**THE REPLACEMENT OF RIVER PARK COMMONS IS MOVING AHEAD!**

By Bob Boyd

The River Park Commons renovation is an exciting opportunity to create a unique development that integrates a people-centric design with the river and the South Wedge neighborhood. The current buildings have outlived their usefulness and have become a liability to the neighborhood. The exciting changes will help continue the development of the South Wedge urban village. The project proposed by Continuity Reality is to renovate the 200 units in the tower and to demolish the “low rise” complex and build 100 new units. The tower would continue to be income qualified tenants 100 new units. The tower would become the usefulness and have become current buildings have outlived their usefulness and have become a liability to the neighborhood. The exciting changes will help continue the development of the South Wedge urban village. The project proposed by Continuity Reality is to renovate the 200 units in the tower and to demolish the “low rise” complex and build 100 new units. The tower would continue to be income qualified tenants.

The first step in making the project real is for the developer to evaluate the impact of their project on the “environment.” This is called a “Preliminary Environmental Impact Statement”. A copy is available at the SWPC office or online at http://www.cityofrochester.gov/dol/index.cfm.

The public has an opportunity to provide input and comment on what is being proposed. Written comments are due by June 6, 2008 at 5 p.m. We encourage everyone to look at the proposal and the issues and then express your views. Information is available at SouthWedge.org or by calling the SWPC office at 585-256-1740, Ext. 102.

The South Wedge Planning Committee, Inc. wants this to be a “GREAT” project. We have identiﬁed a number of concerns that need to be addressed. The key concerns are:

- The proposed plan for the relocation of the residents is not sufﬁcient. The residents will be there between 4 and 30 years. Many of them have become part of the neighborhood – the plan should specifically address how to keep them in the neighborhood if they desire. The plan does not provide a process to give existing residents priority to return to the new income qualiﬁed units. A large number of Somali families live there. Provisions need to be made to keep them together as much as possible and to provide translation services.
- The number of buildings on the site has been increased from five to twelve. This does break up the existing streets.

So, please, get involved with your community and contribute to this project! ▲

**Somali Community Spirit Grows at River Commons**

By Nancy O’Donnell

Seven days a week Abdirahad “Abdi” Mohamud and other committed volunteers at the Somali Community Outreach and Education Center educate and entertain some 50 Somalian children who live in the Somali Community Outreach volunteers (l-r) Mohamed Omar, Ahmed Betula, Dada Mohamed, Mohamed and Abdi Muhamud (kneeling). Photo: Nancy O’Donnell

Commons in 1999 said Abdi. Currently, 34 families live in complex’s top two floors. The first ﬂoor apartments are now vacant.) While the planned Continuity developer allows for some income-qualiﬁed apartments, the community will be inﬂuenced by the renovations and Abdi is worried.

Today the Center provides support for residents of all ages without beneﬁt of public funding. “We have to help our community,” said Abdi. Volunteers buy the sports equipment the children use and the snacks they get each day they attend.

Weekdays kids, ages 3-12 years old, come to the center after school to do homework, sometimes staying until 7 p.m.

“Education is most important to Somalis,” said Abdi. “It is too difﬁcult [in Somalia].” I had to walk 3-5 kilometers to walk to school from my village of Kismayu.”

On weekends, the center continues on page 9.

Tom Cantin was an Urban Planner for the City of Rochester and in the nice weather walked down Mt. Hope on the way to work. Bob Schnacky ran Trott Monument Company on Mt. Hope.

The South Wedge neighborhood had declined by the early 1970s, and there were many boarded up houses. It took Tom two years to rent an apartment on Hickory Street. The neighborhood’s reputation was tarnished and was perceived as unsafe. The only community group was Marie Daley’s South Side Seniors.

The west side of Mt. Hope had also seen better days. The changing nature of the upstate economy had taken its toll. The Lehigh Valley Railroad started pulling back operations in the 1960’s and completely abandoned the site in 1972. The railroad yards were abandoned and overgrown with weeds. There also was an abandoned coal trestle. A road ran through the site. Much of the parcel was owned by the state with a few remaining businesses. There was no housing on the site at all.

Next to the Stone Warehouse was Ritter Slat House – a Rochester destination. It burned down in the 1970’s. Then there was Whitmore, Rudder & Vickers – a street contractor who stored sand and gravel on the site. Behind that was an old ganty crane which was used to unload barges from the feeder canal. A coal trestle used by the railroad and adjacent building for coal sales was also located there.

A brick company and scrap yard were still operating at this time in the middle of the site. Outside the ranks of “old” Mack chain drive ﬁre truck with hard tires. On the Gregory Street side was Santis’s who sold roasted peanuts alongside a bait shop.

This entire site, including the buildings and businesses, were leveled to create River Park Commons. The Slate Urban Development Corporation moved quickly with no community input. There was no consideration of how the project would interact with the neighborhood and the river.

**DO YOU CARE WHAT THE NEW DEVELOPMENT LOOKS LIKE?**

(See page 2)
Redefining Healthy Choices: A Farmers’ Market Manifesto – Part Two

By Chris Hartman

A public marketplace creates a space where farmers and consumers come together, where neighbors gather and talk, and where excitement and merri-
making fill the air. This type of place-making brings communities together, fosters a feeling of belonging, builds networks and develops the social capital neces-
sary for sustained community revitaliza-
tion and health. The relationship between urban areas and their surrounding agricultural communities that must exist to sustain a localized food system is developed and strengthened.

Do you care about River Park Commons?

The South Wedge Farmer’s Market is open Thursdays 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. at the corner of South Clinton Avenue and Alexander Street (behind Boulder Coffee Company).

Chris Hartman, Social and Environmental Integrity and Community Service Coordinator at Harley School, is co-founder with Vicki Hartman of the South Wedge Farmers Market and the soon to be opened 19th Ward Westside Farm-

ers Market, Genesee Street every Tues.

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The Wedge Newspaper, a not-for-profit newspaper, is published by the South Wedge Planning Committee (SWPC), a grassroots organization serving the South Wedge Urban Village. Its mission is to provide accurate coverage of neighborhood news as well as local, state and national news that affect the area. The newspaper is mailed to homes in the South Wedge and points in the Greater Rochester area.

To reach The Wedge, call (585) 256-1740, ext. 5

E-mail Addresses: firstinitial.lastname@swpc.org

The Wedge Newspaper is on the web! www.swpc.org

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Granny’s Ice Cream Opens for the Season
The lawn chairs and tables are out, a huge painted ice cream cone glinting in the window, and the screen door is open for the season at Granny’s Ice Cream Shop at South Goodman Avenue and Caroline Street. Owner Patrick Belle-Isle has added something more to a delectable menu of 22 ice cream flavors, three scoop sundaes and the “ultimate banana split.”

“We now have fresh-made-to-order ice cream pies,” said Belle-Isle. “Already on hand to-order ice cream pies,” said Belle-Isle on June 14, 1 p.m. neighbors Linda Coleman, Ginny Cassetta, Lisa Lefler, Gary Lynch, Allison Clark and Anne Weissbeek joined to see the miniature model home and to discuss future community events. The next Council meeting will be held at Muddy Waters Café June 4, 6 p.m.

Mayor Attends Ribbon Cutting at Mise En Place
Mise En Place owner Ken Holenbeck and family held a ribbon cutting on Friday, May the 9th. In attendance were Mayor Bob Duffy, Carol Stevens, a Monroe County Executive representative, SWP, Director Bob Floyd and BASWA Chair Chris Jones and 100 other neighborhood wellwishers.

“We served Hedonist chocolate ice cream flavors, three scoop sundaes and the “ultimate banana split.”

South Wedge Farmers Market Founders Welcome Liam Christopher Reader to the South Wedge
By Nancy O’Donnell

Welcome Liam Christopher Reader to the South Wedge Church parking lot on Tuesdays, 4-8 p.m. beginning, June 17. It will run through October.

For more information e-mail Chris or Vicki at swfarmersmarket@gmail.com or call 546.7507.

Neighbors Council Plans for Marie Daley Park Picnic
The Neighbors Council met at Equal Grounds on May 7 to discuss upcoming South Wedge events and examine urban forest crafts—a fairy house composed of moss, twigs, pine cones and grape vines—that can be created during the Marie Daley Park Picnic.

South Wedge Neighbors Council photo: Nancy O’Donnell

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Community Builders

South Wedge Garden Contest

Get your gardens ready for the 2008 South Wedge Garden contest. Local garden experts will judge, and you’ll have a chance to win some great prizes and show off your garden. The contest is open to all South Wedge residents. Judges will stop by your house on July 19th between 10:00 am and 1:00 pm to see your garden. Registration is required along with a $5 registration fee. To register, call Allison Clark at 256-1740, ext. 106 or email aclark@swpc.org. Don’t miss this opportunity to let your hard work and horticultural skills pay off.

 Neighbor Council Meetings

The South Wedge Neighborhood Council meets on the first Wednesday evening of each month around the neighborhood. Neighbors Council is a group of South Wedge residents committed to improving neighborhood safety and quality of life, and organizing neighborhood activities. Consider joining; it is a terrific way to get involved. The next meeting is June 4th from 6:00 – 7:00 pm at Muddy Waters Coffee House behind The Cinema on South Clinton. For more information, contact Gale Lynch at 454-3295.

PAC-TAC

The Police and Citizens Together Against Crime (PAC-TAC) helps residents to patrol neighborhood streets on foot, to keep watch for potential criminal activity and interact with residents and merchants. PAC-TAC meets on the third Thursday of every month from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Walks begin at the NET Office on South Clinton. For more information, contact Robert Lauterbach at rlauterbach@gmail.com.

Wedgestock is Coming!

It may seem early but planning is underway for this year’s Wedgestock. Wedgestock 2008 will be even bigger and better than last year. We anticipate more food, more games and more fun for the whole family. This is not your average annual meeting, so mark your calendars and save the date, August 24th at the Highland Bowl.

Dog Walkers Against Crime

A new group “Dog Walkers against Crime” is looking for anyone who likes to walk their dog, meet new neighbors and help deter crime in the neighborhood. The group meets at Marie Daley Park between Gregory and Hickory on Tuesdays at 6:00 pm. So bring your animal companion and walk the neighborhood!

Building on the Nature of the Neighborhood

Marie Daley Park first year Anniversary Celebration

Bring your family, bring a picnic and join us as we celebrate the first year anniversary of the new playground at Marie Daley Park!

June 14th from 1 - 4 pm
at the playground between
Gregory and Ashlands Streets

Live local music
Children can build their
own Nature House
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South Clinton Site Turns Platinum

by Nancy O’Donnell

Tom Taliento got the Manhattan-style bar he always wanted when he opened Platinum Lounge on the corner of South Clinton and Gregory Street. A sinuous oak bar winds around the room in a space once filled by Kim’s Asia Restaurant. Heavy slabs of salmon and grey granite were fitted as a counter on the bar. Two comfy couches hug the windows nearby and wallpaper in muted blues, greens and yellows cover the walls. A second room houses a stage and more couches for a “VIP lounge.”

Renovations to the brick exterior now in process is erasing the previous lime green exterior.

“I’ve always wanted to own a bar,” said Taliento, who did the substantial renovations to the space before he opened the Lounge in March. Along with Platinum, the 26-year-old owns Property Pro, a custom carpentry and floor refinishing company. During one Friday Happy Hour, the lounge buzzed with the kind of crowd Taliento said he wanted to attract—well dressed, diverse, professionals. “We thrive on the diversity of the crowd,” said Taliento. “They’re all different—race, creeds, sexual orientations.”

Bartender Lara Grassi, a Brockport University student studying social work, builds a premium martini from a list of some 19 cocktails alongside Plantinum’s full wine and beer list. The lounge is already helping to promote other businesses in the Wedge; the lounge is a stop on the Rock Steady Bar Tour, a tour of bars that focus on Latin music. Several of the bars on the tour supply snacks for Happy Hours.

Grassi even did her part in promoting Urban Village Scooters. “I told [a customer] I wanted to go for a ride on a scooter,” said Grassi. “He said, ‘I’ll be right back’ and left. When he came back, he slapped a receipt on the bar. He had bought a scooter.”

“I haven’t gotten a ride yet,” laughed Grassi. “He hasn’t picked up the scooter yet.”

Since the kitchen needs a total rehab, Taliento said, Platinum’s menu will be simple bar food until a full kitchen launches later in the year. Taliento envisions Sunday Italian afternoon brunches featuring a crooner ala Frank Sinatra and pasta sauce that comes courtesy of a recipe perfected by his Sicilian grandmother.

Platinum Bar and Lounge, 699 South Clinton Avenue, 536-7516. Tues.-Thurs. 4 p.m.- closing, Fri. 9 p.m.- closing.
Nathaniel Rochester Unveiled

City and state officials, community activists and neighbors gathered together to see the final transformation of Nathaniel Square Park.

May 17, 2008

Photos by: Dave Halter

State Senator Joseph E. Robach, Assistant to Mayor Darryl Porter, Sculptor Pepsy Kettavong, SWPC Executive Director Bob Boyd.

May 10, 2008

Weeding
Sweeping
Mulching
Taking a break

City and state officials, community activists and neighbors gathered together to see the final transformation of Nathaniel Square Park.

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State Senator Joseph E. Robach, Assistant to Mayor Darryl Porter, Sculptor Pepsy Kettavong, SWPC Executive Director Bob Boyd.

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May 10, 2008

Weeding
Sweeping
Mulching
Taking a break
New talent agency opens in the Historic German House

By Nancy O'Donnell

Rochestertalent.com, a talent management company, recently opened its new headquarters in the Historic German House on Gregory Street in the “very attractive” South Wedge.

Brighton resident Eric Cubitt created Rochestertalent.com eight years ago, but practical matters (he’s married to wife Daryl and has an eight-year-old son Colin) kept it as a part-time endeavor. By day, Cubitt worked as an IT manager with Preferred Care. On the side Cubitt performed as an actor in a variety of indie films. “I help to develop careers,” said Cubitt, who gets “commercial work for clients that include video and voiceovers.” In addition, Rochestertalent.com is “the only certified child performer employer” in the area Cubitt says.

Clients have included local business- men and filmmakers who come to Cubitt for help. Among his business clients are Raymond & Flanagan Furniture store. Cubitt recently provided actors for filmmaker Matt Ehlers whose feature film, Smoking Laws, was part of the 2008 High Falls Film Festival. In 2007 Cubitt’s company provided 16 actors in supporting roles along with four young girls for the soon-to-be-released, The Alphabet Murders, a film that examines a tragic series of child murders in Rochester in the 1970s. Like many in Rochester’s film and acting community, Cubitt would like to see the city do more to promote a film industry. “Our primary goal is to find qualified actors for clients,” said Cubitt. “We’d like to see more film work. Rochester is a beautiful location. There are so many faces to the area. We have four seasons, gorges, and cityscapes. Twenty minutes from downtown, you’re in cow pastures.”

As the film industry is today, “It’s almost easier to go to Toronto,” Cubitt added. “We’re three hours from Toronto, a huge film center,” noting that it developed through offers of “huge incentives to make a film” from Canada’s film office.

While many in his current stable of actors, both male and female, come to him “through word of mouth,” Cubitt now plans to hold acting auditions in the coming months. “It’ll be an open door audition,” said Cubitt. “We cast a wide net in the ocean.”

Rochestertalent.com is located at 315 Gregory Street, Suite 300 (Nicholson Street entrance), 271.457. Website: rochestertalent.com.

SouthWedge Colony Bar & Grille

Opens on South Avenue

The soon-to-be hot spot at the corner of South Avenue and Alexander Street is a joint project of brothers Chris and Greg Joy (managing owners) and Lylyna Wilton, of Boulder Coffee Company.

“I keep calling it a ‘classy dive,’” said Wilton. “I wanted to be part of a business that offers a very clean and comfortable place with moderately-priced beverages and food—an extension of your living room.”

Greg Joy agreed, “You don’t have to spend $100 to have a good time. The way the economy is, we wanted to create a place where you would have a great time for $50.”

Refinished hardwood floors and a historic tin ceiling were retained. A flat screen TV hangs above a concrete bar with rounded edges and comfy leather couches and a pool table beckon nearby. “We needed another Gregory Street intersection,” said Wilton. A Continued on page 10

The Wedge
June-July 2008
Somali Community Spirit
continued from page 1

tertains the children from noon – 2 p.m. On one May Sunday after-
tnoon, Abdi shouted directions and warnings as 20 or more young boys kicked one tattered soccer ball around the grass mound be-
hind the River Commons at the Genesee River’s edge.
"I love kids," said Abdi. "I re-
member growing up watching [my] father who loved kids.”
Adult immigrants also benefit from the center said Abdi. Along with learning English, residents born in the U.S. can learn more about the Somalian culture.
Abdi said he couldn’t do what he does without a dedicated team of volunteers and he includes Amai Awess, Ahmed BETula, Fatuma Abdi, Mohamed Omar, Mohamed Mohamad, and community elders like Dada and SWPC Director Bob
Boyd.
"He is wonderful," said Abdi. "He is our only support in Roch-
ester.”
While hours will be extended during the summer to 10-1 p.m. and 4-7 p.m.; the center will be closed midday because the volun-
teers are unable to provide lunches for the children.
"We hope to be able to take a few field trips to Sea Breeze," said Abdi. But, Abdi is not sure that they will be able to pay for it.
Somali Community Outreach and Education Center. River Com-
mons. Mt. Hope Avenue.

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COMMUNITY SPEAK OUT
Making a Great Neighborhood Even Better

By Dr. David Topa

This neighborhood’s great! From “Taste of the Neighborhood,” and the well-attended Halloween children’s parade to continued rave reviews of neighborhood stores and restaurants (including a large number of City Newspaper’s “Best of” awards), the Highland Park Neighborhood continues to impress me. However, like many excellent corporations and organizations, we can’t rest on our laurels and must strive to continue to improve our neighborhood.

How to make our neighborhood better:

Be an ambassador for the neighborhood. Invite friends from the suburbs and other parts of the city to hang out here. Whether it’s having food and drinks at a local establishment or planning a playdate at the Meigs and Linden playground, expose others to all the great things this area has to offer. At work and with friends, talk about how much you enjoy the neighborhood and encourage those looking for housing to check it out. Word of mouth is a great marketing tool.

Shop locally. The neighborhood is home to a number of great shops and restaurants that need our support. By keeping your money local, you’re keeping storefronts full and sidewalks thriving, thus maintaining the safety and appearance of the neighborhood.

Maintain the neighborhood. If you go out for a walk, take a small plastic shopping bag to pick up errant pieces of trash. While not glamorous, it sets a good example for others and keeps the neighborhood looking great.

Don’t be afraid to over-invest. While making improvements to our home, our mortgage banker second-guessed us, saying, “You know, you’re really over-improving for your neighborhood.” Well, if neighborhoods are to improve and thrive, we all need to over-invest. Whether it’s time, money, or effort, give a little more of yourself to keep this neighborhood great. I’ll bet you get a great long-term return on your investment in the form of great neighbors, ease of living, and being a part of a wonderful community.

The article first appeared in The Buzz, Highland Park Neighborhood Association’s newsletter.

Southwedge Colony Bar & Grille
continued from page 8

business to balance out this end of South Avenue, to bring more people to this end of the Wedge,” said Wilton.

A grand opening will be held sometime in June.

503 South Avenue. Hours: Mon-Sat. 3 p.m. – closing, Sunday 3 p.m. – closing. In late summer, a Football NFL Package extends hours to 12 p.m. – 2 a.m. ▲

Highland Hands Massage Center Opens in Historic German House

Debra Eileen Lewis opened her new massage clinic, Highland Hands Massage Center in the Historic German House in May. Her practice offers “therapeutic massage and bodywork for the whole family,” said Lewis.

Lewis studied at the Finger Lakes School of Massage in Ithaca and graduated as a licensed massage therapist in 2002. She has also continued her studies in CranioSacral Therapy at the Upledger Institute in Florida and holds a BA (Arts and Education) from Hobart and William Smith Colleges.


Your Ad Could Be Here…
Reaching 7000 Interested Readers

The WEDGE, a not-for-profit newspaper, is published by the South Wedge Planning Committee, a grassroots organization serving the South Wedge Urban Village. The Wedge first appeared in 1982 when it was called The S.O.S. News. It now boasts a circulation of 7000.

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A good spring cleaning always makes the house and yard look fresh and inviting. Your tool library has the needed equipment to loan its members for this worthwhile activity. Our location is the red brick building at the corner of 224 Mt. Hope and Hamilton Street. Look for the white panel sign and red arrow placed at the side of the building on the Hamilton St.

If you’re not a tool library member, there couldn’t be a better time to join than now. Our fiscal year runs from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009. Join now and get full coverage from signs on date through June 30, 2009. All this at the same price.

Our short step ladders help with washing the outside windows while the taller ladders help with cleaning the gutters. Lightweight Mathis Tillers do a bang up job on flower beds and those vegetable gardens. Use our roller to flatten those bumps in your lawn. Afterwards use our hand push or gas engine mowers to give that grass a neat trim.

Got some bush and tree branch-es that need trimming but are too high to reach? Our long handle pole saw/branch lopper will make short work of that task. How about those walks and garage floors, do they need a good vacuum? Several shop vacs are at your disposal for fast efficient clean up.

When you visit our two floors of tools, we have too many to mention in this short article. Fill out some easy paperwork. Fill out some easy paperwork and you’re on your way with the needed tools.

Donations to the tool library are especially welcome. A special note of thanks--We especially appreciate the recent tools donated by Mr. J. Edward Jackson.

Visit our web site: www.nymarking.com

The Wedge
June-July 2008

SWPC Community Calendar

Resource & Marketing Team
Wednesday, June 25
7:30 pm @ TBA

SWPC Board of Directors
Thursday, June 12
Thursday, July 10
6:00 pm @ 224 Mt. Hope Ave.

Finance Committee
Monday, June 9
Monday, July 7
Noon @ 224 Mt. Hope Ave.

Housing & Overlay Committee
Wednesday, June 18
Wednesday, July 16
Noon @ 224 Mt. Hope Ave.

NIHB Sector 6
Monday, July 14
5:30 pm @ Monroe Co. Parks Dept.

Neighbors Council
Wednesday, June 4
Wednesday, July 2
6:00 pm @ TBA

PAC-TAC
Thursday, June 19
Thursday, July 17
6:00 pm @ 846 S Clinton Ave.

Real Estate Team
Wednesday, June 25
Wednesday, July 30
6:00 pm @ 224 Mt. Hope Ave.

Standard library hours are 4 to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We are also open early on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

By Ed Meyers, SWPC Tool Librarian

A special note of thanks--We especially appreciate the recent tools donated by Mr. J. Edward Jackson.
Construction Begins on Highland Hospital Parking Lot!

By Bob Boyd

The former Family Medicine site at 865 South Avenue has been cleared and construction has begun on the new parking ramp. The ramp will be used by employees of the hospital; it will not be for public use. This is the culmination of over a year of community involvement in this project. Neighbors fought hard against the ramp as it did not complement the residential character of the neighborhood. In the end after countless meetings, letters and an unsuccessful court case the construction is about to begin. The public input resulted in the ramp being reduced from 5 levels and 410 cars to 3 ½ levels with 349 spaces. This reduced the massing and shadow effect significantly. A community design team was assembled and assisted in the development of an appropriate façade.

The original design tried to capture the essence of every building on South Avenue. The revised design is a consistent style and reflects its purpose as a garage. The key features are the use of a brick façade; pilasters to create depth and a cornice. The window frames have lintels and sills, archways and awnings. There are slight variations in height on the South Avenue façade.

Construction schedule is as follows:

- Begin concrete foundations – early June – completed by November
- Asphalt binder for surface lot – late October
- Masonry work begins early November
- Interior MEP and finishing work late November
- Employees begin parking in ramp – January 2009
- Complete MEP and finishing work – late March 2009
- Landscaping and final paving – early April 2009
- Project completed hospital hosts opening event for neighbors – April/May 2009

A Mexican Rainbow for Cinco de Mayo

Coqui’s Journeys: Cultural Gifts, Novelties & Collectibles held a day long Cinco De Mayo celebration at the shop that included Group Arco Iris Mexicano, (The Mexican Rainbow) dance troupe. Colorful dancers performed (standing) Zulet Ramos, 17 and Stephanie Hoppe, 16; Marissa Gingello, 12; and Natalie Hoppe, 12 while teacher Adriana Hoppe looked on. Local artist Shelley Saffer created small ceramic animals. Saffer travels to Peru to work with El Refugio, a mission youth camp.