The New York Upstate American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) recently awarded Bergmann Associates a 2011 Merit Award of Achievement for their work at Nathaniel Square, at the corner of Alexander Street and South Avenue in the South Wedge.

Efforts to beautify the former blighted space began in the early 1990s. The South Wedge Environmental Enhancement Project (SWEEP), headed by community activist, now South Wedge Planning Committee (SWPC) board member Cheryl Stevens, worked for over seven years to transform the spot. Meanwhile, SWPC helped to raise some $300,000 in state and corporate funds to build Nathaniel Square.

In 2001, SWPC joined with Syracuse landscape artist Dudley Breed, Jr., Eastman Kodak, the Greater Rochester Arts & Cultural Council and Neighbors Building Neighborhoods (NBN) in a neighborhood charette to design the park. The park opened in 2006 with brick walkways, a small round plaza and historic millstones. Sculptor Pepsy Kettavong, known locally for the statues of Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony at Madison and King Streets, was commissioned to create a statue of the city founder. Using SWPC board member Dave Halter as his model, the contemplative statue was erected in 2008.

Bergmann Associates landscape architect Mark Johns, who acted as project manager, said they only recently submitted photos for the ASLA awards. "It's always humbling as well as flattering to win an award," said Johns. "I thought it was great that we could take back the former blighted lot that attracted nuisances."

The design by Dudley Breed, Jr., incorporates "historic artifacts" of Rochester's Flour City heyday, "millstones once stored at the University of Rochester," said Johns. "It's always humbling as well as flattering to win an award," said Johns. "I thought it was great that one day I could take back the former blighted lot that attracted nuisances." The design by Dudley Breed, Jr., incorporates "historic artifacts" of Rochester's Flour City heyday, "millstones once stored at the University of Rochester," said Johns. "It's always humbling as well as flattering to win an award," said Johns. "I thought it was great that we could take back an abandoned lot that attracted nuisances."

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Editorial: The Property Tax Blues

By Solomon Rose

As a South Wedge homeowner, it’s daunting to find that my house was assessed for thousands of dollars more than I originally paid for it. Recently, as many other homeowners have, I received a notice from the City’s Assessment Office stating that I had a right to debate my newly upgraded assessment with one of the city’s fine assessors, if I so chose to. If you don’t fight, then for sure your taxes are going to go up!

The biggest problem I have with the city is the lack of information given to the homeowner. What happens when you get to the meeting with the local assessor? Here are a few things you should do. 1. Find three houses recently sold at a lower rate than your house is presently being assessed and are equivalent to your house in square footage, number of rooms, and acreage. 2. Bring estimates and photos of any repairs that presently need to be done on your home. 3. Make sure that you tell them what you think your house should be fairly assessed based on your findings.

They are not even allowing you to compare assessments of other comparable houses that are assessed lower than yours. I was told “those assessments may change based on entire neighborhod being re-assessed this year.” So, the very assessments they have newly applied to our houses are, in fact, not even usable in a debate with the city assessors.

The simple message I would like to get to homeowners in Rochester, NY is you MUST go in and fight your assessment. The assessment is based on math that will not work out in your favor most of the time, and you have the right to challenge their math with your own findings.

I am not saying that the City does not deserve money or that the people at the assessor’s office are bad people. All I am saying is this is as close to a game of “poker” or “can you guess which number I am thinking of” as it gets. Put very simply, the City is winning, and the homeowner is losing. This trend will continue unless we are willing to educate ourselves and make a difference.

Good luck and don’t pay any more property taxes than you have to!
Note to Taggers- Stop!
I doubt the taggers defacing great swaths of South Clinton and Monroe Ave buildings are reading this, but maybe some adults in their lives. So folks, if you notice the billtale signs of spray paint and graffiti designs around the house, you might want to ask “What’s Up”. Let the kids know they’re not making art; they’re making a mess around the house, you might notice the telltale signs of spray paint and graffiti designs around the house, you might want to ask “What’s Up”. Let the kids know they’re not making art; they’re making a mess

Amos, the South Wedge Cat, Returns Home
The e-mail went out in mid October—“Please help us find our missing cat, Amos! We last saw him on October 20 at 6 p.m. at our home...” and the e-mail went viral. Soon neighborhood associations forwarded the APB for “the large neutered black cat, very friendly, wears a red collar and pink heart tag with our information” to other neighbors all over the South Wedge area, Upper Mount Hope and Monroe. Soon the call for help was posted on southwedge.org, and everyone was looking for Amos. Surely, someone would return him “if” he still had on a collar, wrote owner Sara Amico. In something of a holiday miracle, after 40 days away, Amico reported on southwedge.org, “Amos has been found!!” “He was 2.5 miles away when some nice people spotted him crying under their truck and called my number, which was on his collar. He’s a hungry little guy, but sweet as ever. I am so grateful to all of you for helping me look for him, and to have him safe at home!”

Premier Pastry More than Wedding Cakes
Who hasn’t seen the white mountains of wedding cake in the windows of Premier Pastry at 433 South Avenue. But did you know the shop also has an array of tarts and cookies, cream puff swans, petit fours and more? “I don’t get a lot of custom orders from the South Wedge,” said owner Phillip Duquette. Let’s prove him wrong.

Jessie Coven Needs Your Extra Yoga Mat
AmeriCorps volunteer Jessie Coven has joined the South-east Neighborhood Service Center staff as a youth engagement coordinator in the city’s coed Citizen Explorer program in southeast and southwest Rochester. “We teach personal and professional development, self-development,” said Coven. “We also talk about responsibility, self-awareness, honesty and any topics they find important.” Coven attended Allegheny College where she designed her own major—dance and movement studies and communications. Soon dance became the obvious choice for a career. Coven joined AmeriCorps in 2010 and was sent to Hartford, Connecticut, to teach English dance, gym and health to teens. After a year, she moved to Rochester where she now works with the Right Move Boxing troupe for young children and youth. Currently, she teaches

chocolate for all occasions

HEDONIST Artisan Chocolates
Visit our new retail space at 674 South Avenue 585.461.2815 www.hedonistchocolates.com Open Monday-Saturday 10am-6pm
Community Builders

Calvary St. Andrews Produce Lottery

Calvary St. Andrews’ Emergency Food Cupboard (corner of Ashland St. and Avellini Ave.) has been getting free produce from Foodlink on Tuesday mornings. Food Cupboard manager Robert Lauterbach reports that right now they “have more produce than people.”

“We are never sure what they will bring, but it has included oranges, lettuce, Brussels sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower and bread and cookies and cakes,” said Lauterbach.

“Come around 9:30-10:30 a.m. People have their names drawn in a lottery as to who goes first.”

For more information, call 734-2375.

Highland Library

Highland Library Partners reported a total gain of $2,156 from the Barnes & Noble Literacy Program. A total of 42 people joined the program for a total of $9,102 from the Highland libraries, so each library receives $218 dollars.

The group also reports that successful networking has obtained a contractor for an affordable, custom-built shelf in the library for audio books. “It had to be custom-built, because space is at a premium in the branch.” The library has begun a Wish List for craft supplies, and several contributions have been received. In addition, a Book Sale is planned for the spring. Finally, the partners would like to develop a Reading Partners program to match one-on-one adult and child partners to meet weekly in the library to read together.

Farm Days for Kids February Break 2012

Freshwise Farms presents Farm Days for children ages 8-12 during this year’s spring break: Mon. Feb. 20, “All About Chickens,” Wed. Feb. 22, “Soil and Compost,” and Fri. Feb. 24, “Food! Where does our food come from?” Registration closes Wed., Feb. 15. Two identical sessions will be held each day from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. Visit www.freshwise.org or email Derek Crowe (dcrowe@foodlinkny.org) to sign up.

South Wedge Block Club Update

SWPC is still working to identify some folks to start Block Clubs. “If your block is listed here, we still may need more volunteers, so please contact me,” said Angela Clark-Taylor. “Even if you have a strong Block Club, it’s always a help to get involved. Fun, too!”

Blocks in need of representatives include: Whalin Street, Hannah Place, Ashland Street, Poplar Street, South Avenue, Mt. Hope Avenue and Alexander Street.

Blocks that can use more help: Dewitt Ave., Hamilton Street, Bond Street and Menlo Place.

Established Block Clubs that want you to get involved: Linden Street, Cypress Street, Sanford Street, Comfort Street, Gregory Street, and Hickory Street.

For more information or just to get on your blocks mailing list, email a.clark-taylor@hotmail.com or check out swpc.org.

Urban Gardening

Workshops cover a wide range of topics from houseplants starting seeds inside. Monday, 3/21, 6-6:45 p.m. Call City of Rochester 311 for more info.

Free Legal Services for HIV-Positive Residents

The Legal Action Center can help HIV-positive New Yorkers address a host of legal issues, including overcoming barriers created by a criminal record, HIV discrimination, confidentiality & testing, standby guardianships, living wills and health care proxies. For more information, call 212-243-1133 or visit www.lac.org.

Business Holiday Deco- rating Contest Winners

Business Association of the South Wedge Area President Chris Jones announced the winners of the association’s holiday contest: First Place: Premier Pasty, $300. Second Place: InQueery Club, $200 and Third Place: Salon Paragon, $100. Honorable Mention went to thread, Cheesy Eddie’s and Hedonist Artisan Chocolates.

Housing Council Hosts “Operating Rental Property Workshops”

Rental Property Workshops will be held in February and March. To register, call the Housing Council at 546-3700. Cost is $25 per person.

The Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley (GAGV) Receives $15,000 Grant

A Joseph and Irene Skalny Charitable Trust grant allows the GAGV to work against anti-gay bullying and heterosexism. Plans include a youth created short film on the current climate for LGBT youth (the film will be submitted to the ImagOut Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, and used as part of InQueery training at the Gay Alliance) and pocket-sized resource guides on such topics as “How to Be an Ally,” “Young and Gay in Western New York,” and “Young and Trans in Western New York.” The Gay Alliance Youth Program will also create a brief PSA to distribute to secondary schools and to screen before all Youth Project Films at ImagOut.

Simon School Students Annual Holiday Giving

University of Rochester Simon School of Business graduates will be giving holiday joy to the children at the Mt. Hope house. Buffalo native Brennan Day, president of Simon Volunteers, was joined by Amy Keswick from Cincinnati, Ohio, in delivering some 160 toys for all the good girls and boys across from the South Wedge Planning Committee office. This annual event is especially appreciated by the children, The Hamilton Tenants Association (which organizes distribution of the toys) and SWPC.

FOR SALE - $72,500

257 Congress Ave.

- 1,162 sq. ft. home completely remodeled
- 3 bedrooms on the second floor
- Spacious kitchen w/new cabinets, counters, plumbing and flooring
- Large dining room with laminate floor
- Spacious living room with New Green Labeled carpeting
- One completely remodeled bathroom on the second floor with new tub/shower, vanity and commode
- Green Labeled carpeting on the stairs and second floor bedrooms
- Freshly painted walls and ceilings with low VOC paint
- New energy efficient light fixtures throughout
- Generous front porch overlook front yard
- Resurfaced blacktop driveway
- One car garage
- Circuit breakers with 150 amp electric panel
- Energy efficient 40 gallon gas hot water heater
- 93% high efficiency gas, forced air furnace
- New energy efficient windows throughout
- New roofing with architectural shingles
- New maintenance free vinyl siding and trim wrapped in aluminum

For more information, call George Lorson

256-1740 X 101
South Wedge Fun & Beyond

Groove Juice Spring Balls at Tango Café
Bring your valentine or meet one at the Sweetheart Ball, a Valentine’s Day-themed swing dance. Enjoy the festive atmosphere, indulge your sweet tooth, dance to classic jazz and fill up your souvenir dance card to win prizes. Fri. Feb. 18, 7-11 p.m. Free beginner swing dance lessons 7-8 p.m. $5.

Masquerade Ball on Fri., March 30, 7-11 p.m. (Third Floor Ballroom) Tango Cafe Dance Studio, 389 Gregory St. For more info, visit www.groovejuicewings.com.

Cobblestone School Fundraiser Feb. 11
Stories and booking signing by internationally known author and story-teller Kate Martin and a Sundries Fair benefit Cobblestone School on Sat. Feb. 12, 2 - 4 p.m. The fund raiser includes a bake sale, trunk sale of handcrafted Indonesian handmade bags from Ace, green home products and essential oils from aromatherapist Organica Jane, and henna designs. 10 Prince St., tickets $5/person, with a family maximum of $20.

More information available at www.cobblestone.org and www.ralifemartin.com or call 271-4548. Cobblestone School Open Houses will be held on February 9, 6:30-8:00 p.m. and March 15, 9:30-11:00 a.m. Cobblestone School offers a rigorous academic curriculum for students aged 4-12.

Head Up Celebrates New Location
Head Up owner Tonja McNair still held her annual Hat Gala at the Historic German House despite a huge undertaking: moving her hair salon and hat gallery to its new digs at 524 Mt. Hope Avenue after a decade on South Ave.

Mt. Hope Cemetery Winter Tours
Enjoy a walk in this historic cemetery on February 18 and March 17, 1 p.m. The length of the tour depends on the tour group. Tour guides meet at the south cemetery entrance, 1133 Mt. Hope Ave. (across from the Distillery restaurant). Admission $5. Free to members of the Friends of Mount Hope and children under age 16.

“Sassy South Wedge” Pride Week 2012
Members from Rochester Pride met recently with BASWA (Business Association of the South Wedge Area) business owners and talked about the next “Sassy in the South Wedge” event, scheduled for July 6 as part of Pride Week 2012. BASWA was invited to create a float for the Pride Parade which is held on Park Avenue...

BASWA President Chris Jones reports that “several South Avenue businesses have already jumped onto the float (so to speak) including Premier Pastry, Lux Lounge, Hedonist Artisan Chocolates, Boulder Coffee, John’s Tex-Mex, and Historic Houseparts.

Businesses who wish to participate are asked to create an oversized element that will be put onto the float’s flatbed. All elements should represent different South Wedge businesses that are LGBT-owned or friendly. If you are interested, please contact chris@historichouseparts.com.

Team Tap & Mallet Takes the Polar Plunge
Join Team Tap & Mallet as they plunge into Lake Ontario’s icy waters to raise money for Special Olympics on Feb. 12, 12 p.m. Team membership is open to the public. A brief pre-plunge party will begin at 9 a.m. at Tap & Mallet, 381 Gregory Street, with designated drivers bringing our team to Charlotte Beach for the main event, which takes place at noon.

The Post-Plunge Party, sponsored by Custom Brewcrafters begins at the pub at 2 p.m. Joe will also donate a dollar for every CBs beer poured that day to Special Olympic! Please visit polarplunge.net to join our team or to sponsor any of our brave plongeurs!

Heart of the City continued from page 3

Gay Sunday Brunch
Who knew that John White has hosted a Gay Sunday Brunch for “like forever” at his Equal-Grounds Coffee House? “It’s hilarious. It’s held every Saturday at 11 a.m.,” said White. Jon Ver Steeg broadcasts from Equal-Grounds along with special guests.

750 South Avenue, 242-7840. Learn more at www.gaybrunch.com. Gay Sunday Brunch is also available iTunes.

STOP ALERT!
South Wedge is a safe neighborhood, but recently several muggings have occurred on Gregory Street. Always stay alert to your surroundings especially if you’re leaving a bar or withdrawing money from an ATM after dark.

For more information, you can call S.E. Neighborhood Service Center and speak with Community Police Officer Brian Bannerman at 428-7640. To see crime mapping by day or week visit the cityofrochester.gov and search for “crime mapping.”
The community turned out in force from all over the greater South Wedge area for the South Wedge Planning Committee’s (SWPC) Open House on Jan. 20. Attendees also got to meet SWPC’s new director John Page.

In addition to the business part of the evening, neighbors participated in a lively raffle and a silent auction filled with works by local artists. Board members and SWPC staff provided a wide selection of food, from healthy veggies to decadent desserts. State Senator Joe Robach stopped by (and even won a Keurig coffeemaker in the evening’s raffle!). City Council members Carolee Conklin, Matt Haag and Loretta Scott, City of Rochester staff Matt McCarthy, Theo Finn and Julie Beckley enjoyed the event as well. Also in the mix were former SWPC Executive Director Dan Buyer and his son Ben, local business owners from Hedonist Chocolates and Coffee Connection, board members and neighbors from throughout the Greater South Wedge area.

A highlight of the evening was the tour of a new Erie Harbor apartment and townhouse. Sandy Gorie of Conifer Development showed interested attendees the amenities future renters will enjoy. At the end of the evening, more than $1,700 was raised from memberships, the raffle, silent art auction and donations. These funds will be used to further SWPC’s mission to build community, encourage a full range of housing opportunities and promote a diverse, historically significant commercially sustainable urban village.

(Special Thanks to all the Artists who donated to our Silent Auction

Paul Taylor - Glass Artist
John Ballou - Jack Bear Stamps
Vicki Hartman - Ceramics Artist
Sabra Wood - Cat Clay
Jen Buckley - Buckwood Pottery
Erik Gursalin - Sunshyne Silverware
Francesca DeCaire - Glass Artist
Martha Shermerhorn - Ikon-a-pacs
Nancy Topolski - Second Seed
Tom Somerville - Painter
Rob Marvin - Painter
Richard & Kelly - Our Secret Tree House
Jason Ackerman - Serendipity Photo
Carla Morris - Fiber/Recycled Materials
Don & Cheryl Olney - Louise’s Daughter
Rebecca Rafferty - Jewelry
Julie White - Jewelry
Tanvi Asher - Peppermint Clothing
Colleen Vera – Mixed Media
Tanya Smolinsky – Mixed Media
Marisa Krol - Interstellar Love Craft
Lisa Barker - Lisa Barker Photography
Whitney Tesler - Interior Design

For more information about the artists and their web sites, visit www.swpc.org/artists.php.

All photos by Nancy O'Donnell.)
2nd Annual Holiday Decorating Contest

By Angela Clark Thomas
Photos by Robert Lauterbach

Thanks to all South Wedge homes that did so much to make The Wedge look festive this holiday season! Decorating more than doubled this year, compared to last year, with a total of 220 homes competing for prizes! Every street in the Wedge got some votes!

Sanford Street won first place and receives $100 for their block club projects in the 2012. Linden Street and Poplar Street tied for second.

Winning houses by block (selected by one of your block representatives) include: 42 Gregory St., 93 Hickory St., 46 Menlo Place, 84 Linden St., 270 Cypress St., 66 Bond St., 29 & 35 Poplar St. (for their shared display), 84 Poplar St., 214 Sanford St., 109-113 Comfort St., 81 Averill Ave. and 200 Hamilton St.

Congrats to all these winners! Individual homes won a SWAG bag from the Business Association of the South Wedge Area (BASWA)! If you didn’t pick up your prize at the South Wedge Planning Committee Open House in January, please contact me at a.clark-taylor@hotmail.com.

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Coffee Connection Continues Its Mission

When Nancy Sawyer-Molina decided to move to Peru, no one wanted to buy her business. She was ready to close down before Joy Bergfalk stepped up. “I told her I don’t think so,” said Bergfalk.

The award-winning Coffee Connection has a long history of doing more than sell great coffee. Its mission is to provide work training to women in recovery along with a lot of compassionate TLC.

Bergfalk was the perfect choice. Five years ago Bergfalk and husband Jimmy Reader founded Project Empower.

“We’re changing the world one woman at a time, within, between and around,” said Bergfalk. “We’re helping women live into their full potential.”

Bergfalk has a lifelong mission to help the injured and suffering. As a small child she worked with “traumatized animals.” By the time she was in the fourth grade she was teaching Sunday school, and when she worked as a camp counselor “people with trauma would come to me for help.” She entered the Baptist seminary in college and worked as a missionary in Mexico and Honduras.

And her husband adopted three siblings, 12, 9 and 7 from Guatemala.

By 1999, after a whirlwind romance, she remarried. “I met my husband [Jimmy Reader] in the airport when we were both going to the same meeting. We became engaged two weeks later.”

Together they’re continuing their “holistic, spiritual” work for women who sometimes have a long history of addiction. “We go beyond teaching traditional employment skills. We work on communication skills, self-caring. We’re a life sentence that you want.”

So while running a ministry and managing people is easy, operating a coffeehouse is something new to the couple.

“Swedes like coffee a lot. Opening a coffeehouse is some thing new to the couple?”

Jennifer Posey and Zahara Langford (Photo by Johannes Bockwoldt)

The Body Mechanic Holds Grand Opening

Shawn Lawton, licensed massage therapist, was a car mechanic for six years before deciding to train as a massage therapist. He attended the Onondaga School of Therapeutic massage in the Village Gaits and graduated valedictorian. He lives in the South Wedge with his wife.

“As Kodak announced Chapter 11 the day before the opening of The Body Mechanic, Shawn’s story illustrates retraining and entrepreneurial spirit in the South Wedge, part of driving positive change in Rochester,” said Colin Coffey, LMT, founder of Renewing Massage. Lawton is co-located with him at 728 South Avenue.

Lawton was joined at a formal grand opening in late January by Harry Bronson (NYS State Assembly Member, District 131) and Matt Haag (City Council Member-at-Large).

The Body Mechanic offers Swedish and Deep Tissue massage therapy 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday, Saturday, Sunday. To learn more, call 694-5762 or visit rochesterbodymechanic.com.

Jennifer Posey and Zahara Langford (Photo by Johannes Bockwoldt)

New Zeppa Bistro Opens to Rave Reviews

The new Zeppa Bistro opened on January 21 to an enthusiastic crowd seeking its delicious Italian and cozy bistro fare. The new business is located in a freshly renovated space that formerly housed The Keg Sports Bar in the basement of the Historic German House at 315 Gregory Street.

While gutting the downstairs, some original architectural details were discovered and restored, including brick arches and windows. A new oak entryway is handicapped accessible.

Zeppa Bistro will also soon be offering lunches and a late-night “ gastropub” menu. Reservations are suggested for dinner. Call 563-6241 for reservations or information.

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Hope Lodge Offers Help on the Hill

By Lorainee Clements

Nestled on “the hill,” the tree-lined campus of the Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School (CRCDS), is a home away from home for patients and caregivers who travel to Rochester for treatment.

The American Cancer Society’s Thomas Golisano Hope Lodge Hospitality House has been a South Wedge neighbor for almost two years. “The Lodge” provides free, temporary lodging (low-cost housing for non-cancer patients) in a supportive, caring environment. In addition to private guest rooms, Hope Lodge Hospitality House provides a variety of wellness and support programs all free of charge to patients and their caregivers.

Some of the amenities offered are 30 guest rooms with private bathrooms, common kitchen, dining, library, laundry and lounge area, and free transportation to and from treatment for cancer patients who do not have their own transportation. These amenities help provide an environment where guests can relax and concentrate on getting well. Volunteer groups come in to cook dinner for the guests, some coming on a regular basis.

American Cancer Society Hope Lodges give patients the ability to take advantage of world class treatment without. Without the lodge, many would choose not to get treatment at all. A program of the American Cancer Society, there are 31 Hope Lodges in the country with three in the state: Rochester, Buffalo and New York City.

The cost of fighting cancer and other life-threatening conditions can take a toll not only on the individual, but the family’s finances. Fran and Claudia from Central NY know this personally. The couple has stayed at the Lodge, on and off, since it opened its doors in 2010. “We would have probably already two-three years old making it eight plus years old when you finish paying for it. So, you will pay about $3,000 in interest on this used car. A 60-month loan will cost you about $190.00 per month for every $1,000 financed. I highly recommend purchasing a certified pre-owned vehicle which would come with a factory backed inspection, limited warranty and often a lower interest rate. Knowing a car’s history can be vital.

Bumper To Bumper

By Paul Gardner

From RJ and LB in Rochester: “We are thinking of leasing our next car, but we are very confused with the numbers and how they get to them. I don’t know if leasing makes sense for us. The maximum we can spend per month is $300.00. Maybe a good used car? My credit score is around 700, is that score high enough?”

Leasing is like baking a cake. You need ingredients. The key lease ingredients are: cap cost (selling price), residual value (end value at the lease termination) and money factor (interest rate). The cap cost is determined by the dealer; the residual is based on how many miles per year you drive and is determined by the lease company. The money factor is posted by the lease company. The dealer is allowed to increase the money factor to create interest income for the dealership. Don’t be afraid to ask for that information when inquiring about a lease. Beware of advertised low lease prices that seem too good to be true. Read the small print. Know how many miles per year you need before you shop. You don’t want a hefty over-mileage charge at lease end.

A cap cost reduction is a down payment which lowers the cap cost, which in turn lowers the monthly lease payment. Sales tax is based on the monthly payment. Assuming a 36 month payment of $300, your sales tax would be 8% x $300 x 36 months = $864. When comparing leases for various cars, try and set a standard for comparison by using the same cash out of pocket, miles and MSRP. Almost all lease companies will charge you $300 or more to return the car. If you lease another car from the same company, they will waive the charge. You are also responsible for excessive mileage, damage, loss of keys and any late charges.

A $300 per month pre-owned car would get you about a $15,000 vehicle that is probably already two-three years old making it eight plus years old when you finish paying for it. So, you will pay about $3,000 in interest on this used car. A 60-month loan will cost you about $190.00 per month for every $1,000 financed. I highly recommend purchasing a certified pre-owned vehicle which would come with a factory backed inspection, limited warranty and often a lower interest rate. Knowing a car’s history can be vital.

Insist on a CARFAX report which is available at most dealers. Lastly, your credit score determines both interest rate and lease money factors. Your score is rated and you are given a Tier rating. A dealer is required to share your credit score with you. Usually a credit score of 720 or higher lands you a Tier 1+ rating and qualifies you for the best rates. A score less than 729 may put you in a lower tier, which may increase your payments. I have seen lending institutions make exceptions by extending the better rates to lower tiers to promote business. Know your credit score before you lease or buy.

If you need any clarification on any of the above then please direct an e-mail to pagardner83@gmail.com and I will be happy to help.

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Farms Market Begins Planning
By Sue Gardner Smith, SWFM Manager

Plans are underway for the 2012 South Wedge Farmers Market, its sixth year of bringing “the food less traveled” to the lovely tree-lined space at 100 Alexander Street in the South Wedge.

While they desire to squeeze the winter away, our farmers are busy planning plots, ordering seed and gearing up for another year of bringing delicious, sustainably grown and wonderfully local foods to market each Thursday from June 7 through October 18. Market hours will once again be from 4-7 pm.

The South Wedge Planning Committee, the market’s sponsor, seeks donations to help keep the market going strong during 2012. If you are interested in showing your support for the market with a financial donation, or a more substantial sponsorship donation, please contact us at info@swfarmersmarket.org. To receive updates on market plans, please sign up for email updates at www.swfarmersmarket.org, and “like” the market’s Facebook page.

See you on June 7!

For more information, call By George Lorson

The South Wedge Victory Garden Readies for Spring. Apply Now!
By Jim Papapana & Heather Penrose

Are you interested in eating healthier and more nutritious food, in knowing how food makes its way from the farm to your table? How about growing your own fresh vegetables to enjoy on your dinner plate, trimming both your grocery bill and your waistline? Meet more of your fellow South Wedge community members? If you answered “yes!” to any of those questions, you can start growing veggies in the South Wedge Victory Garden this year!

The South Wedge Victory Garden is hosted by the South Wedge Planning Committee (SWPC) and anyone from the neighborhood can apply for a garden plot. Each year over 35 South Wedge families have grown their own food, saving an estimated $150 more in grocery costs per garden plot.

Tomatoes are always the most popular crop to grow by far, and often gardeners end up with more of these delicious red fruits than they can eat. Besides tomatoes, Victory Gardeners have also harvested peas, beans, peppers, lettuce, eggplant, peppers, carrots, radishes, and much more.

Once again we will manage the Victory Garden at 122 Hamilton Street as it enters its fourth growing season in April. We’re starting the plot application process now, even though winter is still in full swing as you read this.

The garden opens for use in April, allowing gardeners to maximize the length of their growing season. An early start sets gardeners up for success with spring crops like radishes, peas, spinach, lettuce, and root vegetables. It increases the opportunity to do “succession planting” where a gardener harvests an early-season plant, and then starts new summer or fall crops in their place, in effect doubling the amount of vegetables grown in a space during a season.

Each participating gardener or household will receive a 4 by 8 foot raised bed to grow whatever vegetables they like. Plots are up to 200 square feet and have a total of $95 worth of seeds or plants provided at no cost, but like other vegetables they like. Plots are $95 per season and must be paid in March, with an early bird discount of 10% off for those who pay by February 28.

Participating gardeners are presented with simple ground rules for its use. During the 2011 season some gardeners fulfilled this requirement by helping in tasks needed to clean and open the garden or applying a layer of compost to the garden beds. Some helped with beautification projects during the season, like planting flowers in the spring or bulbs in the fall. Others did their work as weekly garden caretakers, keeping the garden’s walkways weeded and free of trash and watering communal flower beds or the herb garden.

To apply for a plot in the Victory Garden 2012, please pick up a copy of the application form at the SWPC office at 224 Mt. Hope Avenue, find it on the South Wedge Facebook page, or call 518-1740, ext. 104 to have a copy mailed to you. SWPC will process applications, assign garden plots until March 1st. All South Wedge area residents, including renters and homeowners, are encouraged to apply. Applications are processed on a first come, first served basis.

Soon after the March 1st deadline the garden managers will contact all applicants and begin coordinating gardener orientation meetings. These are short sessions, usually an hour or less, to provide an overview of the garden and a set of simple ground rules for its use.

We are exploring options to expand the number of garden plots available within the South Wedge neighborhood. Demand for garden plots outstrips supply each year, and we’d love to see increased opportunities to grow produce in the South Wedge area. Be sure to stay in touch with garden caretakers, connect with fellow gardeners on the South Wedge Victory Garden Facebook page or on the South Wedge Victory Garden group on the www.facebook.com web site.

South Wedge Resident Explores Mona Lisa Mystery

Next, on his agenda—a book that blows da Vinci’s cover and explains that the Renaissance genius, and host of other contemporaries, were playing tricks with their audience, creating an optical illusion along with actual representation of a subject.

Art historians have argued about several mysteries surrounding the painting. The horizon line behind Mona Lisa often being off by a master painter or critic who couldn’t see what the artist intended. In fact, the horizon line is what the artist wanted to see. What artist, and why the enigmatic smile? Piccirillo thinks he can answer all those questions and more, not as an art historian, but as a working artist.

He studied Fine Arts at MCC and RIT. His first job was making screen prints for the Red Wings’ t-shirts. He’s worked at Dixon Schwabl and now works as a graphic designer at Mann’s Jewelers.

“I fell in love with oil painting even though I’ve never taken a class,” said Piccirillo. “I cancelled cable, started watching documentaries on artists, went to bookstores to study art books. (His favorite style he calls “photo booth” portraits). A sample hangs behind him in photo left.) “I look at a painting and I try to break it down,” he said.

One day he literally turned the Mona Lisa on her head, and suddenly began to see other shapes: a question mark, a horse head, an ape and a buffalo. He turned to a book Da Vinci’s Notebooks, for clues and discovered “he never wrote about Mona Lisa even though he carried the painting around with him for years and never mentions [the models].” But, da Vinci did write a description of a woman who personified every man, and that got Piccirillo thinking.

Soon the modern day artist had created a web site and the press came calling and continue to call. But, he’s not answering all their questions.

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NPP Funding Cut! We Need Your Help to Get It Back!

Over the past several past years, the SWPC has weathered funding cuts of $100,000. We have managed to cope with these cuts by freezing staff and payroll and working to increase our earned income as much as possible. We also were fortunate to receive a modest, but stable amount of funding from the New York State Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP). The NPP has supported community revitalization, small business promotion and employment throughout New York.

Last year, SWPC and its partners in community development received $55,000 each from the NPP for operating costs. This year, the State has cut that funding to $0. This funding cut will have a devastating impact on SWPC and its mission to assist homeowners with repairs, renovate homes for sale to first-time home-buyers, assist new entrepreneurs in the South Wedge and promote neighbors’ involvement in the life of the community.

It is critical to Rochester that Governor Andrew Cuomo restore funds for the NPP in his 21-day Budget Amendments, as there is a possibility that the State Legislature will not have sufficient resources to restore the NPP program once it loses all funding.

We need your help to save the program. Sample letters and talking points for phone calls are available online at www.swpc.org/savenpp.php. Here are a few things you can do:

• Call Governor Cuomo at 518-474-8390 or 518-474-7516 (Albany) or 212-681-4580 (NYC), or
• E-mail the Governor at www.governor.ny.gov/contact/GovernorContactForm.php, or
• Mail a letter to the Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York State, NYS State Capitol Building, Albany, NY 12224, and
• Contact your local Representative and tell them how important the program is to your community and ask for their support. State Senator Joseph E. Robach (R- District 56) can be reached at his District Office, 2300 W. Ridge Road, Rochester, NY 14626, 225-3650. Visit New York State Assembly at http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/ to find your representative. For Senate members, visit www.nysenate.gov/senators.
• Visit Albany on Neighborhood Preservation Coalition’s Legislative Awareness Day at the Legislative Office Building on March 6.

For more information, call the South Wedge Planning Committee at 985-256-1740.

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