



# on the HOUSE

The Newsletter of  
Hopkinson House • Winter 2025



## What's Inside

Lynn Miller

**S**arah A. Kelly, President of Council, opens with a review of the Hopkinson House budget for next year, noting that the increase in maintenance fees will be added to our reserve fund. She comments on capital projects either underway or soon to be undertaken, as well as a likely one-time assessment to come.

General Manager **Gary van Niekerk**, having completed his first year managing our residence, welcomes an additional member to our staff and informs us that the market space on our ground floor will soon have a new tenant—hopefully with a makeover and an expanded menu. He outlines a number of additional renovations we can expect over the next several years.

**Jean Papaj** shares reports from the various groups that serve our residents in the Committee Corner.

**Concha Alborg** reports on her interview of Randi Boyette, another neighbor in our very large residence we might not otherwise get to know. *Concha welcomes suggestions from our readers for individuals living or working among us whom she might interview for future issues.*

**Joseph Quinn** shares highlights from his travels to Italy, accompanied by photos of the rich artistic heritage viewed in three of its remarkable cities.

**Bari Shor** gives us images of residents enjoying our annual Hopkinson House holiday party in late December in the solarium.

**Martha Cornog** digs into the difficulties of homelessness right here in Philadelphia. She reports about the various public and private social services and other forms of outreach available to this under-resourced segment of our population.

My own offering examines one of Philadelphia's most elite institutions, the Academy of Vocal Arts, which is sure to be on your radar if you are a lover of grand opera. AVA trains fine young singers to prepare them for careers on the world's opera stages.

**Michael Neff** continues his visual exploration of our neighborhood with his look at Old St. Peter's Church, especially its churchyard. Founded in the 1760s, St. Peter's remains an active parish to this day and a familiar landmark in Society Hill.

Finally, in our familiar feature, the Chef's Corner, **Joanne Lamarche** lays out two more marvelous recipes, perfectly attuned to the winter season. The first is a tantalizing main dish and the second (naturally?) a dessert. You'll want to whip them up in your kitchen. Enjoy! ■

## Message from Council

Sarah A. Kelly

**I**t will be 2025 when you read this, and we will have celebrated the holidays in Hopkinson House. But I'm writing this article a few hours before the start of our annual December budget meeting, so that is what is on my mind. At the meeting this evening, we will present our 2024 budget results, the 2025 proposed operating budget to be adopted by Council at the end of the meeting, and also a five-year look-ahead at our capital reserve fund and probable expenditures.

By the time you read this, the news may seem old, but it's on my mind, so in case you haven't focused on it, here's the budget report once again, in a nutshell.

We closed 2024 with a surplus as budgeted to address prior year deficits, and going into 2025 we have been able to achieve significant savings in our anticipated tax and insurance expenses. This means that although our overall expenses have increased

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Occasional Photo by Bari Shor



# on the HOUSE

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*on the House* at  
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## Message from Council

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for 2025, we did not need to increase monthly maintenance fees to fund our 2025 operating budget.

The Council did, however, decide to implement a 4% increase in maintenance fees in order to make a higher contribution to our capital reserve fund, and the entire amount of the fee increase will go into the capital reserve. For at least the five-year period of our current capital reserve look-ahead (2025-2029), the current Council (a majority of whose members will remain on next year's Council) has recommended continuing at least a 4% increase in monthly maintenance fees, with that amount all going to fund the capital reserve.

Additional increases will likely be necessary to fund increases in operating expenses, although we will work to manage the operating budget to try to keep additional increases reasonable. However, I've said it before (years ago), and I will say it again — the years of no increases to maintenance fees, or increases less than inflation, are behind us, and are unlikely to happen again.

Even with the recommended increase in fees annually to be directed towards the reserve fund, as we move forward with our very necessary capital projects, we anticipate facing a deficit in our reserve fund by 2027. The current Council therefore has recommended the implementation of

a special assessment of between \$1.5 million and \$2.5 million in early 2027, in order to bring our reserve fund to prudent and required levels. We published this information as part of our budget package for 2025 in order to give owners time to prepare and save for an assessment, and we also have published a schedule of how much an assessment in those ranges will be for each unit type. The information about a probable assessment also will be published on the 3407 certificates that potential buyers receive.

We have not yet adopted the assessment, because, over the course of 2025, the cost of the various capital projects currently underway or in the planning stage will become much clearer. Many of those projects will have been put out to bid or will be under contract, so by early 2026 we should be able to determine accurately what the assessment will be. We hope to be able to inform owners of the specific amount of the assessment and payment terms for the assessment not later than the first quarter of 2026, with payment due in early 2027. It is the Council's current intention to require the assessment payment to be made in a one-time lump sum.

Our manager, Gary van Niekerk, has provided

frequent updates in previous newsletters about the very necessary capital projects the assessment and fee increases will be used to fund.

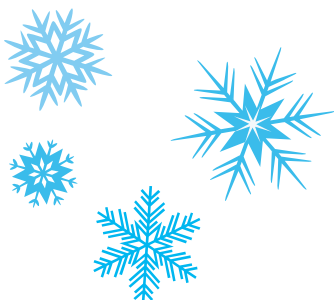
Specifically, they include:

- ♦ Replacement of our domestic hot water system
- ♦ Replacement of the 30+ year-old cooling towers on our roof which provide the chilled water for our air conditioning
- ♦ The delayed, every-10-year recoating of our façade, which has now begun
- ♦ Assessment and correction of possible structural issues involving our garage, building apron and rear courtyard, which has not been done since 1988 or 1989
- ♦ Replacement of our 60+ year-old elevators
- ♦ Necessary repairs to our roof system, including the pool.

It is hard to argue about the necessity of any of these projects. Through sound financial management, prior councils devised a manageable plan for funding our HVAC project, leaving us with a very substantial reserve fund through which the remainder of these projects can mostly be financed. It's our responsibility to raise the necessary additional funds to put Hopkinson House on a solid footing, literally and figuratively, for the future. ■



**Sarah A. Kelly** is a retired lawyer, who is serving her second stint as HHOA Council President, almost 20 years after the first time she served in that capacity.



# Message from Management

Gary van Niekerk

**H**appy New Year! What an exciting and busy first year for me as the General Manager! Hopkinson House and its residents have made me feel “at home,” and I have endeavored to provide the best of service to the community. I look forward to the continued improvement of our management services and completion of projects.

## Events

The Halloween party was a success, and I hope the annual holiday party was enjoyed by all residents.

## Staffing Updates

George Kouroutsidis joined the maintenance team and will soon be assigned to the second shift from 4 p.m. to 12 p.m. George is a very capable and skilled technician and we are pleased to have him join the Hopkinson House maintenance team.

## Commercial Units

The lease for the market in commercial space #3 was not renewed. The Association marketed the space to similar businesses with the intention that it be kept as a deli and market, with a new operator completing a full renovation of the space and offering an expanded menu.

The Association has selected a new potential operator; however, at the time of this publication, the lease details are in negotiations. We will update the community with additional details and a timeline if and when the lease is signed.

## Hopkinson House Projects

Updates to our capital projects are as follows:

### Façade Restoration

All residents should have received the initial communication regarding the start of the Façade Restoration Project, which began on December 2nd. Residents will be notified of work commencing at least two weeks prior to the start of each drop or “line.” After that, a weekly email will be sent with a two-week look-ahead containing any schedule updates. As a reminder, safety is of primary concern during the course of the project, and we kindly ask that residents adhere to our requests to clear balconies and refrain from their use.

### Hot Water System

The Engineer completed the initial draft of project documents and specifications. They were reviewed by the HHOA team, who recommended modifications to the project specifications. Upon receipt of the revised drawings and specifications the next step will be to obtain proposals and select a qualified contractor.

### Garage and Courtyard Restoration

The engineering firm of Joseph B. Callaghan, Inc. provided an assessment of the garage and the courtyard, including the surrounding building apron. They have provided recommendations for repairing the concrete and addressing water

infiltration into the garage structure. Council will be discussing how best to approach this project in the early part of 2025.

### Bike Room: New Pin Code Lock

A new pin number or push-button lock will be installed in early January on the bike room door, and the code will be sent to all current or newly registered bike permit holders. The code will change annually.

### Laundry Room

As noted in the previous newsletter, the laundry room equipment lease is scheduled for renewal in the early part of 2025. The renewal will include new laundry equipment. Plans to renovate the laundry room space at the same time as the lease renewal brought much consternation among those residents who rely on the facility to wash and dry their clothes. As a result, we are putting this project on hold until we are able to offer residents an alternative clothes washing/drying option. This is proving far more challenging than anticipated.

### Cooling Tower Replacement

The cooling towers that help dissipate heat during the cooling (AC) process require immediate replacement, as some of the piping serving those towers failed at the end of the cooling season in 2024. In addition,

the cooling towers have exceeded their useful life of 30 years and are currently 33 years old. The new towers have been ordered, and we anticipate replacement to occur in late April or early May of 2025. The project requires a crane to remove the old towers and lift the new cooling towers into place on the roof. There will be road closures outside Hopkinson House for at least two days. Residents will be notified prior to the project starting.

## General Reminders

### Renovations

Owners who are planning to renovate their units are reminded that a renovation packet must be obtained from the management office and completed in its entirety. No contractor is permitted to core or drill through the concrete slab.

### Parking Rates

Rates will be increasing in 2025 by \$5 per month. Park America has implemented a new online payment system, and will no longer be accepting cash payments.

### Smoking Ban

As of January 1st, 2025, the smoking ban is in full effect. Residents may not smoke in their unit, on the balcony, or in association common elements. Penalties will be enforced for violators of the policy. ■



**Gary van Niekerk**, has been managing condominiums, including both the Ayer and Lippincott condos on Washington Square, for more than fifteen years.

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# Welcome to the Committee Corner!

Jean Papaj

As we look forward to this new year, we thank our committee chairs and members for their expertise, commitment, and hard work in making and keeping Hopkinson House a great place to live. Here is a summary of what they have been working on.

## Landscape Committee

*Lisa Schwab, Chair*

The Hopkinson House Landscape Committee meets monthly to assess and plan proactively for the seasonal needs of our exterior garden areas. We coordinate the recommendations of our vendor and Hopkinson House management and Council, (via our Council liaison), to maintain our plants within the annual budget allocation. Occasionally, we have donated plants or holiday lighting or arranged an additional revenue fundraiser event to underwrite improvements not currently in the Hopkinson House budget. We stepped in to water our courtyard grounds this summer when our

irrigation system was shut off to support a consulting engineering assessment. This effort by committee members prevented Hopkinson House staff from being redirected from their current responsibilities. With an eye for the future, we have ongoing discussions on both short- and long-term improvements, sometimes in coordination with other committees, to discuss potential collaborations and budgets.

## Finance Committee

*Ann Roantree, Chair*

On a regular basis, members of the Finance Committee individually and collectively provide in-depth analysis and advice to our elected Council members and the HHOA General Manager on a full range of financial matters, including but not limited to the stated mission of the Committee, i.e. "to help ensure that HHOA is operating in a financially sustainable manner." Work efforts throughout the autumn

2024 have focused on the development of the detailed 2025 operating budget and a long-range forecast for the funding of capital reserves.

## Engineering and Environment Committee

*Jim Campbell, Chair*

Our most important current efforts have been discussions involving the pending cleaning, repairing, and recoating of the façades and what to do about potential moisture problems. The Committee has recommended that the building retain the services of an expert consultant to make recommendations on how best to proceed to address the moisture aspects of the work. Other discussion topics have included the impending repair work needed to the front, rear, and side exterior walkway surfaces above the garage; how to approach the various roof and pool deck repairs, as well as the best

way to replace and upgrade the existing water heating system. Future topics will include discussions about how the electrical system or appliances in each unit might be reconfigured to allow for electric cooking and baking. Some recent committee-supported successes are that the building has received a nicely sized reimbursement check for the installation of EV charging, and that the compost collection has proven to be quite successful and is reducing the amount of waste being placed in the trash chute. The building has also installed a new trash compactor and a bailing machine for more efficient handling of waste materials. Finally, the building will be installing new cooling towers over the winter, which will improve the performance of the air conditioning system next summer. ■



**Jean Papaj, MBA** is a marketing, communications and business development executive with additional experience as an adult educator.

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## Getting to Know Our Neighbors

# Randi Boyette: Building Bridges

Concha Alborg

Randi Boyette moved to Hopkinson House from Elkins Park during the COVID-19 epidemic only weeks after her husband, Michael, passed away. Living alone for the first time in her life, she knew that she needed to transition from a five-bedroom house in the suburbs into an apartment in town, closer to where two of her three children and her two granddaughters lived in Bella Vista. In fact, Randi is a Philadelphian at heart, with deep roots in south Philly where she was born, and northeast Philly where she and her late husband raised their own children.

Moving into an apartment building during COVID was a challenge. Due to the circumstances, it was hard to make friends at first, as there were no programs or events in the building and very little interaction with neighbors. At the time, we had to ride two masked people max in the elevators — remember those days? But even during COVID, she felt welcomed by the staff and the masked neighbors who always said hello in the elevators and hallways. When her office opened, an added bonus to living here was that she was able to walk to her office in Center City.

Randi has worked for the Anti-Defamation League, a national anti-hate organization, for the past 21 years. She is a Senior Associate Regional Director and has focused her work in eastern

Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, and Delaware on educating others about what constitutes anti-semitism and challenging all forms of bias and hate in K-12, campus, workplace and community spaces. She is also engaged in Holocaust education and advocacy and has a Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. In partnership with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for 14 years, Randi planned and implemented professional development programming for Catholic school educators that focused on Catholic-Jewish relations, antisemitism and the Holocaust. Randi also builds bridges with other communities and co-leads ADL's Black-Jewish Alliance. She was the recipient of the ADL's Senn/Greenberg Award for Professional Excellence in 2011 and has spent the last 13 years striving to maintain the standards for which she received that award.

One part of Randi's job that brings her enormous satisfaction is working with ADL education colleagues to host an annual Youth Leadership Conference each fall. Approximately 500 high school students and educators gather each year at the Pennsylvania Convention Center to hear from a keynote speaker and then break into smaller groups to learn with and about each other.

Given her love of children, it is no surprise that it is her two granddaughters



and one grandson who bring her the most joy. They love to come visit Hopkinson House and, in addition to sleepovers in their grandmother's apartment, they love buying treats in the store, swimming in the pool, and seeing the Chanukah menorah lit alongside the Christmas tree each December.

In some ways, Randi's move to Hopkinson House was like coming home, because she worked on Washington Square at J.B. Lippincott as a manuscript editor in the 1980s. She edited medical books, prepared manuscripts and oversaw the production process.

As a part-time writer, Randi coauthored *Let It Burn: MOVE, the Philadelphia Police Department, and the Confrontation that Changed a City* (Contemporary

Books, 1989, 2013) with her late husband, Michael Boyette. She and Michael consulted on the film documentary, *Let the Fire Burn*, and most recently, a group of middle school students interviewed her while creating a project about MOVE for National History Day.

Randi also co-authored *Soviet Georgia* (Chelsea House, 1988), one of a series of geography texts for middle school students. About a decade after the book was published, Randi found out that her great-grandmother, who she had always known was a Lithuanian Jew, also had roots in the Jewish community in pre-Soviet Georgia. No wonder Randi loves to eat at the Georgian food stand in Reading Terminal Market and at Sakartvelo, the Georgian restaurant on 7th and Chestnut. ■



**Concha Alborg, PhD**, is a retired academic and author originally from Spain. She writes fiction, creative non-fiction and a blog, "Epilogues/Epílogos." [www.conchaalborg.com](http://www.conchaalborg.com)



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# My Brisk Visit to Italy

Joseph Quinn

This past fall, I took part in a brisk 15-day group tour through Rome, Florence, and Venice. What Henry James said in *Italian Hours* about Venice might be appropriate for all three cities: “There is nothing left to discover or describe, and originality of attitude is completely impossible.” Yet he wrote rhapsodically and at length, adding to the vast body of literature about Italy stretching from Dante to Dan Brown. Here I offer a few highlights of my journey, if not with originality, then with astonishment and delight.

Our tour of Rome included visits to the Colosseum, the Forum, the Spanish Steps, St. Peter’s Square and Basilica, the Pantheon, and the Borghese Gallery, where we were entranced by the virtuosic sculpture of Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680). With staggering skill, he captured the fluidity of movement in marble: David aiming at Goliath, Daphne in mid-transformation from woman to laurel tree. For motion in marble on a more heroic scale, we visited St. Peter in Chains to see the intended tomb for Julius II by Michelangelo (1475-1564). A massive Moses holding the Ten Commandments is seated in the center, surrounded by 47 statues. His body is twisted to his left, and from the position of his legs, he appears to be in motion, either rising or sitting. From the side, his piercing eyes and face are alarmingly lifelike.

The undoubted highlight of Rome was a private evening visit to the Vatican Museum. We made our way unrushed and unencumbered through an enfilade of rooms — sculpture and artifacts, tapestries, maps; the celebrated Apollo Belvedere and Laocoon Group; then the Raphael Rooms, originally the private apartments of Julius II. Here we turned from wall to wall, absorbed in the breathtaking artistry of *The School of Athens*, a veritable history of the Greek philosophical tradition, and *The Disputation of the Holy Sacrament*, a grandiose visual summation of the theological trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Finally, we were led through a small passageway into the Sistine Chapel itself. We were free to wander and wonder at our leisure in dumbfounded silence, our eyes cast upward, or toward the *Last Judgment* on the back wall of the chapel. The words of Wittgenstein come to mind: “Whereof one cannot speak, therefore one must be silent.”

We hardly had time to rest our feet and catch our breath before arriving in Florence, where we were further amazed by Michelangelo’s unsurpassed skills. Among the Uffizi’s treasures, I was transfixed by his *Holy Family*, or *Doni Tondo*. Within a perfect circle, the familiar trio is posed in a rhythmically complicated, almost irreverent, roundelay: mother seated casually continued on page 10



Inside the Vatican Museum during our private tour, minus the usual 30,000 daily visitors.



The piercing gaze of Michelangelo's Moses, part of a massive tomb intended for Julius II, draws the viewer's attention in the Roman Church of St. Peter in Chains.

## My Brisk Visit to Italy

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on the ground, hoisting the child in mid-air over her right shoulder to St. Joseph, while exposing her bare left shoulder to the viewer. Another example of spiritual emotion in motion stirred my imagination—Raphael’s jewel-toned, ineffably tender Madonna of the Goldfinch.

But it’s in the Florence Accademia where you’ll find crowds that rival those in front of Leonardo’s Mona Lisa in the Louvre. Here they come to gape at yet another Michelangelo: David, in all its 17-foot naked glory, carved from a single block of Carrara marble. This David, unlike the physically energetic one by Bernini, is static, almost contemplative, luxuriating in his masculine physical perfection, seemingly unperturbed by the presence of Goliath. In an adjacent room are four other works by Michelangelo, the so-called Prisoners (or Slaves). They appear to be no more than misshapen lumps of rough, unfinished marble, with only a few limbs or features fully defined. Seeing these rough creatures struggling to become fully formed, so close to the almost inhumanly polished perfection of David, speaks to Michelangelo’s profound and restless creative genius.

An unexpected highlight in Florence was my visit to the Basilica di Santa Croce. It’s the largest Franciscan church in the world, making it a suitable repository for a cycle of 28 haunting frescoes depicting the life of St. Francis by Giotto

(c. 1267-1337). Combined with the remnants of Cimabue’s sublimely sorrowful Crucifixion, they represent the upper limits of how otherworldly spirituality can be depicted in material form. There is plenty of worldly spirituality to admire here also, like the elaborate tombs of Machiavelli, Galileo, and Rossini, not to mention the final resting place of Florentine-born Michelangelo.

In Venice, the vast piazza of San Marco is dominated by the Basilica and Doge’s Palace, surely two of the most written about and photographed buildings in the world. The Basilica is a freakish mash-up of eastern and western architectural influences — Byzantine (Islamic), Gothic, Renaissance, Romanesque, Baroque. In *The Stones of Venice*, John Ruskin called it “a treasure heap,” referring perhaps to the fact that many of its decorative features — columns, reliefs, sculptures, rare marbles, precious stones, and glittering mosaics — were part of the plunder brought back from the sacking of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1202. Mark Twain considered it “a vast and warty bug taking a meditative walk.”

We were able to explore the interior of the Basilica during a private evening tour. After we entered, the shadowy interior was plunged into darkness. Gradual illumination



In Florence, the Ponte Vecchio spans the Arno River.



In the Florence Accademia, the face of Michelangelo's David, stolid, serene, and apparently unperturbed in the presence of his adversary, Goliath.

revealed multitudinous domes and arches sparkling with a million points of golden light that coalesced into a glittering mosaic history of Christianity.

Two museums provided contrasting aesthetic experiences. The Venice Accademia was an inexhaustible banquet of Italian continued on page 11

## My Brisk Visit to Italy

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Renaissance art, with entire rooms dedicated to Bellini, Tintoretto, Titian, and Veronese. The Peggy Guggenheim Collection of post-WWII art provided a refreshing plunge into abstract modernism.

At the end of the official tour, I extended my stay in Venice to explore other churches and Scuolos (guilds formed by businessmen who hired the best artisans to decorate their luxurious establishments). If Michelangelo represents the principal artistic through-line from Rome to Florence,

Jacopo Tintoretto is the lodestar in Venice. In the Ducal Palace, his tumultuous *Il Paradiso* is thought to be the longest canvas painting in the world. It can only be rivaled by his monumental *Crucifixion* in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, a treasure trove embellished with over 50 works in his signature energetic style.

In the apse of the *Madonna dell'Orto*, I felt dwarfed and humbled by Tintoretto's *Last Judgement* and *Presentation of the Virgin*, a combination of art and worship space that moved

me to the depths of my being, a feeling enhanced by the presence of the artist's final resting place.

Let me return to Henry James to sum up my Italian

hours, particularly in Venice: "The only way to care for Venice as she deserves is to give her a chance to touch you often — to linger and remain and return." ■



**Joseph Quinn** is a retired technical writer who likes to write about architectural treasures in our neighborhood and his travel adventures.



6. Nighttime reflections in the Grand Canal accentuate the beguiling fairy-tale imagery unique to Venice.



During an evening tour of the Basilica, we witnessed the splendor of its mosaic images bathed in golden light.

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Holiday Party in the Solarium



Photos by Bari Shor



Holiday Party in the Solarium



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# Homeless in Philadelphia

Martha Cornog

Philadelphia typically has around 5,000 homeless people on the street, in parks, train stations, the airport. About 70% are Black; maybe 900-1,000 live outdoors. The rest manage overnight lodgings temporarily through shelters, part of an elaborate patchwork of organizations that also include food dispensers, city services, and comprehensive housing programs run by private charities, each operating with different requirements, staff, and agendas.

For the homeless, it's as if the city were a giant mall that probably has what you need somewhere, but how to find it? The service providers impose various requirements and ask a lot of questions. And if you come with a child or relative or partner, or have a pet, you may not be welcome. Additionally, an uncounted hidden group of homeless folk blend into the city invisibly, holding jobs and walking the streets with unremarkable appearance, but at night repairing to their car or a friend's couch.

Those job-holding homeless reflect the reality that a month's rental of a Philly one-bedroom apartment eats up most of, or exceeds, a month's minimum wage income. Pennsylvania's \$7.25 per hour provides \$1,160 a month. But Philly one-bedroom apartment rentals bottom out at around \$980, although a bedroom in an apartment-share rents for less. Not much is left for food or

anything else! A working couple might manage, but take one person out of the workforce and they cannot afford their rental. Add medical expenses — or a child — and the cost of living climbs.

So how can a homeless Philadelphian find help? Various sites often can provide information about other sites. But a valuable and probably overlooked resource is Philadelphia's Free Library, staffed with social workers at the Parkway Central Library, and at nine branches outside center city during more restricted hours. Library-provided social workers can also be reached by phone and email. Additionally the library's website has links to a long list of service providers.

Wait — how can a down-and-out homeless person find free phone access or use email or weblinks? An organization called **LifeWireless** has "Pennsylvania Lifeline Plans" for phones that include many free services plus, for some people, a free phone. And — librarians to the rescue again! — most of our library branches offer free computer access.

Historically, before Philadelphia's urban renewal and the building of the Vine Street Expressway, a "skid row" around Franklin Square housed dozens of establishments catering to destitute men: cheap hotels, rooming houses, religious missions, bars serving "sneaky pete"

wine. The square itself became a social center where the men hung out during the day. Driving up 9th Street to Chinatown in the 1960s, one passed the run-down Gem Hotel in the midst of these dingy buildings. Housing and food from the missions were sometimes free and otherwise low-cost, although served with compulsory evangelism. Most of the area's poor slept in one of these establishments, since snoozing outdoors risked arrest for vagrancy plus accommodations at a lockup. But while such places may not have been five-star, centralization provided these men not just with bottom-barrel prices but with a community relatively free from societal disapproval.

Today, groups of homeless people camping visibly in public attract attention, and sometimes push-back from the Mayor's Office. The original concept had been to send in social service workers first, to shift people into city and private shelter arrangements, paired with police and trucks that then would tear down any abandoned gear. But the timing and execution of these efforts — clearing airport squatters and tent clusters in Kensington — has not been as humane or effective as planned.

For overnight short-term housing currently, places like the Gem Hotel have given way to an assortment of options. **Philly House** (302 North 13th Street)

must be one of the oldest, founded as the Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission in 1878 by John Wanamaker. **SELF Inc.** (1500 Walnut Street) focuses mainly on "behaviorally challenged and substance dependent" people. Supported by the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia, **St. John's Hospice** (1221 Race Street) offers overnight shelter for men plus day services that include meals, showers, mailroom, and health care. The Salvation Army operates several shelters, including the **Eliza Shirley House** for women and children (1320 Arch Street). The city itself supports the **Apple Tree Family Central Intake Center** (1430 Cherry Street) plus other facilities accepting both genders of adults and children. A variety of other shelters operate, also. Additionally, a disturbed person may be "302'd" — involuntarily committed to a hospital mental care unit as a danger to self and others.

But shelters can't be a permanent fix. Transcending these shorter-term options, the more comprehensive **Bethesda Project** uses shelters as part of a continuum-of-care approach to providing permanent housing for homeless people. Its twelve locations include three faith-based shelters with flexible curfews, one other shelter, five buildings of supportive housing, two more designed for independent permanent housing, and one "safe haven" shelter for men with mental ill-  
continued on page 17



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## Homeless in Philadelphia

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ness/substance abuse issues. Additionally, some people are placed eventually into city landlord-run apartments. (The “supportive” component encompasses culturally-responsive drug, alcohol, and behavioral treatment as well as training for employment and getting Social Security benefits.) Bethesda considers its credo a “housing first approach,” although many clients need social/medical support at all stages before they can handle permanent housing.

The fully secular **Project HOME** also takes a “housing first” approach. Several levels of housing, from safe havens through supportive permanent housing, are offered over 24 locations, providing over 1,000 living units. Intensive support for residents includes medical care, education and employment counseling. Project HOME also conducts street outreach and staffs the **Hub of Hope**. This daytime drop-in center in the 1400 Arch Street SEPTA concourse provides health care, coffee, showers, laundry, meals on weekends, and help with housing applications. (Note: SEPTA offers

**SCOPE**, its own outreach program for connecting “vulnerable individuals” sheltering or encountered in the Philadelphia transit system with various social services.)

A fascinating documentary, *Beyond The Bridge: A Solution To Homelessness*, makes the case for a more direct “housing first” approach than the Bethesda Project or Project HOME, citing successful programs in other cities that place some homeless people directly into permanent housing coupled with intensive support.

Philly also offers options for **food** independent of housing. At least 10 religious-affiliated groups offer regular meals to needy people, plus sometimes other services. Near Hopkinson House, the **Faith, Food & Friends** program at Old St. Joseph’s Church (321 Willings Alley) hands out lunch Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Old Pine Street Church’s **Old Pine Community Center** (401 Lombard) provides lunch and dinner Saturday and Sunday. **St. Peter’s Church** (313 Pine

Street) distributes groceries Saturday mornings.

More centrally, **Broad Street Love** — formerly named Broad Street Ministry (315 South Broad Street) — supplies lunch Monday through Friday plus an array of supporting services, including clothing, personal care/hygiene, mailbox services, and help in navigating the city’s maze of other programs. BSL also has medical, legal, and spiritual help on hand.

All told, Philadelphia offers a wide and varied menu of services for homeless people, and many do find help. But about 18 percent stay on the streets voluntarily, if not happily, where they can control their lives more fully, live without curfews or possible violence from other shelter denizens, plus use drugs, smoke, or keep partners, children, and pets with them. So some folks may simply refuse services, like — reportedly — the couple often making day-camp under wraps on the

benches of Washington Square. Others may show psychotic symptoms. If a person on the street seems to need help, an observer can call the **24/7 Philadelphia Homeless Outreach Hotline: 215-232-1984**. To donate to any of the above programs, check their websites.

Should we hand money to apparently homeless people? A 2016 Vancouver study tested the stereotype that such individuals would only waste donated cash on liquor or drugs. The more than 100 study participants were given substantial stipends with no strings, and — surprise! — they spent it on rent, food, transit, and housing. They did not spend it on alcohol and drugs, disproving the stereotype that homeless people would “waste” the money. Fifty percent of participants moved into housing within one month, demonstrating their preparedness to return to stability when given the financial resources to do so. ■



**Martha Cornog** reviews graphic novels for Library Journal.

### Further Reading

The Free Library’s webpage for Social Services links to a lengthy guide listing housing options, food, and other services: [libwww.freelibrary.org/programs/social-services/](http://libwww.freelibrary.org/programs/social-services/)

LifeWireless, Pennsylvania Phone Service: [lifewireless.com/plans/pennsylvania-lifeline-free-phone-service](http://lifewireless.com/plans/pennsylvania-lifeline-free-phone-service)

“Uncovering the Reasons Behind Philly’s 18% Unsheltered Homeless Population”: [generocity.org/philly/2023/04/11/uncovering-the-reasons-behind-phillys-18-unsheltered-homeless-population/](http://generocity.org/philly/2023/04/11/uncovering-the-reasons-behind-phillys-18-unsheltered-homeless-population/)

“We gave \$7,500 to people experiencing homelessness”: [psych.ubc.ca/news/cash-transfers-to-people-experiencing-homelessness/](http://psych.ubc.ca/news/cash-transfers-to-people-experiencing-homelessness/)

# Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts

Lynn Miller

Philadelphia has more than its share of world-class institutions, which include at least three outstanding art museums, one of which was the nation's first art academy, two of its most distinguished science museums, one of the most renowned orchestras on earth, as well as a number of world-class colleges and universities. Another Philadelphia school in this company is unique in its purpose, and in its small size. The sole mission of the Academy of Vocal Arts (AVA) is to be the world's premier institution for training young artists to become international opera soloists. That mission is one which, in the view of many, it continually achieves.

In addition to rigorous training in voice and vocal repertoire, students are coached in acting, opera history, several languages, and stage combat. More than 200 singers from

around the world audition each year for AVA's post-baccalaureate, four-year program, which is tuition-free. No more than eight are selected annually for a total student body of less than thirty. During their studies at AVA, these resident artists then learn music to perform in concerts, oratorios, and fully staged opera productions presented by AVA for audiences in Philadelphia and beyond. All of it is repertory that they'll return to throughout their professional careers.

This year marks AVA's 90th anniversary. Since its inception in 1934, the school has made its home at 1920 Spruce Street in one of those wonderful, mid-19th-century mansions that still characterize the Rittenhouse Square neighborhood. Even with its transformation into a place where musicians work together, it still

retains much of the character of a grand old family home. That is fitting for an institution whose faculty, staff, and students give it something of the feel of an extended family. AVA's first-floor Helen Corning Warden Theater is an intimate space for performers and audiences alike.

The 2024-25 season began in October, as has long been customary, with the annual Giargiari Bel Canto Competition, held in the Perelman Theater at the Kimmel Center. That's when AVA singers compete for prizes in a concert judged by three outside experts — and one award goes to a contestant chosen by the audience. That was followed in November and early December with a number of fully-staged performances of Charles Gounod's "Faust" both at AVA and at the Haverford School's Centennial Hall.

This year, AVA's annual concert of sacred music takes place first on January 21st at the Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr. The program is repeated at 7:30 p.m. the next night in Center City's Church of the Holy Trinity on Rittenhouse Square. Little more than a month later, the artists will present Mozart's beloved opera, "Cosi fan tutte," for three performances during the last week of February and a final one on March 1st.

A special occasion this season is BrAVA Philadelphia, the school's 90th Anniversary Celebration and Gala. On the evening of March 21st, a number of the Academy's most prominent alumni will perform arias from the world's great operas at Marion Anderson Hall in the Kimmel Center. The folks at 1920 Spruce invite you to "experience the artistry and passion continued on page 19

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**Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts** continued from page 18

that have defined AVA for 90 years in what promises to be the most extraordinary concert of the 90th Anniversary Season." Single tickets to the performance start at \$35. But for the full experience, which includes the best seats in the house, a cocktail hour before the performance and gala dinner at the Kimmel, not to mention a post-concert reception, you can become an Angel for \$2,000 per person! If that's too steep, you might become a Benefactor for \$1,750. Both Angels and Benefactors get, in addition to a once-in-a-lifetime evening, substantial tax write-offs for their contributions. Young Friends — those under 45 — can get much of the above for a mere \$250 per person.

Now, back to the regular season. Starting on April 26th, AVA will mount several performances of a late 19th-century opera that is seldom performed in America. That's "L'Amico Fritz" by Pietro Mascagni, who is better known for his "Cavalleria Rusticana." In "Fritz," a confirmed bachelor's best friend takes him up on his bet that he will never marry, a bet on which Fritz stakes his fortune. A pretty girl soon enters the picture and... guess how the story turns out. Additional performances at AVA are on April 29th and May 1st, to be followed by a May 6th presentation at the Haverford School. An additional performance will be scheduled for a venue in Bucks County.

Finally, the academic year concludes with the Farewell Recital on May 9th at the Church of the Holy Trinity. All those singers who are graduating will sing their favorite selections. You can see and hear them just as they are ready to embark on their professional careers.

If you are already a fan of opera's comedies and tragedies, you have a nearly unparalleled opportunity to catch great performances by some of the stars of tomorrow in an intimate space within walking distance of your own front door. If you have not yet

had your emotions and your senses fully engaged by what this art form can provide, AVA offers you a marvelous way to do so. At opera performances, surtitles in English scroll above the singers' heads so that you never lose track of the action, whether they're singing in Italian, French, German, or some other language in which you may not be fluent.

So, why not sample the offerings on display at our Academy of Vocal Arts and experience what another of Philadelphia's world-class institutions has to offer! ■



**Lynn Miller** is a professor emeritus of Political Science at Temple University, now a sometime writer and painter. [www.lynn-miller.net](http://www.lynn-miller.net)

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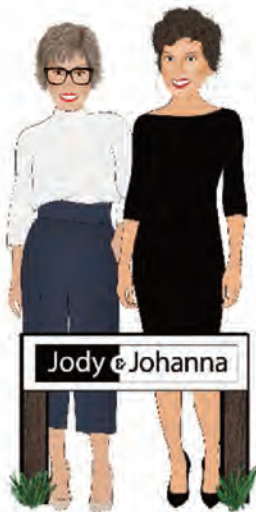
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# The Churchyard at Old St. Peter's

Michael Neff

There have been poems written about churchyards, but I never thought I'd hear myself think, "I could lie here." Of course, the ground has been warmed for some 260 years, and some of the trees are almost that old.

Old St. Peter's at 3rd and Pine Streets was founded in 1761 to accommodate the overflow from Christ Church, as the city expanded westward from the Delaware River wards. The building was still under construction when Rosanna Smallman was buried in the churchyard in 1760. Robert Smith, the architect, designed a cupola to hold the bell.

Early on, care was given to the plants and trees in the churchyard. Several ancient Osage Orange trees descend from specimens sent to President Jefferson by Lewis and Clark (1804-1806). Every autumn these trees drop fruit the size of softballs and the color of lemon-green tennis balls upon the tombs and the grass. The present row of sycamores along Pine Street was planted in 1848.

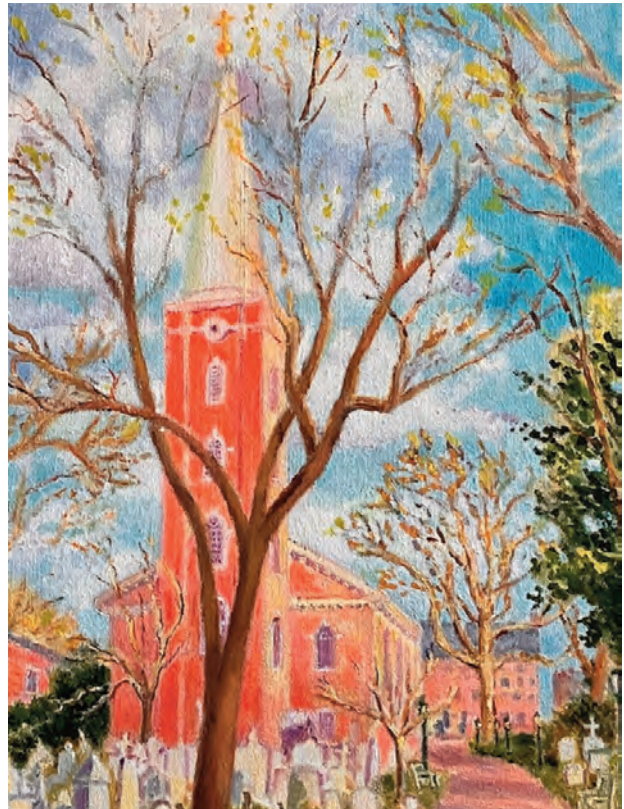
Frances Gurney Smith was a wealthy parishioner eager to "add ornament" to the city. He was a proponent for the new tower on Independence Hall that replaced the humbler original, and he advocated for the construction of a tall tower and steeple for St. Peter's to hold the gift of new bells he was giving. The architect was William Strickland, who designed the Independence Hall

tower. The "new" tower rises to a height of 210 feet. The first swinging of the bells shook the tower so alarmingly that they had to be fixed and struck rather than let to swing freely. By December 1842, the tall slender spire punctuated the Philadelphia skyline.

Many prominent early citizens are in the churchyard, including some whose ethical reservations about the Revolution — fear of the very real violence that did occur — caused damage to their reputations. As a painter, I often stop to pay homage at the tomb of Charles Willson Peale. He painted the portraits of many active citizens of the day, putting human faces on the historical events. Jefferson asked him to paint the scenes and supervise the excavations of the skeletons of pre-historic animals that farmers began to dig up when they plowed the virgin land.

These animal remains were a great mystery. Remember, this was close to fifty years before Darwin. Peale created the first museum to hold these, and other natural wonders, on the second floor of Independence Hall. He was also a co-founder of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the country's first art school. ■

*The factual source for this text is St. Peter's Church: Faith in Action for 250 Years, by Cordelia Frances Biddle, et al. Temple University Press, 2011. Available in the Hopkinson House Library.*



**Michael Neff** paints in Washington Square in summer, fall, and spring. You can see some of those, and other, pictures on his Instagram account, @paintinginthepark.

# Winter Nesting

Johanne Lamarche

*In the middle of winter I at last discovered that there was in me an invincible summer.*

— Albert Camus

After the holiday indulgences, cozying up at home with simple but flavorful recipes is what I am all about. Our first recipe is a sheet pan chicken dinner with

fingerling potatoes and shallots that is easy to throw together and will fill the home with tantalizing aroma. Lemon brings an unexpected bright note to the dish. The whole thing cooks in one pan with easy clean-up.

If you haven't sworn off sweets yet, dessert

is an elegant yet decadent chocolate mousse. Ooh la la, it is irresistible! Portions are small so you can indulge. Use your favorite chocolate bar to make it. ■



**Johanne Lamarche** is a French Canadian who came to the U.S. to study periodontics, stayed for love, and is enjoying a second career as an artist.

## Chefs' Corner

*If you have a favorite recipe, we would love to test it and put it in this column. Send your recipes or requests to Johanne Lamarche at frenchgardener@comcast.net.*

### Sheet Pan Chicken Thighs with Shallots, Fingerlings and Lemon

Return to basics with a healthy nutritious meal that you can put on the table in no time and cooks itself in the oven unattended. This chicken dinner requires just 10 minutes of prep time and is ready in 45 minutes of hands-off time in the oven. It fills the house with mouth-watering aroma and gets great flavor from shallots and lemon. Clean up is a snap. We even served ours right in the pan. You can substitute any vegetables as long as they are cut in similar sizes for even cooking.



#### Ingredients

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 8 chicken thighs, trimmed                        | 2 t garlic powder           |
| 1 fennel bulbs, sliced 1" thick, fronds reserved | 2 t sea salt                |
| 4 shallots, quartered                            | freshly ground black pepper |
| 1 lb fingerling potatoes, halved                 | 1 lemon, zested and juiced  |
|  | 2 T olive oil               |
|  | lemon slices, for serving   |

#### Directions

- 1 Preheat the oven to 400°F. Prepare a sheet pan, along with your chopped vegetables for easy assembly.
- 2 In a large bowl, toss together the chicken, fennel bulbs, shallots, potatoes, and seasonings.
- 3 Place the chicken thighs in the center of the sheet pan and spread the vegetables around the chicken. Sprinkle with the reserved fennel fronds.
- 4 Roast at 400°F for 45–60 minutes, until the chicken and potatoes are cooked to an internal temperature of at least 170°F.
- 5 Finish with two minutes under the broiler to really crisp the potatoes and chicken. Serve with lemon slices.

## Residents' Corner

Residents wishing to make comments or observations on the current issue may e-mail them to: "The Editor," lynn3@comcast.net.

Those who do not have a computer can place their comments in an envelope addressed to "Editor, *on the House*" and give the envelope to the employee at the Resident Services Desk.

Your comments will be published in the next issue of *on the House*.

Anonymous comments will not be accepted.

The editor reserves the right to reject opinions/comments, etc., if they are deemed inappropriate or can involve the association in legal troubles.

## Winter Nesting

continued from page 22

### Mousse au chocolat

This chocolate mousse is one of the easiest recipes you will ever make! The recipe was shared by a French friend who is a neighbor on the Square. It is a classic French chocolate mousse that can be made ahead of time. Without added sugar, it gets its sweetness from the chocolate bar you choose to make it with. Love dark chocolate? Replace the milk chocolate and use only dark. It feels celebratory and indulgent. Serve in your best ramekins or liqueur glasses.



### Ingredients

- 1 110g milk chocolate bar (about 3.8 oz)
- 1 110g dark chocolate bar (about 3.8 oz)
- 4 large eggs, separated
- 1 t water

### Directions

- 1 Cut the chocolate bars up in small pieces. In a heat-resistant dish, combine the chocolate and teaspoon of water. Melt the chocolate using a bain-marie (melting gently over a pot of simmering water). Or, melt using a microwave in 10-second intervals, stirring between bursts. Cool slightly, without letting the chocolate harden.
  - 2 Separate the egg whites and yolks. In a medium bowl, whip the egg whites until soft peaks form.
  - 3 To the warm melted chocolate, add the egg yolks one at a time, Gently fold in the egg whites in two parts, folding each round in without deflating the mixture.
  - 4 Pour the mousse mixture into individuals serving dishes. It is rich, so I recommend small portions.
  - 5 Chill at least an hour or overnight. Take out of the refrigerator 15 minutes before serving. Garnish as desired.
- Enjoy!

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