It’s amazing to me how the Ukrainian-American community has rallied. Not just the Ukrainian-American community, but America as a whole. We’ve been working with Global Cleveland, the Chagrin Valley Documentary Film Festival (they raised about $10,000 to send to Ukraine)...and multiply this 50, 100-times around the world."

...story on page 5
by Keri November

Last year, Tremont residents Keri November and Jack Ricchiuto founded Tremont Shot Finders’ volunteer effort. This incredible effort helped neighbors locate impossible-to-find COVID-19 vaccinations at the time.

Keri November is a full-time lecturer of American Sign Language at Case Western Reserve University. Jack Ricchiuto is a local and national community builder and leadership coach. Together they started their latest effort, the Tremont Brainery: a volunteer effort where neighbors teach neighbors on topics related to any area of skill, knowledge, or expertise.

Tremont Brainery is excited to announce four upcoming workshops!

- Tina Kaiser of Kaiser Gallery will present “How to Discuss Art with Confidence” at her Gallery! The event starts at 7 pm on Thursday, May 12th. Participants must be 21 and over! There is a requested one-drink minimum.

- Keri will teach an introductory American Sign Language workshop at the Merrick House in Tremont. The workshop starts at 5:30 pm Thursday, June 9th and runs for one hour. Participants must be 18 and over! Feel free to utilize the flyer below to register through the QR code.

- Keri will also teach an introductory American Sign Language workshop at the new Roasted coffee shop in Tremont. The workshop starts at 5:30 pm Thursday, June 2nd and runs for one hour. Participants must be 18 and over! There is a requested one-item minimum.

- Jack will also be doing another workshop on Meditation and Mindfulness in May at the fabulous new Roasted space. Details to come!

Go to TremontBrainery.com and select “events.” Once you do so, register for the workshop you’re interested in signing up for!

For future workshops, if you are interested in teaching a workshop through Tremont Brainery or if you have a topic you would like to teach, you can request a workshop on any topic! Join the Tremont Brainery Facebook group to learn about future workshops and volunteer to teach or request a workshop! Feel free to email me directly if you are not on Facebook at klnovember18@gmail.com.

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Tremont Brainery

*Four New Workshops*

Tremont Brainery AND MERRICK HOUSE PRESENTS:

JUNE 2, 2022

5:30-6:30 PM
Keri November

MERRICK

HOUSE

1050 Starkweather Ave.

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THE SIGN GUY SIGHTING:

Good Friday Murals Appear on Tremont Fences

Dave Witzke (a.k.a. The Sign Guy) was sighted painting out of several Tremont fence murals to be offered to Tremonters for Good Friday.

by The Tremontener

On Good Friday, The Tremontener found The Sign Guy Dave Witzke painting murals on fences of Tremonters who found his Good Friday fence mural painting offer on the Tremont Neighborhood Crime Watch Page. We asked him how these Good Friday murals came about.

Dave: Previously, when I wanted to paint murals, I offered free murals on my Instagram page. Nobody responded.

The Tremontener: Nobody responded?

Dave: Nobody responded. I go on the Tremont [Neighborhood Crime Watch Facebook] page… I was like, ‘Oh, I’ll go on and see what’s going on over there.’ A recent post popped up complaining someone had done some tags on a fence. I’m like, ‘Tomorrow’s Good Friday…see if I can get some fences in—’ you know, to cover that up or whatever. I went on there, posted, and like: [Dave mimed being overrun] Swamped. Yeah, swapped.

The Tremontener: We saw Sandy Smith responded right away.

Dave: Sandy—she was the first one. People were sending me all these different things—I’ll never get to them all. But there’s going to be another day where I’m going to want to paint—it’s a nice day, nothing else is going on, and I want to have all these walls on the back-burner that I can do a different day. I wanted to paint today. I knew I was off. I’m like, ‘Oh, I want to paint—it’s supposed to be nice. It would be nice to paint a fence or whatever.’ But I didn’t expect, like…that. I offered these Good Friday murals for free, and… people are giving me money, anyway.

The Tremontener: Like donations, though—you’re not charging for this work?

Dave: Normally, I charge for my work—a two-car garage door is $500; a one-car garage is $250-$300.

That pricing was based years ago on a customer on literancy. I just wanted some extra money… I met with them; I said… Oh yeah, just give me—they said, like, ‘No. We’re going to give you $500.’ So… they set the price for the doors. Now, people ask me—‘Two car garage doors—$500 bucks.’ And people don’t mind paying it!

If you have a surface you would like The Sign Guy to add to his list, or if you would like to commission a mural for your garage door, follow contact him at thesignguy1972 on Instagram.

by The Tremonster

The Tremonster is a newspaper by and for the neighborhood of Tremont in Cleveland, Ohio. A Tremonster is anyone who loves our shared neighborhood of Tremont. Any Tremonster may submit content for consideration by the 15th of each month to: TheTremonster@TheTremonster.org

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Thanks to Scott Radke, for the contribution of our logo character for The Tremontener

ScottRadkeArt.com

Mascot: Abbey

Our ongoing thanks to the below Tremonsters for their constant help advise and support:

A special report by The Tremorton

The Tremorton interviewed affoGATO Cat Café co-owners Mandy Miller and Eduardo Crespo at the end of April to check on plans for their future, to see how they’re doing today, and to learn about how they navigated their new Tremont business through an unusual second and third year operation amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Tremorton: Eddie and Mandy, how have you navigated the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Eddie: affoGATO Cat Café: Building a Cat Community

Mandy: We were closed for—what probably five or six months?

Eddie: Somewhere around six months, and then we—

Mandy: We did like a partial close…we were closed-closed for a while, then we came back and we were only doing adoption appointments and to-go service. Actually, another local business, Terrapin Bakery over on W. 14th Street, gave us a door to install in our door so that we could do to-go service outside. That helped us survive; that was really awesome.

Eddie: They helped us out majorly.

Mandy: And then we were slowly easing into opening, and it’s been moving ‘movein’ groovin’ since then. The cat side is busy as always—people always want to visit with the cats—so, we’re still recommending reservations for that side, even though we’re taking walk-ins again, technically. We’re just always full because people love the cats and the cats love people, and it is a very close-knit, very very, very…people can’t say enough wonderful things about the people who visit the café.

Mandy: We stream on Twitch twice a week. It’s free to watch, and we encourage people to watch if they’re interested in adopting. Even if their schedule won’t allow them, or they still don’t feel safe, or they can’t come to come visit the cat lounge for our regular hang-outs, they can watch those videos and still get to know the cats. People are able to subscribe and support, as well.

Eddie: It increased—without a doubt—the amount of adoptions we’ve done because you record a video once, and 50 people can watch it. I think we’re averaging about 150 views per stream.

Mandy: Yeah, yeah, it isn’t huge for Twitch standards, but it’s nice for our cats.

The Tremorton: There are so many businesses that went under during the pandemic. It must have been particularly hard for this business, having made the investments you needed to make. How can you describe, as a mom-and-pop business, going through this pandemic?

Mandy: We’re so, so grateful we had really been showing some growth in our first year, and we were so excited that so many cats were getting adopted and that people were enthusiastic about coming to visit—to see it die suddenly…was just so heartbreaking. We’d be here, at the café (we have to come and check on our space) but there were no cats here…we adopted out all the cats right when the pandemic hit, so we’re walking through empty space…it was so, so heartbreaking—

Eddie: —and then, we have these money sinks: the rent doesn’t stop, medical insurance didn’t stop—

Mandy: —everything.

Eddie: Yeah. We applied for grants, we got a few of them. It was rough that for six months, we didn’t know what we were going to do. We applied for grants because we’d already taken out so many loans, we were cautious about taking on additional Paycheck Protection Program loans…you know, we were raised to be very fiscally responsible: never [take out a loan] you’re not sure that you can pay back. Who knows—if that were to change we’d be in a creek. So, we just tried for grants but got denied.

Mandy: There were grants that were designed for women and minority-owned businesses—

Eddie: —we are both—

Mandy: —we are both, yes, they laugh! There were cat cafes in other cities closed: the one in Columbus closed; one of the ones in Pittsburgh closed…so it was very real to us how possible it was that we were going to close. The cat café that we are closest to is Gem City Café in Dayton. Thankfully, they survived as well—knock on wood.

Eddie: They seemed to really have their stuff together—we knew we were going to be fine. I think, during the pandemic, they opened a vet clinic—

Mandy: —they used their time to open a vet clinic!

Eddie: —they’re helping even more since the pandemic, which is impressive.

Mandy: They were more published than us before the pandemic hit, and we’re so happy for them.

The Tremorton: The numbers of adopted cats was impressive prior to the pandemic; tell us about how many successes there have been throughout this stretch of time.

Mandy: Yeah, it’s been great. Like I said, right when the pandemic hit, we adopted out the last cats we had here, so, thankfully, they were all in their nice, new homes to ride everything out. Then, as soon as we were open, there was interest immediately—I think everybody was stuck at home, so, people want companionship…there have been way more adoptions than we expected since we re-opened.

Eddie: It’s a huge thank you! We’re actually working on a project right now making yearbooks of all the cats.

Eddie: —Mandy is—

Mandy: —Mandy is single-handedly creating yearbooks for all the cats!

The Tremorton: What kinds of adjustments did you need to make when you were open during the pandemic?

Mandy: I think we had a lot of people who felt safe coming here because we took it so seriously—it was a lot of work; we had breaks between each appointment, we were deeply sanitizing the room, there are separate air systems…

Eddie: It was a lot of stress. We read lots of articles where cats were catching [COVID-19], and we had an obligation to them to take care of them. They don’t know better; they can’t do preventative measures. So, we have to be twice as worried as the average person because we’re inviting people into their space.

The Tremorton: They have a difficult time with social distancing?

Eddie: Right. And if they were to get sick, they would end up back in the shelter and then all the other cats would be in danger, too…it’s just a domino effect that you have to take care of before it becomes a problem.

The Tremorton: Do you hear back from families that have adopted your cats?

Mandy: We get so many nice updates! We have a hashtag that people can use: it’s affoGATOLUMI— we encourage people to use that [when posting about their adopted cats on social media], or people will stop in or send us emails.

Mandy: Yeah, the emails are pretty detailed and have pictures and stuff. We actually just got an update about one of the cats in our very first group, Kirby. Apparently, she is thriving at home and has a cat wheel that she loves.

Eddie: I think you have pictures of Kirby somewhere.

Mandy: Yes—from when we were opening—because she was in our first group! Kirby, affoGATO Cat Café Alumni

Eddie: She’s the petite brown tabby kitten…

Mandy: …she was wearing a pink flower when she came in.

Eddie: Yeah.

Mandy: We’ve been getting tons of awesome updates, which is what helps keep us going…knowing that they’ve gone to these homes, and they’re so loved!

Eddie: It’s a huge thank you! We’re really working on a project right now making yearbooks of all the cats.

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Mandy: There’s going to be a yearbook (for each year) of all the cats that have gone home. It has their pictures and their adoption date and birthday.

Eddie: She’s doing great work.

The Tremorton: The Tremorton: It seems like you’re building a cat community.

Eddie: We try!

Mandy: All the people that stop in here, that’s the mutual connection that we all have. No matter what, everybody loves the cats. It makes for a really nice sense of community—especially when everything is so divisive.

Eddie: There are so many cat cafes in other cities closed:

Eddie: —the one in Columbus closed; one of the ones in Pittsburgh closed…so it was very real to us how possible it was that we were going to close. The cat café that we are closest to is Gem City Café in Dayton. Thankfully, they survived as well—knock on wood.

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The Pelton: Renovating a Pre-Civil War Building in the Heart of Tremont

By Bruce Checefsky

Trained as a fine art photographer with a background in studio arts, Barbara Merritt has been a freelance photographer for over 22 years. She specializes in portrait, event, and fine art, and pet photography. Her photography gallery is located at 818 Professor Avenue. Three years ago, she opened 818 Gallery, which shows contemporary art by regional artists four or five times a year. To schedule a photography session or make an appointment to see the gallery contact her at barbmerrit@gmail.com or call 216-870-2012.

Bruce: You are both a photographer and gallery owner. Tell me about that.
Barbara: I am an artist and photographer. I also own the 818 Gallery in Tremont. I had a gallery in Tremont in the 1990s on the second floor above the former Fifth Third Bank on Professor Avenue. I moved to Chicago after five years, where I worked for a commercial gallery. After two years, I returned to Cleveland.

Bruce: Way did you move back to Cleveland?
Barbara: Mostly family reasons. I was born in Cleveland and grew up in Lakewood. I lived in Tremont for ten years. When I returned, there was still Tremont. I eventually opened a gallery on the Fahrenheit restaurant on Professor Avenue. The job in Chicago was unsatisfying. I would say to an artist just starting out, do you want to be an artist or own a gallery?

Bruce: What advice would you give to an artist looking to exhibit?
Barbara: Having friends and family, and a gallery can be an open call for artists.

Bruce: Do owners like to be in the photography with their pets?
Barbara: Owners like to have their kids with their pets, and a few owners sometimes like to be there. They want to hold onto the memory.

Bruce: How about your pets? Bentley, what brought you to Tremont?
Barbara: I would let them sniff around and do their thing. The ones that misbehave yield the best results.

Bruce: Do you own any pets?
Barbara: I had a cat that passed away last year. I am not ready to start anything new now. My family has a dog at their cottage, and another dog, Star, and a cat, and a snake outside.

Bruce: How would you describe your clientele at the gallery?
Barbara: I have very diverse and sometimes challenging clients. I love historical stuff. I wanted an opportunity to do both… and see the building instead?

Bruce: What first brought you to Tremont?
Barbara: I liked the way it was a very community-driven neighborhood. There were unique, independent businesses. They'll be there when you get involved in Tremont back then. I get involved with some of them. At that point in my life, I was bored, and I wanted to end up. I gravitated to the arts community. A lifetime of friendships came from that.

Bruce: What do you like about your return. How was that different?
Barbara: I opened 818 Gallery three years ago. I was a bartender at Edison's Pub. The owner of the building also owns the Fahrenheit restaurant building. We worked out the details. The building was owned by a family. When COVID19 hit, I quit bartending and devoted more time to the gallery.

Bruce: Was there any involvement with photography while also bartending.
Barbara: I have been a freelance photographer for over twenty years. I used to do weddings but not much anymore. I do portraiture and photography for magazines and catalog publications. I also do pet photography.

Bruce: What is it like to photograph someone’s pet?
Barbara: Crazy, people seem to want to photograph their pets more than their children. I love working with animals.

Bruce: Do you photograph in your studio or at the pet’s home?
Barbara: If the pet is a bigger animal, we might go to the home. But we have to make the two doors for the retail space, and we made modifications to make sure the retail space was accessible. When we first looked at it, the old hair salon was only using one half of the first floor, the other half was an apartment. We knew we would have to do a ton of work to the space, so can it be laid out in a way that takes better advantage of how it addresses the street? If we were living in one of the apartments, how would we want it to be set up? We wanted to come to it from that standpoint: keeping the building structure where it is, how would we lay it out, today (following how apartments are laid out today; what people are looking for in apartments)? We were able to achieve the balance of historic and modern through working closely with our architect, Antonia Marinucci. Her quality in design and aesthetic shines through what you see today.

Bruce: Tell me a little about the changes you’ve made to this incredible building.
James: The front building was built in 1901. Since then, there were multiple additions—the back garage was added around 1920, when the storefront was expanded as well. The front was connected by an addition that was installed to connect the garage and the front sometime in the 1950s (this was the only part that was a completely wooden structure), and that had aged very poorly.

Bruce: That was the section that looked like a skyscraper.
James: We took that middle part down, and initially, we had looked at the garage as the garage as well—it was not in good shape when we started on the project. As we started looking at it more closely, we realized that portion of the structure was in better shape than we thought. It was easier to salvage the garage and turn it into a sixth apartment. We put a lot of work into this property, opened up a retail space with modifications, did a ton of work restoring and repairing the building structure—a rent the building.

Bruce: What advice would you give to an artist looking to exhibit?
Barbara: I would say to an artist just starting out to show your work as often as possible and get involved in the Cleveland art community. The art scene is manageable in a way different from other larger cities. It’s easier to get involved and recognized as an artist in a city the size of Cleveland. We are a very close-knit community.

Barbara Merritt has been a freelance photographer for over 22 years. She specializes in portrait, event, and fine art, and pet photography.
Andy Fedynsky, Director of the Ukrainian Museum-Archives, spoke recently with The Tremonster about the effort locally and globally to support Ukraine’s resistance to Russia’s ongoing invasion.

by Rich Weiss

When The Tremonster caught up with Andy Fedynsky, Director of the Ukrainian Museum-Archives (1201 Kenilworth Ave.), he was tucked away in an office at the end of a small hallway behind the Lincoln Park-located gallery building, working feverishly on an office computer. Andy took a moment to offer a glimpse into his perspective from right here, in Tremont, on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the outpouring of support for Ukrainians, locally.

Andy: Did you see where the flagship of the Russian fleet sank? The Ukrainians say we bombed it. Russia says, ‘No, no, no—there was a fire and ammunition went off.’ My question is, what kind of navy sinks its own flagship? [Andy laughs]…It’s crazy, what’s going on now. Obviously, about the war, but in terms of what we’re facing—interest from people like The Tremonster, but also Senator Sherrod Brown—he was here Monday; Senator Rob Portman; U.S.A.I.D. (Agency for International Development); Congressman Tim Ryan; Global Cleveland—Joe Cimperman, of course. It’s really astounding how many people have really rallied to Ukraine, and they see this as something that’s important, not just for Ukraine, but the United States, the West, and the values that we all share, hopefully, as Americans and Europeans.

The Tremonster: When I came back to see you, I was here in front of your computer, and it looked like you were being pulled in a bunch of different directions—it seems there has been a sudden demand on your time to connect people as well as produce information about Ukraine—

Andy: —huge. I don’t really reflect on it that much, I just react. I get dozens of emails of information but also requests for information…so let me just show you. In fact, this is what I was working on right now [Andy gestures to his computer screen]: ‘I would like to donate an archive of my father Ostrovsky, from Tel Aviv, who was a well-known Ukrainian art critic.’ The guy wants to donate his archive of art criticism—1,200 items packed into boxes, located in Brooklyn, NY—just before you came over, I was talking to this guy, Igor Ostrovsky.

Andy brings up another email: This is a professor from the University of Edinburgh—this was yesterday—interested in bringing five or six scholars into Tremont. These include [scholars from The University of Manhio, Stetson University of St. Andrews, University of Buffalo…]

The Tremonster: There’s a lot of good will in your email inbox.

Andy: It’s not just the Ukrainian Museum: Rob Portman is going to speaking at the City Club. Sherrod Brown—he’s Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, so the Senate Banking Committee has oversight on sanctions. But also, the World Bank, The International Monetary Fund (IMF)…so, Ukraine is running a deficit of about $5 billion a month, which is not sustainable. Tomorrow, the finance minister of Ukraine will be in Washington meeting with the IMF: That’s what we talked to Sherrod Brown about on about Monday: tanks, helicopters, rockets, etc., but also IMF money…these are the kinds of unheralded things that we’re doing.

The Tremonster: When community members donate to the Ukraine war effort through the Ukrainian Museum-Archive or its local partners, how is the money used?

Andy: Here’s Cleveland’s Maidan Association: Look what they’ve done: 14 pallets of medical aid [in one day]; five pallets [the next day]; five pallets [the next day]; this is what they’re collecting. This is just Cleveland…[Andy scrolls down a page on the Maidan Association’s website…] hygienic products and bedding. This is ongoing.

The Tremonster: Tell me about the Cleveland Maidan Association.

Andy: Maidan is the Ukrainian word for ‘public square.’ Specifically, in the capital city of Kiev, so, Maidan is the ‘Independent Square.’ It was where Ukrainians rallied for independence in 1991, the Orange Revolution in 2004-2005, and then when Ukraine had committed to join the European Union and Putin forced that to reverse, people spontaneously came out (hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people) to say, ‘No, We want to be part of Europe, not Russia.

So, as a consequence, Putin invaded Crimea and eastern Ukraine (Donbas). In 2014, Ukrainian Americans in Cleveland rallied to support Ukrainians—many of whom are family and friends—to support Ukraine’s effort to defend itself. And now, of course, with the war, they’ve rallied even more. They’ve been organizing literally tons of humanitarian assistance—one of the connections is MedWish, a medical assistance group that takes medical equipment from hospitals that they’re deaccessioning because they’re getting more modern things, but they’re certainly still useful.

The Tremonster: How do these supplies get to Ukrainians?

Andy: So, MedWish, Maidan, the Ukrainian Doctors Association—they’ve been assembling these and sending them to Ukraine through their already established [supply line] transportation hubs, mainly through Poland: the Polish port of Gdansk, and then sending it into Ukraine. We’re a clearing house for information. There’s Cleveland Maidan, but there’s also Fund to Support Ukraine, which is supported by United Ukrainian Organizations of Ohio. There are food kitchens in Ukraine, there are medical supplies that are going there to support civilians who are wounded and families. There’s an enormous need, and I know a lot of people, personally, who are working hard to support Ukraine in its great time of need.

The Cleveland Maidan, The Fund to Aid Ukraine, Cleveland Museum Archives—we’re largely volunteer—virtually no overhead—so the money goes to where the need is. And also, people who know each other and trust each other, and are honest and dedicated and idealistic. There’s others—UNICEF and others [doing good, trustworthy work]—I tend to focus my energies and energy on local…this is Cleveland. This is Cleveland.

The Tremonster: Are you able to get in contact with relatives?

Andy: This morning, I spent half an hour talking to my cousin in Lviv—he’s my age—just to call and say, ‘Hey, we’re with you. How are you and your wife? I saw, when the bombs went off, ‘How close?’ ‘About three miles from where we live.’ And he talked about Mariupol—he said, ‘We have about 200,000 people from Mariupol in Lviv now, who we have to take care of.’ ‘That’s half a million people a day, right?’ So, Chef José Andrés [his nonprofit organization World Central Kitchen] is on the ground to assist refugees at the Ukraine-Poland border. And so, the world has come together.

It’s amazing to me how the Ukrainian-American community has rallied. Not just the Ukrainian-American community, but America as a whole. We’ve been working with Global Cleveland, the Chargin Valley Documentary Film Festival (they raised about $10,000 to send to Ukraine)…and multiply this 50, 100-times around the world. What’s happening?

My daughter, Alexa, was a Fulbright Fellow to Brazil. So, Alexa won a Fulbright fellowship and spent a year in Brazil. So, we follow what’s going on in Brazil. In Brazil, the Ukrainian-Brazilian community is raising funds and humanitarian aid to send to Ukraine. This is being replicated scores of times throughout America, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Australia, throughout Europe, and, of course, in Ukraine. So, it’s tragic but it’s also inspiring.

The Tremonster: It’s refreshing to see such unified, collective action in such a diverse time.

Andy: There’s a wonderful book called The Uprooted written by Oscar Handlin 50 years ago, and he said: ‘Then I discovered the immigrants were American history.’ The history of America is the history of immigration. Most Americans trace their heritage to somewhere else—whether Europe, Africa, Asia—that’s our genius of our country: that we’re able to take people from all over and have them all become Cleveland Guardian fans! [Andy laughs]
Memories of Tremont Ave.

Some Southside Memories of Spring

by Ken Seigulinsky

For me, there was never any doubt that spring had arrived when our front room coal stove was allowed to burn out and the ashes, previously saved to sprinkle on icy sidewalks, were thrown into the trash. The stovepipes would be disconnected from the chimney and stove, wrapped in cloths, then stored in our one-quarter section of the basement. The stove was slid to a corner in the living room and covered with a cloth overlay that would shield it until the next winter. With the fire out, the coal stove no longer supported my quest to create a large silver ball. I had been collecting the inner foil wrapping of my father’s Camel cigarette packages to generate a silver ball, competing with my friend Ralph who lived next door. To separate the foil from the wrapping on the coal shovel, I had to knead the putty into was that of a cucumber. Frequently, the putty was rubbed over wallpaper, the soot adhered to the putty leaving a clean streak. Since the putty was pliable, it could be shaped to fit little corners and niches that attract dust and dirt. Most of the dirty wallpaper was near the ceiling, where the rising air carried the soot. I learned that the most effective shape to form the putty into was that of a cucumber. Frequently, the wallpaper cleaner had to be kneaded to uncover a clean portion. It was easy to uncover a clean portion. It was easy to

Coal stoves created a lot of soot that traveled throughout the entire house, so when spring rolled around it was necessary to clean the wallpaper. Using soap and water was not possible because early wallpapers were made of paper, not vinyl, so wetted paper would tend to bubble or lift. Fortunately, there were a couple of wallpaper cleaners available: Absorene and Kutol. Absorene was pink and Kutol was white. Both were pliable kinds of putty sold in cans. When the putty was rubbed over wallpaper, the soot adhered to the putty leaving a clean streak. Since the putty was pliable, it could be shaped to fit little corners and niches that attract dust and dirt. Most of the dirty wallpaper was near the ceiling, where the rising air carried the soot. I learned that the most effective shape to form the putty into was that of a cucumber. Frequently, the wallpaper cleaner had to be kneaded to uncover a clean portion. It was easy to

Photos courtesy of Post 58

Towpath Trilogy Half Marathon and 5-Miler Attracts Nearly 600 Runners

by Tom Matia

Cooks Michael Policnik and Terry Mollett for serving awesome brats with sour kraut. Tom Matia for selling Dungus Day t-shirts and taking great pictures. Donnie Ernst for clearing tables. And a special thanks to Marianne Green’s group who showed up at noon with at least 15 people strong and provided food and fun. It’s all about teamwork. Great times with great people. Thank you Ryan Dunn and Ray Williams for helping out.

Photos by Tom Matia

Memories of Tremont Ave.

Play-Doh was created as an outgrowth of Kutol wallpaper cleaner and debuted as a child’s toy in 1956, selling for over four times the cost of Kutol. We lived downstairs in the back of a four-family, two-story dwelling at 2464 Tremont Ave. It’s interesting that we kids would specify where we lived by “upstairs in the front/back” or “downstairs in the front/back.” The small amount of soil below our windows along the south of our complex was understood to belong to our landlord (downstairs in the front) so we were prohibited from planting anything; however, my mom created her own unique spring garden of a few flowers. She had a small container, about 8 inches long, shaped and painted to look like a log with an oblong, oval opening. In the fall, she would set the bowl on a sunny windowsill to await the spring approached she regularly checked for shoots to emerge then would set the bowl on a sunny windowsill to await the tulip flowers. We always marveled at how those beautiful flowers could be grown without soil. One miserable spring I was out of school with the measles, confined indoors with little to do. When the spots finally disappeared, I was allowed to go outside in the fresh air. Sitting on some steps with the sun on my face, I was happy that I would be returning to school. Tremont School had a nurse who had to confirm I was no longer contagious, so her office was the first place I visited. What an unpleasant surprise I had when she determined that I had the mumps and had to return to home isolation. My saved report card indicates that I missed 17 1/2 school days due to the double whammy sicknesses. Fortunately, I recovered in time to celebrate Easter: dying Easter eggs, putting temporary tattoos on our arms, and dressing up for church in our finest clothes.
Roasted Tremont: A Lifelong Dream

Sofia: Yes! I went to school for marketing at the University of Akron. I love the community vibe, I love the kind of art school, and I was going to be an art teacher. So, I worked after University of Akron, I also have a marketing company on the side. Sofia Syed, Marketing, I specialized in helping small businesses because of my parents' example. My mom worked here when he was 20. My dad grew up on Castle Ave., before it was gentrified. They had my sister, who was older than me, and then they had my twin brother and me, so my parents had three kids under the age of two. My mom had to raise all three of us, but from there grew a lot of greatness. She was staying home with three kids, but she's like, 'I might as well wash more kids,' and created an in-home daycare. She had a bunch of kids there. Then, it expanded—they owned three real daycares; three physical buildings.

That's my example, growing up—every week, I would go to Sam's Club with them and buy all these milks, and buy 100 milks and all these cereals and stuff. And before the COVID-19 pandemic, I would go there, spend hours, buy all these milks, and then go to each daycare to drop them off. As a kid, I hated it. I would be like, 'Why do I have to carry 100 milks every week?' I hated it.

The Tremont: Now that you're a small business owner, have your views on bulk evolved?

Sofia: It's so funny...because now we run to Sam's Club to get milk—for Roasted! I always come back. I'm not saying I'm going to use my dad's Sam's Club card, still [Sofia laughed]. I'm like, 'Wow, I understand why they need so much help because if I rely on Alex (my boyfriend) a lot. If we're out of milk, he'll run to Whole Foods or wherever we need to go. It's amazing to have that support system. It's great to have a partner that believes in Roasted and also is willing to run out and help in that regard, because I can't leave. He even quit his job to do it. My parents have helped—I think they believe in this fully. My dad's the one who helped me buy the sign outside with the big logo. And he's like, 'Are you going to buy a sign?' I'm like, 'Well, I'm kind of out of money.' He's like, 'No, no, you need a sign.' I think I didn't have them as an example, I don't know if I'd be where I'm at. My sister owns a yoga studio in downtown Cleveland, The Tremonster, from LA for a wedding over the summer, my sister lives in the area, we were walking around and we came across this location...I got into talks with the owners, and I was able to take a former coffee shop and renovate the space, and it all fell into place. I moved back November 27th, and I got the keys December 1st.

The Tremont: What did you think when you first saw this cafe space?

Sofia: At first, I was like, 'I don't see a lease/for sale sign,' so I just sent them an email, and that's how the conversation got started. It was summer: all the trees and the people and it was beautiful and walkable. Everyone would go in and get their coffee and they would love to be a part of this,' you know? The Tremont: How does it feel now?

Sofia: It doesn't feel real. It still doesn't feel real. Even with people sitting in here, it doesn't feel real.

The Tremont: How was the first day open—what was it like turning on the lights?

Sofia: I cried. I seriously cried [Sofia laughed]. When I sold my first cup, it just was crazy to me. I'd been in this space by myself for three months, designing, and...you don't know how people are going to react; it's a gamble. I had no expectations coming into this. The way everything's falling together—everything I envisioned is happening: the events, the music, we're going to have comedy events...

The Tremont: Tell us about the time you spent studying coffee farming processes in Honduras.

Sofia: I went to the Columbus Coffee Fest back in 2018-2019. There was a booth there by a woman named Alejandra Flores called Unataza Coffee. She was promoting her mobile coffee shop in Honduras trip. She's from Honduras, lives in Cincinnati, and every year she takes a group of people—she says, 'Honduras is beautiful, it's underappreciated.' It's a huge coffee Mecca.' That's why she does this yearly trip: we got to go to different coffee shops—on the coffee farm itself, at Cafe' Duke's San Isidro Farm, we got to see the plant, and then the cherry, and we watched the whole process. When you pick the plant, you get a cherry, and then the cherry has a mucilage around it, which contains the bean. You take that apart, and you're left with this bean that needs to dry. They let it all dry, then you're left with these husks. I don't know what happens next, but it's done, you strain out all the spices and you're left with just the tea. You know it's done, you strain out all the spices and you're left with just the tea. You know it's done, you strain out all the spices and you're left with just the tea. You know it's done, you strain out all the spices and you're left with just the tea. You know it's done, you strain out all the spices and you're left with just the tea.
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