LAKEWOOD CBSERVER

Founder of Award Winning Observer Community Newspapers & Websites

Volume 19, Issue 1, January 4, 2023



The World Mourns A Legend **Bill Hixson**

by Jim O'Bryan

Bill would have preferred me using the title of his book that he co-wrote with longtime employee and friend Mathias Burke, "An Ordinary Man Blessed With Extraordinary Experiences" but that title was taken. Buy the book, it is an amazing read.

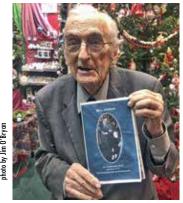
I write this to celebrate a legendary person, who was smart, talented, friendly, driven, joyous, and loving-- Bill Hixson, who was known as Mr. Christmas.

Bill began his life in April, 1929. Born in Berea on the kitchen table, he would change the way many of us would view Christmas, and the past. He had that effect on the world.

Bill was a creative child and soon gravitated to art, cooking, writing and gardening. His



Bill Hixson relaxing in the Christmas Tree Room, prior to opening for business in 2018



Bill Hixson excitedly showing me the proof pressing of his book, "An Ordinary Man Blessed With Extraordinary Experiences"

mom would give him money to buy lunch and instead he would buy seeds, ferns and plants. He became aware of a horticulture club that awarded class credits, and entered. While he did not win, it moved him in a direction

that would become his passion and job.

His parents, realizing his love of flowers and plants, moved to an 11-acre farm in Parma. After trying to raise vegetables for sale

continued on page 11



While he was known as Mr. Christmas, Bill just enjoyed holidays and celebration, especially Valentine's Day. Here is a small selection of his massive collection.

Lakewood Observer Project And

Two From Lakewood Inducted In Journalism Hall Of Fame

by Debra O'Bryan

Last month I had the pleasure of seeing two people from Lakewood inducted into the Cleveland Press Club Journalism Hall of Fame-- a place where luminaries like Dorothy Fuldheim, Nev Chandler, Chuck Heaton and Louis B. Seltzer hang out!

First up was my fellow Lakewood High School Class of 1980 graduate Mary Kay Cabot. Mary Kay grew up watching the Browns on Sundays with her dad, Joe Cabot, who was a Lakewood Fireman. Her love for Cleveland sports grew from him. Mary Kay is best known as the Cleveland Browns beat reporter. What most do not know is that it was Mary Kay that broke ground for women covering football and sports. Everyone sees that as the norm now but it was unheard of when she got her start with the Plain Dealer in 1984 after graduating from Kent State University. Diminutive in stature, Mary Kay had to work harder to be recognized in the male dominated field of sports writers, gradually earning the coaches' and players' trust to become the longest tenured NFL beat writer in the country. She is also among the 49 elite selectors of the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Today, besides covering the Browns for the Cleveland Plain Dealer/Cleveland.com, she is also an analyst for WKYC-TV3, she appears on ESPN



From left to right; Denise Polverine Manoloff, President Cleveland Press Club, Publisher at Cleveland Magazine. Rick Jackson, HOF inductee, Monica Robbins, recipient of the Chuck Heaton Award, Mary Kay Cabot HOF Inductee, Jim O'Bryan, HOF inductee for the Observer Project, Journalism, Photography and Entrepreneurship.

and numerous radio stations, and she co-hosts the Orange and Brown Talk Podcast. She is married to former Lakewood resident Bill Murman, and is mother to three children.

Lakewood is so proud of you, Mary Kay!

The other Lakewood native I am proud to announce is my husband of 37 years, Lakewood Observer Founder and entrepreneur Jim O'Bryan. Always marching to a different tune, Jim has been a dynamic force in every endeavor he has pursued. From being one of the first to bring back hot dog carts to Cleveland in the 70's, rebuilding and managing clubs and discos, to running Racing For America, a motorsports program designed to promote young

American drivers around the world. Jim was inducted into the Cleveland Press Club Hall of Fame for helping to start local Citizen Journalism in Ohio.

Although Jim had no previous journalism experience, he did have knowledge of publishing. Working at B.P. America in the 80s and early 90s, Jim honed his skills as a designer and photographer earning himself six Silver Quill Awards for the production of The BP Express, an internal, global publication. After leaving British Petroleum, Jim and I started our own business, A. Graphic Solution. Happily doing graphics, signage, silkscreening and photography, we never expected to start a newspaper... but I'll let Jim finish this story. See Page 6.

LO Holiday Lighting Contest Lincoln Home Finally Lands Top Spot

By Deb O'Bryan

It was a close race this year with thousands of votes cast.

Congratulations to our top house on Lincoln, they have finished in the top ten the last 5 years!

See the winning homes on pages 12-13. Winning Voters who were randomly selected are: Rosemary Luby and Mika Joshua.

Winning Nominator who was selected is Anne Edouard.
If your home or name is

continued on page 12



First Place: 1544 Lincoln

photos by Jim O'Bryan

THE MAYOR'S CORNER

by Mayor Meghan George

Happy New Year Lakewoodites

Happy New Near! The last twelve months have been another hectic but highly productive year here at City Hall. I'm proud of the exceptional work being done by all of our team - here are a few highlights of what we were able to achieve together this past year.

Cove Community Center Opens. Cove Community Center opened and united the City's human services work in an easily accessible facility to serve Lakewood's seniors, families, and youngsters. Services available include senior nutrition, transportation, and activity programs; the Lakewood Family Room; Help to Others (H2O) youth program; community-based social work services; the juvenile diversion program; and flexible meeting spaces.

Neighborhood Paramedic Program Launches. The City created a neighborhood paramedic program focused on preventing injuries and addressing medical issues before they escalate to a hospital or emergency room visit. The initial focus is fall prevention for seniors through home visits making them aware of how to avoid trip-and-fall situations. The program launch was supported by a \$70,000 start-up grant from the Healthy Lakewood Foundation.

Car Seat Fit Stop Returns. Our Fire Department's car seat safety program returned this year post-COVID, allowing residents to have trained members of the department check and help install child safety seats in vehicles. This has been a huge hit, with high attendance at all of our monthly events.

Using ARPA Dollars for Police Capacity. We used ARPA dollars to help increase our authorized police officers by four to a maximum of 99. This will keep staffing at key thresholds and avoid any reductions in service while we deal with attrition from retirements, industry-wide challenges with recruitment, and lengthy onboarding for new officers. We have also continued strategic

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for parties and

investments in equipment such as cam-

Building Codes and Inspections. We did a deep dive on our building code, adding stiffer penalties for violations in large buildings and requirements that large buildings and parking structures regularly obtain a structural engineer's report on building conditions. We also instituted the first formal survey process

to assess the condition of all of the 1,500

commercial buildings in Lakewood.

Downtown Development Momentum. The City developed a formal term sheet with CASTO to redevelop the former Lakewood Hospital site. The deal will also retain one of Lakewood's largest and growing employers, Roundstone Insurance. The project includes the city's largest new housing development in decades; a public plaza; commercial and retail space; and an increase to our municipal tax base. Site work began this fall, and our local committees are helping to guide finishing touches on design as we move toward a 2023 construction launch.

Studio West. The City was happy to see phase one of this impressive and innovative project open late this year. Our team in the Planning and Development Department continues to work with the project developers to provide assistance as they realize their unique vision.

ARPA Support for Clean Water Infrastructure. The City's integrated wet weather improvement plan (IWWIP) was adopted years ago to protect our Great Lake and the Rocky River - but it also placed a large burden on our ratepayers. With that in mind, when Lakewood obtained tens of millions in ARPA dollars, we dedicated \$25 million to help ensure a reduction in costs to our ratepayers, an investment that will pay off for decades.

Snow and Ice Control Plan. We announced the City's first formal snow

and ice control plan, to fully align and clarify our strategy across departments and increase capacity. New aspects in the plan range from ways to deploy more plows on City vehicles to policy changes that ensure additional personnel to cover holiday and weekends. The plan also includes a pilot project to provide free salt to residents for use in keeping home sidewalks walkable.

Foster Pool Revitalization. Following the summer swim season, the City began construction on a multimillion dollar project to revitalize this beloved community asset. When completed, Foster Pool will have improved accessibility, a new competition and recreation pool, a water play amenities area, splash pad, and bathhouse renovations. The project also solves a longstanding leakage issue that caused an annual loss of one million gallons of chlorinated water.

Recycling & Refuse Facility/ Animal Shelter: The City began construction on a new Berea Road facility that will serve multiple purposes, including streamlining and improving recycling and refuse services and an updated facility for humane treatment of stray animals, while allowing space to be freed up for the buildout of our water and sewer infrastructure in the Metroparks.

January 4, 2023

Green Initiatives. Lakewood continued its commitment to evolving our municipal fleet of vehicles, with older gas powered cars being replaced by fully electric or hybrid vehicles. The City also updated our tree plan this year and planted more than 400 new trees, with a special focus on our parks and areas with less canopy coverage.

As we enter 2023, I look forward to continuing to speak with all of you about your hopes and priorities for our wonderful City in the new year.

LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

Your Independent Source for Lakewood News & Opinion

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The mission of the Lakewood Observer is to attract, articulate, and amplify civic intelligence and community good will in the city of Lakewood and beyond.

Become an Observer!

The Lakewood Observer is a product of citizen journalism, which means it is a completely ommunity-written paper. We are looking for volunteer writers, photographers, designers, and llustrators. It doesn't matter if you're a professional or an amateur, our editorial staff will be glad to help you through the process. Register to our Member Center at lakewoodobserver.com where you can submit stories, press releases, letters to the editor, photos, cartoons, drawings, etc. No need to register to post online calendar items or classified ads. Questions? Email our Associate Editor at oetsy@ lakewoodobserver.com.

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The Lakewood Observer is produced by volunteers/residents of Lakewood.

If you'd like to help this history-making 19-year-old project continue to publish the words, stories and images of fellow Lakewoodites follow the QR Code to the Member Center and sign up at www.lakewoodobserver.com/members.

If you'd like to advertise with us contact: production@lakewoodobserver.com.

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Isn't it time you joined this effort to report community news while preserving our history?

OBSERVATIONS

Congratulations To You

Isn't It Time You Joined This Historic Project

by Betsy Voinovich

Ianuary 4, 2023

The Lakewood Observer, the printed newspaper, and the 24 hour message board known as The Observation Deck have been in existence for 19 years as of this past July. Congratulations to us. When I say "us," I mean all of us. I'm referring to myself as an editor and writer on this paper, other editors, our publishers, sales staff, delivery people, and advertisers, but most importantly, I'm talking about you, our readers, writers, and writers of the future.

If you haven't heard, the Lakewood Observer is a community written paper. Every story you read was written

by a member of the Lakewood commu-

Congratulations All Lakewood Observers

by Mayor Meghan George

This is an important edition of the Lakewood Observer and I wanted to take a moment to offer some words of congratulations to Jim O'Bryan and The Lakewood Observer for the recent recognition Jim received from the Press Club of Cleveland. Last month, Jim was honored with an induction into the Press Club Hall of Fame in honor of his impressive career leading grassroots, community-focused journalism here in Lakewood. A peer in the Cleveland news world recently referred to Jim as "a local journalism pioneer" and "the soul" of Lakewood news, and those are fair descriptions. I fondly recall how my father wrote a "Welcome Letter" for the front page of the first edition of the Observer in June 2005, and since that time, Jim and his team have served our community well. The Observer continues to provide a venue

roclamation

Married Charles & years, Bernel St. Str.

Carlotte State

How fitting that our latest would be a

proclamation from the current mayor,

Meghan George!



tion/Award from former OSU journalism student, Mayor Tom George and Council.

to keep our residents informed and offers them a space for them to voice a spectrum of opinions on Lakewood's direction. Congratulations, Jim, on a well-deserved honor, and keep up the good work!



The Observer has started to catalog all the awards we have gathered over the years. We tend to not toot our own horn, 99% of the time. In 2023 we celebrate together.





nity who wanted to share something with you. This person sat down at a laptop, or picked up a notebook and a pen, and wrote down something they wanted the rest of Lakewood to know about. They are not paid professional writers, they aren't usually professional writers, and many wouldn't characterize themselves as writers at all. They are just like you.

They are your neighbors and friends, business owners, representatives of community institutions like schools, churches, City Hall, the Beck Center, Lakewood Public library, Lakewood Alive, any individual or group with something to say.

If you've been reading this paper for a while, you know that our readers and writers have provided questions for candidates running for office and have taken on issues like the closing of Lakewood Hospital or the controversy over whether Lakewood schools should be required to provide teachers for students who chose to remain home during the pandemic. We also— you also—cover the fun side of Lakewood, from restaurant and music reviews to horoscopes, comics, and articles and photos about anything you choose to share with your neighbors and friends about what's going on in your world.

From the beginning the paper has existed as an online website and a printed newspaper, available for free throughout the city, which makes it possible for everyone to participate, including those with no internet access. Writing for the paper is as easy as going to the website—lakewoodobserver.com— going to the Member Center and submitting a story. From there your story goes to our editors who prepare it for publication. No middleman. That's it. A paper written by the community, for the community — a chance for our citizens to talk to-and learn from-- each other.

Through all of these years, residents have held fast and continued to write and submit the content of this paper, confident that their words were necessary and appreciated. So congratulations and thank you! Thanks to you, this is the oldest community written paper in the country--almost 400 papers, and we're still going strong.

Interested in getting involved? Join us for an Observer Party where you can meet writers, share ideas and eat a lot of cupcakes. Check next paper for details. If you'd like to just get started, go to our website, click on Member Center, and start writing. Can't wait to hear what you have to say.





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was the games' leading scorer (14) and

rebounder (10). Lucy Henrikson (3) and

Aya McAliffe (5) provided points and

solid minutes off the bench. Senior point

Guard Sam Hudak had 9 points and was

a steady ball handler/distributor against

LAKEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY



Thanks, **Madison Branch Library**

by Naomi Schiffrik

Shout out of thanks to the Madison Branch Library and their staff. They saved a part of Christmas for some little people and their parents. Grace Preschool, a Lakewood institution that has served Lakewood families for 42 years, had a problem with their heat system. The service company was called but with supply issues it would take some days to get it fixed. We knew we could not continue in the building as the weather was turning cold quickly,

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but we did not want to disappoint the children and their families by not being able to host our family cookie exchange, our Happy Birthday Jesus party, and the program the little ones planned for their parents. As administrator of the school, I had to figure out what we were going to do. An inspiration came to me – would the library have space for us to use and would they be willing to have us there? They are across the street from us on Madison Avenue.

One call to the library and our dilemma was solved.We were able to use both their rooms downstairs and they worked perfectly – one as a classroom and the other for the parents to meet and the children to perform. The teachers were able to bring all their projects and supplies over and get set up on Monday afternoon for class to meet on Tuesday morning and then again on Thursday morning. Words cannot express how thankful we are to the staff for their willingness to help us with two days – one for the 4-year-old class and one for the 3-year-old class.

For me it was especially nostalgic, as I spent my early years in Madison Branch Library and I got to connect with a librarian whose children I had taught many years ago. It was certainly one of the blessings of this holiday season for myself, for our staff, for the children and their families.

Thank you everyone at Madison Branch for being there for our families in a very meaningful way.

Naomi Schiffrik is the Administrator of Grace Preschool, 13030 Madison Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio 44107.

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Children's And Youth **Services Programs**

by Jeffrey Siebert

Ukrainian Folk Tales and Craft

For Students in Kindergarten through Second Grade. Do you like stories about animals? Ukrainian folk tales and fairy tales often use animals to show us how we can succeed with the challenges life brings us and encourage us to never give up! Join us as we read Sirko, retold and illustrated by Olha Tkachenkoa and create a piece of Ukrainian art. Registration is required.

Ianuary 4, 2023

Wednesday, January 11, 2023 at 4:00pm - 5:00pm

Sunflower Embossing

For Students in Sixth through Twelfth Grade. Sunflowers are a Ukrainian symbol of peace and a national symbol of the country of Ukraine. Tooling and embossing are types of metal art perfect for beginning to proficient artists. Creating raised and depressed surfaces is embossing. Create a sunflower by embossing a sunflower design on metal. After an image is indented onto the copper sheet, it's painted with black paint. Once the paint dries, students rub the surface with a plastic scouring pad. This only removes paint from the higher areas of the image and gives the metal sheet a deeper and more textured look. Registration is required

Thursday, January 12, 2023 at 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Friday, January 13, 2023 at 4:00pm - 5:00pm

Tissue Paper Sunflowers

For Students in Second through Fifth Grade. Help the Library grow a sunflower (paper) garden. The Library will create a garden inside of the Library as a visual tribute to Ukrainian people. Sunflowers are a Ukrainian symbol of peace. Create one giant sunflower out of tissue paper for the Library's sunflower garden and one to take home. Hang your sunflower in your window at home! Registration

Main Library- Wednesday, January 18, 2023 at 4:00pm - 5:00pm Madison Branch-Thursday, January 19, 2023 at 4:00pm - 5:00pm

To sign up for any program, register online at lakewoodpubliclibrary.org/ youth or call (216) 226-8275, ext. 140.







LHS SPORTS

Dr. G's Ranger Roundup:

by Dr. Charles Greanoff **Girls Basketball**

January 4, 2023

December 30, 2022 Lakewood vs. Massilon

A grinding, back a forth slog between Lakewood and Massillon changed when junior Ally Bookman scored 8 points late in the 3rd quarter, propelling the Rangers to a 53-43 win at the New East Gym tonight. From then on, the Rangers lead never fell below eight points (The Tigers had re-taken a lead mid way through the 3rd quarter). As usual, junior Delaney Garcia

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strong defensive pressure. Senior Nette Doran played strong defense and made a critical three-pointer. Senior guard Sydney Hampton scored 4 points and also handled the pressure well and handled the ball well. Senior Ava Carroll grabbed 6 rebounds, scored 5 points, and had her usual strong all-around game. Senior Jacquie Hudak and junior Sophia Zarbo did not score, but provided solid minutes **HOME ALONE** of the bench. Sophia was another strong PET SITTING, INC. ball-handler, and Jacquie played strong defense. The Ranger defeated a tough opponent tonight, and it took the entire team to do it. They boxed out, helped each other on defense, communicated, and gave maximum effort. On another note, the IV's won a thriller (49-46) in overtime. It looked bleak, until Elizabeth Doup hit a 3 at the buzzer to tie the game In Home Pet Care in regulation. Helen Fraunfelder open-While You Are Away ing the scoring in OT and the Rangers **Experienced**

Swimming

Lakewood vs North Olmsted

resurgent swim program coming soon...

were on their way. Basketball is a true team sport. I'm enjoying the Cavs season (despite tonight's loss)—they are a very likable crew. That said, there is nothing quite like rooting for the real home team, the one that grew up and lives here. The Lakewood Rangers are one team, from one town, that gives it their all. Long Live Lakewood. December 22, 2022 Lakewood vs North Royalton

On Polar Vortex Eve, the Lakewood Ranger Girls warmed the hearts of their faithful with a gritty 53-46 road win over a determined North Royalton squad. Junior Delaney Garcia (pictured) led the Rangers in scoring (18), was a force on the boards and played her usual strong all-around game,, but it took a total team effort tonight to deliver a win. Senior Sydney Hampton (pictured), who has just recently returned to play after recovering from an injury, made key baskets and helped break the Bear press in the tension filled 4th Quarter. Junior Sophia Zarbo (6 points) came off the bench and likes make key plays—and baskets-down the stretch. Likewise, Senior Sam Hudak hit two game clinching free throws that reversed a Ranger cold spell from

the line. Junior Ally Bookman scored 3 points, but more importantly she played tough defense on Royalton's best player, Brooklyn Gambino, who still managed to lead all scorers with 20. Seniors Ava Carrol (9 points) and Nette Doran (6 points) played her usual strong all around games.

After Lakewood stormed out to an early 8 point lead, the Bears found their rhythm and after the first quarter most of the game was played with the ranger up by 1-4 points. The Bears briefly took the lead midway through the 4th quarter, but the Rangers never lost their poise, and thats when Hampton and Zarbo made some big plays.





LHS Boys and Girls Swimmers defeat North Olmsted. Charlotte Beno, Piper

McElfresh and Ava Watts with 2 wins each, Zoe Bowers, Felix Piotrowski, JP

McManamon and Logan Friend with 1 win. Stayed tuned for a full story on our

Addiction treatment works, people recover.



LAKEWOOD'S HISTORIC COMMUNITY WRITTEN JOURNALISM PROJECT

by Jim O'Bryan

Back in October I received a call from Carol Kovach of the Press Club of Cleveland. Carol was calling to say that I had been chosen to be inducted into the Press Club of Cleveland Journalism Hall of Fame for the Lakewood Observer and all of the Observer papers I had created along the way. She went on to say,"We believe you started Citizen Journalism here in Ohio, if not in the country!" While I was honored and taken aback, I thought back to the nearly 20 years that have unfolded. Instantly I said to her, "I do not go in without acknowledging the people that have helped to start the Lakewood Observer, and have taken part. Because, without an engaged community, this project would not have been possible." She agreed.

The actual induction ceremony was held on November 16th. A humbling experience, as I joined ranks with true journalists who I have looked up to and admired. Being honored alongside Rick Jackson of Ideastream, and Mary Kay Cabot who is the face of Cleveland Browns coverage was unreal. As I mentioned in my acceptance speech, I don't belong in the Hall of Fame by myself, but with everyone that has contributed in some way, and I will take them with me.

Then we started the long process of collecting the names of everyone who has taken part. After all, we all know it doesn't mean a thing, until it is in print. So here in the first issue of 2023, we all walk through the door of immortality forever, and I couldn't think of a better crew to walk through the door with!

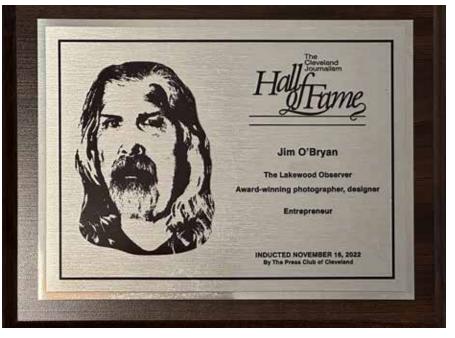
The printed version of the Lakewood Observer began as a discussion board, still called the Observation Deck. It was started shortly after Lakewood's civil war over what was a strip mall proposal for the west end of Lakewood that would have changed Lakewood forever. Known as the West End Project, it would have forced 1,500 out of their homes. During the course of the online civil war, we had battles that were way over the top. The very early days of social media where conversations were being twisted and used for political gain. Later, I learned one person on one side was using 5 names, and 5 people on the other side were using one name so they could answer the troll using 5. What also bothered us, the core group, was that most of the "facts' presented by City Hall and their blind supporters had no basis in fact. Soon the public saw through the lies, and voted to stop eminent domain and the project.

The discussion board ran smoothly with everyone using their one, real, vetted name. Unheard of at the time, it was a way for better penetration. On a good day we were rivaling Cleveland.com for traffic, but we knew we were leaving behind 60% of the population who needed the same information as those online. So DL Meckes, Stephen Davis, Kenneth Warren, Heidi Hilty, Dan Slife, Stephen Calhoun, Bill and Jan Davis, Mike Deneen and others held a series of meetings discussing what we should do and could do. After all, it had to be easy to run, sustainable in every sense and fun.

All Lakewood Observers Awarded A Place In The History Of Journalism



In 2005, the original Lakewood Observer crew getting the first of what would become many awards, commendations, and recognition for starting citizen journalism, honesty in reporting, and real community building.



The plaque I accepted November 11th, on behalf of all Lakewood Observers, which also hangs in the Hall of Fame at the Cleveland Press Club. So proud of all of us!



Senatorial Citation sent to us from State Senator, and Observer, Nickie

We came up with the print version of the Lakewood Observer. A product

we could deliver to doorsteps and put in people's hands. It had been nearly 20 years since Lakewood had a paper with their name on it. We would bring one back FREE for everyone. Immediately we realized that without a budget or money we would not have a real staff and office. We also realized two things: Lakewood was filled with people that had great stories and skills. Over the course of the next year, with Dan Ott and Rami Daud, we hammered out the software to make publishing a community newspaper driven by residents a reality.



Congratulations to Observers and the City of Lakewood from State Representaand Observer Michael Skindell. See what the George Family sent on page 3.

It was shortly after the completion of the software I got a call from Future Heights in Cleveland Heights, they wanted a paper like the Observer in their city. At this point, there was no thought to other papers. Members from Future Heights were taken through the start-up process. This paper would be run by a non-profit, a first for the group and much of the print industry. It went up and started publishing papers within months, proving that the project could easily be set up in other communities.

After the Heights Observer's first year, The City Club of Cleveland was hosting a luncheon discussion on "The Death of Print Media" presented by Lauren Fine, a print media consultant for Merrill Lynch. When asked at the end of a very sobering presentation,

"Is there anything that can succeed?"her answer shocked everyone: "A small paper in Lakewood seems to have a business plan decades ahead of others."

Lauren challenged me and the Observer to start papers in other communities. In quick succession, Collinwood was launched with the help of Mike Polensek and Betsy Voinovich who joined the Observer team. Next came Westlake, Bay Village, Parma, Seven Hills, Independence, Euclid, Rocky River, Ohio City (2 papers, Argus and Observer), The Healthy and Humane Observer for Northeast Ohio, along with the Great Lakes Courier (a biking enthusiast publication). I was getting approached by JumpStart, the Cleveland Foundation and others about new projects, about financing the company and taking it public.

Over the next two years, I met with many investors -- in retrospect none cared or even understood the soul of the project. It became obvious, all they wanted were cheaper ways to cover or control the news. I had become disillusioned with people coming in to study the Observer then leaving and starting knock-offs like "Patch," "Neighborhoods" and others that had nothing to do with a community's needs, news, or saving journalism. Instead it was all about profits, slashing costs, and control, always the control. The original thought was that papers like the Lakewood Observer could fill the small often costly gap in larger papers. Wall Street had already decided the best way to run a newspaper was with a skeleton staff, no printing, no delivery-- just more profits.

Today nearly 20 years after the first print edition rolled off the presses, the Lakewood Observer continues to run smoothly, with many thanks to Deb O'Bryan who runs the day-to-day business side of the Observer, and of course the Lakewood community which continues to show up and add their stories and photos. Ken Warren and Steve Davis, my brothers in this who I miss terribly, I believe would be very proud of our accomplishment.

It continues to be a gift from one group of residents to our fellow neighbors. One thing I make clear whenever I speak of the Lakewood Observer and our success, is that I am lucky to be in Lakewood, we have an intelligent, talented community that loves living here. I also make it clear, that without the volunteers, basically all of us, we would not have been able to repeat this dance of love, respect and story telling for nearly twenty years and 400 issues.

This has been accomplished, by all of us working together for a better understanding community, our history and our future. With that in mind I give you the list of people I am taking with me into the Cleveland Press Club Journalism Hall of Fame. Let this be a written record of our thanks and gratitude for each other and what we have done, together.

From one Observer to another, Peace & Love.

Please consider joining this historymaking and recording project. It works best when we do it together.

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nny Updegrove of Howard Hanna

Most saw Bill signing one of the thousands of ornaments he designed and sold. It was a tradition. son School of Floral Design. That first

year was tough, the saving grace was a friend who suggested selling Christmas trees, which made a small profit. Then Bill Knoble called to see if Bill Hixson could take over some of his work, especially with the hospitals and funeral homes.

During this time Bill attended the rival FTD Florist Convention, where he met Vernon Smithers who was demonstrating a product to go up against



Lakewoodite Dave Buehler speaking with Bill Hixson about Lakewood's Templar Motor Car Museum. Bill was fascinated and dreamt of driving one this summer.

LAKEWOOD MOURNS BILL HIXSON

The World Loses A Legend - Bill Hixson

An Ordinary Man Blessed With Extraordinary Experiences

Bill what he thought, Bill answered

and said, "Not much, it's not the foam

that's holding the flowers, it's the

chicken wire wrapped around it." The

man asked Bill down to his company for

a visit. Bill explained how the product

could be made so much better. Vernon

took all of Bill's recommendations and

they came up with the green clay now

used by most floral arrangers, Oasis.

Revolutionizing the industry, Bill cov-

ered major cities in every state teaching

tion, he became an FTD Florist, and

the business took off. Soon they needed

more space, and a friend mentioned an

old buggy/car wash on Detroit Avenue.

Hixson's Flower Barn was born! Rebuilt

with salvaged barn wood from local

farms, to fit the name. Always ahead of

his time, in the 60s, Bill Hixson's crew

were known as being "a little Bohemian."

Perhaps some of this came from the

charming Eunice Sowiak, who had just

arrived in Lakewood from Moose Jaw,

Canada. She was a young woman who

responded to an article, took classes from

Bill, and went on to become his trusted

partner. Together they built a business

that encompassed working with staff

from all the major department stores to

develop bridal shows. Bill knew that if he

In the year following the big inven-

florists how to use the product.

continued from page 1

didn't work, Bill went to work for a couple Cleveland florists before going to Knoble Flowers. At this point his old horticultural teacher would have him come back and teach students floral arrangements which he loved. Teaching was something Bill did up until a week before Christmas. That's right, Bill was still teaching flower arranging right up until the end of his life.

As a young man, Bill was drafted for the Korean War. While he did not go overseas, he gained many life experiences. Although Bill Knoble was his mentor, coming home

Bill realized he had outgrown Knoble's. With \$3,000 and help from a friend, he opened his first flower shop and school at 13615 Detroit Avenue. All he had were some tables and chairs, from the dissolution of the Knoble-Hix-



could reach a bride early in the planning, he would get the business. Everywhere he went he would gather ideas, friends and important business contacts. It is hard to talk with Bill and not get motivated. He had that magic. Growing tired of changing the window every two weeks, an employee, Susan Luehers, made the giant Raggedy

Ann Doll that still sits in the window

Bill Hixson in the massive Christmas Ornament Room, showing off the Hixson ornament which was new at the time to teach Western Floral Arrangements. What started with 2 people, became 20, then 100, finally over 1,500 attending his classes. This spurred Bill to write a book in both English and Japanese for his friends and students. Bill continued to go to Japan throughout the years;

> his love of the Japanese people and culture were evident. One of his

proudest philanthropic endeavors

was donating to orphanages in Japan.

Bill's classes in Lakewood also grew. It was during one of his LHS auditorium classes, yes that is correct, an entire auditorium to house everyone, Bill was reintroduced to Nancy Clarke. Nancy had attended a couple classes and was looking for a job. She called the White House to see if they needed a flocontinued on page 14

Remembering Bill Hixson

by Daniel Sobotka

I was sad to hear that Bill Hixson from Hixson's in Lakewood died yesterday at the age of 93.

I visited the store just two weeks ago and we had a real conversation. He was half-Ukrainian just like me and we discussed the war going on now over there, sharing our personal feelings about it.

Hixson's was a magical place and it was all because of him. He sold memories and he's definitely given me many over the years. My son's Christmas tree s full with just some of them.

These were some photos from that visit. I asked him if I could take his photo which I did but when I showed it to him he didn't like the fact that his arms were up so he asked me to take

Bill Hixson...ever the consummate arranger!



Photo of Bill Hixson this December by Daniel Sobotka

I Cannot Think Of Christmas Without Mr. Christmas

by Kyle Weigand

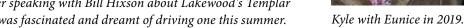
The news of Mr. Hixson's recent passing hit me harder than expected. Memories of countless hours spent in the store with him and Eunice came flooding back. The relationship between he and my parents goes back nearly fifty years, starting when he designed custom holiday pieces in the 70s for their Lakewood home including some we still use!



A young Kyle Weigand in front of the cherished mantle piece designed by



Still in use fifty years later!



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January 4, 2023

January 4, 2023

HOLIDAY LIGHTING WINNERS 2022

The Lakewood Observer Volume 19, Issue 01

Finally A Winner

continued from page 1

listed here, congratulations on winning and thank you for taking part in our annual contest. Please email: production@lakewoodobserver.com or call/text: 216-339-2531 to schedule a and Store. time to drop of your prize(s).

We look forward to meeting you.

Above all, thank you to our generous sponsors who make it all possible: India Garden, the Root Cafe, West End Tavern, the award-winning Woodstock BBQ, and Carabel Beauty Salon



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Third Place - 14410 Bayes



Fourth Place - 16131 Lake



Fifth Place - 1248 French



Sixth Place (tie) - 13217 Hazelwood

HOLIDAY LIGHTING WINNERS 2022



Sixth Place (tie) - 1458 Northland



Eighth Place (tie) - 1303 Nicholson



Eighth Place (tie) - 1450 Mars

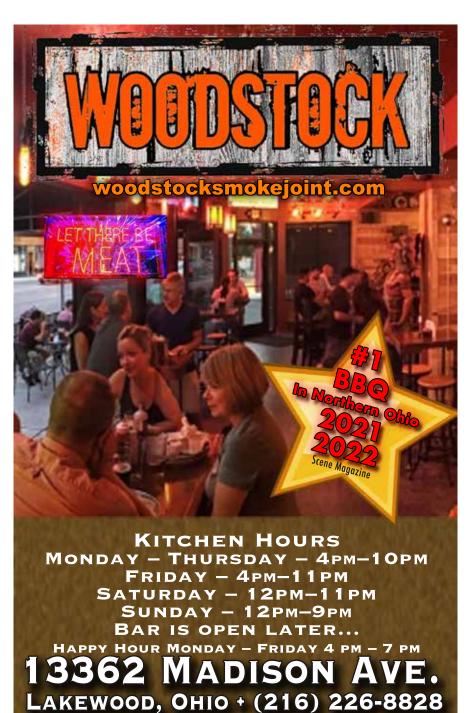


Tenth Place (tie) - 1604 Lauderdale



Tenth Place (tie) - 2064 Clarence





LAKEWOOD MOURNS BILL HIXSON

The World Loses A Legend - Bill Hixson Dead At 93

An Ordinary Man Blessed With Extraordinary Experiences



Photo by Daniel Sobotka of Bill Hixson walking out of the store, taken a couple weeks before his death this year.

continued from page 11

rist, and they said, "No, but what is your background?" She mentioned Bill Hixson Floral Class, and she was invited to Washington for an interview, and a job as White House Florist. Seems Washington had heard of Bill. The following year she asked Bill to join her at the White House, which became a yearly tradition for seven presidential administrations.

Early on Bill learned that he could buy ornaments from around the world OR he could design his own for the same price. This started the tradition of people wanting the latest Bill Hixson designed ornament. Each one, right up to the 2022 pieces contained artwork and designs straight from Bill Hixson.

Always interested in everything going on around town, recently one thing that had really caught his attention were the Templar Cars after an introduction to Dave Buehler, owner of the Templar Museum. He really wanted

Delivery till 1am

a ride in one, so that he could draw

the experience. Sadly it never happened. Bill's health started to decline with the death of his dear Eunice a year ago. Longtime friend and employee Mathias, along with Dick Slife, and other friends would stop by and check in on him frequently. Just three days before his death I stopped in to say hello and wish him a Merry Christmas. As I pulled up to the front of Hixson's, Bill was getting out of his car, having just driven himself from breakfast. I asked how he felt and he smiled and said, "Good, I've put on 30 pounds this year, and look forward to

when do we drive the Templars?" While I am crying writing this, I know I am not alone. Bill touched so many lives. As a friend I grew up with said, "We all lost a good friend and member of our family and life. Christmas will

that meatloaf lunch you promised, and

Godspeed, Bill. I know wherever you are, Eunice and your friends are there, and you're helping make heaven a more beautiful loving place. Rest in peace.

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17615 Detroit Avenue • 216-228-2900 *nunziospizza.net*

SPECIAL TOPPINGS: Artichoke Hearts Tomato Broccoli Chicke

Some Of The Messages Posted On Bill Hixson's Passing

 $A \ small \ sample \ of \ the \ hundreds \ of \ messages \ left \ with \ the \ LO.$

Karen DiGregorio "Went into the store before Christmas and was lucky enough to meet Mr Hixson after all these years. Received a red carnation from this gentle man."

January 4, 2023

Barbara Knill Rook "He and Miss Eunice gave me my first job back in the '70s. They were inseparable and are together again, almost a year after her passing.

Pamela Griebel Tippie "Oh I'm so sad to hear this. A stop there has been one of our favorite Christmas traditions. He always took time to make conversation.

Mary Carol Warren Lucic "Lovely tribute you wrote! A tremendous loss for us all!" Joseph McClain "So sorry to read this. We lived around the corner from Hixson's and they were very much a part of our Lakewood life."

Cynthia J Remer-Souris "What a great run he had. Rip Mr Hixson."

Diane Virostko "Sad news indeed. I hope that Hixson's continues to be a fix-

Karolyn Isenhart "Lakewood will never be the same."





AROUND TOWN

SHARR GAZER

JANUARY

January 4, 2023

ARIES: The Ram's great at starting things; you've got Jupiter in your 1st house & the Sun in your career sector for your NYResoulution; resolve to follow through & finish one damn thing

TAURUS: The Bull, on the other hand, is great at follow-thru, but dammit Bull, this year, promise the world you'll change something; yes, take a risk, shake the dust off of Steady Eddy

GEMINI: The Twin is the Zodiac's version of the Road Runner, always on the move; for your NYResoultion, slow the hell down, especially with Mercury Retrograde & Mars Rx in Gemini

CANCER: The Crab's focus, career & partnerships; moving forward into 2023; you like to stay in the security of your shell, do something this year that scares the living daylights out of you

LEO: The Lion/Lioness does elegant like no other, & you're one of the most generous of the Zodiac, this year pick a cause that is close to your Lion's heart, and donate your time or money

VIRGO: Virgos, we love you, we do; however, for 2023, maybe take the white gloves off a few times more often, lay off the criticism, & that includes the self-criticism, don't worry-be happy

LIBRA: You shine in your relationships & home/family this month. You weigh everything out, balancing the scales; for your NYResolution, go to a restaurant with 25 burgers & pick one fast

SCORPIO: Scorpion, put the Stinger away a little more this year; you can keep a secret like nobody's business, go ahead & open up with someone close to you, let them see inside of you

SAGITTARIUS: The Centaur is the visionary of the Zodiac; instead of reaching for the pie-in-the-sky prize, put a little more planning into your aspirations, & you'll still hit the Bullseye

CAPRICORN: The Goat is the workoholic of the world, for 2023 put your MacBook & your smartphone away; Jupiter's in the 4th, where the home is, enjoy yourself, put the work

AQUARIUS: The Sun shines in the house of reflection; you're the rebelrouser, the new-fangled techno gadgets, the futuristic one, your NYResolution: go in the box, do something traditional

PISCES: The Fish are the idealistic dreamers of the world, you love the oceans, the Planet & everyone swimming in your Seas, clean off the rose-colored glasses for 2023, & sample reality

Eva Starr, the local astrologer, has been studying the moon & stars since she could read. You can reach Starr at

Holidays In Lakewood Healthcare

by Cass Blankenship

with giving, O'Neill Healthcare's 6 locations collected and donated over one thousand pounds of non-perishables and canned food items for the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and other local hunger centers! O'Neill Healthcare partnered with The Greater Cleveland Food Bank and its 230 local food pantries and ninety mobile pantries to feed over 343,000 people across six counties in Northeast Ohio. "Our facilities staff, residents, and their family members here at O'Neill Healthcare joined together to make an amazing donation to the food bank to help spread the holiday spirit. As a family business, we understand the importance of support and being there in times of need. We are grateful to help the Greater Cleveland Food Bank," said David T. O'Neill, LNHA, MBA, Director of Operations.

Kicking off the Holiday season

O'Neill Healthcare has also opened its doors to family and community members hosting warm, traditional-style gatherings. Each building was excited to be again able to host these parties as families sat with their loved ones to enjoy a holiday meal. "It is a welcome sight to have our families back in our communities to celebrate the holidays with a clas-



Page 15

their loved ones once again.

sic meal. For years, holiday dinners have been a tradition of our communities that staff and residents love. We look forward to hosting future events in our buildings for both family members and members of our surrounding communities," said Richard O'Neill, LNHA, Director of Business Development. All O'Neill Healthcare Assisted Living communities actively participate in their cities and look for-ward to hosting educational programs, dances, dinners, and more!

If you are interested in hearing more about our future events, taking a tour, or volunteering at O'Neill Healthcare Lakewood, please visit oneillhc.com or call (440) 471-9200.



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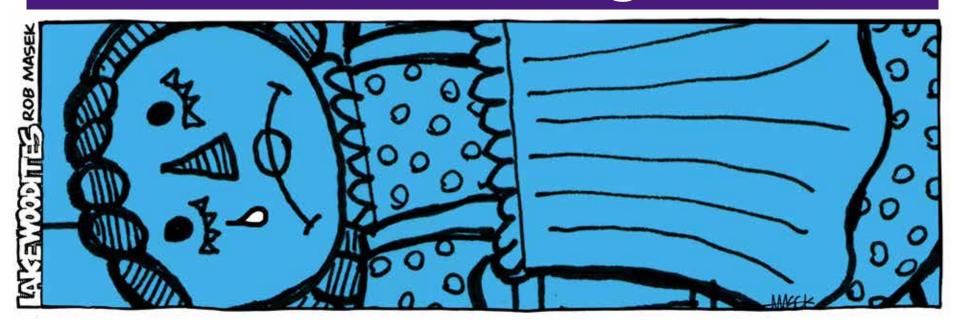


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The Back Page

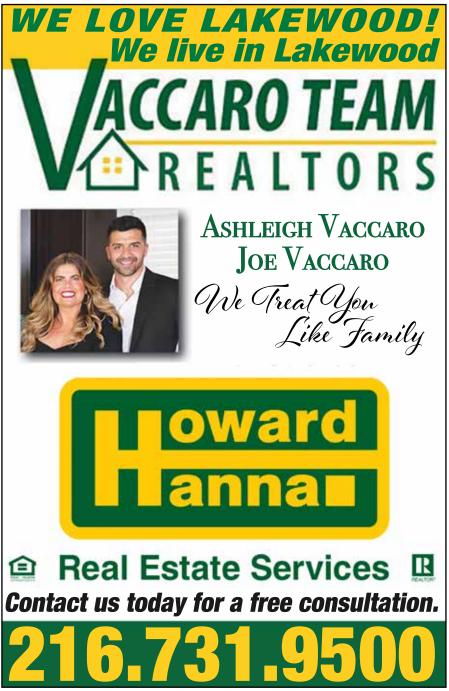






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