Welcome To The Summer of 2023

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Stronger Together at the 2023 Cherry Blossom Festival
by Rob Buscher

The 2023 Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival was a resounding success with a record-breaking attendance of nearly 50,000 people across the two-day outdoor festival on April 15-16. The incredible audience response is credited in part to the continuation of last year’s concert series that incorporated local musicians from Parkside and elsewhere in West Philly.

In addition to the robust musical offerings, for the first time since the pandemic this year’s festival also brought back Japanese cultural workshops and retail vendors selling a range of Japanese ceramics and kimono to anime action figures and other contemporary cultural products. The result was a festival that delivered something for everyone, whether they came for the music and stayed for the shopping or showed up for the Japanese culture and ended up rocking out with some of the local musicians instead.

This year’s festival featured a tea ceremony led by the Urasenke Tea School who offers ticketed tea ceremonies at regular intervals throughout the season at Shofuso, demonstrated the traditional art of tea for festival attendees inside the Horticulture Center. Ikekana International, whose works often grace the different rooms at Shofuso, also held a workshop on Japanese flower arranging. Two groups of martial artists visited the festival from the Penn Shotokan Karate and Temple Karate Club to provide live demonstrations.

There were also a variety of children’s arts and crafts activities ranging from origami and shogi (Japanese chess), to a kid’s passport scavenger hunt.

Taiko drumming was well represented throughout both days of the festival featuring a number of local and regional drum troupes including New York’s Yoko Nakahashi and New Jersey’s Hoh Daiko, in addition to Philly’s own KyoDaiko, Swarthmore College Taiko, and Casual Fifth. The main attraction of course was Tamagawa University Taiko – regarded as one of Japan’s leading college taiko troupes, who performed in Philadelphia for the first time since 2019.

For anyone interested in trying their hand at taiko, Shofuso offers free workshops most Saturday afternoons throughout the Summer starting at 1:30-2:30pm for walk ups at any skill level, and continuing from 3-4pm, an additional workshop for more experienced percussionists interested in developing a song that will be performed at the Obon Festival at Shofuso on Saturday, August 12.

In terms of our local performers, Japan America Society was happy to welcome back Badd Kitti – Philadelphia’s Queen of Funk and Acarajé Afro-Brazilian Drumline, who both delivered incredible performances. Two newcomers to the festival from West Philly were Karen Smith of Sistahs Laying Down Hands and Gabe Preston Sounds – experimental Jazz group.

As we continue to explore some of the overlap among Japanese and African American musical cultures, each of these artists found ways to showcase different elements of Japanese culture in their performances. For example, Badd Kitti performed a song by the Japanese band Yellow Magic Orchestra in tribute to pioneering electronic Funk musician Ryuichi Sakamoto who died earlier this year. Likewise, Gabe Preston delivered a stunning flute rendition of Martya Takeuchi’s Plastic Love – a song that embodies the influence that R&B has on the Japanese genre of City Pop music.

Another highlight was Masaru Koga Jazz Quartet helmed by Japanese American saxophonist and shakuhachi (bamboo flute) player Mas Koga. Performing a compelling set of jazz standards and originals, Mas was sure to slip in a few John Coltrane tunes to pay homage to the legendary musician who lived a little less than a mile from where the concert was taking place, across the river in Strawberry Mansion.

This year’s festival also included a special tree-planting ceremony to commemorate the recent planting of 15 new cherry trees in West Fairmount Park donated by Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia. Over the next decade, JASGP has pledged to plant 600 trees throughout the city as a renewed gift of friendship between the Japanese people and Philadelphians from all backgrounds.

As the Cherry Blossom Festival continues to become more diverse in its program offerings, the organizing committee is pleased to see our communities come together in mutual admiration for our shared cultures. We look forward to continuing to welcome more Parkside residents to other programs at Shofuso throughout the rest of this season.
Centennial Parkside CDC Launches New Strategic Plan

By: Chris Spahr, Executive Director of the Centennial Parkside CDC

The Centennial Parkside CDC (CPCDC) was founded in 2015 by a group of passionate residents and neighborhood organizations with a mission to preserve, promote and revitalize East Parkside through building partnerships with businesses and institutions and creating programs that engage residents, increase opportunity, and grow a diverse, thriving community. In February of 2016, this group completed their first five-year strategic plan charting a path for service to the East Parkside residents, businesses, and institutions.

Five years later in 2021, the CPCDC started a year-long process to reflect on the spirit and goals of the original strategic plan, review the progress that had been made towards goals, celebrate everything that was accomplished, and take steps to intentionally plan the next five years.

The reflection on the 2016 strategic plan and the progress made revealed some essential lessons that were carried forward into a new 2023 – 2028 Strategic Plan adopted by the CPCDC Board of Trustees in November of 2022. These reflections identified very specific needs for the organization including:

- A holistic, consistent, and trauma-informed community engagement strategy
- Clear definitions of the problems the organization and community are facing
- Validated, evidence-based interventions to address those problems
- Measurable goals with clear ownership and accountability
- Ability for the plan to be dynamic to support new, critical community needs as they arise
- A deeper Board of Trustees and Committees with the capacity, resources, and skills to support the plan
- A transparent fundraising goal and strategy
- A strong administrative and technology foundation so staff can focus on high-value tasks
- A focus on organizational and community sustainability

To incorporate these lessons into a new plan, CPCDC took a deliberate approach composed of reflection, surveys, an in-person staff retreat combining team building and practical planning exercises, a series of weekly workshops, and a review process that included participants from many of CPCDC’s stakeholder groups. The plan resulted in six issue areas that will be expanded upon in future Parkside Journal Articles. These issue areas and their goals are as follows:

- **Housing Security**
  - Goal: East Parkside residents will have safe, clean, energy efficient and affordable housing.

- **Environmental Justice**
  - Goal: East Parkside residents will have clean streets, green spaces, access to renewable energy, and workforce development opportunities.

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#ItsASummerThing: City unveils summer programs, activities for children and youth

PHILADELPHIA – With a nod to a phrase popularized during the Philadelphia Eagles’ march to Super Bowl LVII, Mayor Jim Kenney and other officials this morning announced “It’s A Summer Thing!” as they unveiled the city’s line up of programs and activities available to children and teens this summer.

Pools, spray grounds, reading enrichment, STEM activities, free meals, sports activities, summer camps and seasonal jobs were all promoted as ways to keep young people engaged when schools dismiss for the academic year.

Noting that “It’s a Summer Thing” was a phrase that grew out of the Eagles’ most recent football season, Mayor Jim Kenney emphasized. “When our kids have a summer that is engaging, safe, enriching and fun, our city wins.”

Families can visit phila.gov/itsasummerthing to learn about summer programming offered by the City’s Office of Children and Families (OCF), consisting of Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR), Free Library of Philadelphia (FLP), and the Department of Human Services (DHS), as well as its partners, the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) and Philadelphia Police Department (PPD). Links will guide visitors to information on registration, timelines, locations, and requirements.

“Our goal is for children and youth to have a fun, safe and enriching summer,” said Vanessa Garrett Harley, Deputy Mayor of the Office of Children and Families. “We are pleased to offer a wide range of free or low-cost positive programs to children and youth of all ages in all areas of the city.”

Summer activities for children and youth include:

- Over 100 summer camps at Recreation Centers and Parks sponsored by the PPR
- Swimming and free swim lessons at pools and water play at spraygrounds.
- Out-of-School Time summer camps located in schools and community-based locations throughout the City.
- Reading activities at library branches throughout the City
- Fun activities and play time on hundreds of blocks throughout the City as part of the City’s Play Streets Program.
- Positive youth development programming such as gaming, conflict resolution, financial literacy classes at the Community Evening Resource Centers which are open from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m.
- Recreation and athletic programming at PAL sites throughout the City.
- Diversion programming and activities through the DHS #Intensive Prevention Services program for at-risk youth

For more information, visit www.philadelphiacityrowing.org
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URBAN GUERILLA ORCHESTRA
# ItsASummerThing: City unveils summer programs, activities for children and youth

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Paid job opportunities for teens through the WorkReady program.
Summer jobs at the City pools as lifeguards and pool maintenance attendants through Philadelphia Parks and Recreation.
Free meals are distributed at PPR camps. OST Summer Programs and Play Streets throughout the City. For more information about free food, please see philagov/food.

In order to help make this a safe summer for our children and youth, PPD First Deputy Commissioner John Stanford urged parents to be responsible and accountable for their children and to help police enforce youth curfew laws. He also said police would step up patrols around pools and recreation centers during the summer.

Information about enrollment, applications and descriptions of these programs and numerous others throughout the city, can be accessed through, www.phila.gov/itsasummerthing. Programs and opportunities will be regularly updated at this website.

Update on Carousel House

The City of Philadelphia’s Rebuild Initiative is leading the Carousel House project in partnership with Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR). For decades, Carousel House has been an accessible, welcoming and active place for people with disabilities.

Rebuild is an initiative of the City of Philadelphia Managing Director’s Office to improve parks, recreation centers, and libraries in close partnership with Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR), the Free Library of Philadelphia (FLP), and other City departments. Jenny Chen from the Community Capacity Team issues the statement below:

“The Carousel House Rebuild team is making great progress on the design of the new inclusive facility! Please stay tuned for the next public meeting about the proposed indoor and outdoor spaces later this summer or early fall. Check out more information about the project at www.carousellhousebuild.org and sign up to receive email updates by going to https://tinyurl.com/chtstayedupdated.”

Hope PHL Unlocks a Summer of Fun Programs and Activities For West Philadelphia

by Jim Brown

The summer is here and the sounds of jazz and pop-up events around the neighboring communities in West Philadelphia greatly complement the work of the newly formed merger of the People’s Emergency Center and the Youth Services, Inc. to form Hope PHL.

Communities of Parkside, Mantua, Belmont, University City, West Powelton, and Powelton Village have been a great resource to the People’s Emergency Center (PEC) and Youth Services, Inc. through combined services in the community for over 120 years. Their goal is to be a great city-wide services agency helping people to overcome poverty and homelessness, and restoring lives.

And through that support from the community, Hope PHL has been a community partner that looks to share its resources and reward the community it serves with its annual Lancaster Avenue Jazz Festival, and its newly introduced “Pop-Up Events” through the above-mentioned neighborhoods this summer.

Earlier this month, The Parkside Journal spoke with Hope PHL’s Director of Communications Trish Downey about the merging of PEC and Youth Services, Inc. about why create this new partnership and what will it mean to the communities in West Philadelphia in their service areas as well as citywide.

Trish Downey Speaking:
“Several years ago, the People’s Emergency Center and another West Philly service agency (Youth Services, Inc.) got together and started talking about programs that were deemed similar or for the same people and talking about how we could come together to have a greater impact and better serve the community.”

Trish Downey:
“So, Youth Services, Inc. has the Baring House at 34th & Baring Street in West Philadelphia, and they also run a youth emergency shelter in North Philadelphia,” added Ms. Downey. “And they have a family support center in Germantown. And then you know, PEC has a West Philadelphia location that had a few services that were open to all of Philadelphia. One of which is The Jazz Festival and the other is the Digital Inclusion program.”

Trish Downey:
“And so, we took a look at our strategies and programs and thought we could really enhance each other, continued Downey. “And we already partnered in several ways leading up to that. One of which our families often used the Crisis Nursery and Respite Care at Baring House. Also, we used their parenting education program. So, their parent educators come to the shelter and conduct services and workshops there. So, that is why we ended up changing both names to Hope PHL. Part of the new name helps what we think is our strength at what we can offer.”

Offering an array of valuable and needed services, Hope PHL continues to build support for residents in their service area that will benefit them and enrich their lives. Those services are Children’s Services-Early Childhood, Adult & Family Services, Community-Based Services, Youth & Young Adult Services, and Children’s Services-School Age which has benefited over 25,000 residents annually in West Philadelphia and city-wide through Hope PHL.

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View our upcoming events & register:
Stronger Together at the 2023 Cherry Blossom Festival

by Rob Buscher
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A few highlights of our 2023 Summer Season follow.

• Free Taiko Workshops at Shofuso, Saturdays 1:30-2:30pm and 3-4pm
• Parks on Tap Pop-up Beer Garden at Shofuso, June 8-9 from 4-10pm and June 10 from 12-10pm
• Special Exhibit Okaeri (Welcome Home): The Nisei Legacy at Shofuso Opens August 10
• Obon Festival Saturday, August 12 from 3-7pm
• Ikebana International Flower Arrangement Exhibition September 8-10

Local residents of 19131 and 19104 are granted free admission to Shofuso Japanese House & Garden during regular business hours Wednesday-Sunday 11am-5pm. Tell the staff at the ticket window if you are a local resident to gain complimentary entry.

Hope PHL Unlocks a Summer of Fun Programs and Activities For West Philadelphia

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Trish Downey:
“We have so many services,” said Downey. “It was hard to talk about what we offer. But we do want our services to be offered with hope in mind. And with positivity and meeting people where they are, and finding out what they want and what they need. And helping them get there. Some of our services though are through city contracts.”

Trish Downey:
“Our neighborhood advisory committee is just our 19104-zip code,” added Downey. “So, our community development work will very much focus on West Philadelphia and we also have services in a couple of other locations which serve multiple communities.”

As we continued to discuss Hope PHL’s new name, Trish Downey was excited to talk about the organization’s signature event, The Lancaster Jazz Festival, and its new Pop-Up Events that will engage residents of the neighborhoods they serve.

The Jazz Festival is Saturday, July 15th at 39th & Powelton Avenue at Saunders Park Green

Trish Downey
“This year, we have a lot of great things in store,” said Downey. “As always from 12 pm to 7 pm. We have our jazz lineup. We have six or seven amazing performers. They are Philadelphia-based performers. One of the best things about our festival is that it has a variety of musicians and performances. You just don’t hear one type of jazz sound. It brings people together. It’s built on the amazing artist and musicians that are based in West Philadelphia and kind of honors them.”

This year, the festival will also be featuring a special Children’s Village which is being sponsored by the Penn Museum to have lots of activities for children.

Trish Downey
“So, it will be family-friendly,” said Downey. “It will be some great events for the whole family. We’ll have tents for senior citizens to stay under in case it gets hot. They’ll be food vendors and other vendors.

Trish Downey
“Organizer of the festival, Yolanda Braxton does a curated mix of local vendors,” added Downey. “Everything is open to the public and it’s free. You can come with your snacks and chairs and hang out all day and have a really great time. It’s a great community event.”

“Last year was the first time we had it in the park since the Pandemic,” continued Downey. “We had about 3,000 people come through. It was just a really nice, peaceful jazz enjoying the day. We have a fabulous community between Mantua, Belmont, Millcreek, Powelton Village, and Saunders Park and it was really a nice time.”

Hope PHL’s New Pop-Up Events, embrace their service area neighborhoods

“The Pop-Up Events were created last year because we hadn’t been in the park during the pandemic and didn’t have the festival at all,” said Downey. “We did like a live streaming thing, and we wanted to make sure of what we were doing and then we decided to do a series of smaller events mostly on Lancaster Avenue or right around Lancaster Avenue in that community. One place last year was the New Africa Center on 42nd & Lancaster Avenue.”

“And so this year, the upcoming events start on June 16th,” added Downey. “Yolonda’s very creative. On June 16th at the TD Bank University City location (3735 Walnut Street) from 12 pm to 2 pm. TD Bank is the presenting sponsor of the Pop-Up series this year. So, the other Pop-ups are on June 23rd at the Ed Bradley Community Oasis at 949 Belmont Avenue, from 4 pm to 6 pm. We’re having a Jazz Brunch on June 25th at Imperial Caribbean Seafood at 725 N. 42ND Street from 12 pm to 2 pm. On Friday, June 30th at The Community Education Center (CEC) at 3500 Lancaster Avenue (A mini-Jazz Festival) from 5 pm to 7 pm. And then we’ll have a final one before for the big festival on July 7th at The Porch 30th Street Station at 2949 Market Street from 12 pm to 2 pm

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We are open Tuesday – Saturday, noon to 6pm weather dependent. Please check Phillypumptrack’s FB page for day to day openings.

Reduced fee structure for “free lunch/Medicaid” youth.

- If participant lives in 19131 and can prove they qualify for Medicaid the cost is $75 / session
- All parents/guardians must sign a waiver
- Helmets required - if participant doesn’t have one - we will provide one
- Bikes optional - if participant has their own they should bring it
- We will provide water and snacks during break times - participants should bring own snacks if diet restricted
- Beginner – Advanced Beginner – Must be able to ride a pedal bike with confidence. These riders will work on learning how to pump and ride the track contiguously without pedaling.
- Intermediate – Advanced – Must have ridden the pumptrack before, able to ride track by standing and pumping (ask if unsure). These riders will work on body position, flow, manuals

Registration Link: www.phillypumptrack.org/summercamp
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As I was wrapping this story up I learned some good news that I had to share with our readers.

I received an email from The Parkside Journal of a press release from Hope PHL. As you know Hope PHL provides social services, housing, and community development to residents of Philadelphia. They were recently awarded a $250,000 dollar “Housing for Everyone” grant from TD Banks’ Charitable Foundation. This grant will help prevent homelessness in Philadelphia through rental assistance services. Hope PHL services will provide relief to West Philadelphia. Hope PHL was one of 37 non-profit organizations selected from more than 450 applicants.

“TD Charitable Foundation’s Grant offers much-needed support that, when combined with the broad array of Hope PHL services will provide relief to West Philadelphia renters in a shrinking affordable housing market,” said Kathy Desmond, President at Hope PHL.”

Centennial Parkside CDC Launches New Strategic Plan
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Community Prosperity
Goal: East Parkside residents will have a platform to share their needs, access to community leadership, and trauma-informed programming to help them build skills, gain employment, build wealth, and increase health and wellness.

Cultural Celebration & Preservation
Goal: East Parkside will celebrate and preserve its cultural heritage and create a physical center to grow, nurture, and showcase local and community-representative arts programming.

Commercial Vibrancy
Goal: East Parkside residents will have a vibrant commercial corridor with a diverse mix of quality goods and services at businesses that are owned by local, underrepresented owners and relevant to their needs.

Organizational Sustainability
Goal: East Parkside residents will be served by a community development corporation that is financially sustainable and has the ability to increase the capacities in which it serves the community.

We look forward to providing a deeper look into these issue areas in future additions of the Parkside Journal. Please also be on the lookout for informational materials in the community that will expand on CPCDC’s strategic plan in hopes that the entire community can participate in its implementation. We also encourage all residents and stakeholders to reach out to the CDC at 267-225-8356 or info@centennialparkside.org for more information.
Clearly in Parkside, we do not lack for variety of summer programs for area Youth to engage in during the summer. Most of our area Rec Centers, cultural institutions and non-profits have a plan for youth this summer. It may require a little web searching but the programs are there. One new Youth initiative that I think is a little unique was developed by Tashia Rayon from Centennial Parkside CDC. Tashia is the Director of Cultural Development at Centennial CDC. She is the force behind the new Black Urban Theater which recently opened its doors on 40th & Girard avenue and the annual Black Man’s Conference.

Many of her programs concentrate on young black males in our community, for as we all know this segment of our demographic seems to truly be misunderstood and underserved by the larger community. This new program is starting off small but she hopes to grow it. Tashia describes it as a type of Young Black Male Retreat, in fact that is the name of the program. This initiative is all about exposure and communication. This is a much smaller program than many of the others Ms. Rayon and the CDC have done in the past.

This program seeks to take up to 10 young men on a one-day experience out of the neighborhood. Adult volunteers will go with students to act as Mentors and guides. The curriculum for this program is still in development but this is what they plan so far:

a) A Sunrise walk or hike at John Heinz Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum  
b) Breakfast at local restaurant in Philadelphia  
c) Trip to The Lest We Forget Museum  
d) Back to the Black Urban Theater for Wrap Up Sessions.  
e) Dismissal

As was said in the beginning this is just a pilot program that may grow in time. When I asked Ms. Rayon about what goals, she wishes to accomplice with this program she replied: “Create a sense of fellowship among our young people, give them a sense of unity and let them know that they are not alone. There are other young people of like mind out there. Perhaps our biggest goal is to get them out of the neighborhood to see and experience something different.”

For more information on this project and many others from Centennial CDC go to their website at: https://centennialparkside.org/

Ohio House, pictured above, is one of the few remaining intact buildings from the Centennial Exposition of 1876. The event took place right here in Fairmount Park in Parkside. More than 10 million people visited the exposition during its 6 month run. Ohio House was one of 26 State exhibit building built to highlight and promote individual state accomplishments. At the end of the Fair all the houses were disassembled and returned to their respective States. Ohio House is the last remaining State House in Philadelphia.

Over the years the house has gone through several restorations and the building was most recently a restaurant. However that's all in the past this month Ohio House has just had a grand reopening as the Center for Parks at Ohio House.

This is the new home of the Fairmount Park Conservancy.
Have a Good & Safe Summer from
The Parkside Journal