

Building Community

SPRING 2005

Local Dollars Helping Local People

The Mission of the Acton-Boxborough United Way is to identify and raise public awareness of community needs, link needs with quality services, and raise and allocate funds to support the charitable efforts of the community.

CONCERT FOR COMMUNITY

Dr. Steger & 13 Fish Return to Benefit Concert at ABRHS Auditorium

On Saturday, April 30, the ABUW's annual Concert for Community will feature concert pianist Dr. Elliot Steger. Lello Molinari on acoustic bass and Jon Hazilla on drums, both teachers at the Berklee College of Music, will complete Dr. Steger's trio. Opening the concert will be the Acton-Boxborough High School a cappella singing group, 13 Fish Named Jennifer.

Dr. Steger and 13 Fish will donate their talents with proceeds from ticket sales and advertising going to ABUW supported organizations. Additionally, sales of Dr. Steger's CDs will go to the American Cancer Society, the Alzheimer's Association, and the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

About the Composer & His Music

Dr. Steger performs his own compositions with the precision of his longtime training as a classical pianist. His music reflects jazz, blues, pop and new age influences. He has released 4 CDs: Images, Transition, Making Time and Joyful Blue. Elliot has composed over 100 songs with the CDs containing the "best of" these.

When asked why he performs his music in a benefit concert, Elliot says, "so that people will be listening to good music and contributing to people in their local communities in need and I think that's a great deal. I get to do what I love, play music, and

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Business & Community Recognition

Small Business Grounded in Community Spirit

Building Community, the Acton-Boxborough United Way newsletter, is published three times a year and distributed to corporations, businesses and households in the Acton and Boxborough communities. Its purpose is to communicate the health and social service needs of the community and to describe the ways these needs are being addressed.

Sue and Jeff Purchon have lived in Acton many years and had watched various owners come and go at the coffee shop on Spruce Street. When the space came up for sale just over two years ago, they jumped at the chance to finally own it. There was no question about what they would do—open a coffee shop that was welcoming and comfortable, where you could get high-quality sandwiches and baked-on-site treats. Most of all, they wanted a place where people could gather, allowing the community to come together. "The building is so cozy and the location is so central, it just seemed



**Sue Purchon
of the
Continental
Café**

like the right thing to do," said Sue Purchon.

From the start, this is exactly what the Continental Café has become. On any given day an observer will notice the variety of customers in the Café: high school students relaxing in the overstuffed leather couch during their free period, business people discussing a deal at a table, a mother with two small children having a treat at another table, and a long line of customers. Local artists display their works on the walls of the

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CONCERT FOR COMMUNITY

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help contribute to a great organization. It doesn't get much better than that." He chose the three charities mentioned above to donate all CD profits because, "I have seen how devastating these diseases are to my patients as well as family and friends."

Here's how Elliot approaches developing his musical compositions. "I first hear a melody in my mind, then add rhythm and harmonization and usually leave space for freedom of improvisation on the basic chord structure. These melodies come to me often spontaneously or sometimes while I am in the car listening to music, which sparks an idea. I leave a Dictaphone in my car so I can sing a melody into it and develop it into a song at a later date."

"Most of my songs come to me without any subject matter in mind but a few were written for or inspired by specific people or events. For example, "Jessica" and "Adam's Song" were written for my kids and "Land That I Love" was inspired by September 11th. The key to my compositions is a strong melody line. I chose acoustic bass and drums because they are the perfect accompaniment for the piano, supplying the rhythm and bass line while I provide the melody and harmony."

Community Generosity

Sandy Campbell, the Executive Director of the ABUW expressed, "On behalf of our community and the dozens of local health and human services organizations funded by the ABUW, we are thankful for the generosity and community spirit of all the performers, the underwriters Middlesex Savings Bank and Bursaw Oil & Gas, the over 50 businesses supporting this event and all those who will attend."

The show begins at 8:00 PM, Saturday night in ABRHS Auditorium (refreshments at intermission). Buy your tickets online at www.abuw.org, the Minor Chord of Acton, by calling the ABUW office 978-263-1777 or at the door on April 30. Tickets are \$15 for the general public, \$10 for students and seniors.



Agency Spotlight

Improving Family Life for Parents and Their Children

A single mother with a three-year-old and one in school needed to work fulltime but was unable to afford daycare for the younger one. Her only option was to enlist the aid of her ex-father-in-law who traveled to Acton by train each morning. She could go to work only after making the round trip to the station. Returning from work she made the trip again.

Other families face even greater challenges. Relying on a relative, who may not be physically able to provide adequate supervision or stimulation, or a neighbor, places unhealthy stress on everyone involved.

One agency in town, the Community Partnership for Children (CPC), provides a safe and reliable alternative. Formed nine years ago to provide low- or moderate-income families living and working in the towns of Acton, Boxborough and Littleton with access to quality daycare services through tuition subsidies, CPC has changed the lives of the many children they have served.

The single-mother story above is a good example. When she was put in touch with this agency, the CPC was able to place her son in one of their facilities. According to Betsey Sweet, Grant Coordinator of CPC, "When he first came to the program he was quiet and apprehensive. It didn't take long for him to just blossom. His mother was thrilled. So were we."

This year there are 30 preschoolers participating in the program. They attend either the Infant Toddler Center in South Acton, which is operated under the direction of the CPC, or one of a number of other daycare centers in the area with whom the CPC contracts. Families pay on a sliding scale based on their finances.

The Community Partnership for Children faces their own hurdles as well: how to provide for the increased demand for affordable daycare—their waiting list is growing; how to reach and support non-English speaking families; and how to raise the standards of local daycare providers so that they achieve national accreditation.

The CPC received initial funding from the State Department of Education. Cuts



in State budgets, however, have pressed the CPC to seek financial support from local organizations. In 2004, ABUW added Community Partnership for Children to its list of supported agencies. To learn more about this agency or to volunteer your services, please contact Betsey Sweet or Susan Twombly at 978-263-2064.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

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café, and open-mike nights allow musicians to gather and meet each other.

The Continental Café also reaches outside its walls to support community projects in town, often donating coffee and baked goods to concerts, school functions, and other activities within the Acton-Boxborough community. Last year the Purchons generously donated the coffee for our Concert for Community with Elliot Steger, and this year they will do it again. Their coffee is so well-known within the community, that most of it was sold before the concert even began!

This year the Continental Café has also generously offered its space for the annual meeting the ABUW had in March. "We love to support businesses that are so generous—everybody wins" says Sandy Campbell, ABUW's Executive Director.

The Purchons continue to show how a small business in town can give back to the community without necessarily having to commit to large cash contributions.



Agency Spotlight

Bringing Aid to Nearly 1,000 Seniors Annually

When 88-year-old Frances Bean broke her arm six years ago and needed help, she knew just whom to call: Minuteman Senior Services (MSS). Their Meals on Wheels program has been providing her with a hot lunch every day since. Mrs. Bean, a resident of Acton for 72 years, gets around nicely on a walker, but with her arthritis, she can't do much cooking. "Oh, I don't know what I'd do without them," she says of the volunteers who bring her meals.

For 30 years, Minuteman Senior Services has been helping area seniors live more independently with 18 programs. For over 15 years, the United Way has been supporting these programs—and not just monetarily. Patti Dubielak of MSS says they have a special relationship with ABUW that forms a true partnership. For example, one of the MSS's educational events called Caring Conversations, a series

of forums open to anyone who is concerned with or assists seniors, are often done in conjunction with ABUW.

MSS also manages the Aging Information Center, advising senior citizens where to go for help with housing, home care, and educational opportunities. Last year, 935 Acton and Boxborough residents benefited from one or more of its programs. All services are offered on a sliding fee scale, never turning anyone away if they are in need. Ms. Dubielak says, "Because we are non-profit, we have to go to private sources and individuals for money, as well as organizations like United Way for support." She is especially grateful that the level of mutual cooperation with ABUW maximizes the advantages of what they do. "We don't have that link in every town we serve," she notes.

Among the educational services offered is SHINE, which guides seniors



through the often-baffling world of insurance. MSS is also a state-designated investigator for elder abuse. They also provide Memory Disorder Consultation that evaluates a client, educates the family on the disease, and prepares an individualized plan on managing the illness and accessing resources. They will follow up with the caregiver to offer ongoing assistance and support.

Acton and Boxborough seniors can meet at the Audubon Hill Senior Center for daily luncheons. Seniors look forward to these outings as a way to stay in touch with friends, as well as have a well-balanced meal for a nominal fee. To learn more about MSS, please contact Patti Dubielak at 978-263-8720.

"13 Fish" to Reprise Concert for Community

Saturday night...live...the *a cappella* group 13 Fish Named Jennifer will delight an anticipated packed audience at ABUW's second annual Concert for Community.

The choral group from the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, which features 12–16 sopranos, altos, tenors and basses, performs without the accompaniment of musical instruments. Preparations are underway for their most eagerly anticipated performance of the year on Saturday, April 30th, where they will share the stage with concert pianist Elliot Steger.

"Performing in front of a large audience like this one is amazing," said junior Eric Bell, speaking of last year's performance. Eric runs the group this year along with juniors Brian Herdeg and Russ Viola. "The more people there are, the more fun it is, and the higher the level of energy."

"We're always learning and perform-

ing new material and this concert will be no different," said Bell. "We'll probably be singing 'Ghostbusters' and maybe 'Amish Paradise.' Currently, we're working on 'Brown-eyed Girl' by Van Morrison." The group tries to choose songs that are easily recognized and enjoyed by audiences. Oktoberfest, Cabaret Night, and State Play Night are a few of the school and community events they have played.

The most rewarding thing about being in 13 Fish is, according to Bell, the process of watching all their hard work gradually come together to form harmonies. "Each part must be learned separately before they are all put together," he explained. "When each member does their part, everything falls into place."

Auditions are held every spring, followed by practices on Thursdays throughout the academic year.

Board & Officers Installed

At our recent Annual Meeting, a new Executive Committee and a slate of new Directors were elected to serve the ABUW in the coming months.

Elected to lead our organization for the next year are: Julie McKinley, President; Marilyn Peterson, Vice President, Campaign; Elizabeth Reinhardt, Vice President, Budget & Allocations; Mary Corke, Vice President, Communications; Christopher Erickson, Treasurer; and Andrea Eisenberg, Secretary. Also serving on the Executive Committee are Pam Collins, Chair, Nominating Committee; Ken Appel, Chair, Special Events; and David Gerratt, Chair, Strategic Planning (*ad hoc*).

An enthusiastic slate of new Directors was also elected to serve for the 2005-2008 term, and they include Amy Burke, Rebecca Capodilupo, John Fallon, Karyn Finamore, Gim Hom, Marge Kennedy, Anne McNeece and Jason Verner.

It is certain to be a productive and rewarding year. Thanks go to all of the volunteers who serve, now or in the past.



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Local Dollars Helping Local People



News & Updates

Forums, New Service, New Office, Concert and Iraq

Transportation Forum Update

Momentum created from the ABUW hosted forum continues. You may have read about it in the Beacon. A task force has been formed to review transportation problems within Acton and Boxborough, with the goal of finding solutions to some of the most pressing problems. For more information or to be part of this exciting initiative, please contact Sandy Campbell at 978-263-1777.

2-1-1 System

The ABUW is currently part of a state-wide initiative, led by the Council of Massachusetts United Ways to create a 2-1-1 system within the state. Once set up, dialing 2-1-1 will allow residents to access information about social services in much the same way that they can now use 4-1-1 to find contact information about other residents. This will make it much easier to access services when they are needed. We will keep you posted as progress is made in this effort.

Board Member's Son Continues LTC Dad's Work

Board member Ken Appel has a son who is now serving in the middle east as a specialist in the Army National Guard. "SPC Marc" has agreed, along with two other officers from Acton (serving in different locations), to be the liaison for soldier care packages and school supplies for Iraqi children that Acton and Boxborough citizens are sending overseas. This is phase II of a project managed through Beth Petr's community efforts. SPC Appel is a former student of the Acton schools, and a criminal justice student at Suffolk University.

Spring Concert

Saturday, April 30, 8PM, ABRHS Auditorium (see article, pg. 1.) Hope you'll join us for this great event.



Local agencies get tips and inspiration at a workshop on communicating their mission. This free workshop was led by David Gerratt, ABUW Board Member and Principal, DG Communications, of Acton.

Next Community Forum

The next Community Forum (date TBD) will focus on problems faced by the immigrant population in our community. Does this issue interest you or do you have knowledge to contribute? If so, contact Sandy Campbell at 978-263-1777.

Move to New Office

Effective immediately, the ABUW office has moved to a new location: 179 Great Road, Suite 212, Acton, in the Patriot Square building.

If you wish to make a contribution, you can make an online donation (www.abuw.org), or send a check to: ABUW, 179 Great Road, Suite 212, Acton, MA 01720.
If you would like more information, contact our Executive Director, Sandy Campbell at 978-263-1777 or send an email to abuw@abuw.org.