

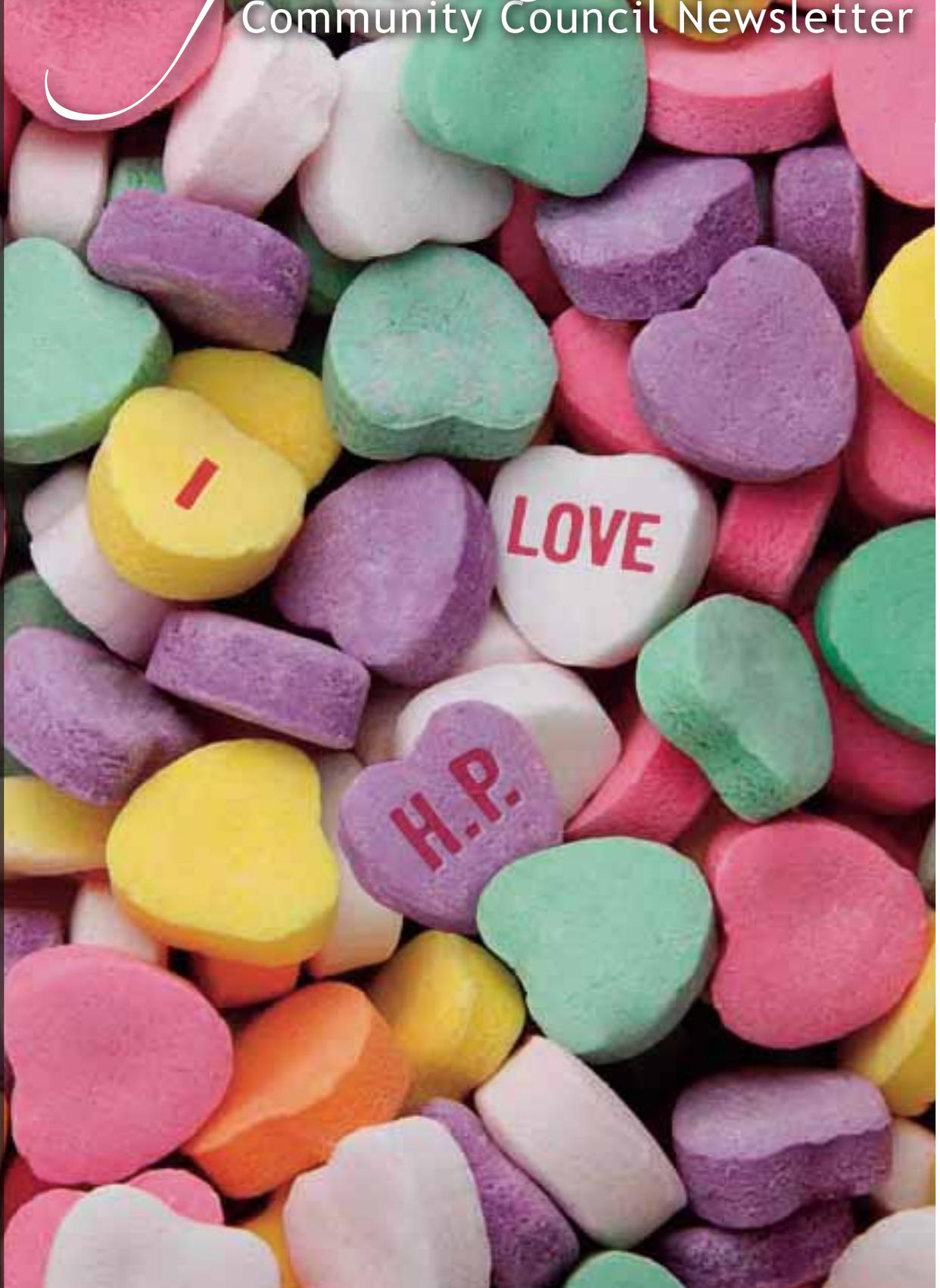
February 2012

# Highland Park

Community Council Newsletter

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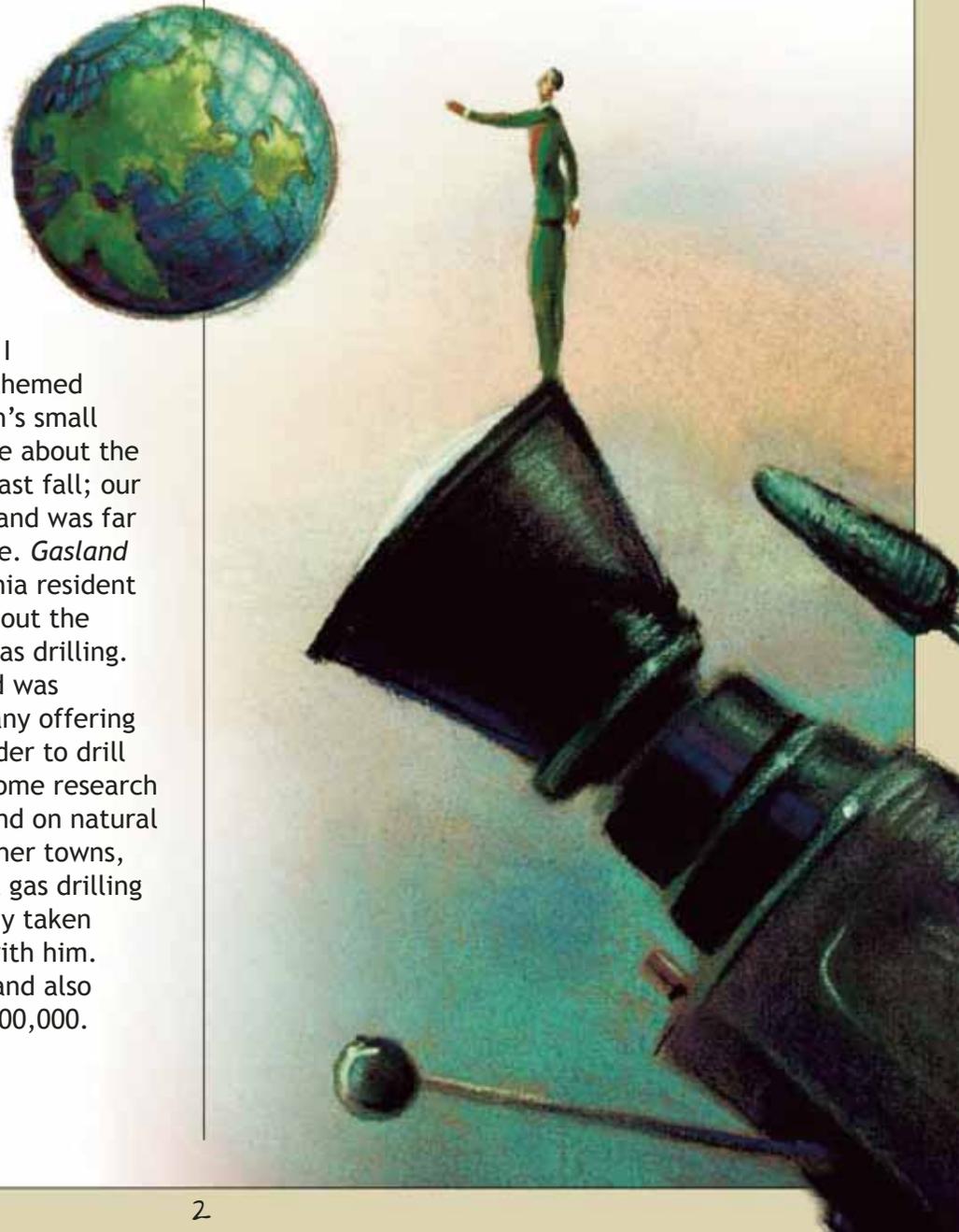
# A Letter from the President

A couple of years back, we had local documentary filmmaker Chris Ivey come visit the HPCC and share an installment of his *East of Liberty* series - a film exploring the impact of urban development efforts on our friends the next neighborhood over. The whole process of bringing Chris to the HPCC was the beginning of a journey for me into the world of documentary filmmaking. Along the way, I've been exposed to new ways of thinking about what a documentary film is supposed to be: a statement of truth, well researched, conveyed with visual evidence, about some important or interesting topic.

It is with this more conscious perspective on documentaries that I am approaching the social justice-themed films we are exploring in my church's small group. I wrote recently in this space about the *Garbage Dreams* film we watched last fall; our January movie hit closer to home, and was far more emotionally devastating to me. *Gasland* chronicles the efforts of Pennsylvania resident and filmmaker Josh Fox to learn about the environmental impacts of natural gas drilling. Josh owns land in Milanville, PA and was approached by a natural gas company offering to lease his land for \$100,000 in order to drill for natural gas. Curious, Josh did some research on the Marcellus Shale formation and on natural gas drilling practices. He visited other towns, in PA and elsewhere, where natural gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing had already taken place. He took his cameras along with him. He eventually produced the film - and also decided that he didn't want the \$100,000.

*Gasland* has some fairly dramatic footage of various individuals lighting their tap water on fire, and one gentleman using a hair dryer on a tub of his water and watching chunks of plastic congeal in the water. There are individuals - many from apparently poor, rural areas - who have become very sick, many who buy all their water from grocery stores, and who claim that the air and water pollution problems on their land or in their towns started when the natural gas drilling began in their area.

I will say here that while I found the film powerful and riveting, I have been cautious about uncritically buying into its claims or conclusions. It is one thing to assert that an industry is causing pollution, and quite another to prove it. Some of the research I



conducted after watching *Gasland* indicates that in some cases, environmental officials have speculated that other causes besides natural gas drilling may be the cause of some of the problems. Josh Fox dedicates a significant portion of his *Gasland* website to refuting critics of the accuracy of his film, but in my view he could have done a more rigorous job of citing the sources for the facts in his rebuttals. Finally, I would say that while the *Gasland* film painted a vivid picture of what it takes to perform a hydraulic fracturing operation, I ultimately felt that I got a more thorough, and more even-handed, understanding of the process by reading the article on hydraulic fracturing available on Wikipedia. The Wikipedia article gave me a greater appreciation for the technical complexities of the drilling process. It also led me to a sobering Congressional report describing what is known about the various chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing.

It's fair to say that the film slants pretty heavily against hydraulic fracturing, at least in the manner in which it has been practiced in the United States over the last few years. There is little footage in the film dedicated to any positive aspects of natural gas drilling, such as economic growth, job creation, or our country's energy independence. It's difficult for me to tell whether industry spokespeople - a number of whom were approached in the movie, but declined to say much on film - refused to participate because they sensed this slant, or if it was mostly the result of the very understandable tension about who would control what the film would say. As a filmmaker, Josh Fox would naturally want to retain creative control of his documentary. A natural gas executive or spokesperson would generally have little incentive to make statements while the camera is rolling, and then leave it up to an independent filmmaker to use the footage any way he wanted to. The documentary film genre has many examples of top-notch, groundbreaking investigative reporting, but also plenty of examples of one-sided attack films that distort, invent or omit facts to suit the views of the filmmaker. Author and filmmaker, Barry Hampe, describes these latter films as "docuganda."

I'm not sure my mind is made up yet about every aspect of natural gas drilling or hydraulic fracturing. And even if it were, I'm not sure it would be my place to spout off my personal views while I'm wearing my president-of-neighborhood-council hat, as I am here. What I will say is that while I am a substantial fan of both Bible study and prayer, a time comes when action is required. As a man of faith, I am called to act in love, in a manner that cares for the poor and that also cares responsibly for the planet we've been given to inhabit. As a scholar, I feel obliged to educate myself with the facts, and then act responsibly. As a Pittsburgh resident, I stand - as do all of you - to be tremendously affected by whatever decisions are made about natural gas drilling, not only in this region, but in other places upwind or upriver from us (and that's a lot of places). As a member of the community council, I've gotten to know several local and state legislators, all of whom have spent some time grappling with this issue and all of whom can potentially influence the policy decisions that will be made. Given the various hats I wear, I have concluded that I need to be doing more than just passively acknowledging the existence of this issue (the trick for me is determining what, in this case, "more" means).

Finally, friends, as president of the community council, I have the increasingly challenging task of writing an article for you each month that is, in some plausible fashion, relevant to our big-city-appeal, small-community-feel lives here in Highland Park. This month my topic found me rather easily. I charge you to reflect upon these things. Do your homework; learn the truth. Don't be afraid to go where the facts lead you, or to act on the courage of your convictions.

Eric D. Randall, *HPCC President*

*The End*





# HPCC January Meeting Minutes

*by Bob Staresinic*

Eric Randall, HPCC President, called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm with a quorum present.

Frank Pizzi, Curator of Horticulture at the Pittsburgh Zoo, spoke about upcoming events at the Zoo, including the Zoo Gala in June, Summer Safari, and Zoo Brew. The Zoo is up for reaccreditation at the end of July, so they are preparing for that. The Verizon cell phone tower is active and the landscaping surrounding it is in.

Susan Rademacher, Parks Curator for the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy spoke about the revised master plan for Highland Park. This is an update of the master plan created in 2000. Focus groups gave a lot of input into the plan, which included the same group of planners that worked on the original plan in 1998-2000.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Then next HPCC Board meeting is Thursday, February 16th at 7:00 p.m. at St. Andrews Church, 5801 Hampton Street.

Esther Bush, President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, will be speaking to us about diversity.

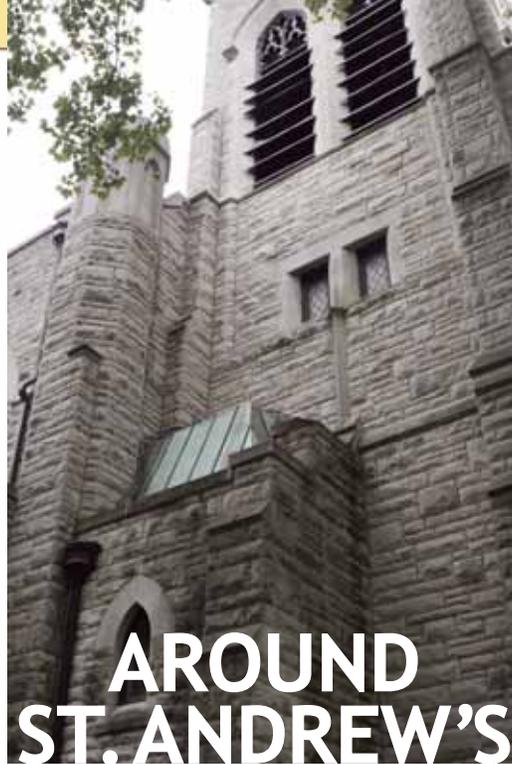


Wintery February marks a time of transition in the year, as Christmastide and the Feast of the Epiphany give way to the more austere and reflective season of Lent.

The St. Andrew's Schola Cantorum will be singing Choral Evensong on Sunday afternoon, February 19, at 4:30 p.m. Our guest preacher for the service will be the Rev. Cynthia Bronson Sweigert, who recently concluded seventeen years of ministry as Rector of the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, Squirrel Hill, and who serves the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh as Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships.

Our Annual Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras Pancake Dinner and Fun Night, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 21st. Wear a costume, and beads, and see who will be crowned King and Queen of the Mardi Gras this year!

Ash Wednesday, February 22, will include the traditional Ash Wednesday Service of the Imposition of Ashes and Holy Communion at 7:15 a.m., 12 noon and 8 p.m.



## AROUND ST. ANDREW'S

By Bruce Robison, Rector

St. Andrew's, in the 5800 block of Hampton Street, has been at the heart of this neighborhood of Highland Park for more than a century now. If you have a pastoral concern we can help with - a baby to be baptized, a marriage to celebrate, a sick or shut-in family member or neighbor who would appreciate a visit and a blessing, a family to comfort at the time of the death of a loved one - or if you simply would like to borrow a table or find some space for a family gathering too large for your living room, please feel free to give our church office a call at 412-661-1245, or check us on the web, [www.standrewspgh.org](http://www.standrewspgh.org).



# Working to Create Jobs

*By State Rep. Joseph Preston Jr.*

Creating jobs is a top priority. On a national and state level, the outlook is undoubtedly bleak. More than 45,000 people lost their jobs from May to August 2011 and it is estimated that more than 500,000 people are out of work in Pennsylvania.

I have been working with my fellow caucus leadership colleagues in developing a jobs package called JumpstartPA. The plan is a 10-pronged approach to give workers, businesses and the Pennsylvania economy a true jumpstart.

JumpstartPA would fix and upgrade roads, bridges and mass transit. We lead the nation with 5,200 bridges deemed structurally deficient and we have more than 7,000 miles of bad roads.

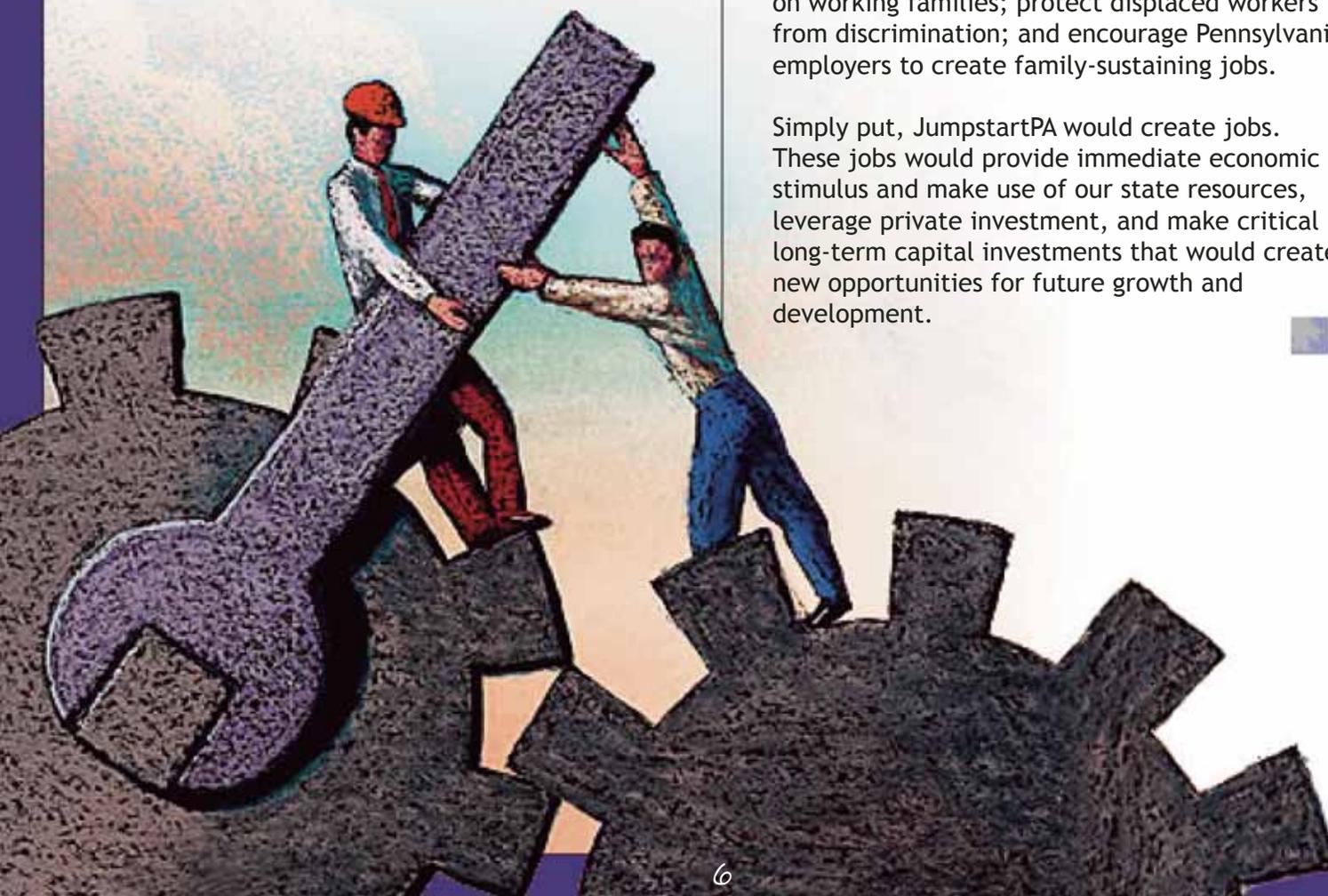
We need to put people back to work with a comprehensive, long-term transportation funding plan. A funding solution would support tens of thousands of transportation-related jobs in Pennsylvania.

JumpstartPA would be an investment in our state's infrastructure and create long-term economic benefits. For every \$100 in infrastructure investment, it would return \$350 to our economy. A \$1 billion investment in highway and bridge improvements would support 30,000 jobs. The creation of the Pennsylvania investment bank would capitalize \$1 billion in new sewer infrastructure through Pennvest, assuring environmentally safe streams and rivers.

Under the current state budget, public school funding was slashed by nearly \$1 billion resulting in 14,000 public school jobs lost. We need to get back to basics and invest in our future by fully funding public schools so young people will be ready to one day enter the workforce job-ready.

The plan also increases early childhood education subsidies to help reduce the burden of child care on working families; protect displaced workers from discrimination; and encourage Pennsylvania employers to create family-sustaining jobs.

Simply put, JumpstartPA would create jobs. These jobs would provide immediate economic stimulus and make use of our state resources, leverage private investment, and make critical long-term capital investments that would create new opportunities for future growth and development.



# Apply Now for College Financial Aid

*By State Rep. Joseph Preston Jr.*

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is now available to students planning to attend college in the fall.

Information from the FAFSA is used to determine eligibility for federal grants, the Pennsylvania State Grant program, scholarships, reduced-cost federal loans, work-study programs, and many school-based scholarships and financial aid programs. While the deadline to submit the FAFSA for most students seeking a State Grant is May 1, individual schools and scholarship programs often have earlier application deadlines. It's important to do this as early as possible due to the fact that grant money runs out first and all that's left are loans.

This is the most important step that students and families should take when looking for assistance in paying for higher education. I encourage students who plan to attend college to fill out the application form as soon as possible to ensure that their financial aid needs are met.

Students and families can find more information about the FAFSA, as well as overviews, preparation worksheets and the online application, at [www.PHEAA.org/FAFSA](http://www.PHEAA.org/FAFSA). The website also offers a list of information that will be needed in order to submit a complete application.

Please contact my office -- 208 N. Highland Ave.; 412-361-3692 -- for more information on this or any state-related issue.

*State Rep. Joseph Preston Jr. serves the 24<sup>th</sup> Legislative District which comprises Aspinwall, Wilksburg and portions of Pittsburgh.*





# WINZ

## A Letter From Mayor Luke Ravenstahl

Dear Neighbors,

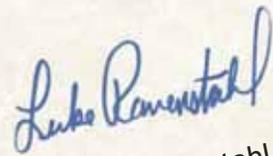
Keeping our streets safe and adopting green technology to save taxpayer dollars remains a priority as we begin 2012 in the City of Pittsburgh. As you may have noticed, Pittsburgh's business districts are looking brighter, safer and cleaner this year.

In December, we began replacing streetlights in more than 40 business districts with improved, energy-efficient Light Emitting Diode (LED) streetlights. This enhancement will make our business districts safer and better-lit as residents and visitors visit our local shops and restaurants. The new streetlights produce a brighter, cleaner light that improves visibility for drivers and pedestrians and have a longer life than standard bulbs. In addition, the City will reduce its energy usage by more than 60 percent, saving taxpayers approximately \$110,000 per year.

This is the latest in my efforts to restore, revive and reinvest in our business districts. Through the Taking Care of Business Districts (TCGB) program, crews responded to a list of action items delivered by 311 callers and businesses, including graffiti removal, painting road lines, problematic sidewalks and other property citations. The TCOB program also provides neighborhood businesses districts with clean sweeps, infrastructure improvements and long-term strategies to renew the neighborhood lifelines.

If we want to continue to grow and improve Pittsburgh, we have to keep our local businesses strong and vibrant. Keep an eye out for these improvements in your community and take this opportunity to walk through your local business district and visit some of our City's great businesses.

Sincerely,



Luke Ravenstahl  
Mayor, City of Pittsburgh



Symphony  
tonight!

# Book Review

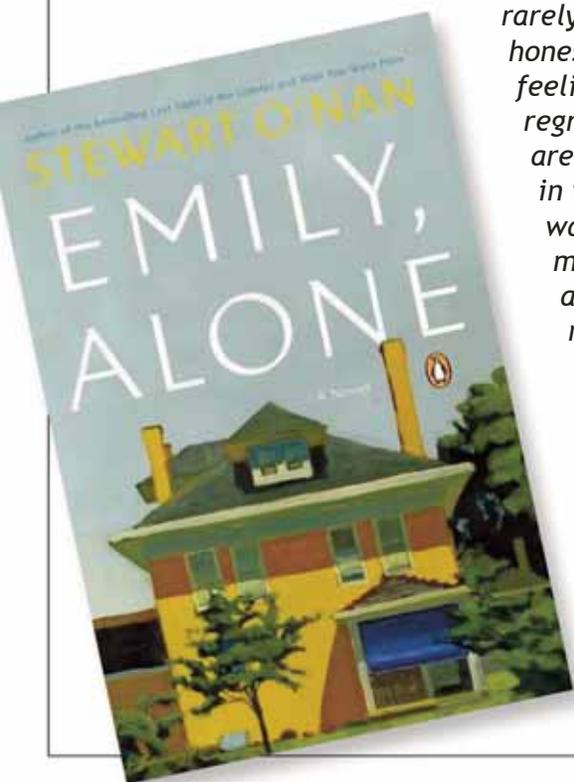
By Al Mann

My wife and I recently read a novel by Pittsburgher Stewart O’Nan, entitled *Emily, Alone*. We enjoyed hearing him speak at CMU as well. Although the book is a work of fiction, we found it especially interesting because the major action takes place in a house on Grafton Street in Highland Park, just around the corner from us on North Sheridan Ave. The author very skillfully describes the inner thoughts of the elderly woman who owns the house. It is a delightful read, made particularly interesting because of its frequent references to places in the neighborhood and in the wider Pittsburgh community. The book was published in 2011 by Viking Press Division of Penguin Group, [www.penguin.com](http://www.penguin.com).

*The official outline of the book is below:*

*A sequel to the bestselling, much-beloved Wish You Were Here, Stewart O’Nan’s intimate new novel follows Emily Maxwell, a widow whose grown children have long moved away. She dreams of visits by her grandchildren while mourning the turnover of her quiet Pittsburgh neighborhood, but when her sole companion and sister-in-law Arlene faints at their favorite breakfast buffet, Emily’s days change. As she grapples with her new independence, she discovers a hidden strength and realizes that life always offers new possibilities. Like most older women, Emily is a familiar yet invisible figure, one rarely portrayed so*

*honestly. Her mingled feelings - of pride and regret, joy and sorrow - are gracefully rendered in wholly unexpected ways. Once again making the ordinary and overlooked not merely visible but vital to understanding our own lives, Emily, Alone confirms O’Nan as an American master.*



## HPCC Officers

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### Vice President

Monica Watt (412) 361-7902

### Treasurer

Paul Miller (412) 365-0675

### Secretary

Bob Staresinic (412) 441-8972

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Lynn Banker-Burns (412) 361-8863

Al Mann (412) 661-5947

Nancy Levine-Arnold

Teri Rucker (412) 482-2533

Nancy Schultz

Glenn Schultz

Laura Smith

Sarah Trbovic

## HPCC Committees

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Nancy Levine-Arnold

### Children’s Events -

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Education - Dave Atkinson

House Tour - OPEN

Finance - Dell Ziegler (412) 363-0742

Membership - Kelly Meade (412) 362-0331

[membership@highlandparkpa.com](mailto:membership@highlandparkpa.com)

Newsletter - Monica Watt (412) 361-7902

[editor@highlandparkpa.com](mailto:editor@highlandparkpa.com)

Nominating - Bob Staresinic (412) 441-8972

### Public Safety -

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[public-safety@highlandparkpa.com](mailto:public-safety@highlandparkpa.com)

### Reservoir of Jazz -

Ethan Winograd (412) 352-2767

### Super Playground -

Monica Watt (412) 361-7902 &

Vernon Simmons (412) 661-1366

Yard Sale - Paul Miller (412) 365-0675

Welcoming - Bob Staresinic (412) 441-8972

Zoning - Dell Ziegler (412) 363-0742

# Ceramics Workshops at the Union Project

Bring that special someone to a very special **Clay Date** at the UP, Feb 11th from 3:30-5pm and celebrate L.O.V.E. with ceramics. You are also welcome to join us for our **Family Ceramics Workshop**, Feb 18th from 10-11:30 am, a morning of mud, fun and family! For more information call 412-363-4550 or visit [www.UnionProject.org](http://www.UnionProject.org).



# Join the East End/East Liberty Historical Society

This non-profit community organization, entering its 10th year, is dedicated to honoring the history of our area and working toward its continued improvement. Annual membership dues are \$20, including quarterly update bulletins called Bit of History. The latest issue covers the new Bakery Square development, which represents a creative reuse of the old Nabisco Bakery in East Liberty. To join, please use this application form:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your check to Al Mann, President, East End/East Liberty Historical Society, 5907 Penn Ave., Pittsburgh PA 15206 or email [alfred.mann@verizon.net](mailto:alfred.mann@verizon.net) for more information.



## St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

*The Rev. Dr. Bruce Monroe Robison, Rector  
 The Ven. Archdeacon Jean D. Chess, Deacon  
 Peter J. Luley, Organist & Choirmaster*

At St. Andrew's

*Sunday Morning Services  
 9 a.m.*

*In the Chapel  
 11 a.m.*

*Choral Service in the Anglican Tradition*

*Nursery Care: 8:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.  
 Church School, Youth, and Adult Programs,  
 Sunday Mornings, 9:45 – 10:45 a.m.*

*Wednesday Morning Service  
 Holy Communion 10:30 a.m.  
 Rector's Bible Study 11:15 a.m. – Noon*

*Choral Evensong  
 First Thursday of the Month, 8 p.m.  
 Third Sunday of the Month, 4:30 p.m.*

*Check our Website for Special and Holiday  
 Services and Activities*

*You Are Welcome Here*

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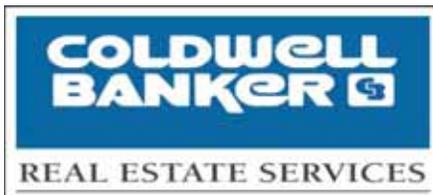
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