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New Day of Peace event planned for Batavia

New celebration set for Sept. 21 by city's Parks Foundation

By David Sharos
For The Beacon-News

The United Nation's International Day of Peace is scheduled for Sept. 21 and the Batavia Parks Foundation will offer a new celebration in the city to tie-in with the event.

The Batavia Peace Day event will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the Peace Bridge and Riverwalk South Plaza in downtown Batavia.

The celebration is being sponsored by Drendel & Jansons Law Group.

Batavia resident Craig Foltos, 69, who owns a barber shop in town, will serve as the master of ceremonies and said he is excited about the community having the chance to come together over something positive.

"Anytime you can get a bunch of people together and feel some good things and realize we're all in this

together," he said, "isn't that a good thing to do?"

Years ago, Foltos constructed wooden letters saying "Peace on Earth" that have been placed across the bicycle-pedestrian bridge every year during the Christmas season.

"When you drive across that bridge and see that peace sign it puts you in a better mood," Foltos said.

The Batavia Parks Foundation, Foltos said, wanted to partner with him in hopes of raising money for permanent metal letters featuring

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The Peace on Earth sign is a holiday season staple on the pedestrian and bicycle bridge over the Fox River in Batavia. A drive is underway to replace the seasonal wooden letters with permanent metal ones.
STEVE LORD/BEACON-NEWS



A sitting area opens into the cafeteria on the fifth floor of Weston Bridges, a facility for independent living adults with intellectual or cognitive disabilities, built into the former Copley Hospital building on the East Side of Aurora. STEVE LORD/THE BEACON-NEWS

A new beginning

The new Weston Bridges apartments open in the old Copley Hospital building

By Steve Lord
The Beacon-News

It took Parish LaRosa one word to sum up his new apartment: "Awesome."

LaRosa is one of the first residents of Weston Bridges, an apartment development that eventually will feature 53 units for independent living adults with intellectual or cognitive disabilities, built into the former Copley Hospital building on Aurora's near East Side.

Officials held a ribbon-cutting Tuesday at Weston Bridges, and it was a day of congratulations for the building's developers, for VIPs, city officials and many Aurorans.

But the biggest VIPs were people like Parish and his parents, Sherry and Mark LaRosa, Aurora

residents who said their dream has been to find independent living for Parish closer to them than Rockford, where he lived until he moved back with his parents in 2021.

"This has been wonderful, absolutely incredible," said Mark LaRosa. "They have been angels for us."

Sherry was beaming when she told a television reporter, simply, that her son "is happy."

He not only has a new apartment, and is closer to home, but he can be part of the community, getting to know the grocery store and other amenities in town, she said.

"And we can see him any time we want," chimed in Mark LaRosa.

Their joy was matched by

that of both the developers of the former Copley campus, now known as Bloomhaven, and city officials, all of whom had skin in the development.

The three sets of brothers who formed the partners known as Fox Valley Developers, LLC - Paul and Jason Konrad, Michael and Stathis Poulakidas, and Russell and Ron Woerman, all of whom grew up in Aurora — came up with millions of dollars to put into the development. And the city of Aurora also approved millions in incentives to help bridge the funding gaps.

Mayor Richard Irvin said the redevelopment of the former Copley campus shows that "we're actually making a difference." He pointed to the increase in values in the surrounding Copley or Bard-

well neighborhood, and increased interest in those longtime East Side houses.

"Folks who had written this neighborhood off want to be part of this community," Irvin said. "This affects all of Aurora positively."

Paul Konrad, the Emmy award-winning meteorologist on WGN-TV who spoke for his other partners, also thanked the neighbors, saying the partners were "grateful for their support during this."

It was support that came hard, because neighbors had been promised redevelopments that fell through, while watching the building fall deeper and deeper into disrepair over the years.

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Vacancy filled on DuPage Board

Phillips sworn in for District 5 seat

By Suzanne Baker
Naperville Sun

Naperville resident Amy Phillips was sworn in Tuesday to fill the vacant District 5 seat on the DuPage County Board.

District 5 includes parts of Aurora, Naperville, Lisle, Woodridge and Warrenville.

After weeks of reviewing applicants, DuPage County Chairman Dan Cronin chose Phillips to fill the seat previously held by Amy Chavez, who resigned a month ago because she was moving out of state.

Phillips' appointment was unanimously approved by the County Board. She will serve the remainder of the term, which expires Dec. 5.

The Nov. 8 general election will determine who will replace Phillips.

On the ballot for the three open seats in District 5 are incumbent Democrats Dawn DeSart and Sadia Covert, Democratic candidate Saba Haider and Republican Patricia "Patty" Gustin, a Naperville City Council member.

In nominating Phillips, Cronin highlighted her passion for helping people and accomplishing common goals.

"Ms. Phillips desires to work collaboratively, identifying problems and finding common sense solutions at the local level. I believe her experience within the District 5 community and her professional expertise will make Ms. Phillips an excellent addition to the board," Cronin said in a news release.

Because Chavez, of Naperville, was a Democrat, Cronin was required by state election law to appoint a new member from the same political party within 60 days of Chavez's resignation. Her last day was Aug. 16.

In her professional life, Phillips is a licensed architect, sustainability consultant, naturalist and educator with expertise in biomimicry and systemic resilience.

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Meet the new American Girl, modeled after Hinsdale sixth grader

By Adriana Perez
Chicago Tribune

On a recent visit to New York City, 11-year-old Rio Lewis walked into the American Girl doll store with her family and was shocked to see her face on banners for the brand's newest character all around the shop.

"One mom and a little girl, they're like, 'Hey, you know what? You kind of look like Claudie.' And I was like, 'I am Claudie!'" Lewis told the Tribune.

Lewis, of Hinsdale, is the model for the brand's newest character, Claudie Wells, featured in the hardcover book "Meet Claudie, An American Girl" written by New

York Times bestselling author of "The Vanishing Half" Brit Bennett, and illustrated by Laura Freeman.

"It's really amazing, because I get to tell people, 'Hey, I'm the face of the new American Girl,'" Lewis said.

In the doll's book, the character grows up in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City in the early 1920s, when Black artistry thrived. According to the American Girl website, Claudie is surrounded by "writers and poets, painters and sculptors, actors and dancers, singers and musicians" and is trying to figure out how she fits into the world around her.

Lewis, a sixth grader, is an artist herself: a dancer, an actress and a

musician. She has also been modeling since she was 4 years old, she said.

She has been a competitive dancer since she was in first grade — though she began dancing as a 3-year-old. Most recent, she went to Las Vegas in July to compete in the RADIX Nationals with Impact Dance Studio.

As an actress, she's played a role in an episode of HBO Max's "South Side," has starred in local plays and been featured in commercials.

She said she has also auditioned to be in a few Broadway shows, including "Mrs. Doubtfire" and "Annie."

Her audition to model as Claudie Wells included sending over

snapshots and a video of herself talking about her favorite historical figure or her favorite book. She was torn, her mother said, between talking about Harriet Tubman or the fantasy book series "Keeper of the Lost Cities." She ended up describing the latter.

After the audition, Lewis withdrew from consideration because the shoot would have taken place during one of her brother's baseball games out of town, which the family was going to make a trip out of.

But the baseball tournament ended up getting canceled just as Lewis got the part. It takes about eight months to a year between auditions and finalized illustra-

tions, according to Wendy Walsh, the book's creative manager.

"This was one of those cases where the model gets on set, puts on the wardrobe, and she IS that character," Walsh said in an email. "It doesn't happen all of the time, but in this case it did. We all looked at each other on set and said, 'That's her! That's our Claudie!'"

During the American Girl shoot on her 10th birthday in August 2021, Lewis said, she got to ride on a red scooter like the one the character has in the book.

"For historical characters, we try to find a model that we feel embodies that character in spirit and how we visualize how that character would come to life," Walsh said

TODAY'S WEATHER



High 76 Low 63

Complete Chicagoland forecast on back page

Vol. 175 No. 193



BRIDGE

East-West vulnerable, East deals

North
 ♠ Q 9 4
 ♥ A J 8 2
 ♦ J 6
 ♣ J 9 3 2

West
 ♠ A 8 7 2
 ♥ 5
 ♦ 10 8 7 5 4
 ♣ Q 10 7

South
 ♠ 6 5 3
 ♥ Q 10 7 6 4
 ♦ A Q
 ♣ A K 5

East
 ♠ K J 10
 ♥ K 9 3
 ♦ K 9 3 2
 ♣ 8 6 4

Today's deal is from the finals of the Spingold in Providence a few weeks ago. Both declarers received a diamond lead, covered by the jack and king, and won with the ace. Both declarers ran the 10 of hearts at trick two, winning the trick when East ducked his king.

The bidding:

East	South	West	North
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All pass	

Opening lead: Eight of ♦

queen, cashed the ace of spades, and led another spade. The defense took their tricks and the contract was down two.

At this table, East hesitated before ducking the king of hearts at trick two, giving away the location of the king. Declarer knew that East held a high spade honor as West would have led a spade if he held the ace and king. East-West had a light opening bid style, so South knew that West held the queen of clubs or East would have opened the bidding.

South calmly led a low club from his hand at trick three, attempting the swindle of the year! West played low, as who would possibly lead a low club from the ace and king? He discovered to his horror that Sjoert Brink from the Netherlands had done just that. Dummy's jack won the trick. The ace and king cleared the suit, and dummy was re-entered with a heart to the ace. The nine of clubs provided a parking place for a low spade and Brink claimed his contract. West called the police, but to no avail.

— Bob Jones, tcaeditors@tribpub.com

Videos often seen through personal lens



Denise Crosby

Who would have thought our first chance to scrutinize video footage from the Aurora Police Department's body cameras, purchased earlier this year after near-universal demand following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, would turn out to be such a yawner.

Anti-climactic might be a more polite way of describing the footage that was meant to shed some light on a police call in April that led to ugly accusations Mayor Richard Irvin slung at Ald. Ed Bugg at a July City Council meeting.

In case you were napping yourself when a run-of-the-mill procedural liquor license discussion quickly turned ugly, here's a quick recap: Irvin accused the 9th Ward alderman of trying to shake the restaurant down for gift-card donations and also of "pretty much" lying to police about his power to approve liquor licenses.

Those zingers stemmed from an incident in April when employees of Strings Ramen restaurant called APD on Bugg after feeling threatened by and/or suspicious of the alderman, whose visit to solicit donations

for a street clean-up project turned into an authoritative reprimand when he realized the restaurant did not have the proper license to allow patrons to bring their own booze to meals.

The confrontation between the mayor and Bugg over this 3-month-old encounter was the leadoff for what turned out to be an exceptionally hostile City Council meeting soon after the mayor returned to his duties full-time following what some might see as his own beat-down in a campaign for Illinois governor.

The optics that meeting created turned into a lot of online chatter, a front page story and a first-ever Beacon-News FOIA request for Aurora Police Department body cam video to determine who was in the right and who was in the wrong.

Turns out no one, really. Or everyone, sort of. Which does not, as you can imagine, make for riveting viewing.

Most of the footage features an unconcerned Bugg standing near a squad car outside the restaurant, messing around with his phone while also presenting his side of the story to the officer who seemed appropriately bored with the whole scenario.

Another video shows a second officer talking to the restaurant employees, who put a call in to the owner who then had to explain why it seemed necessary to call the cops on Bugg.

While we don't hear what was said earlier between the alderman and the pair of Strings Ramen employees that led to the police call, I seriously doubt any shaking down was going on.

Nor do I think Bugg was doing any serious lying to the cops or went into that restaurant for anything other than to solicit donations for street clean-up volunteers.

But instead of sticking to the innocuous task at hand, when he realized the restaurant did not have the appropriate liquor license for BYOB, he did what those with a little power tend to do.

Exert a little muscle. When he began questioning the young employees about liquor licenses procedures, it was obvious from their later remarks they had no idea what he was talking about, especially because the other Strings Ramen restaurants were in locations that did not require any such city endorsement.

So everything Bugg was throwing at them went over their heads and into the realm of suspicious or threatening.

Although the mayor seemed to come across to many as the heavy at the council meeting, he might not have so publicly eviscerated Bugg during this liquor license discussion had the alderman not brought up the fact this restaurant — in the city's Pacifica Square shopping center — had recently been the site of a police response.

Irvin was quick to point out the reason for that cop call was, of course, Bugg himself, who it must also be noted ended up voting for the license.

Bugg is known as a stickler for details and for following city regulations: For example, during the pandemic when businesses were struggling to remain open, he pressed the mayor to penalize those that did not adhere to COVID-19 protocols.

Which can be viewed as admirable — or annoying.

While the APD body cam videos did not reveal any serious misdeeds, they did show how right or wrong — much like truth itself — is often determined through one's own personal lens.

That's why bad optics, which can lead to verbal and even physical altercations, occur when we forget about things like context or intent or emotions.

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Batavia

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LED lighting that will identify the Peace Bridge.

Foltos raised funds himself for the project through sales of T-shirts and sweatshirts as well as private donations to give to the foundation.

Batavia resident Britta McKenna, president of the Batavia Parks Foundation, said the board "got inspired when Craig (Foltos) handed us a \$4,000 check."

"These were the funds he had raised and he said every season we hold a sing-along before we take the letters down and it's so moving and then somebody else talked about a day of peace. Somebody

Googled it and found out about the United Nation's Day of Peace," McKenna said. "Board members were texting me overnight and saying, 'We ought to do this' and so we jumped on it and decided we're going to take the United Nation's Day of Peace and amplify their message and bring it to Batavia."

The total cost of the project to install the metal letters on the bridge is \$50,000, McKenna said, adding that in the span of a few months, the group has already raised \$32,000.

"After the Highland Park tragedy we're looking for ways to actively promote peace and this event gives our project more exposure as well as supporting the idea of peace," she said. "I

can't solve violence but we can promote peace."

McKenna said to date, each of the letters has been sponsored and that Drendel & Jansons Law Group contacted her about how they too could get involved. "We need working capital and we asked if they wanted to be a sponsor of this local day of peace and they said yes," McKenna said. "If all goes well, we hope to have a ribbon cutting for this project installed at the 2023 Day of Peace."

The schedule for this year's inaugural celebration will include guitar selections by Dave Ramont at 5:30 p.m.; Unity Circle dancing, led by dancer and mentor Behati Hart, at 6 p.m.; the Batavia High School Orchestra,

conducted by Allison Liska, at 6:30 p.m.; and a poetry recitation of a piece called "Peace on Earth" by Christopher Kuhl and a proclamation by the city of Batavia at 6:55 p.m.

A 7 p.m. there will be a community sing-along and luminaria on display.

Corporate sponsorships and donations are being accepted for the project. For information, e-mail bataviaparksfoundation@gmail.com.

Donations via check may be made out to Batavia Parks Foundation and mailed to Batavia Parks Foundation, 327 W. Wilson St., Batavia, IL, 60510.

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Apartments

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"So many of them said, we'll believe it when we see it," Konrad said. "This place had been a dark spot in the community."

Paul Konrad said when his brother Jason first brought him to see the former Copley buildings, and pitched the idea of investing in the site's redevelopment. "I thought he had lost his mind — it was a mess."

But he trusted his brother's vision, and choked up a few times Tuesday while saying it was rewarded with the ribbon-cutting and official opening.

The development was done in several segments, the first being a clean-up that was necessary before any redevelopment could be done. That cost \$12 million,

with the city putting in \$3 million of the cost. But the developers only got that money once the clean-up was finished, and certified.

The rest of the project involved a \$128.5 million investment that included about \$9 million in city incentives.

Right now, Weston Bridges has two floors of an eventual five floors open, with 14 residents living there and another two who just signed on. Eventually, there will be 53 residents.

Next door will be Bardwell Residences, a 99-unit senior living center. Developers are putting the finishing touches on that, with an opening expected soon.

Already open is the new East Aurora School District administration building, which was remodeled into the former Nurses' Building on the far southern end

of the campus. East Aurora School District Superintendent Jennifer Norrell was on hand Tuesday to call the place "a fine location."

Norrell pointed out that not only does the school administration have a new home, but the closing of Seminary Street next to Bardwell School has given children a new place to play, as has a Fox Valley Park District park on the eastern edge of the development. That not only serves the school students, but the neighborhood as a whole.

Kids used to walk to school on the west side of Lincoln Avenue, afraid to walk next to the former Copley buildings. But Norrell said they now walk on the east side, and you can see a difference in their attitude "to walk by this beautiful campus."

Eventually, there also will

be a medical center, to be remodeled into one of the oldest part of the building, the original Aurora Hospital built before 1900.

Russell Woerman, the partner who served as general contractor for much of the work, admitted there were days he walked a fine line between optimism and wondering if they would ever get the job done.

It was especially a challenge navigating the rules and regulations of the state and federal historic tax credits that were key to raising a lot of the private money for the project.

But they knew they had to keep moving ahead, Woerman said.

"It only works if we get it done," he said.

And Tuesday showed that they got it done.

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