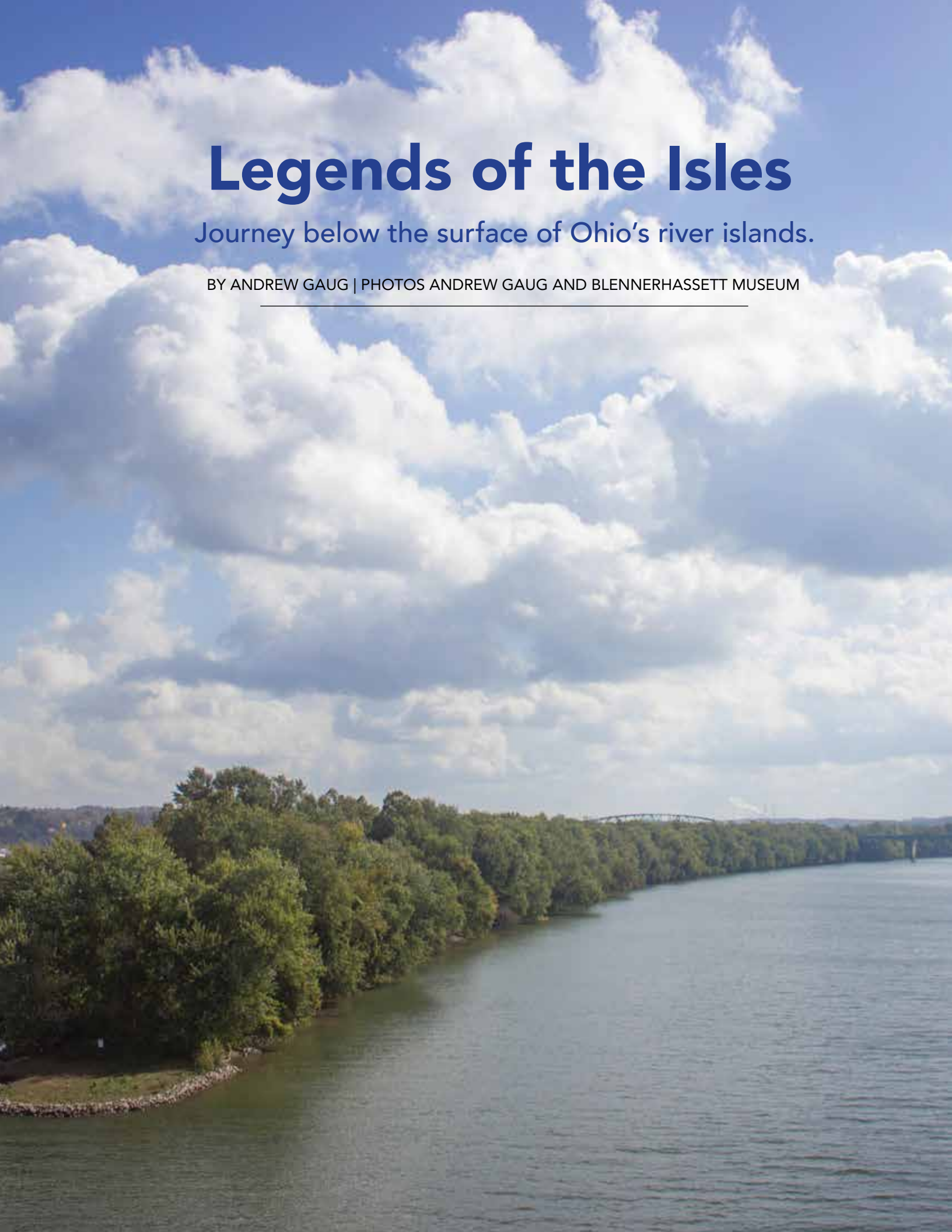
Partin announces the last race of the night, then fits himself into his small, red and white legend car with the number 10 on each side. A few minutes later, he's through the finish and exhausted, but nothing less than satisfied. "I just enjoy good racing and seeing fans have a good time," Partin says.

As it nears 1 a.m., Partin is the last inside the stadium. After he turns out the lights, his mind shifts to the upcoming week, when he will repeat his Brushcreek work schedule; the same routine that his father started 15 years ago, and the one Steven Partin now loves himself. 

Legends of the Isles

Journey below the surface of Ohio's river islands.

BY ANDREW GAUG | PHOTOS ANDREW GAUG AND BLENNERHASSETT MUSEUM





To a visitor driving on State Route 7 along the Ohio River, the five tree-covered islands separating the Parkersburg and Marietta areas might inspire a moment of curiosity, and maybe even a quick Google search.

And for many residents of the region, the Buckley, Neal, Muskingum, Blennerhassett and Vienna Islands are merely a backdrop to their routine commutes.

“They don’t even know they are there, let alone how they would get there,” Dr. Ray Swick, historian at Blennerhassett Museum in Parkersburg, says with a laugh.

Buckley, Neal and Muskingum are just three of 22 islands that are a part of the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge, which is managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The mission of the refuge system is to protect the wildlife habitats and preserve natural resources for future generations. Matthew Magruder, the visitor services manager at the Fish & Wildlife Service center in Williamstown, West Virginia, says migratory birds and freshwater mussels both rely on the refuge’s physical offerings.

The islands function as nature’s version of a rest stop for the birds as they travel thousands of miles across the United States every year. “If we don’t have as many [islands] as we do then those gaps get longer and longer and it makes it more difficult to make that trip,” Magruder says.

But mussels are the islands’ year-round residents, and living in the river along the islands are over 40 different species of freshwater mussels, six of which are endangered. The mussels are essential to the river’s ecosystem, as they help clean it. The tiny mollusks reduce sediment, silt and pollutant buildup by filtering water and digesting plankton—thus maintaining proper levels of the organism.

The islands are also a regulated habitat for another animal—humans. Every day, between an hour before the sunrise and an hour after it sets, the islands—accessible only by boat—are open to visitors. During these daylight hours, visitors can hike, swim, fish and hunt with proper permits, take photos and generally explore, as long as it is not destructive.

The history of these islands is as rich as its soil, and for the 200 years prior to the islands joining the refuge system in the 1990s, their list of owners and uses regularly changed. However, the 381-acre Blennerhassett is certainly the most storied. The island features Blennerhassett Mansion, a reconstruction of the former home of Harman and Margaret Blennerhassett, known for its extravagance and accompanying scandal.



The story goes that in 1796, the Blennerhassetts arrived in Pittsburgh from Ireland to start a new life in America. With plenty of money in their pockets, they had their eyes set on settling in Tennessee, the Union's newest state.

Before long, the two became aware of the brutal reality that was the American West, contrary to what they had been told was full of "Gardens of Eden." Rather than settling in Tennessee, the family decided to plant their roots in the upper Ohio River Valley, and in 1797, they arrived in Marietta to live along the Ohio River.

"It was one of the great rivers in the world," Swick says. "[Thomas] Jefferson said it was one of the most beautiful rivers in the universe. The land was extremely fertile and the most fertile lands were on the [river] islands."

In 1798, the Blennerhassetts purchased 169 acres of Belle Isle, and by September of 1800, their mansion was completed. Standing behind meticulously manicured lawns and gardens was a 12-room, white mansion that contained about 7,000 square-feet of living space. Trees were cleared in the front lawn of the home so passersby on the river could see the impressive Palladian-style home well from afar. The Blennerhassetts wanted to make an impression.

But the family's stay in their home was short-lived after they were accused of supporting former vice president Aaron Burr's conspiracy to form an army in the west, a treason against his own nation. Blennerhassett offered Burr financial support and his own home as a base of operations, and with militia coming to the island, the family deserted their homestead in 1807.

In March 1811, the island was under the ownership of Thomas Neale, who farmed hemp on the land and used

the mansion to store around 20 tons of his crop. It is said that his slaves started a fire for warmth in his cellar, and the fire spread to the hemp and, eventually, it burned down the house. Historians like Swick note the event as curious, given the slaves had means to start fires for warmth in their quarters.

The single-family ownership of the island lasted just more than a decade. After the house's destruction, the island was divided into five farms and rented out for the next century. DuPont purchased the island in 1966, for water and aquifer purposes in its plastic manufacturing.

To this day, the whole island is still owned by DuPont, and the mansion site is leased to the state of West Virginia.

Swick credits American bicentennial fever that was sweeping the nation in the 1970s for the idea of reconstructing the mansion and making a state park out of the island. "The federal government was just shoving money at localities," he says.

And Blennerhassett was considered one of the most significant sites in the region's history. Between 1973 and 1974, state archaeologists dug up the mansion's ruins and uncovered its foundation stones.

In 1980, the island opened as a state park, similar to today's refuge islands. Besides natural sites, the visitors could see the foundation stones. In 1984, reconstruction of the mansion began, and on July 4, 1991, the rebuilt Blennerhassett mansion opened to the public.

With the foundation stones uncovered, architects knew the dimensions of the house's ground floor. A visitor's journal tipped them off that the room layout on the second floor mirrored the ground floor.

“Blennerhassett has the best recorded history of any island in the river.”

Dr. Ray Swick, Historian

But it was travelers' accounts, court records and the Blennerhassetts' own writings that filled in most of the remaining holes. For example, architects knew how many windows were in the house and their sizes because they have records from when Harman was purchasing windows. “Blennerhassett has the best recorded history of any island in the river,” Swick says. Anyone associated with it always recorded plenty of information.

For Swick and the rest of the staff that were involved in the rebuild, those records were like a mosaic.

ABOVE | The main section of the house is in the center. The Blennerhassett's summer kitchen is to the left and Harman's study is on the right.

BELOW, TOP | Although the curved staircase inside the house's entryway conforms with the surrounding decor, the placement of its original staircase remains a mystery.

BELOW, BOTTOM | Blennerhassett Museum's sternwheeler, The Island Belle, takes visitors on a 20-minute ride to and from Blennerhassett Island.



Eventually, they obtained enough information to assemble most of the picture.

The front three rooms of the main part of the house are the most accurately reconstructed rooms. To the right of the main entry room is the lower drawing room, with polished black walnut panels from floor to ceiling. But while there is still a lot known about the rooms, there are still unknowns.

For example, although the entryway's wide, spacious and curved staircase to the second floor is attention-grabbing, Swick says that the museum staff still is not sure exactly where the original stairs were. “There are still mysteries that this house has not given up,” he says.

Along with the original foundation stones, the house holds 15 original artifacts like three alabaster pieces that were found in Akron, Ohio, and a piano that was found in Gallipolis. When the Blennerhassetts deserted the mansion, they could take few possessions with them. Months after their departure, their belongings were auctioned off and scattered hundreds of miles.

All said and done, the mansion's Federal EDA grant-funded reconstruction cost almost \$1 million.


Like the refuge islands, Blennerhassett is accessed only by boat. The difference is that visitors must purchase a sternwheeler ticket to reach the island. On the island, guests can tour the house, rent bicycles, take a horse-drawn carriage ride around the island, visit the gift shop and have a picnic under shelters.

According to www.blennerhassettilandstatepark.com, the island draws over 50,000 visitors annually. Swick believes the island continues to draw in visitors because of its unique story, which he calls a micro-cosm of American history. Though it is most known for the period that the Blennerhassetts inhabited the island, much more has happened on the little strip of land.

Native Americans inhabited the island up to 13,000 years ago. Civil War incidents occurred on the island, as did bootlegging wars. “There was excitement at all times,” Swick says. “Whatever was going on in the rest of the nation, you will find examples [on Blennerhassett].”

“You drive past them, you see them, but you don't really think about what is possible to do out there,” Swick says.

While our country's history constantly shifts, the islands continue residing in the Ohio River, unmoving and constant. Sometimes those traits escape our notice.

In this case, you just have to look. 



ABOVE | One section of the property, including the Range Office, Dentist, Mining Supply Store and Dance Hall, all of which have been built in the past three years.

A Family's Frontier

"Frog" and Sharlene Montgomery may look like 1800s throwbacks, but their focus is on creating their family's future.

BY DANIELLE PODLASKI | PHOTOS BY ROYLE MAST

While most couples share common interests of rooting for the same sports teams, playing tennis or attending concerts, Mike "Frog" and Sharlene Montgomery are a little different. They are the proprietors of Dogwood Pass, a replica of a Wild West town, located in Pike County.

Their interest in designing and constructing buildings of a working Old West town turned into so much more. Dogwood Pass has grown far beyond what Mike and Sharlene had ever imagined. "We never saw this as a business, it was just a hobby," Sharlene says.

The story of how Dogwood Pass came to be begins 22 years ago, when the land that Dogwood Pass is built on was all woods. The couple cleared a little spot on the land to camp, and decided to get married there. At their wedding, all the guests were dressed-up in 1880s style clothing. Mike was dressed in his mountain man costume, while Sharlene was the Indian maiden, riding into the ceremony on horseback. "To be here 22 years later and to have that start is just so fulfilling and peaceful," Sharlene says.

The land the couple was married on was a large family-owned farm, where Mike grew up riding horses and hunting. One day, Mike had the idea to build a saloon on the land to come back to after a long day and relax, his own version of a mancave.

Six years ago, the couple decided to make Mike's dream of building and fully decorating a saloon a reality. "We totally enjoyed the decorating of the saloon and imagining what it would look like," Sharlene says. "[Mike] had envisioned how he thought it should look and it is truly amazing how everything turned about to be so authentic and historical looking"

The building of that saloon kick-started a hobby for the two, a hobby that would eventually turn into an obsession. The saloon sat by itself for a year. "We would just look at it and would just keep saying, 'It doesn't look right by itself,'" Sharlene says. "So we started adding to it."

Dogwood Pass opened to the public for the first time in 2012, when Mike and Sharlene held their first annual Cystic Fibrosis benefit at their saloon. Their son-in-law, Brad Schneider, died from the illness. In honor of him, they

“ To be here 22 years later and to have that start is just so fulfilling and peaceful,”

Sharlene Montgomery,
Proprietor of Dogwood Pass

decided to sponsor a local child from the community and send all the proceeds made to that child and family. “People would come in and were amazed at the décor and what a good job we did,” Sharlene says. “I think the enthusiasm helped push us along into building a jail and a livery. Then we thought that that wasn’t enough.”

Most of the town has been built in the last three years. The town consists of a cigar shop, a freight office, a jail, a mercantile, a bank, a gun shop, a church, a cat house and a bath house, to name a few. Mike, with the help of his family members, hammered every nail into each and every building himself. “I’m the builder, period. We have the help of my grandson, Cole, and my brother in law, Steve, now comes over and helps, but we built it entirely ourselves,” Mike says.

As for the designing and decorating, it is a team effort by the couple. All their time and work put into making sure the town best resembles an Old West town does not go unappreciated. “Every building that we have built and spent time with and imagined how we would have liked it to look is so appreciated,” Sharlene says. “It is so neat to hear people who live on the other side of the map come in and say this is so unique. Things like that don’t get old to us.” Many people who have come through DogWood Pass have been amazed and have donated decorations to be displayed throughout the town.

“We get a lot of classroom field trips, company parties, birthday parties, and any of those types of events,” Mike says. Weddings keep the couple busy, preparing and renting the property for about 10-15 weddings a year.

Each month, Dogwood Pass has a festival where 500 people will come through the town. One of DogWood Pass’ biggest events is its Halloween festival, turning the Wild West town into a haunted, zombie filled town, bringing in close to 1,000 people. Mike and Sharlene often invite special guests to perform during their festivals, such as Old West circus performers and the Seventh Ohio Calvary Union. In the wintertime, when it is too cold for people to be outside watching the reenactment, they do Old West card games and events in the saloon. Mike also teaches concealed carry classes and hosts shooting events.

Most of the participants who take part in Dogwood Pass’ reenactments and festivals are family members and friends of Mike and Sharlene. But the couple always welcomes others to participate in the town’s events. “One of the neatest things about Dogwood Pass is that it draws people in and you meet the greatest people,” Sharlene says. “They’ll come out and help on the weekends and before you know it, these people are like family to you.”

People’s appreciation and admiration of the town drives



ABOVE | Mike “Frog” Montgomery and Sharlene, the proprietors of Dogwood Pass

Mike and Sharlene to push to build more. While the speed of building the town might slow down with age and finances, Mike and Sharlene are willing to do whatever they have to in order to keep the town alive and growing. “You just can’t stop and enjoy it. If you sit here and look at it, you always come up with things to add in your mind,” Mike says. “I’m waiting right now to add more things so it’s never going to stop growing. I can’t see it.”

As for the future of Dogwood Pass, Mike and Sharlene hope to keep the business in the family, passing it down to their children and grandchildren. “I was born on this farm and my grandfather left it to my parents, who left it to me, so that’s how I want to leave it,” Mike says. The two have been preparing their family to run the business and have faith they will continue to keep up the town’s success. “I think our children, or some of our children, and grandchildren are ready to take it over. They understand as it grows, this is something they have to take care of someday as well,” Sharlene says. “We try to instill that into them. We don’t take it lightly.”

Mike and Sharlene believe that none of their success would have been possible without each other. “You can’t do it without both, without the two people,” Mike says. “If you don’t have the same interest, there is no way anything like this can happen.”

The Montgomery’s little hobby turned into an obsession, which turned into a business, and eventually, turned into their life. It’s their greatest passion, a passion that they can share with each other and their family, and they don’t ever see themselves giving it up. “I can see us in our 90s pointing to our grandson saying ‘Move this over here and let’s build this here,’” Sharlene says. “It’s our life and our hobby,” Mike says. “It’s what we do and what we will continue to do.”



TO-NIGHT
BASKET-BALL
DANCING

WINNER
OF THE ARTS

The image shows the interior of the Tecumseh Theater, which is in a state of disrepair. The upper portion of the frame is dominated by a large, arched decorative element with intricate, possibly gilded, floral and scrollwork patterns. Below this, a brick wall is visible, featuring a single, arched window that allows bright light to enter the room. The floor is cluttered with various construction materials, including wooden planks and debris. The overall atmosphere is one of historical decay and abandonment.

Diamond in the Dust

Once a precious corner stone of Shawnee,
The Tecumseh Theater readies for restoration.

BY CASSIE KELLY | PHOTOS BY TYLER ROSS



ABOVE | Many old theater equipment and artifacts were found during the cleanup of the Tecumseh Theater and are put on display on the second floor.

When you take a drive down Main Street in Shawnee, you will see overhanging balconies, decorative brick store fronts and old fashioned signs—prime examples of early 1900s boom-town architecture. Amidst the historical town's artifacts is the large, three-story Tecumseh Theater, which for the first time in 30 years, is beginning to show signs of restoration.

Back in its golden years, Shawnee – located in Perry County – was a thriving coalmining town. At its peak in the early 1900s, there were about 4,000 residents who called the town home, making it the largest coalmining town in the Hocking Valley Coal Boom era.

But by the 1930s, the boom was over. The coalmining companies packed up and left, leaving Shawnee with a ravaged environment and high unemployment. Now with just 900 residents, only a few industries keep the town afloat. One of which is the abundant amount of clay within the Hocking Valley Coal Fields. The clay, found alongside the coal, is used to make tiles and bricks throughout the microregion of Athens, Hocking, Perry and Morgan Counties. The products from the clay have sustained the Little Cities of Black Diamonds (LCBD), coalmining towns throughout the microregion. But it is not enough for the cities, like Shawnee, to thrive again.

After the bust of the coal mining industry, the people of the LCBDs spent the latter half of the century restoring the surrounding forests and streams, holding on to what they considered their home. In 1934, Wayne National Forest became the first national park in Ohio. Wayne removed the large coal globs that coated the hillsides black, replanted the woodland, and staved off underground mine fires, as well as many other conservation efforts.

Then in 1976, the members of the Sunday Creek Restoration Project saw hope in the town and the Tecumseh Theater, and they took on the major effort to restore the beautiful building. According to Sandra Landis, a Sunday Creek associate and dedicated member toward the restoration, the theater was going to be torn down and salvaged for its steel I-beams. Determined to not let history crumble, a group of locals formed the Tecumseh Theater Organization and bought the building for just \$500. The ownership was then transferred to Sunday Creek Associates in the early 1990s.

Before Sunday Creek took over the project, Landis says there had never been a clear voice or vision for the building, which is why little work had been completed. It was full of rubble and the roof was leaking.

After cleanup and a less-than-sturdy repair to the roof, their first step was to bring the right side of the storefront

back. Once they did, it served as the community library until the recession hit in 2008 and now serves as an area to learn about the history of Shawnee and the LCBDs.

Next, they restored the left side of the storefront, which has been a huge success for the community. They hold many gatherings a year, such as receptions, retirement and graduation parties, a place for polling during elections and even a classroom setting. The most memorable experience, Landis says, was last year when they hosted a small theater production on a platform stage to raise funds for the restoration.

The entire project will cost about \$1.2 million. The building needs an elevator, plumbing, electric and a complete remodel for the windows and walls.

With the hopes of gaining sufficient funds from federal and state grants, they are now designing plans to renovate the second and third floors. The second floor served functions in the early 1900s, from silent films to basketball games. They hope to restore the old finishes and intricately painted designs on both the stage and the walls, based off of old photos and stencils they recovered during the cleanup.

“We see the opera house being available for performance, seminars, tradeshow, galleries, exhibits, you name it,” Landis says. “All sorts of wonderful things can happen in there once it’s back.”

Restoring the opera house is just one of the many ways the community will once again thrive. Buckeye Trail Association has expressed interest in making Shawnee a trail stop for hikers to get maps and amenities. Wayne National Forest is also interested in making Shawnee a Gateway Headquarters for information and access to the many nearby nature attractions such as Tecumseh Lake and the horse-riding trail.

“Part of the work of regenerating and revitalizing a place, I think, is understanding its story and its past,” Landis says. “Both so you can discover assets to build on, but also so you can discover mistakes that were made or things that should never be repeated... We understand that a place that was so terribly wounded and damaged and left as trash can heal and thrive, but it is not without enormous help and time.”

To read more, visit www.littlecitiesofblackdiamonds.org.



ABOVE | The Tecumseh Theater is three stories high and renovations are underway. The total cost of the project will be about \$1.2 million.



ABOVE | Shawnee is a telling example of boomtown architecture with its many vintage signs and decorative overhangs.



ABOVE | The theater was used for many purposes from silent films to basketball games.



PHOTO | An old piano and hundreds of antique theater chairs are reserved on the third floor of the Tecumseh Theater.

Where The Wilds' Things Are

As winter's chill beckons, The Wilds' animals can take to the great indoors.

BY MARIA DEVITO | PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE WILDS

Wednesday, who was born in March, is preparing for her first Ohio winter. But her parents are not buying her a coat, a hat or gloves. Instead, she's growing out her fur to withstand the cold temperatures.

To clarify, Wednesday is one of the Bactrian Camels at The Wilds—a private, non-profit conservation facility that occupies nearly 10,000 acres.

The center, located in Guernsey County's Cumberland hills 20 miles southeast of Zanesville, started hosting animals in 1984 after the land was donated by American Electric Power. The Wilds opened to visitors in 1994, Jennifer Wilson, a spokeswoman for the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium—which manages The Wilds—says.

During the warm summer months, the roughly 600 animals inhabiting The Wilds roam the facility's five pastures, says Dan Beetem, the center's Director of Animal Management.

In the late fall to early spring, this changes. While some of the animals, such as Wednesday and the other Bactrian Camels, are from indigenous environments that see extreme cold temperatures, Beetem says other tenants must be indoors when temperatures drop.

Rather than move these animals to other facilities, The Wilds turns up the heat—literally. “Most of the animals go to places where they have access to a heated barn, yet they're still outside,” Beetem says. “They're not living indoors all winter long.”

Not only is the barn air heated, but the floors are warmed as well, giving the animals a toasty place to sit. Still, not every animal is 100 percent content with the great indoors. “Some animals just hang out in the barn

where the heat is and some animals would rather be outside,” Beetem says. “It's not unusual to come in the morning and find a cheetah sitting out in the snow waiting for you to come in and feed.”

Giraffes, the most temperature-sensitive of The Wilds bunch, are a different story. “By late September the giraffes are back at their barn,” Beetem says. “When we start getting overnight temperatures down in the 40s regularly, that's when we want to have them back where they have some extra shelter.”

But the 50 percent of the center's animals that remain in open pastures all year round also get winter upgrades, as sides are added to the existing summer shade shelters. In addition, the natural tree and brush-filled terrain of The Wilds protect the animals during the snowy months. “They actually use the natural cover out here as much or more than the shelters we give them,” Beetem says.

An animal's response to frigid temperatures also acts as a vetting tool. “We only have so much barn space,” Beetem says, adding that the center is interested in animals such as the Sichuan takin, a goat-antelope native to Tibet and western China, because the species is accustomed to the frigid weather. The species stays out in the open pastures year round, opening up barn spaces for other animals. “We have more opportunities for animals that are adapted to the Ohio winters ... because there's more space available to them,” Beetem says.

The Wilds' expanse allows animals, such as the Sichuan takin, the space they need to spread out. Beetem recalls when the takin first arrived at The Wilds in 2003 and the herd was placed on one side of the lake that connects two pastures. By the next day, the herd had swam to the other side of the 34-acre lake.

“There are a few species like that, that we know that if they're in that pasture, they could be on either side of the lake in one or two different pastures,” Beetem says.

Visitors can see all the open pastures and lakes if they come to The Wilds during its annual visitor season from May to September. The center is open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., when the last guided tour bus departs from the visitor's center. Nearly 117,000 people visited The Wilds in 2014, Wilson says.

“It's not unusual to come in the morning and find a cheetah sitting out in the snow waiting for you to come in and feed.”

Dan Beetem,
Director of Animal Management



In October, The Wilds is only open on weekends, but from November through April, visitors can still see the animals through special reservation-only tours that allow them to drive up next to the animals.

“As long as the weather’s good and we can drive, we’ll be out looking at the animals and then come down to visit the barns where the giraffes and the rhinos are in the winter to visit them and see how we take care of them,” Beetem says.

As for the roughly 30-member staff working behind the scenes, the winter months are far from chill. Beetem says the staff interacts with the animals every day, checking up on the animals and bringing them food.

“The animals that need the support, we got it for them here. The winters here are much harder on the staff than they are the animals,” Beetem says with a laugh. 🇺🇸

For more information: www.thewilds.columbuszoo.org

Adventures at The Wilds'

Safari Transport tour takes visitors through The Wilds open pastures.

Adults: \$20, Seniors: \$19, Children age 4-12: \$15, Children age 3 and under: Free, Wilds member: Free, Military members: Free with current ID

Wildside Tour allows visitors to ride along with The Wilds animal management staffers as they interact one-on-one with the animals.

Non-members: \$125 per person, Wilds members: \$100 per person

Open-air Safari gives visitors the chance to pet animals alongside the vehicle.

All ages: \$30, Wilds member: Free
Military members: Free with current ID

Winter at The Wilds Tour like the Wildside Tour takes visitors through The Wilds with animal management, with the added element of going to the winter barns.

All ages: \$125 per person, Wilds members: \$100 per person



Feigned Fortune

The legends of Adams County's Counterfeit House include money, mayhem and murder. But if its walls could talk, the truth might sound stranger than fiction.

BY CORTTANY BROOKS | PHOTOS BY ANDREW DOWNING



PART I: LEGEND HAS IT

In the rolling hills and hollers of Adams County, a dilapidated white house sits on a ridge above the Ohio River. The structure looks pretty ordinary for a crumbling building, but as any good criminal knows, looks can be deceiving—for this is a tale of counterfeit money, trap doors, hidden rooms and secret drops in the dead of night.

The first half of the 19th century was a golden age for American counterfeiters. There was no national currency, no greenback—just an unregulated patchwork of more than 1,600 private banks and 7,000 different bank notes. It was during this age of economic confusion, or so the story goes, that a counterfeiter named Oliver Tompkins arrived in Adams County to build his dream house.

It was in the spring of 1840 that Tompkins acquired about 150 acres on Gift Ridge (today Gift Ridge Road) for the construction of his home. An engraver by training, Tompkins is said to have taken up counterfeiting in Cincinnati, 70 miles down the river. However, some say he came from New York City and was already on the run from the law when he arrived in Ohio.

Tompkins' accomplice was Ann Lovejoy, who may have been his sister, or possibly, his mistress. A good way from the bustle of the city, Adams County seemed the perfect place for the two to set up shop. Steamboats carried them a steady stream of customers who are said to have come from Pittsburgh, Portsmouth and Cincinnati all to acquire the product Tompkins and Lovejoy were selling—top quality counterfeit. For just ten dollars, you could get a flawless 500 dollar bill. But first, you had to know the rules.

The deals went down like this: on the nights the house was open for business, Tompkins would place a lantern in the attic window, a signal that was visible from the river. The customer would dock at a slip called Tompkins Landing and then make the mile trek up to the house.



ABOVE | The only house in the country built from the ground up for the sole purpose of counterfeiting.



ABOVE | Long-admired by the Spires family, an old safe remains fastened in the corner, as it is too large for removal.


From there, the customer needed to open the house's locked door, done by jerking the doorknob straight upwards and then turning it. Once inside, they walked down the wide hallway that led to a back doorway. Above that doorway was a windowless room where Tompkins performed his craft, silently watching over the transactions. But customers did not know that they were being observed, all they knew was that inside the door to the right existed a slot and in that slot existed a notch. Inside that notch would be counterfeit money to buy with real money. The customer would make the exchange without ever seeing anyone.

Tompkins and Lovejoy ran their operation seamlessly for at least a year until one fateful purchase brought the law on their trail. One afternoon, the story goes, Lovejoy boarded a riverboat bound for Cincinnati and booked a hotel to stay the night. While there she went into a local general store and bought a black shawl, paying with a counterfeit bill and getting genuine currency in return—but the bill she tried to pass was quickly identified as a fake.

When she realized government agents were trailing her, Lovejoy quickly returned to her hotel to burn the shawl and gather her things. Authorities soon discovered the partially burned garment, and Lovejoy was identified. But the agents were too late to catch her—by this time Lovejoy had escaped on the last boat to Adams County.



ABOVE | Carla Lynn Spired, the current owner, shows the dilapidated home.



Once home, she rushed the mile and a half up to the house to tell Tompkins of her narrow escape. They knew the law would soon be closing in. Apparently, government agents had recently been snooping around, and Tompkins had even shot one. Their only choice now was to flee.

The next day, the authorities arrived at Tompkins Landing. Like many before them, they walked the mile up to the house only to find it abandoned, without any trace of counterfeiting. Legend has it that Tompkins and Lovejoy had ridden off to Concord, Kentucky, six miles to the east, after stashing the evidence in a secret tunnel that ran to the river and dynamiting the entrance shut.

But the tale of the Counterfeit House was far from ending, and the biggest rouse of all was only beginning.

PART II: LORE, AND A LABOR OF LOVE

For decades, local lore cited the spirits of those who died in the Counterfeit House and still inhabited the building. However, neither spirits nor mortals could have withstood the winds that blew through Adams County in 2008. The structure's roofing was ripped open, and one of the relic's seven chimneys blew apart and crumbled to the ground with the blast. The damage turned into despair and now, in its current state, dilapidation.

In the front of the house, a small gable window used for a signal light now appears dusty and cracked. The special hidden slot built behind an interior door, believed to be the place where the counterfeit money was exchanged for the purchase price, is full of cobwebs.

Pieces of roofing that covered three bedrooms on the east side of the house are now pulled up, exposing insulation, ceilings and antique furnishings to Ohio's natural annual elements. Nearly a dozen trees cover up the facade and chimney. A single bat has settled in the center of the hallway on a rusted chandelier; his droppings cover old newspapers scattered on the ripped up floorboards.

The now broken-down structure on Gift Ridge that was once a hub of illegal business has stood for nearly 17 decades. "Most of the story of the Counterfeit House is legend, but supported by fact," Stephen Kelley, historian and columnist, writes in the *People's Defender*, the weekly newspaper of Adams County. For instance, to this day, there is a trick lock on the front door that would seem to be locked to the average observer, yet when the knob is lifted in a certain way, it will open.

Other curious architectural elements include the house's seven chimneys, as only two are functional. Ductwork in the house would send smoke from the two real chimneys to all the other stacks, making them appear to be real. Today, secret compartments in the fallen chimneys are visible from inside the house. A visitor might also observe the ornate carpet where Tomkins used to watch over his transactions, which now hangs from the ceiling.

According to Kelley and Carla Lynn Spires, the house's current owner who still lives on the property, the legend indeed includes bloodshed. They agree with the account that Lovejoy was in Cincinnati using some of the

counterfeit money and was noticed by authorities. She was then followed back to the Counterfeit House by a Pinkerton agent, who managed to operate the trick lock and gain entrance to the house through the front door. And they both note it was in the 10-foot by 45-foot hallway where Tompkins allegedly murdered the agent. The floor and a wall are reportedly still stained with blood. "I saw the blood stain with my own eyes when I visited the house," Kelley writes. "That would have been in 1973."

However, for Spires, the house's legacy is more complex. Despite the fear in her eyes when she refused to enter the kitchen, saying it would give her "weird dreams for weeks," and the faint memories she has of hearing the house's broken organ playing in the dead of night, she still isn't completely sold on the ghostly presence of Tompkins and his companions.


"Now, I don't know about the legend, but I do know that certain ghosts were not ghosts," she says laughing to herself. "There was a bloody handprint on the wall, and it did come back every time we painted, but not before the last coat."

Spires humor about the house is especially poignant, given her family's roots with the property. A portion of the farm was purchased by a great-great uncle of Jo Lynn Spires, Carla Lynn's deceased mother, in 1896. Her grandparents, John and Elizabeth Johnson, purchased the house in the 1930s. Jo Lynn—an only child—grew up in the house with her parents, John and Alberta Johnson, and her grandfather. Carla Lynn similarly spent each weekend of her childhood at the notorious home with her mother and sister.

"I enjoyed growing up there," Spires says. "I knew every Saturday, in warm weather, that we had to get up and really clean, because someone would always come to see the house. But I loved it."

Since 1986, a Spires woman has lived in a trailer behind the house, and for much of the time it was open as a museum each summer. Carla Lynn describes her mother's determination to keep the museum open even during her battle with cancer as none other than a "labor of love."

"Over 1,000 people have come to see in one year," Spires says. "We've had 400 students come. We dressed up in period clothes and did a reenactment of the murder. They loved it."

It wasn't until November of 1851 when Lovejoy finally returned to the area—this time, with a coffin. She said Tomkins had recently died, and she wanted to bury him in Adams County. The funeral was held in the parlor of the Counterfeit House. The body of 33-year-old Tompkins had finally been put to rest—or so it was said. To this day, many are convinced the coffin actually held a wax dummy and that Tompkins had watched the whole thing from one of the secret chimney compartments. In the end, Oliver Tompkins' most convincing counterfeit may well have been his very own death—or even further, his ability to live on in the legend that is the Counterfeit House. 

Editor's Note: The information in this story was compiled from verified sources, including the *People's Defender* archive and the Adams County Historical Society.

What's your story?

Coach Bob Lutz trades the sidelines for shorelines.

BY ANDREW DOWNING
PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE IRONTON TRIBUNE

In the middle of Ironton, running adjacent to the high school football field, there is a street named for Bob Lutz, one of the most prolific figures in the town's history. He spent three years coaching football at Ironton St. Joseph and 39 years coaching the Ironton Fighting Tigers at Ironton High School.

During his coaching career, Lutz piled up an astonishing 381 wins, making him the most winningest high school football coach of all time in Ohio. In 1979 and 1989, Lutz won state championships, and his team was state runners-up six times.

Many of his old players and colleagues tell stories that illustrate how he put the players first. Coaches were not included in team pictures, because it was all about the players, so the coaching staff was photographed separately. This is the type of detail that would define Lutz's mindset and professional approach to the game throughout his 42-year career as a football coach.

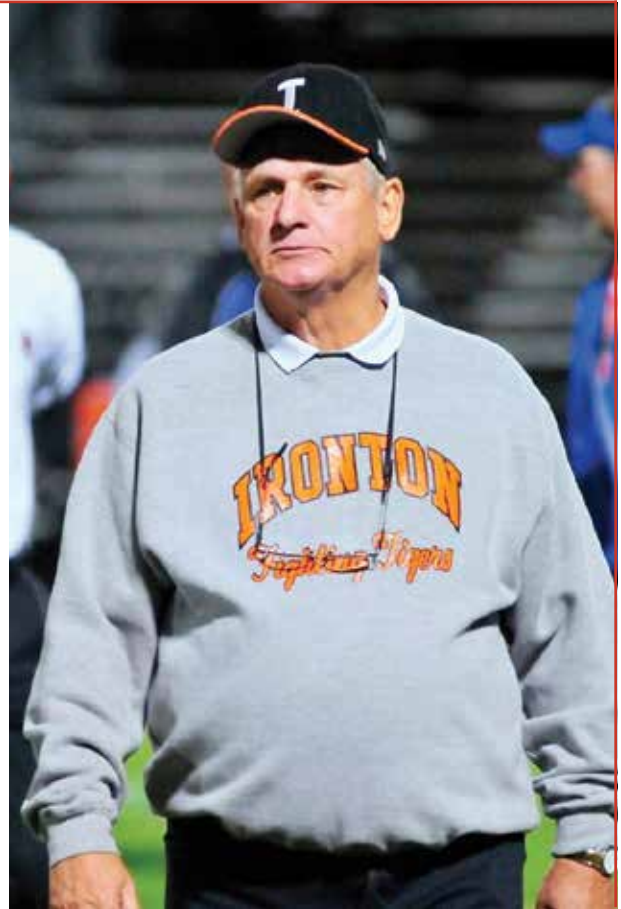
It's now been four years since Lutz announced his retirement. During this time, he moved north to Perrysburg and then south to Naples, FL, his current home. And what was once a five-minute drive to the football stadium is now a five-minute drive to the beach. We reached out to the Hall of Famer to hear more about his recent off-field life.

SOUTHERN SURROUNDINGS

"It's very clean. There's no industry down here. There's a lot more produce farms, especially oranges. The rainy season is interesting because there's a lot more rain than what I'm used to, even in Ohio. You don't have the grime on your cars that you get in the Midwest."

PATRIARCH PEACE

"My sons are down here, along with my daughter and grandson. I go to the beach every now and then to walk near the ocean. I've only been here about three months, so I haven't done too much yet. I'm looking forward to the winter. I'll be in my shorts and my sandals."



ABOVE | As Ironton Fighting Tigers head football coach, Bob Lutz commanded the Friday night sidelines from 1969 - 2012.


LIFELONG DEVOTION

"My wife and I just celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. You know, there's not too many of those anymore. It was September 3rd, but we celebrated a week late because my granddaughter was going on a campus visit to the University of Florida."

EXPERT OBSERVER

"The football down here is a lot different. The athletes and style of play is just something I'm not used to. But at the same time I'm not coaching, so I don't really have to understand it all the way just yet. I go over and watch the local team play here. I watch Ohio State on the weekends, and I try to follow the Browns on Sundays."

ENDURING MOTTO

"I always told them [players] to do everything right. If you do everything right, things will fall into place and good things will happen." 

Nationally Recognized Orthopedic Care



Named as one of
Healthgrades® America's
**100 BEST
HOSPITALS**
for Joint Replacement™
In 2015



Holzer Medical Center - Jackson

At the Holzer Center for Joint Replacement, we provide quality orthopedic care for the patients we serve. Our goal is to ensure that patients receive outstanding orthopedic care and experience restored or improved quality of life.



We are also proud to announce that Holzer Medical Center - Jackson received a Five-Star Rating for the quality of Total Knee Replacement and Total Hip Replacement surgeries, as well as Hip Fracture Treatment in 2015. Healthgrades® is a leading online resource that aids consumers in making informed decisions when choosing a physician and hospital to provide care.

1.855.4HOLZER (1.855.446.5937) • www.holzer.org

Southeast OHIO

E.W. Scripps School of Journalism
1 Ohio University
Athens, OH 45701-2979

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ATHENS OH
PERMIT NO. 100

Dresden's Village Victoria
Scrapbook Retreat inspires
hearts and crafts, see page 10.
Photo by Alexandria Polanosky

