The WEDGE®

The Official Newspaper of the South Wedge Since 1982

June/July 2019 Vol. 41 No. 3

The South Wedge Farmers Markets offers fruit and flowers, pastries and wine tastings, mini music concerts, free outdoor yoga and so much more every Thursday at Genesee Gateway Park.

South Wedge Farmers Market Opens June 20

Shop local and support local growers at the South Wedge Farmers Market on opening day June 20. Every Thursday, 4-7 p.m. through September, Genesee Gateway Park on Mt. Hope Avenue will be buzzing with community spirit. Musicians, buskers to community organizations. Tru Yoga is back with free riverside yoga classes at 5:30 p.m. Take a class and get a Yoga $5 Buck to use at any of our market vendors. The Market has rapidly become a true community destination for Wedge families. The EBT token program is back with an added bonus of $3 for every $5 spent. For those watching their bottom-line purchasing power, the ability to buy more with less is tremendously helpful.

Buying at the Market is more than just a monetary transaction, it’s an opportunity to learn more about the person growing your food. Take a little extra time when shopping to ask your questions about diet, food and what you can do to embrace a healthy lifestyle.

Your support is key to keeping and expanding this great community asset. The South Wedge Farmers Market continues to provide quality service each and every week. Like us on Facebook, bring your friends and neighbors to the Market and visit our website www.swfm.org often for announcements, recipes and more.

The South Wedge Farmers Market is a community development and outreach program of the South Wedge Planning Committee. To get more information, contact Glynis Valenti, Executive Director at 585-257-1740 or e-mail: info@swpc.org. Vendor applications are available at 585.256.1740 or e-mail info@swpc.org. Special thanks to Market Sponsor Highland Hospital.

The WEDGE Newspaper Celebrates 37th Year

Nancy O’Donnell

In the early 1980s a group of South Wedge activists were determined to resurrect their neighborhood. They looked beyond the boarded-up South Avenue businesses and run-down houses and envisioned a vibrant urban neighbor-hood. The first “official newspaper of the South Wedge” was four pages and published eleven times a year. Called the South Wedge” was four pages and published eleven times a year. Called the South Wedge” was four pages and published eleven times a year. Called the South Wedge” was four pages and published eleven times a year.

The WEDGE chugs along thirty-seven years later in a time when many newspapers are declining. With advertisers’ support the WEDGE will continue to share the stories that make the Greater South Wedge area one of a kind.

Focus Theater Brings Improv to the Wedge

Nancy O’Donnell

Focus Theater’s house team “The Urge” (back row, l-r) Ty Gagnon, Jeri Dubi, Devin Hott, Sara Shley (front row, l-r) Joanne Brokaw, Kate Armstrong, Pat Best, Cody Jones and John Vodas

Focus Theater’s house team “The Urge” (back row, l-r) Ty Gagnon, Jeri Dubi, Devin Hott, Sara Shley (front row, l-r) Joanne Brokaw, Kate Armstrong, Pat Best, Cody Jones and John Vodas

Focus Theater brings “Left for Dead,” a 50+ improv troupe. “The key to improv is that you’re not out there alone. If a scene starts to fizzle, someone else picks it up. No matter what, there’s always camaraderie.”

If it seems that comics and improv artists are multiplying like rabid rabbits, you’re right. Firehouse Saloon and Boulder Café both offer evenings of improv and stand-up comedy. Area colleges are teaching improv and it’s not all about

continued on pg. 11
The Wedge Planning Committee (SWPC) invites you to join us in making a difference in the vibrant South Wedge neighborhood and beyond. Please consider subscribing. You’ll get the newspaper delivered to your home & a Wedge Card to tell us what YOU want to see in YOUR community. Get the Wedge!

For 36 years, The Wedge Newspaper has chronicled the lives and times of the South Wedge neighborhood and beyond. Please consider subscribing. You’ll get the newspaper delivered to your home & a Wedge Card to tell us what YOU want to see in YOUR community. Get the Wedge!

Erata

An article in the WEDGE April/May issue about Rochester ChiroTherapy’s new partnership with the Veterans Out, each Center (VOC) of Rochester was printed with an incorrect date. VOC has served area veterans since 1973. We apologize for the error.

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Please mail form along with your payment to: 224 Mount Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620.

South Wedge Farmers Market
Genesee Gateway Park
Free bag on your first visit

Stuart’s Spices, 10% off $10 or more
754 S. Clinton Avenue, Rochester

Swiftwater Brewing Company, $1 off flight of beer
378 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester

The only constant is change. Our lives, our workplaces, neighborhoods, cities, and world shift in the daily ebb and flow, and change, cause, and effect, that is life.

For example, a few years ago I never would have guessed that I would return to Rochester from my life as a photographer, writer, and wine rep on the Oregon coast. Nor did I anticipate the move to Ohio where I cared for my elderly parents. Even more unexpected was working in community development organization. Its mission is to help we are beginning programming based on resident requests. Now is a great time to tell us what YOU want to see in YOUR neighborhood. What are your priorities? What are the biggest issues you see in the South Wedge?

South Wedge Planning Committee (SWPC) invites you to meet your neighbors at our Community Engagement Committee (CENCOM) board meeting to find out what we’re doing and where we’re going. All of life is in flux. Connect or reconnect with us, and be the change you want to see.

Interested in learning more about SWPC, call 256-1740, ext. 2 or e-mail gvalenti@swpc.org.

SWPC Board Members
Frank Logan, chair
Anthony Sciarabba, treasurer
Teresa Hemann
Emery Rizzo

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Mitchell Dassner, John Dennis, Joe Dilamore, Charyl Stevens

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Glynis Valenti, executive director
Joan Brandenburg, special project coordinator
Nancy O’Donnell, writer/editor

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

Get the Wedge!
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Please share others.

Buy a Wedge Card and get discounts when you shop local businesses. A list appears here every month of participating businesses. You’ll also get the WEDGE newspaper mailed to your home. To sign up: complete the card below, visit the SWPC office at 224 Mt. Hope Avenue or the South Wedge Farmers Market (in season) or contact Glynis Valenti, gvalenti@swpc.com, 256-1740, ext. 2. Are you a business owner or interested in participating in the Wedge Card discount program? Let us know!

Cheesy Edibles, 5% off 602 South Avenue
Equal-Grounds, 10% off 750 South Avenue
Hedonist Artisan Chocolates & Ice Cream, 10% off 674 South Avenue
Leaf Tea Bar, 10% off 686 South Avenue
Liberty Tax, 10% 686 South Avenue
Little Button Craft, 10% off 658 South Avenue

South Wedge Planning Committee (SWPC) invites you to join us in making a difference in southeast Rochester. Join our board of directors or serve on a committee. Founded in 1978, SWPC acts as a conduit for federal or state repair grants that help keep people in their aging homes. SWPC works in a full range of ways to build community through the annual South Wedge Farmers Market (June-October), South Wedge Victory Gardens on Hamilton and Cypress Streets and THE WEDGE newspaper that publishes six issues each year. Your time, talent and passion can help us in continuing SWPC’s work. If interested, please call 256-1740 or e-mail gvalenti@swpc.org or board chair Frank Logan at flogan@rochester.rr.com.

The Wedge Newspaper, a not-for-profit newspaper, is published by the South Wedge Planning Committee, a community development organization. Its mission is to preserve accurate coverage of community news. Printed bimonthly (February, April, June, August, October and December), the WEDGE has a circulation of 3,500. It is distributed to area businesses, retail shops and other drop-off points in the southeast and greater Rochester area. Your subscriptions help support The WEDGE. Please consider subscribing. You’ll get the newspaper delivered to your home & a Wedge Card to tell us what YOU want to see in YOUR community. Get the Wedge!

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Be Alert to Noise Levels In Summer Months


Being a good neighbor means being mindful of neighbors whose idea of bliss include listening to the summer wind. Blaring music or mowing your lawn at dawn does not a good neighbor make.

The City of Rochester brochure “How to be a good neighbor” offers guidance to help keep our neighborhoods harmonious with info about noise ordinances.

“Noise should not be audible beyond 50 feet from your property line between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m.” That means lower the volume after 10 p.m.

“Noise should not be audible beyond 50 feet of your property line between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m.” That means no mowing your lawn at 6 a.m.

Breaking the noise ordinance makes a lot of your neighbors very unhappy and being cited may result in fines.

So, be a good neighbor, and we can all enjoy a summer of fun without ear plugs.

CSA Garden Stocks Food Pantry

The annual Swillburg Potluck Picnic will be held on Saturday, June 29, from 1–3 p.m. Last year we had over eighty neighbors join in to make a very festive day! No doubt we’ll have lots of vegan, vegetarian and barbeque offerings in previous years, we’ve covered a few tables with sumptuous repasts. Please watch on the Swillburg Facebook page, WEDGE Newspaper website and Nextdoor as well as on sandwich boards throughout Swillburg for announcements.

Besides these community building events we’ll be participating in the annual Wilson Day of Engagement in late August. University of Rochester incoming freshman engage in community service. They’ll tidy up parts of the neighborhood, rake, shovel, and prune, while we introduce them to Rochester and the Swillburg neighborhood. Neighbor Sharon Price is our coordinator for this event. As always, we hope neighbors will join in. Please watch for more information on Nextdoor and the Swillburg Facebook page.

Swellburg neighborhoods continue to gather for monthly luncheons and dinners in the local restaurants. Please join us; the more the merrier! You can find announcements of days, times and places through the community get together on Nextdoor.

Also, as I mentioned in the last issue’s column, Swillburg swag is available online. You’ll find it at https://swillburg-neighborhood-association.square.site

Well, I’m wishing you a fun and safe summer. Hope to see you around the community!

Flowers of summer (Photo by Glynis Valenti)

Humans of the South Wedge

“I wish I could award it 0 stars...But, one will have to do. The staff was truly horrible.”

Courage, resilience, laughing in the face of contempt—makes life worth living.

The Wedge Newspaper needs your support.

Please call to learn about our very affordable ad rates 585.256.1740, x104 or 585.978.963

Available online & print

Starting a business? Need help with business performance? Explore the free resource available to you! THE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER IN YOUR AREA HAS BUSINESS ADVISORS READY TO ASSIST YOU!

Visit us at
South Wedge Planning Committee Office
214 Mt. Hope Ave. Rochester, NY 14604

For an appointment:
Call 585-245-3429
or email Nerz Karsten at karsten@genesoo.edu

The Wedge - June/July 2019
Misfit Doughnuts Opens in the South Wedge

Monroe Avenue’s loss is the South Wedge’s gain when Jenny Johnson’s Misfit Doughnuts reopened on Gregory Street in the old location of Peppa Pot Café sometime in July. The Jamaican café has relocated to a new space on East Main Street. A huge fire, attributed to arson, forced Johnson to move and after some hiccups inside her new location, she’ll be moving in. While insurance is paying for equipment, Johnson held a fundraiser in early June to help with additional costs. “I love the South Wedge, and I wanted a presence here, but nothing was available that met my needs,” said Johnson. “Rebecca from South Wedge Properties reached out to me. She told me she loves my doughnuts.”

Johnson enjoy baking from an early age in her hometown of Auburn, NY. “I gave up the dough, but it wouldn’t give up on me,” Johnson said. A year later a friend told her to check out the Monroe Avenue location. “It was 900 square feet and super affordable.” In two years Johnson was running a successful business until the fire. When Misfit opens, she’ll carry her signature vegan doughnuts, Fuego Coffee and Katboocha along with other treats. Many of her doughnuts can be viewed as “out there.” They’re cut in half and packed with creative combinations “like a sandwich.” “I’m on pop culture,” said Johnson, who named her business after her favorite brand. Flavors include Cookies Monstar, a chocolate chip stuffed doughnut with a vivid blue top. Darth Vader is a chocolate cream filled doughnut with chocolate ganache and chocolate cake cookies. Then there’s the King Kong, a banana bread doughnut with salted caramel filling, drizzled with caramel and topped with banana chips. Right now Johnson’s only goal is to get her business “up and running.” “I’m sure I’ll be adding more treats—cinnamon rolls and fritters when we open.” MisfitDoughnuts&Treats, 133 Gregory St.

Cheesy Eddie’s Commits To Wedge Presence

Colleen Baker, co-owner of the South Wedge dessert landmark Cheesy Eddie’s, said don’t believe the rumors. She and husband Tom have moved Cheesy Eddie’s 2 at the Genesee Valley Regional Market in Henrietta, but they’re committed to their shop on South Avenue. “We are not leaving the South Wedge!”

“We were bursting at the seams. It’s amazing our team never hurt each other,” said Baker. “The [Regional Market] kitchen is ginormous. (Think 5,000-square-foot warehouse.) It has double doors and an open cafe at the entrance. We placed an old pie machine and this old Hobart mixer we found in the basement in the [South Ave] basement inside.”

The larger space allows Cheesy Eddie’s to showcase their extensive cake selections (some 25-30 choices) and all the classic and specialty cheesecakes (10-15). It also carries “Jillian’s Delight” cookies. An employee Jillian created the cookie by slapping cream cheese frosting between two oatmeal cookies. They introduced “Jack’s Delight” using chocolate cookies. Cheesy Eddie’s 2 in Henrietta is located near Palmer’s Market.

Good Smoke BBQ, 489 South Avenue

John’s Tex-Mex moved to a bigger space at 428 South Avenue and now Good Smoke BBQ Shack will be moving into their former cozy space after walls are painted. “We’ve been looking for a city address for some time. The South Wedge menu will be a bit different from the others. We won’t do large meats,” said Wemmett. “We’re doing sandwiches, gourmet bowls and burgers.” Also in house are “Moinks,” a one of kind Good Smoke appetizer. “That’s moo and oink. Bacon-wrapped meatballs.” The Snack Shack will also serve beer and wine. The couple have gotten a reputation for award winning barbecue around the East Coast winning over 400 awards. They placed in the very prestigious Jack Daniel’s World Championship Invitational Barbecue. Last month, they came back from a competition in Virginia “B8 Gives Back,” as Grand Champion. Wemmett said hours for the Snack Shack when it opens mid-June will be 11-9 p.m. M-F, 12-9 p.m. Sat and 12-8 p.m. Sun. They may be tweaked at later date. Stop by and welcome the Wemmetts to the Wedge.

Good Smoke BBQ, 489 South Avenue

Peppa Pot Opens in the South Wedge

Marlene Henry realized her dream of bringing traditional Jamaican and Caribbean recipes out of her kitchen and into the South Wedge community when she opened on Gregory Street in March 2011. She named her new business “Peppa Pot” after the traditional “one pot” meal that her mother made. When Henry moved to Rochester, she began cooking Jamaican specialties for festivals. Her friends loved her cooking and encouraged her to open a restaurant. In a WEDGE interview in December 2011, Henry said she first looked for a small place with a friend, but she found that late night bar food was more likely fried chicken and fries not fried dumplings or oxtails. She and the business partner parted ways. Along the way she wanted to expand and found a new space in downtown. Her new East Main Street location serves Jamaican specialties including Brown Stew, Jerk Chicken, Curry Goat and Oxtail and Ackee along with many side dishes and appetizers. She serves a variety of unusual drinks: Sorrel and Irish Moss, Ting and “Irie” Iced Tea.

Henry invites guests to bring their own wine and beer to enjoy with meals. Right now she’s offering lunch specials, and she plans to have longer hours during the summer months and especially during the Jazz Festival.

Peppa Pot, 522 E. Main Street

John’s Tex Moves to Bigger Digs

John’s Tex-Mex restaurant moved to a bigger place and introduced a bigger menu. The menu includes enchiladas, chimichangas, new burrito fillings and queso every day. (Queso was previously offered only on Mondays; vegan queso is now offered on Mondays only.) Owner John Roth plans to add new items once his staff adjusts to the new menu and space.

When a new liquor license comes through, John’s Tex-Mex will offer margaritas, beers and ciders on draft, as well as more selections in bottles. The bar has its own outdoor patio where smoking is allowed. A nonsmoking patio is available in the North Bar. “We’re doing some amazing stuff in the works, as is a small counter in the bar dedicated to takeout orders.”

John’s Tex Mex, 428 South Avenue
Life and the Art of Wallpaper Removal

Michele H. Martell

Home ownership. What a blessing. And with the blessing comes a list of things to do, which is exciting and daunting at the same time and yet, so satisfying. My first DIY job was to remove a large amount of wallpaper shortly before I was hosting a professional event in my home. It was a bit ambitious for a novice who had never undertaken such a project. My friends said that I’d chosen a monster project to start with. However, it inspired me to get the job done right and expeditiously. Shortly in, I asked myself, “what in the world did I get myself into?” After all, I really had no idea what I was doing, and I was learning as I went along. At which point, a cardinal peered into my window at me while I inexpertly had my scraper in-hand. That was the only sign that I needed. (If you’ve read my last article you’ll know I see feathered creatures as guiding angels). I was encouraged, and it was Game On!

During this arduous task, many thoughts began to cross my mind, while I listened to my music day and night. I had a lot of time to think because what I thought would take a weekend ended up taking over a week. All other tasks were put on hold or rescheduled. My goal—crisp, clean, sparkling, beaming white walls. What I didn’t know was how many layers below the current layer of wallpaper I had to dig through. It turned out there were many, many layers of more wallpaper, paint, and I couldn’t tell what else, until I kept digging.

For the wallpaper, I used multiple chemicals, various types of scrapers, plus a steamer. It was a filthy, messy, long process that involved some late nights, and my active body was surprisingly sore. However, I was bound and determined to remove that which didn’t serve my visualized outcome of having sparkling and radiating walls to enjoy. It made me ponder how in life, if we are seeking a brighter, more joyous outcome, that there may be many layers we have to remove in order to get there and that we are all learning as we go along. Underneath the peripheral layer of wallpaper, I found old, sticky, yucky stuff. In life we often have to search below the unpleasant stuff to find the joy that we need, even if it takes a grueling process of chipping away and removing that which no longer serves our highest good. It can be a backbreaking yet exhilarating process to discover just what is to be uncovered under the next layer, removing what we thought we were and what we had to be, to reach our core brightness.

At one point I had thought the job was done. Turned out it was time to peel away more layers of what needed to go, whether chiseling piece by piece, or ripping apart in one fell swoop, eliminating that which was outmoded and no longer serving me, regardless of the mess and fallout that was heaped, discarding toxicity to move forward to clarity and brightness.

Such is life in the bigger scheme...relishing what makes us feel bright and loved and valued, inspiring us to reflect the same; and stripping away what does not bring us satisfaction, joy, and happiness. Keep doing the work on the inside and out, and we will get there. The process is worth it.

The cliché of staring at a blank wall took on a new meaning for me – I now find it absolutely exciting to stare at a blank sparkling wall because I know what it took me to get there. At the end, I knew it would be bright and beautiful. And we can say the same about life. If we just continue to do the work to dig below the surface, we often find a gratifying brilliance and beauty.
City Love 2019 was a huge success. The South Wedge Planning Committee’s (SWPC) annual fundraising event was held on Friday, May 3 at the newly renovated Historic German House.

Guests danced to some very fun and funky music by Uptown Groove, bid on great auction items, walked off with some fantastic raffle gift cards and most important, reconnected with old friends and made new ones. Thank you to all of the attendees for coming out to support SWPC community engagement programs.

Congratulations Lisa Reagan!

Lisa was named the 2019 David Halter Community Champion. Reagan was lauded for her dedicated service to the South Wedge by her good friend and 2018 Champion award recipient Rev. Judy Lee Hay.

"Lisa has used her incredible legal skills as an attorney to work for justice and fairness with such organizations as Farm Workers, Legal Aid, and Senior Housing," said Hay. "She has a passion to preserve city neighborhoods and has volunteered with SWPC on issues of removal of lead paint in homes, holding landlords accountable for property upkeep and tenant rights. As co-chair of NBN6 (Neighbors Building Neighborhoods) Lisa raised issues.


of traffic calming on residential streets and serves on Erie Harbor Phase Two planning team. She supported neighbors in opposition to the proposed Gold Street Lofts and the projected heights of the Highland Hospital PDD.

As a dedicated resident of Linden Street, Lisa has organized the Linden Street Block Party and pays attention to the needs of elderly neighbors.”

South Wedge Planning Committee Board of Directors Chair Frank Logan and Executive Director Glynis Valenti wish to thank all of the sponsors, raffle and auction donors, volunteers, and those who provided delicious tastings to round out the event. “Congratulations to Ron Maier and his family for seeing the Historic German House as an anchor business in our community” says Logan. “We congratulate all of those involved in the renovation of the facility and applaud the investment being made that will benefit all South Wedge residents.”

Visit www.swpc.org often for details on City Love 2020 and hit the like button on Facebook.

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It’s no secret that veteran homelessness is a serious issue in the United States, and the data supports it. According to the of January 1, 2018 Department of Veteran Affairs website, just over 37,800 veterans experience homelessness on a given night. Accord- ing to the same data, although veteran homelessness decreased 5.4 percent just over 37,800 veterans experience homelessness in 2018, it is on a crucial point in the chart of our country. Both this eclipse and Mercury’s move- ments coincide with Mercury’s position in the Declaration chart of July 4, 1776. This is just one of several ways in which 2019 is extraordinary in the evo- lution in the United States of America. While Mercury is in Leo (June 27 - July 19) it joins forces with Mars and Uranus making communication and thinking about change, dramatic, apocalyptic and boastful. On July 19, Mer- cury slips from fiery proud Leo back into watery nurturing Cancer (until Au- gust 12) giving everyone the opportu- nity to reconsider our heart’s desires. One curious fact about Mercury is that its movements repeat every 46 years, making the current cycle a repetition of 1973 in some noteworthy ways. Many comparisons have been made in the media between our current adminis- tration and that of the Watergate era. For example, Mercury was retrograde in Pisces (March 22) when Robert Muel- ler released his report, mirroring when Richard Nixon was taped planning ob- struction of justice in March 1973. Days after the release of the report, Attor- ney General William Barr essentially at- tempted to neutralize the effect of the report and has since perjured himself about several aspects of doing that. If you experienced the Watergate era first hand, you also had these pat- terns in your own chart, in your own life. And no matter how old you might be, these current lunar cycles, eclipses and Mercury’s movements will be ex- perienced to varying degrees in your personal world this summer depend- ing on where they occur in your chart. The degree to which they connect with your birth chart—or not—will be re- flected in your experiences. It might be a relatively placid year for you, one of great upheaval, or somewhere else on the spectrum of change re- lated to conscious thought, commu- nication and/or commerce. Perhaps you will change your mind in 2019…

What do you think?

If you’re interested in seeing how Mer- cury (and other planets) might be affect- ing your horoscope, Aeolea Wendy Bur- well and Peter Doughty are available for personal consultations: aeolea@junoco.com, zodiaca1spiral.com

Planetary Messengers
Aeolea Wendy Burwell & Peter Doughty

Welcome back to our second offering in a series focused on the art and science of astrology. In writing this we hope to spark the interest of a wide range of readers from those who might know their Sun signs to others who know nothing about astrology, including those who think it just might be a hippy hoax from the 60’s. In any given shorter period of time, one very observable celestial event is the complete cycle of the moon, from new to Full and back again. In June and July, we not only have two such lunation cycles but also the bonus of our second set of eclipses of 2019. The first was in January. Most of us have a general awareness that ocean tides are related to the moon’s close probability to the earth. Since our bodies are largely water, the pull of the moon affects us also — just ask any first responder or emergency room personnel after working a July Full moon shift. We even have a word for it: lunacy, from the Latin meaning moon!

The Gemini New Moon on June 3 (Sun and Moon are in the same sign at every New Moon) is at sunup in Washington DC. The chart drawn for this moment also has Mercury in Gemini, opposite Jupiter in Sagittarius (each in signs they rule), and so we can expect a renewed round of verbiage in which facts and astrology, including those who think it just might be a hippy hoax from the 60’s. In any given shorter period of time, one very observable celestial event is the complete cycle of the moon, from new to Full and back again. In June and July, we not only have two such lunation cycles but also the bonus of our second set of eclipses of 2019. The first was in January. Most of us have a general awareness that ocean tides are related to the moon’s close probability to the earth. Since our bodies are largely water, the pull of the moon affects us also — just ask any first responder or emergency room personnel after working a July Full moon shift. We even have a word for it: lunacy, from the Latin meaning moon!

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I truly am the luckiest dog in the world. Not only do I get constant love from the veterans I live with at Richards House on Cypress Street, but it just so happens I reside in the coolest community, the South Wedge! Just down the street from me is Teresa Wilcox and her dog Jax. We love to play. After visiting with Jax, I try and sneak some alone time at Highland Park. It’s a great place to sniff out a few new friends. After the park, I like to make my way over to the shops. Places like Equal Grounds and Hedonist Artisan Ice Cream invite me to come right on in and visit. Treats for pets are always included. They even know me on a first name basis, and leave a water bowl outside for me and other dogs to quench our thirst. How thoughtful is that?

Richards House is a haven for homeless veterans operated by the Veterans Outreach Center. After visiting all my friends on South Avenue, I am reminded that I have a very special job of looking after and caring for the men in our house. I would love for my community to come visit me and the see first hand the wonderful impact the Veterans Outreach Center has on my friends at the house. After all, they served their country and it seems right that we step up and take care of them. Until next time, your friend Hans is in need of a very long nap! I know, I have such a rough life, right? For more information about Veterans Outreach Center, Richards House and how you can help or drop off a snack for Hans, call (585) 295-7821 or email Joan.Brandenburg@vocroc.org.

Hans stops by to chat and check out Hedonist Artisan Ice Cream ever changing flavors

Hans contemplates the possibility of an ice cream cone
Activists Sabrina Smith and Jeiri Flores host a discussion at the Swillburg's Cinema Theater

Jeiri Flores, a local disability rights activist, wants to start a conversation. In late April, Flores and community activist Sabrina Smith invited families to a free screening of the film, The Hate You Give. They asked the attendees to stay after for a discussion about the impact of violence on young people and to learn ways to heal the trauma that follows. Flores used a grant from Rochester’s M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence to hold the event.

The film, based on a novel by Angie Thomas, tells the story of a Starr, a 16-year-old African American girl, who straddles two worlds—a mostly poor neighborhood and an elite affluent private school in the white part of town. She witnesses a childhood friend, a young black man, killed during a traffic stop, and her life changes dramatically. In a plot that resembles the national news, a grand jury does not indict the white police officer in the shooting. Starr must find a way to heal and retain a loving heart despite the trauma she suffers.

“I wanted to have a conversation around trauma and unpack the movie,” said Flores. “The movie is not about police brutality per se. I wanted to break down how we all have trauma, and how it impacts everyday life. I read the book, and it personally spoke to the things happening in my community.”

“I felt the topic of violence and trauma needed to go beyond talking to my friends,” Flores added. “It needed a community discussion. Some of these kids are seeing their friends being killed. That’s what I’m reading on social media; someone wrote ‘I buried a friend this summer.’ I didn’t have to process that as a child. They need resources that will help to navigate those feelings.”

Flores said she also wanted to give children “the full movie experience—access and a bag of popcorn and pop. I didn’t want families to say ‘I don’t have the money to go.’”

Joined by her friend Sabrina Smith, Flores invited others in the community to talk about resources to help traumatized children. Pastor Ronald Smith for Restoration Worship Temple and Pastor Paulette Brown from Agape Worship Center had a spirited conversation with the audience that ranged from 10 to 70.

“We should ask ourselves what can I do not to create trauma on my fellow man?” Pastor Smith said. “I needed to deal with my own trauma when a friend was killed. We need to treat each other as humans. We all have families to go home to.”

Ruth Danis, a former teacher, focused on education: “Teaching is everything.” One young African American girl shared that “it doesn’t make sense that people would be afraid of me just because of the color of my skin.” One teenager in the audience said that empathy was the key: “We have to feel for each other if really want to change.”

Later, Flores raffled fourteen copies of Thomas’ book, donated by several doctors at the University of Rochester and Flores’ “mentor” at SUNY Brockport. She also distributed pamphlets about NAMI’s (National Alliance on Mental Illness), a local mental health resource for families.

“It’s important that the community should continue to work for an environment free of violence. Young and old can come together to discuss issues that impact all of us,” Flores said.
WOKEPac Agitates for Political Inclusion

Nancy O’Donnell

It wasn’t billed as an afternoon of inspiration and activism, but that’s what happened when the Cinema Theater opened its doors to Robin Wilt’s WOKEPac (Women of ‘K’olor Electoral PAC) and a screening of Knock Down the House, a documentary that follows the 2018 primary campaigns of four progressive Democrats: Cori Bush, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Amy Vilaseca, and Paula Jean Sweeney.

After the screening, WOKEPac held a fast-paced panel discussion with local political luminaries. The women spoke of the current political climate, the actions of some politicians who are “taking the teeth out of the Voting Act,” others who are working to revoke Roe v. Wade, attacks on health care and the environment.

Reenah Oshun Golden, founder of Blackbox Theatre and member of writing collective “We All Write,” moderated the panel of six women: Brighton Town Council member Robin Wilt, Rochester City Council member Jackie Ortiz, Rochester City School District Beata Licor, Brighton Town School board member Christina Lee and Shari Curry Mitchell, who is running for Monroe County District Attorney.

Wilt is best known for her run against now Congresswoman Joe Morelle when he was holding an office in the NYS State Assembly.

She said she started WOKEPac because of her belief that underrepresented communities are ignored when government officials craft policy. She describes WOKEPac as “an organization for women of color, with the goal of empowering traditionally underrepresented communities” with a “mission to change the makeup of political campaigns and diversify the movement for social justice.” Its goal is to “disrupt the traditional political narrative.” Its simple message is “You can run. You can win. We can help.”

“We’re trying to challenge political operators,” said Wilt. “We need to challenge the patronage system. It takes people to challenge the machine.”

Each of the panelists spoke about their backgrounds and the reasons they ran for office. Ortiz spoke of her brother’s death. Lebrón said a “seemingly minor reminder of how women must act as disrupters as a political system that has kept women out. She argued that legislated politicians often “try to take you out.”

“I don’t kiss anyone’s ring,” said Lebrón.

Korean-American Lee offered a challenge to the audience in a sobering quote: “One hundred people need to run for office. Ortiz said her brother’s death. pellets seem a visible reminder of how women must act as disrupters as a political system that has kept women out. She argued that legislated politicians often “try to take you out.”

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Positive Force Movement Opens in Blossom Business Center

Lore McSpadden was looking for a fitness center that welcomed people of all sizes, genders, orientations and abilities, so she opened her own along with co-owner Christine Walker. On May 25, 2019 the Positive Force Movement celebrated its grand opening in the Blossom Business Center. The event included several movement demonstrations from the personal trainers and group exercise instructors who work at Positive Force Movement.

“Our mission is to make elite, top-level coaching available to people who have historically not felt welcomed by the fitness industry,” said McSpadden. “I wanted to help each individual discover strength and empowerment within a fun, safe, inclusive, and celebratory environment.”

The Positive Force Movement “focuses particularly on the needs of LGBTQ+ folks, fat and larger-bodied folks, People of Color, folks who are 65 and older, survivors of cancer, autistic people and people with disabilities.”

McSpadden and Walker, along with their team of trainers, offer personal training and group exercise classes including: Kettlebell, Silver Sneakers, Yoga, Mindfulness and Movement, Capoeira, and MMA/Cardio Kickboxing. They also have space available in for massage therapists and Reiki practitioners who are aligned with their philosophy of LGBTQ+ inclusion, anti-racism and radical size acceptance.

“There’s no place else that I can go that’s going to be safe for everyone, that’s going to be welcoming for everyone.”

“People need to be in a place where they’re not going to feel intimidated by other people’s abilities and can focus on what they can contribute to the space,” Thompson added. People with marginalized identities—whether connected to their gender, orientation, age, size, race, class, or disability—often face significant health and wellness disparities.

“The team at Positive Force Movement is committed to helping each person develop their own personal connection to movement that celebrates them exactly as they are, right in this moment,” Thompson added.

To learn more, visit The Positive Force Movement on Facebook. 595 Blossom Road, Suites 317 and 319.

Positive Force Movement Center offers personal training and group exercise and classes: Kettlebell, Silver Sneakers, Yoga, Mindfulness and Movement, Capoeira, and MMA/Cardio Kickboxing.

River Edge Neighborhood Program

The River Edge Neighborhood Program, sponsored by Episcopal SeniorLife Communities, is a membership-based, health and wellness initiative for seniors living in the South Wedge, Highland Park and PLEX neighborhoods. The Program is based at River Edge Manor on Mount Hope Avenue and has three main components: physical fitness and nutrition, social interaction, and education. The Neighborhood Program seeks to empower and support seniors to live safe, fulfilled and active lives within their means and in their place of choice, by increasing knowledge, activity levels and overall health, through programs specifically designed for older adults.

A schedule of the activities offered in the Neighborhood Program is available at EpiscopalSeniorLife.org.

To learn more about the Neighborhood Program, contact Bonnie Gregoire at 585-546,8400 x3703 or bgregoire@EpiscopalSeniorLife.org.

River Edge Neighborhood Program targets seniors living in the South Wedge

Get your ad in the WEDGE in 2019 Business card size costs only $33 a month! Call for more info. 586.257.1740

DO YOUR PART
Don’t Litter.
Pick it up when you see it. Check out #litterati on Instagram. Litterati has collected and logged over 700,000 pieces of trash! And while you’re at it, you can cut back on your use of plastic way before the law changes. Bring a cloth or net bag for your groceries, your personal take-out containers, your own spoons, etc. Let’s keep plastic out of the ocean.

Capoeira teacher Chris Thompson with student

The Wedge Gets Read!