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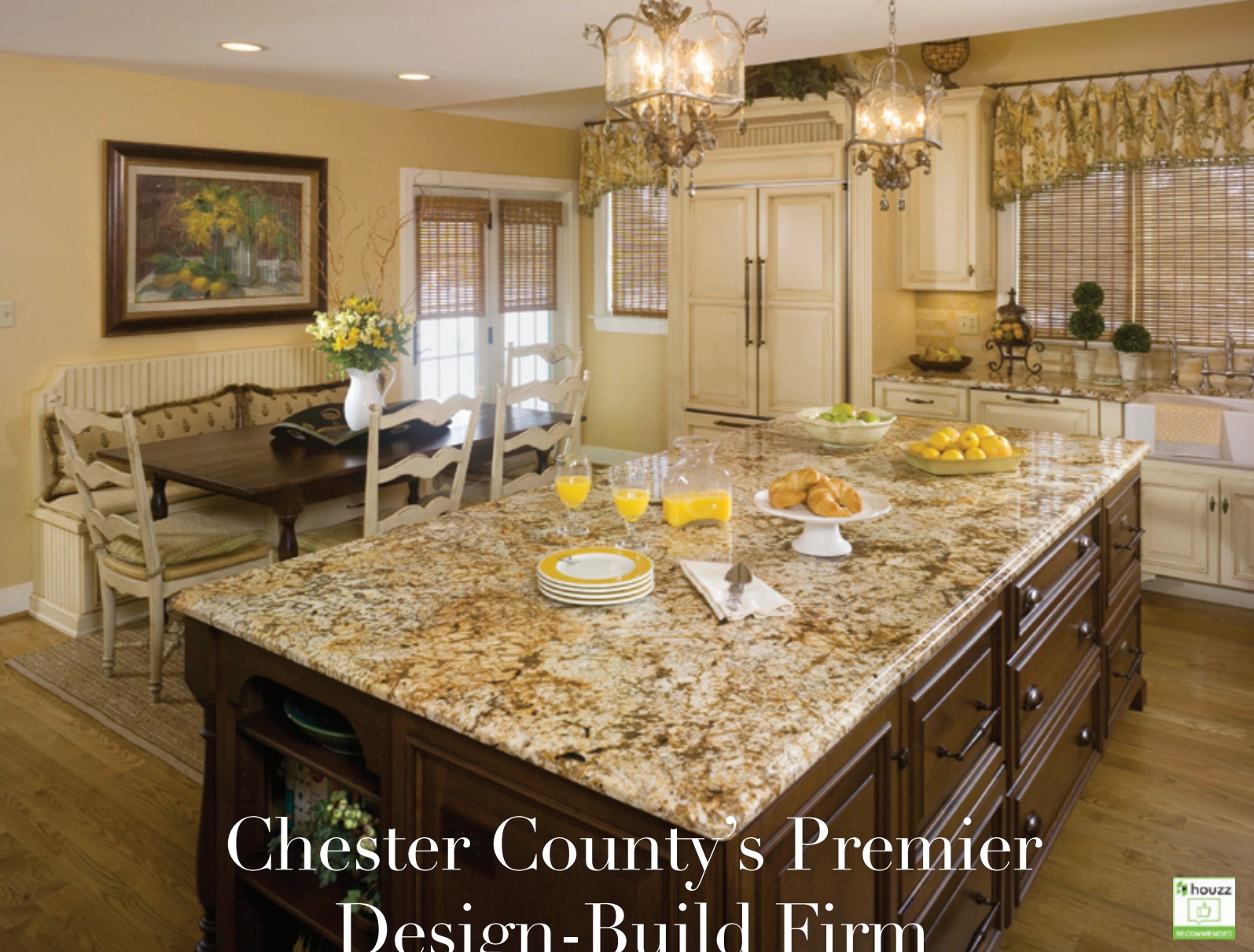
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Raised in Radnor, PA, Patricia Brennan has been providing Wealth Management advice right here in West Chester for over 25 years. She is a Georgetown University graduate and earned her CFP® designation in 1990. She is a recognized leader in her industry and serves as the first Chairwoman on the National Advisory Board for Royal Alliance.

On a local level, Patti, her husband, Ed, and their four children reside in West Chester, where she is also active in her community. Patti currently serves as a board member for the Chester County Economic Development Council, Cuddle My Kids, The Chester County Hospital and Health System, and for the Brandywine Valley YMCA.

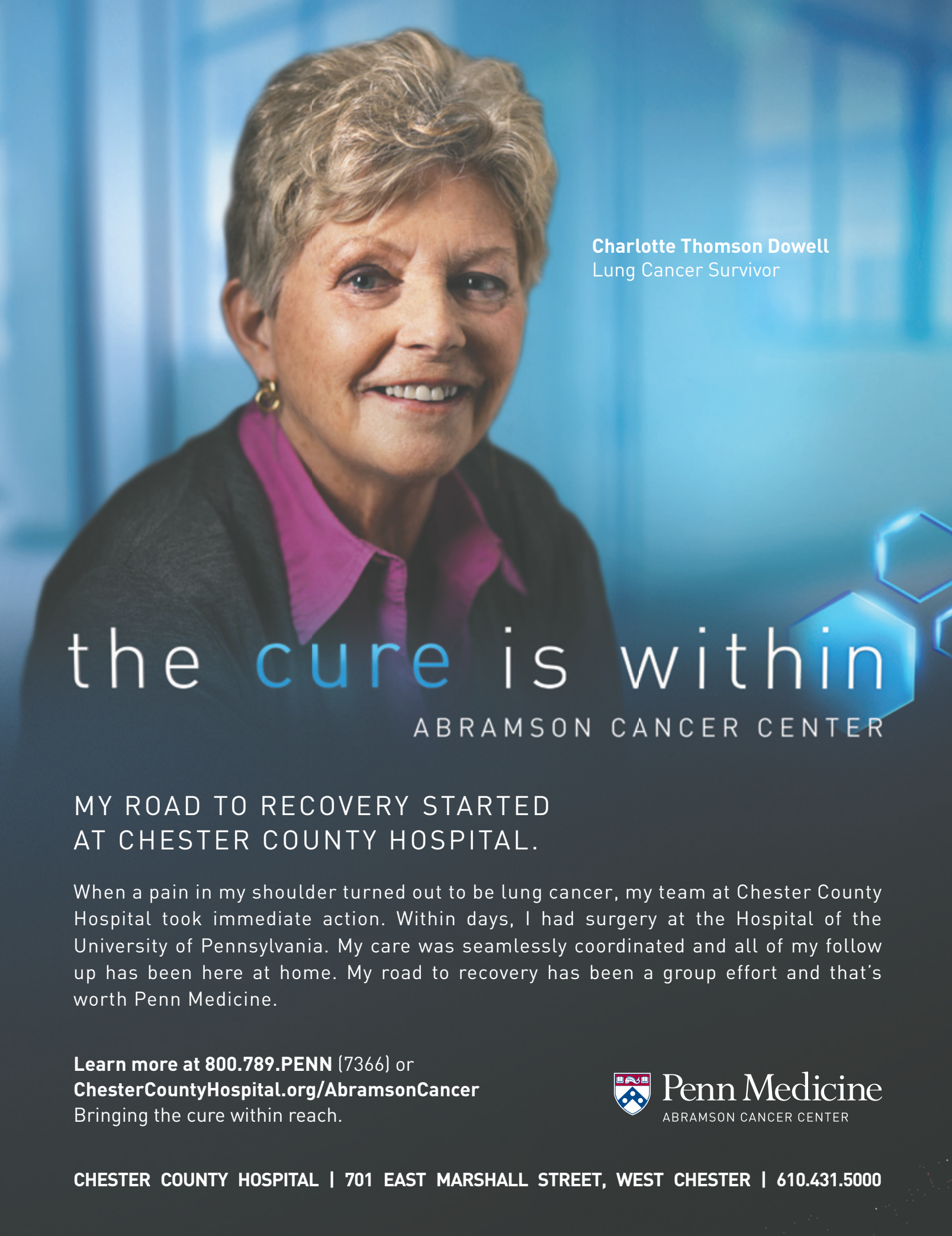
Patricia Brennan in 2015 –
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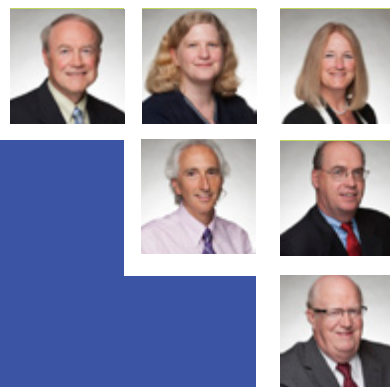
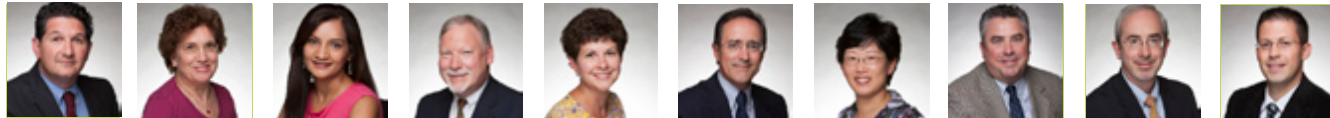


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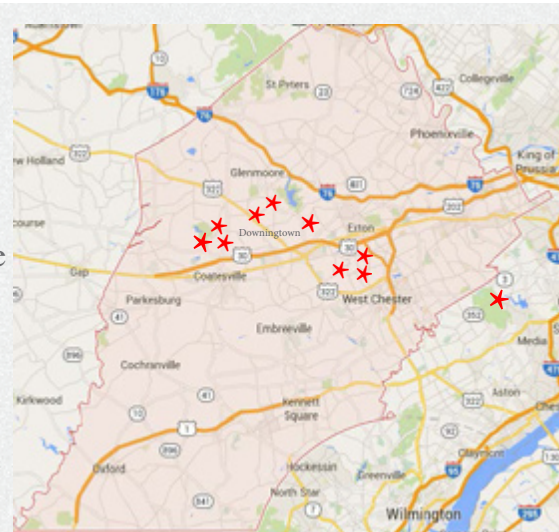
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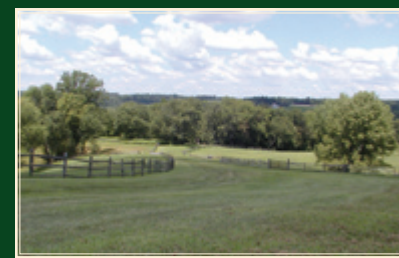
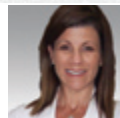
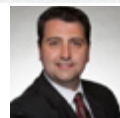
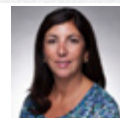
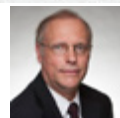
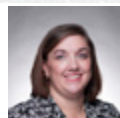
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from the EDITOR

It's Leap Year! What's your plan for your bonus day? Leap into fun for Super Bowl 50, Valentine's Day, Presidents' Day, Chinese New Year's, Kennett's Chocolate Lovers Festival, Mardi Gras? So many choices, and even more in our Best Local Events and February Picks.

To focus on your health, read Mary Dolan's survey of exercise options—CrossFit, hot yoga, cycling, dance, boot camp, massage—in “New Ways to Get Healthier This Year.” To embrace nature, there's Kirsten Werner's story on why we're seeing snowy owls locally in “Snowy Skies.”

If food and drink are your passions, tuck into Laura Brennan's Cuban food-focused column in Brandywine Table—complete with ropa vieja and tres leches—and Laurel Anderson's review of America's native spirit in “Bourbon Is Booming!” Both will leave you feeling warm inside.

For those choosing to stay close to hearth and home, read on. We bring you our chat with HGTV's Property Brothers and Matt Freeman's love story about a stately, historic home that's been carefully updated, in “Love at First Sight.” Allison Ector has a narrower perspective, focused on the heart of the home in “When Is It Time to Update Your Kitchen?” She talks to the experts, identifies trends and offers tips. Find more resources for your home in our “Where To Find It Guide.”

New home owners get advice from area realtors in Mary Dolan's “Ready for Your First Home?” along with first mortgage tips from Ken Pitts in “First-Time American Dream.”

For our education feature, we look at what independent schools are doing to nurture creativity. From hand tools to 3D printers and creative play to building robots, area schools are primed to foster the “Cornerstone Skill of the 21st Century.”

We hope you enjoy this issue, and thank you for reading.


Jo Anne Durako
Editor

COUNTY LINES MAGAZINE

February 2016

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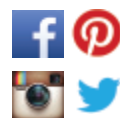
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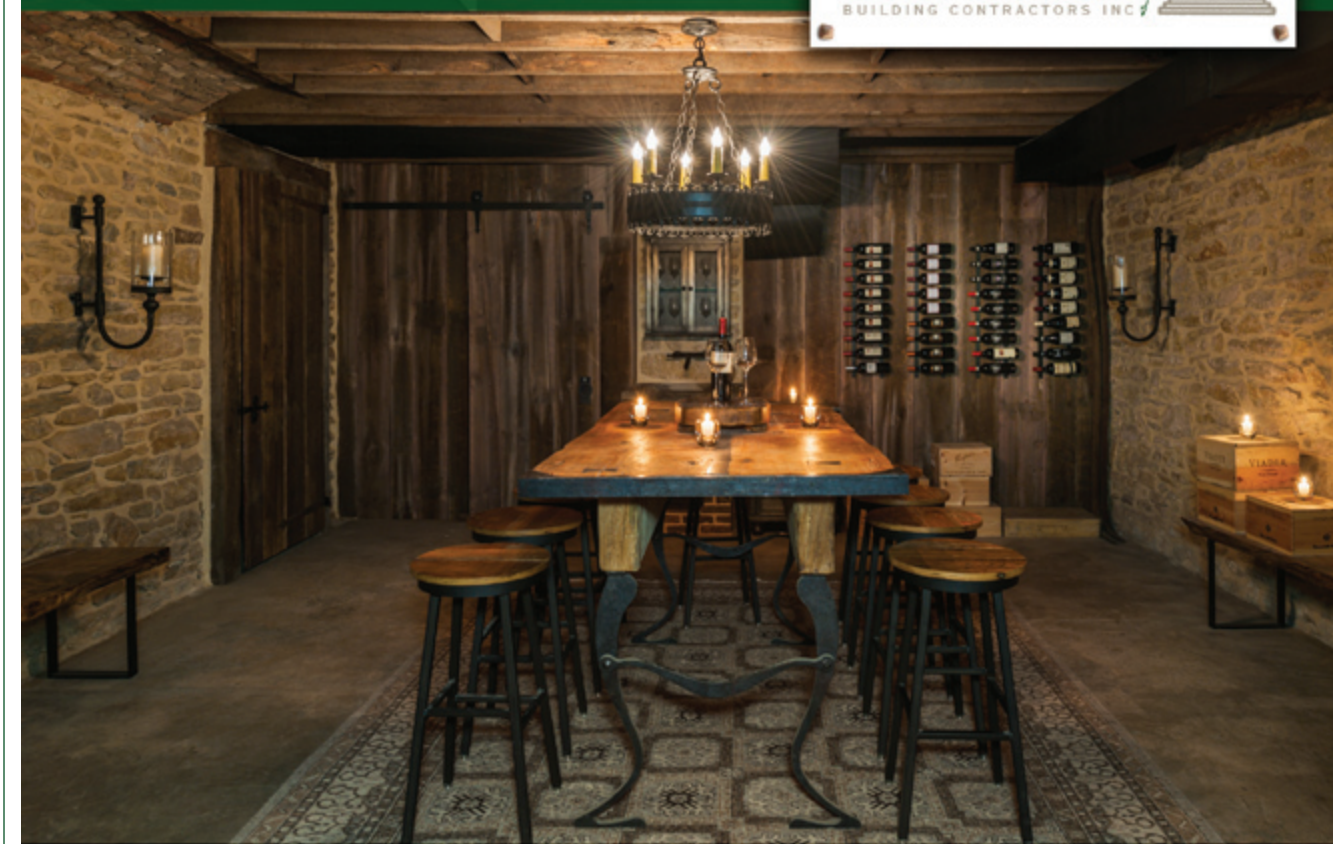
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CONTENTS

VOLUME 39, NUMBER 6 • FEBRUARY 2016

COUNTY LINES
MAGAZINE



- 28 **NEW WAYS TO GET HEALTHIER THIS YEAR**
We'll help find the right plan for you.
Mary Irene Dolan
- 32 **SNOWY SKIES**
You may get a chance to see a snowy owl this winter.
Kirsten Werner, Natural Lands Trust
- 36 **READY FOR YOUR FIRST HOME?**
Local realtors share best tips.
Mary Irene Dolan
- 38 **WHEN IS IT TIME TO UPDATE YOUR KITCHEN?**
There are signs that the time has come. Here are a few.
Allison Ector
- 44 **LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT**
Even for house hunters, the heart wants what it wants.
Matt Freeman
- 52 **WHERE TO FIND IT GUIDE**
Everything you need for the home
- 58 **CORNERSTONE OF THE 21st CENTURY**
Creative approaches to teaching creativity
Edwin Malet
- 65 **GUIDE TO AREA INDEPENDENT & PRIVATE SCHOOLS, OPEN HOUSES**
- 78 **BOURBON IS BOOMING!**
Want to know more about it?
Laurel Anderson
- 81 **BRANDYWINE TABLE**
The flavors of Cuba
Laura Muzzi Brennan

departments

14 **WORTH KNOWING**
17 **GOOD TO KNOW**
19 **FEBRUARY PICKS**

20 **BEST LOCAL EVENTS**
80 **FOOD NEWS**

85 **TALKING WITH**
86 **INDEX**

Cover photo by Tom Crane

First-Time American Dream

Ken Pitts, LeaderOne Financial Corp.

BUYING YOUR FIRST HOME IS A MAJOR DECISION—one that affects both your finances and your life. Make sure you've done your homework before you take this big step. You don't want to find the home of your dreams only to learn you can't afford it. Getting good advice early is critical so your American dream can have a happy ending.

Pre-approval Process

Once you're ready to buy a home, it's a smart step to get pre-approved for a mortgage, even before you start looking. And savvy first-time homebuyers should use the expertise of a mortgage professional to help them through the pre-approval process.

This process starts by analyzing your income to determine your purchasing power. Next, your cash and investments are reviewed to determine funds available for a down payment. Then you're matched

with a mortgage program to meet the monthly payment you qualify for and the liquid assets you have.

Other home-related costs can affect your mortgage limit, such as closing costs and local real estate and school taxes, which can vary widely among neighborhoods and school districts. Condominium fees and similar fees also impact affordability. A mortgage professional should know the area and help you understand these factors and costs and their effect on affordability.

It's a good sign if your realtor asks you for your pre-approval letter before taking you to look at homes. It wastes everyone's time to show you houses you can't afford. The pre-approved purchase price helps focus home searches in areas you want and can afford.

Most important, pre-approved buyers can shop with confidence and negotiate from a place of strength once they find their dream home.

Myths vs. Reality

Here are some common misconceptions some first-time homebuyers may have—and the reality of today's mortgage market.

Myth—I need a 20% down payment to buy a home.

Reality—There are many low-down-payment programs available. The federal government insures FHA loans with 3.5% down payments; Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac offer 5% down payment programs. If you served in the military, you can purchase with no down payment, using your VA benefit. In rural areas, such as western Chester County, USDA offers a no-money-down rural housing program. Plus, many counties offer down payment grants. Your mortgage professional can help research programs for you.

Myth—Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI) is a rip-off.

Reality—The reason low-down-payment programs exist is because of private mortgage insurance. PMI protects lenders from part of the loss of a foreclosure (FHA has its own version, known as MIP). Lenders almost always lose in foreclosures, even on borrowers with 20% down payments. Legal fees and interest costs drive up foreclosure expenses. So PMI protects lenders and encourages them to risk writing low-down-payment loans. As the mortgage industry has stabilized, mortgage insurance rates have become more competitive.

Myth—I need a high credit score to buy a home.

Reality—You need a good credit history showing few or no late payments. Some buyers show good credit history, but lack sufficient history to earn a high credit score. Even so, you still have options.

Myth—All the down payment money must come from my own funds.

Reality—Many first-time homebuyers receive cash gifts from relatives, and that's okay. The gift-giver has to provide documentation of the source of funds and an executed gift letter. Some buyers get help from relatives who co-borrow with them to help them qualify.

Myth—I can't buy a "fixer upper" if I'm a first-time homebuyer.

Reality—FHA offers 203K programs that allow fix-up expenses to be financed as part of the purchase price and require only 3.5% down payment.

Your home purchase can really be your American Dream if you're prepared and have help to guide you through the process. Working hand in hand with a mortgage professional and realtor will help make your dream a reality. ♦

Ken Pitts is a Senior Mortgage Banker with Leader One Financial Corporation, a national mortgage lender. With over 25 years of real estate and mortgage experience, Ken serves the greater Philadelphia area, Delaware and Southern New Jersey markets. Contact him at 610-345-9100; Leader1.com/KenPitts.



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[Good to Know] Just A few things we'd thought you'd like to know this month

New Girl Code. The gender gap continues to close in tech fields, thanks to nonprofit groups like **Girls Who Code**. Our local **Chester Springs Library** is jumping on this high-tech bandwagon, recently launching its own new Girls Who Code Club. The club teaches girls about artificial intelligence, graphics, game design and seeks to inspire, educate and equip girls with computing skills for our increasingly tech-savvy world. Info at ChesterSpringsLibrary.org/Girls-Who-Code-Club.



Smart Socks. Ever spend the night cozying up with your latest Netflix obsession only to fall asleep mid-show? Never miss another minute with **Netflix Socks**! They work by detecting when you've dozed off and sending a signal to your TV, pausing your show automatically. But you can't buy them—this is strictly DIY, brought to you by crafty Netflixers themselves. If you're up for the challenge, find instructions at MakeIt.Netflix.com/NetflixSocks.



Leap Into 2016. It's another leap year! That means all the young “leapings”—people born on February 29th—get to celebrate on their actual birthday. Did you know **leap years** began as a correction for our imprecise solar system—the Earth doesn't make a perfect 365-day orbit around the sun? Leap day comes with superstitions and traditions—like being the day women propose to their men and a day of bad luck for those born on it. Sorry leapings! More at TimeAndDate.com.

People's Choice Theatre.

When it comes to local theaters, the **Media Theatre** is a community favorite. Online magazine *Broadway World's* 2015 “Best of Philadelphia” Theatre Awards proved just that with Media's 20 out of 23 category wins—including for *Les Miz* as Best Musical and *The Miracle Worker* as Best Play—all voted for by theater members and patrons. Make sure you catch Media Theatre's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, in performance until February 21st. 104 E. State St., Media; 610-891-0100. MediaTheatre.org.



Adopt a Valentine. Instead of a clichéd greeting card and box of chocolates, why not adopt a furry friend this year? The **Chester County SPCA** is repeating its Valentine's Day adoption day. The longest residents of the shelter get priority with an adoption special, plus all other pets get adoption fee discounts—all to encourage you to take them home give them the love they deserve. Come to adopt, stay for the Smooch-A-Pooch kissing booth! 1212 Phoenixville Pk., West Chester; 610-692-6113. CCSPCA.org.

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February 27

Bundle up and enjoy! More than 50 unique craft breweries are featured along with live music and great food. Benefits Historic Kennett Square. *Broad and State Sts. 12:30 to 4 p.m. \$60; designated driver, \$20. Special*



connoisseur tasting, Def Conn 1.3, 11:15 a.m. in a heated space. Ticket includes gourmet local food pairings plus admission to the festival, starting at 12:30 p.m. \$100. 610-444-8188; KennettWinterfest.com.



Willowdale Steeplechase Mardi Gras Auction & Cocktail Party

February 27

An evening of dancing, great fun and food, live music and a silent auction featuring high-end items such as a week in Maui, a skybox at Dressage at Devon and a Bahamas vacation. Benefits Stroud Water Research Center, The University of PA School of Veterinary Medicine's New Bolton Center and Quest Therapeutic Services. *The Yellow House at Willowdale, 101 E. Street Rd., Kennett Square. 6 p.m. \$95. 610-444-1582; Willowdale.org.*

Trail Creek Outfitters Wild & Scenic Film Festival

February 25-26

Join Trail Creek Outfitters as they host two evenings of nationally acclaimed independent short films highlighting outdoor adventure, environmental concerns and beautiful cinematography. Local food and drinks available. Benefits Stroud Water Research Center and The Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County. *Chester County Historical Society, 225 N. High St., West Chester. Doors open at 6 p.m., film starts at 7. Tickets: \$30 for one night, \$50 for two nights. TrailCreekOutfitters.com.*



Chinese New Year Celebration Delaware Art Museum

February 20



Celebrate The Year of the Monkey with traditional Chinese art activities, demonstrations, a gallery scavenger hunt, folk dances, a Chinese yo-yo performance and performances from the Chinese American Art

Council. 2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free. 302-571-9590; DelArt.org.

best Local Events

FAMILY FUN

ONGOING

DE Nature Society Programs.

From kayaking to cooking, hiking and fitness, to birding and botany, you can find a program for every season at one of their locations: Ashland Nature Center, Coverdale Farm Preserve, DuPont Environmental Education Center and other area preserves. DelawareNatureSociety.org.

FEBRUARY 5

Daddy / Daughter Valentine's Dance at The Radnor Hotel. Music, dancing, photos, refreshments, caricatures and a craft make this an evening to remember. Formal attire recommended. 591 E. Lancaster Ave., St. Davids. 6:30 to 8:30. \$40-\$70. 610-688-5600; Radnor.com/Recreation.

FEBRUARY 6

For Young Audiences at The Colonial Theatre. Balloon Freak John Cassidy. 227 Bridge St., Phoenixville. 2 pm. \$5. 610-917-1228; TheColonialTheatre.com.

FEBRUARY 6, 27

Historic Sugartown Events for Kids. Feb. 6, Cabin Fever Saturday offers historic crafts and activities and old-fashioned games, 11 to 3, \$3. **Feb. 27,** Hannah's Leap Day Tea is an indulgence in a 4-course tea provided by Simpson House Tea Room, 2 to 4, \$30. Activities held in the Carriage Museum, 273 Boot Rd., Malvern. 610-640-2667; HistoricSugartown.org.

FEBRUARY 15, MARCH 19

Longwood Gardens OrKid Days. Explore orchids firsthand at discovery stations, observe orchid illustrators in action, create an orchid illustration of your own and enjoy a family seek-and-find in the Conservatory. 1001 Longwood Rd. (Rt. 1), Kennett Square. 11 to 2. \$13-\$27. 610-388-1000; LongwoodGardens.org.

FEBRUARY 19-21

Greater Philadelphia Pet Expo. All your favorite pets under one roof! While more dog oriented, there is usually a reptile show, the LI parrot society, ferrets and some cat groups. Leashed pets are welcome. GreaterPhiladelphiaExpoCenter, 100 Station Ave., Oaks. Fri, 4 to 9;

Sat, 10 to 7; Sun, 10 to 5. \$4-\$12. 800-677-4677; PhiladelphiaPetExpo.com.

FEBRUARY 21

Immaculata Symphony Youth Concert.

Enjoy an afternoon of music as the symphony performs classical music from cartoons. After the concert, children are invited on stage to meet the musicians and to see and hear the instruments up close. Afterwards, children can meet the musicians. [Immaculata College](http://ImmaculataCollege), [Alumnae Hall](http://AlumnaeHall), 1145 King Rd., Immaculata. 3 pm. \$10. ImmaculataSymphony.org.

FEBRUARY 26-27

Philadelphia Rock Gyms & Schuylkill Canal Assoc. Present the Banff Mountain Film Festival.

From remote landscapes and cultures to the most exciting action sports, this is an exploration of the mountain world featuring climbing, skiing, kayaking and biking. [Alumnae Hall](http://AlumnaeHall), Immaculata University, King Rd., Malvern. 7:30 pm. \$16.50-\$19. 877-822-7673; PhilaRockGym.com.



FEBRUARY 28

Tyler Arboretum's Pancake Breakfast and Maple Sugaring Celebration.

Bundle up and enjoy this annual celebration of the maple tree's sweet offerings. Learn how sap is turned into syrup and try your hand at tapping a tree. Then sit down to a hearty all-you-can-eat pancake and sausage breakfast. Snow date: Mar. 7. 515 Painter Rd., Media. 8 to 1. \$8-12. 610-566-9134; TylerArboretum.org.



ART & CRAFT SHOWS.....

THROUGH FEBRUARY 6

Academy of Notre Dame 43rd Annual Fine Art Show & Sale.

The exhibition features nearly 100 artists' works in a variety of mediums. Academy Mansion, 560 Sproul Rd., Villanova. Daily, noon to 4. 610-977-0807; NDAPA.org.

THROUGH FEBRUARY 14

Professional Artist Members Exhibition at Main Line Art Center.

Juried exhibition with opening reception Jan. 15, 5:30 to 7:30. Painters, photographers, sculptors and mixed media artists display. 746 Panmure Rd., Haverford. Mon-Thurs, 9 to 9; Fri-Sat, 9 to 5. Free. 610-525-0272; MainLineArt.org.

FEBRUARY 3-7

Malvern Retreat House Art Show.

Original juried artwork by more than 100 professional artists. Special feature of the show: "Glass Art." Malvern Retreat House, McShain-Horstmann Family Life Ctr., 315 S. Warren Ave., Malvern. Benefits the Retreat House. Feb. 4, complimentary wine and cheese reception, 5 to 8. Wed-Sat, 10 to 7; Sun, 10 to 4. 484-321-2562; MalvernRetreat.com/ArtShow.

FEBRUARY 6

Chadds Ford Historical Society's Plein Air Event.

Artists set up their easels around the area and display their work in an exclusive preview party at the Barn Visitors Center, 1736 Creek Rd., Chadds Ford, from 5 to 6 pm, \$50 for two people (\$25 can be applied towards art purchase). After, a Wine & Cheese with the Artists reception and wet paint sale from 6 to 8, \$10. 610-388-7376; ChaddsFordHistory.org.



MARCH 11-12

Chadds Ford Elementary School Art Sale & Show.

Artists display and sell their art in an array of mediums. The show's Featured Artist is Helena Van Emmerik-Finn, Donating Artist is Mary Styer Holton. Benefits educational enrichment. 3 Baltimore Pk., Chadds Ford. Fri, wine and cheese, 7 to 10 pm; Sat, 10 to 4. Free. 610-388-1112; CFES.UCFS.org.

AUTO & BOAT SHOWS.....

THROUGH FEBRUARY 7

Philadelphia Auto Show.

Catch a glimpse of

the industry's latest models at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. 1101 Arch St., Phila. Sat, 9 to 10; Sun, 9 to 8; weekdays, noon to 10, Sun, Feb. 7, 9 to 6. \$7-\$14. 215-418-2000; PhillyAutoShow.com.

FEBRUARY 3-7

The Atlantic City Boat Show.

Celebrate life on the water. Climb aboard hundreds of boats for every budget and lifestyle. Atlantic City Convention Center, One Miss America Way, Atlantic City, NJ. Wed-Fri, 11 to 8; Sat, 10 to 8; Sun, 10 to 5. \$16. 718-707-0716; ACBoatShow.com.

BRIDAL SHOW.....

FEBRUARY 28

Bride Guide to West Chester.

The theme this year is "What Happens in West Chester, Stays in West Chester." Guests enjoy a fashion show, great prizes, 30 local vendors, free food and drinks and more. Chester County Historical Society, 225 N. High St., West Chester. 11 to 2. Bride/groom and one guest, free; others \$10 at the door. To register visit TheBrideGuideToWestChester.com.

DESIGN HOME SHOWS.....

FEBRUARY 12-14, 19-21

Philly Home & Garden Show.

Innovative products and hundreds of experts under one roof. Celebrities on hand include John Gidding of HGTV's *Curb Appeal*, Jeff Devlin of DIY Network's *I Hate My Bath* and more. Pennsylvania Convention Center, Phila. Fri-Sat, 10 to 9; Sun, 10 to 6. \$3-\$13. 855-856-7469; PhillyHomeShow.com.

FEBRUARY 28

Bucks County Designer House & Gardens Empty House Party.

Meet the 2016 design team and get a peek at their visions for transforming Foxwood Manor, this year's designer house. Enjoy music, light fare, raffles and silent auction. 1596 Turkey Trot Rd., Jamison. 2 to 5. \$30; \$40 before and after ticket includes Empty House Party and house tour. BucksCountyDesignerHouse.org.

FESTIVALS & HOLIDAY EVENTS.....

See Family Fun.

FEBRUARY 11

Valentine Speakeasy at DE Art Museum.

Grab a date and head to the museum for a soiree. Dress in your best Prohibition-era attire and enjoy cocktails from that time, Jazz Age music and swing dance demonstrations. 2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington. Speakeasy cocktails and treats available with a secret password. 5 to 8 pm. \$5. 302-571-9590; DelArt.org.

FEBRUARY 12-14

Greater Phila. Mid-Winter Scottish & Irish

Music Fest & Fair. Spend the weekend listening to great traditional and contemporary Scottish and Irish music and enjoying food, vendors and dancing. Valley Forge Casino Resort, 1160 First Ave., King of Prussia. Fri, 6:30 to midnight; Sat, 10 am to midnight; Sun, 10 to 7. \$18-\$30. 610-825-7268; EOHebides.com.

FOOD & BEVERAGE.....

THROUGH FEBRUARY

The Kitchen at Wayne Art Center.

Culinary arts shine with a seasonal selection of

hands-on cooking classes, taught by professionals, for both adults and children. 413 Maplewood Ave., Wayne. 610-688-3553; WayneArt.org.

THROUGH FEBRUARY

Brandywine Artisan Wine Trail February Events—Art of the Valentine.

A new theme of art-related events shared by the Brandywine Artisan Wine Trail every month. For Valentine's Day, it's pairings (with chocolate of course, cheese and cupcakes, too) movies, crafts and more. For a complete listing, visit BrandywineArtisanWineTrail.com.

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FEBRUARY 21

Kennett Chocolate Lovers Festival. Calling all chocoholics! Hundreds of chocolate treats are offered in competition (professional, amateur and student) for awards. Benefits the United Way of Southern Chester Co. Kennett High School, 100 E. South St., Kennett Square. Connoisseur ticket, \$25, 1 pm entry; admission, \$10. 2 to 4. 610-444-4357; Kennett-Chocolate.org.

MARCH 5

10th Annual Philly Craft Beer Festival. More than 75 of the best craft brewers from nearby

and around the world participate to offer samples in a VIP Session, 12:30 to 5 pm, \$75, and a General Session, 1:30 to 5, \$46. Food trucks, too. Benefits Phila. Committee to Benefit Children. Navy Yard, 4747 S. Broad St., Phila. 631-940-7290; PhillyCraftBeerFest.com.



In a Theater Near You ...

THROUGH FEBRUARY 21

To Kill a Mockingbird. Harper Lee's novel comes to life on stage, as attorney Atticus Finch defends a young black man wrongfully accused of a crime in 1935 Alabama. The Media Theatre, 104 E. State St., Media. Check website for show times. \$25-\$42. 610-891-0100; MediaTheatre.org.



FEBRUARY 20-MARCH 20

Sense and Sensibility. Full of passion, wit and soaring emotions, this is a new adaptation of Jane Austin's classic novel. People's Light, 39 Conestoga Rd., Malvern. \$27-\$47. For curtain times and information, 610-644-3500; PeoplesLight.org.

FEBRUARY 23-28

Chicago-The Musical. A tale of fame, fortune and all that jazz. The Playhouse on Rodney Square, 1007 N. Market St., Wilmington. Tues-Thurs, 7:30; Fri-Sat, 8; Wed, Sat, Sun, 2 pm. \$40-\$95. 302-888-0200; ThePlayhouseDE.org.

MARCH 4-6

Mamma Mia! ABBA's timeless songs in the musical with more productions playing internationally than any other. 1007 N. Market St., Wilmington. 8 pm. \$45-\$120. 800-338-0881; ThePlayhouseDE.org.



MARCH 2-27

Dogfight. Music and lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. Book by Peter Duchan, based on the Warner Bros. film and screenplay by Bob Comfort. The Media Theatre, 104 E. State St., Media. Check website for show times. \$25-\$42. 610-891-0100; MediaTheatre.org.



Local Farm Markets

* **Downingtown Farmers Mkt.,** Dane Decor Warehouse Parking Lot, 216 Washington Ave. **1st & 3rd, Sat, 10 to noon.** 610-836-1391; GrowingRoots-Partners.com.

* **Eagleview Farmers Mkt.,** Chester Co. Food Bank, 650 Pennsylvania Ave., Eagleview. **1st & 3rd Thurs, 2 to 4.** 610-836-1391; GrowingRootsPartners.com.

* **Kennett Sq. Farmers Mkt.,** E. State St., between Broad and Union Sts. **1st & 3rd Fri, noon to 4.** 610-444-8188; HistoricKennettSquare.com.

* **Lancaster County Farmers Mkt.,** 389 W Lancaster Ave., Wayne. **Wed & Fri, 8 to 6; Sat, 8 to 4.** 610-688-9856; LancasterCountyFarmersMarket.com.

* **Malvern Farmers Mkt.,** Burke Park, Roberts Rd. & S. Warren Ave. **1st & 3rd, Sat, 10 to noon.** 610-836-1391; GrowingRootsPartners.com.

* **Phoenixville Farmers Mkt.,** 200 Mill St., under Gay St. Bridge. **Sat, 9 to 1.** PhoenixvilleFarmersMarket.org.

* **Rosemont Farmers Mkt.,** 1149 Lancaster Ave. **Wed-Sat, 9 to 7.** 610-527-4800; RosemontFarmersMarket.com.

* **West Chester Growers Mkt.,** Chestnut & Church Sts. **Sat, 9 to 1.** 610-436-9010; WestChesterGrowersMarket.com.

* *These are winter markets and are open at least once a month during the off-season or are indoors. Check their websites for details.*

FUNDRAISERS.....

FEBRUARY 5

Souperbowl 2016. Hosted by the Greater West Chester Sunrise and Westtown Goshen Rotaries, you'll enjoy delicious soups and breads donated by area restaurants and bakeries. Benefits local, national and international charities. Good Will Fire Company, 552 E. Union St., West Chester. 7 to 10 pm. \$60. 484-888-2001; Rotary7450.org/GWCSR.

FEBRUARY 6

Philadelphia Heart Ball. The evening will include gourmet dinner, live and silent auctions and entertainment to celebrate the efforts of all who give their time and effort to the American Heart and American Stroke Associations. Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, 1201 Market St., Phila. 6 to 11 pm. \$1,000. 215-575-5204; PhiladelphiaHeartBall.Heart.org.

FEBRUARY 20

Take a Polar Plunge for the Brandywine Red Clay Alliance. Jump in ... water's freezing! You can dip a toe or take the plunge in the



Brandywine Creek for this annual fundraiser. Benefits the conservation of natural resources of the Brandywine and Red Clay Valleys. Brandywine Picnic Park, 690 S. Creek Rd., West Chester. 10 am. \$35. 610-793-1090; BrandywineWatershed.org.

FEBRUARY 20

Cheers for CHOP. A festive event that includes entertainment, cocktails and silent and live auctions. Benefits Emergency Medicine at Children's Hospital of Phila. Vally Forge Casino Resort, 1160 First Ave., King of Prussia. Tickets start at \$150. CheersForChop.edu.

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FEBRUARY 20

Media Music Theatre's Gala Celebration. "Fight For The Arts" is the theme for this memorable evening featuring Tony Award nominee Josh Young in a special one-night-only concert, plus a preview of the upcoming season. More information available closer to event. 610-891-0100; MediaTheatre.org.

FEBRUARY 25

Annual Empty Bowls Event at Red Clay Room. Designed to raise awareness of hunger in the community while raising funds to support the Kennett Food Cupboard. A simple meal of soup and salad is served, attendees enjoy a silent auction and receive a handmade bowl as a reminder of the event. 423 Dalmatian St., Kennett Square. Lunch seating, 11:30 to 1:30; dinner, 6 to 8:30. \$25. 610-925-3556; KACSONline.net.

FEBRUARY 26

Phoenixville Community Education Fdn. Phantom Fundraiser. Enjoy an evening of dinner, dancing and silent and live auctions. Benefits Phoenixville Area School District. Rivercrest Golf Club, 100 Golf Club Dr., Phoenixville. 6 pm. \$85. PCEFOonline.com/2016-Phantom-Fundraiser/.

MARCH 6

Chester County Futures "Strikes for Futures" Event. Come out for an afternoon of food, fun and bowling benefitting Chester County Futures, a program providing academic, mentoring and scholarship support for disadvantaged Chester County youth. Palace Bowling and Entertainment, 977 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown. 3 to 6. \$20. 610-787-9045; CCFutures.org.

GARDENS

THROUGH MARCH 27

Longwood Gardens Orchid Extravaganza. The conservatory transforms into a tropical oasis featuring an astonishing display of orchids. 1001 Longwood Rd., Kennett Square. 9 to 6. Timed admission tickets req., \$10–20. 610-388-1000; LongwoodGardens.org.

MARCH 5–13

The Philadelphia Flower Show. "Explore America" is the theme for this year's show. The PHS and the Park Service are inviting a new generation to discover these special places. PA Convention Center, 12th & Arch Sts., Phila. Sat, Mar. 5, 11 to 9; Sun, 8 to 9; Mon.–Fri., 10 to 9; Sat., 8 to 9; Sun., 8 to 6. \$15–\$27. 215-988-8800; TheFlowerShow.com.

MUSEUMS

THROUGH FEBRUARY 7

Brandywine River Museum of Art Exhibits & Events. "Natural Selections: Andrew Wyeth Plant Studies." Rt. 1, Chadds Ford. Daily 9:30 to 4:30. \$6–\$15, free Sun mornings. 610-388-2700; BrandywineMuseum.org.

THROUGH APRIL 24

The Delaware Art Museum. Outlooks Exhibition Series showcases regional artists of national and international stature: "Inside Out: Carol Tippet Woolworth, Catherine Drabkin, Pahl Hluchan, Colleen Randall, Daniel Jackson." 2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington. Wed, 10 to 4; Thurs, 10 to 8, free after 4; Fri–Sun, 10 to 4; \$6–\$12. Free Sun. 302-571-9590; DelArt.org.

MUSIC, ENTERTAINMENT

THROUGH NOVEMBER

2ND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

West Chester Story Slam. A monthly event where anyone can take the stage and tell a five-minute true story based on the theme of the night. No notes, props or music allowed. Side Bar & Restaurant, 10 E. Gay St., West Chester. 8 pm. Phone or visit website for tickets. 610-429-8297; SideBarAnd-Restaurant.com.

FEBRUARY 4

Delaware Art Museum Presents Concerts on Kentmere. "Harmonizing with the Murals of Howard Pyle," celebrating the landmark murals of Howard Pyle, Pyxis Piano Quartet will present music from that era. 2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington. Pre-concert talk, 7:30; performance at 8 with complimentary desserts and coffee served at intermission. \$40. 302-571-9590; DelArt.org.

FEBRUARY 6–MARCH 11

Performances at The Grand. *Feb. 6*, Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes; *Feb. 11*, Battle of the Sexes Comedy Night; *Feb. 13*,



Champion Fulton; *Feb. 20*, globalFEST On the Road—Creole Carnival; *Feb. 26, 28*, Delaware Symphony Orchestra, Fantastic Guitars; *Feb. 26*, John Caparulo; *Mar. 1*, Warren Haynes and The Ashes & Dust Band; *Mar. 2*, Patty Griffin, Sara Watkins and Anais Mitchell together on stage; *Mar. 4*, The Russian National Orchestra; *Mar. 5*, Pinkalicious: The Musical; *Mar. 11*, Tracy Morgan Picking Up The Pieces Tour. 818 N. Market St., Wilmington. 800-37-GRAND; TheGrandWilmington.org.

FEBRUARY 7

Vox Renaissance Consort Renaissance Candlemas. This evening is a perfect remedy for the "February blues" featuring Renaissance Masterworks for voices and period instruments. Daylesford Abbey, 220 S. Valley Rd., Paoli. 6:30 pm. \$10–\$25. 610-688-2800; VoxAmaDeus.org.

FEBRUARY 12, MARCH 4

WCU Live! Presents ... Feb. 12, FLY Dance Company, a high-energy cross between street dance and classic choreographic principles, Asplundh Concert Hall. *Feb. 26*, Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater performs original Spanish classical ballets, folkloric and Flamenco dances, Asplundh Concert Hall. *Mar. 4*, Irish Music with Brian Conway, Irish-

American fiddler, Madeleine Wing Adler Theatre. 7:30 pm. \$13–\$20. 610-436-2266; WCUPA.TicketLeap.com.



FEBRUARY 18

Uptown! Entertainment Presents vocalist Paul Jost & The Jost Project. Ballroom at the Westside, 430 Hannum Ave., West Chester. 6 pm, cocktails and small bites; concert, 6:30. \$20. 484-639-9004; UptownWestChester.org.

FEBRUARY 20

The Playhouse on Rodney Square Presents TAO: Seventeen Samurai. This new show brings audiences athletic bodies and contemporary costumes combined with explosive

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Taiko drumming and innovative choreography. 1007 N. Market St., Wilmington. 8 pm. \$33-\$39. 800-338-0881; ThePlayhouseDE.org.

FEBRUARY 21

Immaculata Symphony Orchestra Youth Concert. The chorale performs a variety of classical music from memorable cartoons. Children are invited on stage after the concert. 1145 King Rd., Immaculata. 3 pm. \$8-\$15. 610-316-1731; ImmaculataSymphony.org.

FEBRUARY 25

Broadway in the Borough. The Resident Theatre Company (RTC) brings professional theater to downtown West Chester. Hear amazing voices from New York, Philly and our area. Sprout Music Collective, 130 E. Prescott Alley, West Chester. Doors open at 6, show at 7, after-party, 8. \$13.59-\$21.99. RTCwc.org.

FEBRUARY 26

Concerts at Community Arts Center Friday Night Live Concert. Music: Miceli/Monroe Jazz Quartet. Artists: Olga Nielsen and John Laidacker. 414 Plush Mill Rd., Wallingford. 7 to 10 pm. \$15. 610-566-1713; CommunityArtsCenter.org.

MARCH 4

Point Entertainment Presents Gaelic Storm. Traditional Irish music with modern influences. The Colonial Theatre, 227 Bridge St., Phoenixville. 8 pm. \$20-\$32.50. 610-917-1228; TheColonialTheatre.com.



MARCH 6

An Invitation from The Theatre Organ Society of the Delaware Valley. Shake off the winter blues and welcome spring with a wonderful program featuring the 3/24 Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ. The Colonial Theatre, 227 Bridge St., Phoenixville. 2 pm. \$6.50-\$11.50. 610-917-1228; TheColonialTheatre.com.

MARCH 6

Vox Ama Deus Ensemble Presents a "Bach and Handel Gala." Instrumental and vocal solos at Gladwyne Presbyterian Church, 1321 Beaumont Dr., Gladwyne. 5 pm. \$10-\$25. 610-688-2800; Vox-AmaDeus.org.

TOWNS, TALKS & TOURS.....

FEBRUARY 5, 13, 18

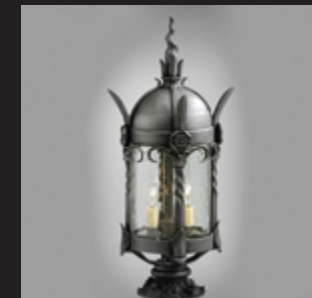
First Fridays, Second Saturdays Third Thursdays. Stroll through area towns to find exhibits, galleries, restaurant specials, entertainment and extended hours. **Feb. 5, First Fridays:** Kennett Square, 610-444-8188; HistoricKennettSquare.com. **Lancaster City,** 717-509-ARTS; LancasterArts.com.org. **Oxford,** 610-998-9494; Downtown-OxfordPA.org. **Wayne,** 610-687-7698; FirstFridayWayne.com. **West Chester,** 610-738-3350; DowntownWestChester.com; **Wilmington,** 302-576-2100; ArtLoopWilmingtonDE.com. **Feb. 13, Second Saturday:** Media, 484-445-4161; MediaArtsCouncil. **Feb. 18, Malvern Stroll,** MalvernBusiness.com. ♦

Stay in the know with everything going on in *County Lines* country. Sign up for our monthly Events Newsletter at Newsletter@ValleyDel.com

Send a description of your activity to Info@ValleyDel.com by the first of the month preceding publication.

For more events visit:

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NEW WAYS TO GET HEALTHIER THIS YEAR

Mary Irene Dolan

FIND YOUR PERFECT FITNESS FIT!

IT'S THE BEGINNING OF A NEW YEAR AGAIN. TIME for your local gyms to be packed with motivated new members armed with this year's resolutions. Don't be that person who puts personal fitness goals on pause now that it's February.

Want to know how to prevent that? Find a wellness routine that fits *you*. Luckily, we've done some of the heavy lifting for you by rounding up a few of the most popular wellness trends.

FIT WITH CROSSFIT

What started as a fitness fad is here to stay—and for good reason! Intense, fast-paced and competitive, this total-body workout works well for anyone looking for a challenge.

CrossFit is special because it's *not* a specialized workout. Instead, it aims to prepare your body for anything by developing ten recognized fitness domains—strength, flexibility, speed and coordination to name a few.

Every session is different, and since classes thrive on camaraderie and teamwork, it's a great place to meet workout buddies to hold you accountable.

You'll find CrossFit virtually everywhere. At **CrossFit West Chester**, you can choose group and personal training sessions, plus other classes like Olympic lifting, yin yoga and CrossFit for kids (4 to 12). Downingtown's **CrossFit Rock Solid** has the usual Workouts of the Day to keep things fresh and comprehensive fundamentals classes to ease in newcomers. And in Extton, **CrossFit Proven** has both performance clinics with new exercises every week and a coach-supervised open gym for practice at your own pace.

SWEATING WITH HOT YOGA

It's no secret that hot yoga, or Bikram yoga, is ... well ... hot. Think 90-minute sessions in a 104-degree, 40-percent humidity room. How could this possibly be beneficial, you ask? It turns out that the heat works with your body to aid greater flexibility, increased strength, better breathing and improved focus.

There's no shortage of local studios dedicated to Bikram yoga. Check out **Bikram Yoga Extton**, **Bikram Yoga Chadds Ford** or **Bikram Yoga Main Line** in Berwyn for location and scheduling options that work for you.



Bikram Yoga Main Line



CrossFit Proven



Fit Ryde Indoor Cycling & Fitness Studio



Zumba at ACAC

And if you'd rather work your way up to 100-degree sessions, **Yoga Secrets** in Kennett Square has both warm and hot yoga options, with temperatures in the 80s and 90s, respectively.

Beginners need not be intimidated. Studios welcome people of all ages and skill levels, some with beginner-friendly courses. Just remember, bring plenty of water!

CYCLING ALL YEAR

Want to feel the burn of biking regardless of the weather? Then indoor cycling is a fitness craze for you. With the help of technology, you get the same effects of outdoor riding and the same results—increased endurance, stamina and upper and lower body strength. Plus it's a cardio workout that's actually fun!

And the bikes really do feel real. **Fit Ryde Indoor Cycling & Fitness Studio** in West Chester uses Real Ryder bikes that turn, tilt and lean with every pedal. At **Inner Fitness**

Drive in Newtown Square, the Stages Free-Motion bikes let you adjust resistance, just like regular bikes, to control how hard you want to work.

If you don't want to ride in silence, many studios use music to keep the class motivated. Collegeville's **Cycle Zone** instructors tailor rides to the latest upbeat hits. Another way to workout without realizing it!

DANCE! BARRE, ZUMBA & MORE

If your regular workout routine leaves you bored, it's time to try some dance-inspired fitness trends. From traditional ballet conditioning of Barre to heart-pumping, lively choreography of Zumba, there's a style for everyone. And don't worry—no experience is needed!

Barre will help you develop muscle strength and flexibility, plus improve balance and posture. Locally owned **Barre Balanced** in Glen Mills offers a variety of classes, ranging from a slower beginner course to

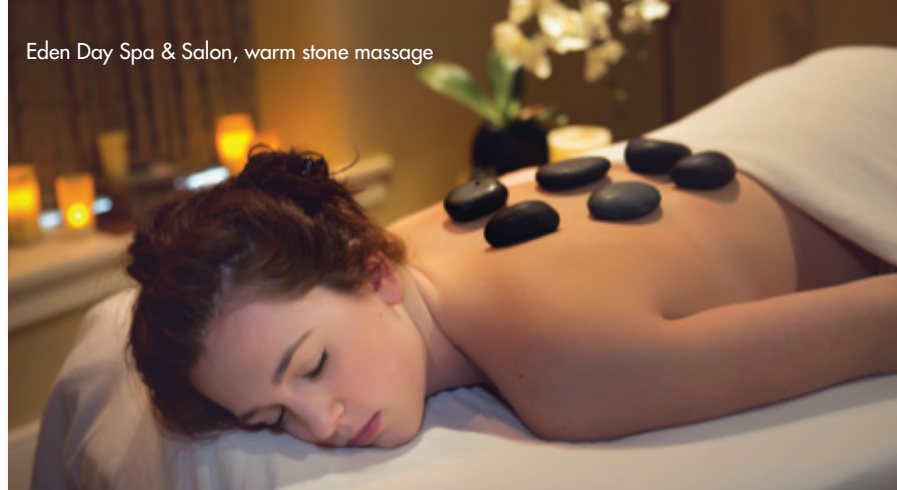
more intense "burn" sessions using cardio intervals. Check out their Beginner Ballet and Modern Dance classes for the full-on dance class experience.

Purenergy in Paoli has lots of options for the Barre-inclined—like boot-camp-esque EnergyBarre and strength-and-resistance-training BuffBarre. When you want to just turn up the music and dance, try their easy-to-follow Zumba class, with tunes from around the world.

But if you struggle with so-called "simple" Zumba choreography, **ACAC** in West Chester has you covered with a less intense Zumba Lite option. To strengthen your core muscles, try their Zumba Core or Belly Dancing classes. And to seriously let loose, their Dance Party class will get you in cardiovascular condition to music you love!

IF YOU NEED A KICK—BOOT CAMP

Whether you're a fitness junkie or otherwise normal person craving a challenge,



boot camp workout will test your limits and push you further than you dreamed possible—all while being mentored in a safe, fun and non-intimidating environment.

Depending on the time of year, classes are indoors or out—great for endorphins—and use a variety of high-intensity, military-style exercises. **Body Blast Boot Camp** in Malvern is open year-round and incorporates unique equipment that burns fat and keeps members engaged.

Boot camp will hold you accountable, so if you have a goal, it's your trainer's and classmates' jobs to make sure you reach it.

At the new **Exton Fit Body Boot Camp**, everything is done in a group setting to motivate, push and support participants to get the results they want.

To take this style of fitness to the next level—provided you don't mind getting dirty—there's always the **Tough Mudder** obstacle courses. Mark your calendar for May 21st and 22nd at Plantation Field in Kennett Square. But start training now!

OR MAYBE A MASSAGE

After a long day at the gym, yoga studio or boot camp course, your body might be

in need of some well-deserved relaxation. Sounds like a trip to the spa is in order! Although it's nothing new, treating yourself to a professional massage session can do wonders for your overall health and is a perfect complement to any workout routine.

Massage is like exercise ... really! ... because not every style works for everyone. Deep tissue is generally recommended for pre- or post-workout, but some find that style too aggressive. **Eden Day Spa & Salon** in Collegeville has a bevy of options—from tension-releasing Relaxation and Warm Stone Massages, to more vigorous Therapeutic and Deep Tissue Massages. **Malvern's Grazia Skin Care & Spa**, too, offers both Swedish-style and Deep Tissue massage, plus everything else to get you beautified after a body-sculpting session.

And remember, even professional athletes get massages after a tough game or workout!

Now that you've got more options for fitness, there's no excuse not to get healthy or healthier in 2016! ♦



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Snowy Skies

Kirsten Werner, Natural Lands Trust

YOU MAY GET A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME CHANCE TO SEE A SNOWY THIS WINTER

SNOW-COVERED MARSHLANDS SPARKLED UNDER a low winter sun as 30 birders gathered—binoculars at the ready—at Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in Atlantic County. Their quest: the majestic snowy owl, a species that appeared in our region in record-breaking numbers during the past few winters. “For most people, this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see a snowy owl!” said group leader and avid birder, Debbie Beer, from Natural Lands Trust.

Or is it?

BEHOLD THE SNOWY OWL

Biologists and ornithologists have noted periodic incursions of snowy owls for centuries. These “irruptions” are generally attributed to variations in Arctic prey and predator populations, but the exact reasons leave questions about climate changes and nature’s cycles.

The snowy owl (*bubo scandiactus*) is one of the largest North American owl species, reaching a height of 27 inches with a wingspan of 66 inches. Their striking plumage—snowy white feathers and heavily feathered feet—make them well adapted to their Arctic breeding grounds.

In winter, snowies migrate south where food is more plentiful, primarily preying on lemmings and other small rodents. But no one is sure why so many are showing up in our area and beyond. They’ve been observed in eastern Canada, the Great Lakes region, the northeastern U.S., and as far south as North Carolina. One intrepid bird was documented off the coast of Bermuda!

WHY DO SNOWIES ROAM?

Many scientists believe the reason for these irruptions is linked to the number of lemmings—the snowies’ main prey—which have wildly varying populations from year to year. If lemmings are scarce, perhaps the birds head farther south to find food. Or perhaps comparably mild Arctic weather has improved breeding conditions for lemmings, in turn boosting the owl population.

Female snowy owls are able to adjust the number of eggs they lay depending on food availability—laying three to five eggs when food is scarce, but seven to 11 when food is plentiful. “Seeing so many of them in our area could be because last year was a good one for breeding and owls—mostly juveniles—pushed south due to food competition farther north,” offered Debbie Beer.

Professor Kevin McGowan, a Cornell University ornithologist, is skeptical of the lemmings hypothesis. Studies using tiny transmitters revealed some snowy owls actually travel farther north in the winter, not south, scouting for pools of open water in Arctic ice where they prey on sea ducks and other waterfowl. “A big shift in bird movement one year might just be a freakish event,” McGowan told *The New York Times*, “or it’s the beginning of a pattern.”

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Scientists have long used changes in bird populations, behavior and reproductive ability to monitor the health of ecosystems. Because of their rapid metabolisms and wide geographic range, birds reflect changes in the environment quickly and can warn us when things are out of balance.

In the 1960s, a perilous drop in the number of peregrine falcons and bald eagles helped illuminate the dangers of DDT and other pesticides. More recently, the appearance of razorbills—seabirds indigenous to the cold waters of the North Atlantic—in Florida was an indication of drastic changes in sea surface temperature. According to *eBird.com*, “These owls are surely telling us something, but we still don’t understand exactly what. It could be that this is a large invasion that is part of periodic and natural fluctuations; or an unsettled Arctic environment could be part of the story.”





PHOTO BY DEBBIE BEER



PHOTO BY BILL MOSES

Historical records show that the first irruption of snowy owls in North America occurred during the winter of 1833–34. Mass influxes of these birds have occurred every three to five years since then, to varying degrees. Many birders and scientists believe these occurrences are a normal, cyclical part of nature.

Modern advances allow us to better track and observe birds, including using crowd sourcing. Project SNOWstorm, a collaborative research effort led by owl expert Scott Weidensaul of the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, in Millersburg, PA, documents and studies the recent snowy

owl irruptions. Likewise, *eBird.com*, an online bird checklist program launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, offers researchers a data-rich resource supplied exclusively by “citizen scientists.”

YOUR LIFE LIST

While birders collect valuable data and researchers look for answers, birders will add unexpected species to their life lists. The group that visited Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge last winter in search of snowy owls was not disappointed. Just before heading home, they spotted one on

a grassy ridge. Said trip leader Debbie Beer, “Frozen fingers were forgotten as we took turns observing and photographing him through the spotting scope, admiring his ability to thrive in Arctic conditions and an ever-changing world.” ♦

Natural Lands Trust is dedicated to protecting the forests, fields, streams and wetlands essential to the sustainability of life in eastern PA and southern NJ. Since its founding in 1953, NLT has preserved more than 100,000 acres, including 42 nature preserves totaling more than 22,000 acres. Today, millions enjoy the healthy habitats, clean air and water, recreational opportunities, and scenic beauty provided by the lands NLT has preserved. For more, NatLands.org.



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Ready For Your First Home?

Mary Irene Dolan

BUYING YOUR FIRST HOME IS A MAJOR MILESTONE. It's likely one that will make you feel more like an adult, a more responsible person, and more connected with your community. The perks of home ownership are plentiful—tax benefits, building home equity and credit, sometimes even a cheaper monthly payment. Plus ownership brings with it a sense of pride and security you won't find while renting or crashing with friends or family.

Before you take the leap and buy your first home, you'll want to be prepared for the responsibilities that accompany your new status. Because, unlike the images on those televised remodeling shows—where kitchens and bathrooms are redone in a few days and fixer-uppers are transformed in short order—owning a home is work!

That's why you'll want to be sure you're ready and prepared for the challenge.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Buying a home is as much an emotional decision as a financial one. "You'll know you're ready to buy because you'll feel it," says Jennifer Daywalt of Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate. "You'll want to make your home décor Pinterest boards a reality, and you'll begin envisioning what your home will look like and how you'll decorate."

You'll more likely feel ready when you're at a stable point in your life and taking that next step seems a perfectly logical choice. "If you plan to move in the next year or so, it might not be the best time to buy," notes Brett Jones of Sotheby's Brandywine Fine Properties. Only you know if the time is right. And as Jones advises, "The most important thing is making your first home a place to be happy."

Of course, you'll want to make sure your finances are in order. Yes, you'll need money for the down payment and monthly mortgage payments. But you also have to plan for things like property insurance, taxes, regular maintenance and higher utility bills (some renters don't pay utilities, like heating) as part of your homeowner budget. (More about getting your first mortgage in the "Worth Knowing" column in this issue.)

Savvy homeowners also set money aside for unforeseen expenses—that rainy day fund—as well as other things that make them happy so they don't feel house poor.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR?

A key consideration in your decision is your lifestyle. "Do you want to live downtown, where you can walk out your door to local shops and restaurants?" asks Jennifer Daywalt. "Or, do you prefer a smaller neighborhood with more open space and nature

right outside your front door?" These lifestyle cues will help you decide where to start looking.

Other considerations include proximity to work, family and friends. Some people may feel a fresh start in a totally new location is just what they need, while others won't want to give up the close relationships and familiarity with towns in their current neighborhood. The trend among millennials favors community-style condos and townhouses, but that doesn't mean it's for everyone.

And remember, although your first home is likely not your ultimate dream home or the only one you'll ever buy, that doesn't mean you shouldn't plan for the future.

"Many first-time buyers make the mistake of being too conservative," notes Holly Gross of The Gross Realty Group. "They'll pick the bare minimum they can afford and outgrow their home too quickly." For example, if you buy as a single person or couple and then decide to start a family, your needs and wants may well change with your lifestyle. "It's better to leave yourself room to grow than have to move again before you're ready," says Gross.

BEST TIME TO BUY?

Traditionally, springtime was thought to be the best time for buying a home. But times have changed. Many realtors now say there's no best or right time. In fact, waiting until spring may prove more stressful for first-time buyers as they compete in the busy market.

It's best to start looking as soon as you know you're ready. "Although the old adage has been to *list* in the spring, buyers shouldn't limit their timeframe to start their search," says Georgianna Stapleton of Country Properties. She admits the springtime will generally have more houses available, but it doesn't prevent the rest of the year from having great properties for sale. "The need to purchase, not seasons, should be the buyer's motivator!" she says.

DO YOU NEED A REALTOR?

The resounding answer to this is ... yes, you absolutely need a realtor! Specifically a local one. And especially as a new buyer.

Navigating the real estate market through websites like *Realtor.com* may seem like the way to go, but you could cause yourself more stress and the potential for a costly mistake.

An experienced realtor who knows the area's ins and outs is your best guide, one who can tell you about the neighborhood, school district, things to do, local businesses and more. "We're there to guide you through the process and look out for you," notes Holly Gross. Gross stresses the importance of interviewing several realtors and choosing one who understands your needs and makes you comfortable asking difficult questions. And as a first-time buyer, you're likely to have *a lot* of questions.

Realtors want you to be satisfied. "The last thing we want is our clients to experience buyer's remorse," notes Brett Jones. "Having a realtor there throughout the process of inspection, making offers and signing contracts helps lessen the chance of making the wrong choice." And a happy homeowner makes a great reference and a repeat customer.

So if 2016 is your year to buy a home, there's no time like the present to get started! ♦

LOCAL RESOURCES

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BHGCommunity.com

Brandywine Fine Properties Sotheby's International Realty

5701 Kennett Pike, Centreville, DE
610-474-6520
BFPSIR.com

Country Properties

Berkshire Hathaway/Fox & Roach
Route 82 & 162, Unionville
610-347-2065
TheCountryProperties.com

The Gross Realty Group

Berkshire Hathaway/Fox & Roach
484-678-0367
GrossRealtyGroup.com

* More in our "Where to Find It Guide."





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When is it Time to UPDATE YOUR KITCHEN?

Allison Ector

THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE TIME HAS COME.
HERE ARE A FEW.



Wall & Walsh



Dilworth's Custom Design

LET'S FACE IT—in an ideal world, we'd all love to upgrade our kitchens every few years or so to reflect our changing lifestyles and changing kitchen styles. But the reality is that most of us can't afford that daydream, nor is it the green way to go. Which brings us to this important question: When is it time?

Are your cabinets falling off their hinges? Are you storing your roasting pan in the oven? Do you stumble down to the basement to retrieve your waffle iron? Do your lighting fixtures look like they belong on the set of *The Partridge Family*?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you already know the time is now! But let's consider other reasons for transporting your kitchen into the 21st century.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Since these days the kitchen is the center of our home—where our families and friends gather to cook, work and unwind—it's important that the space be functional, efficient and aesthetically pleasing.

Before 1990, most kitchens were designed with a sole chef—mom—and a sole purpose—cooking—in mind. But today's kitchen needs to serve more than one cook as well as a variety of purposes.

Whether filleting a flounder, checking Facebook or playing Friday night poker with the Joneses, the kitchen is the place to be.

Here are some things to consider when evaluating the state of your most used and useful room:

1. Are the major elements deteriorating?
2. Is the space efficient?
3. Is the room functional for your family?
4. Does it make you smile?
5. Could it be greener?
6. Are you planning to sell soon?

DETERIORATION

NEWS FLASH—Your kitchen wasn't meant to last forever! Cabinets, counter tops, hardware, fixtures, lighting and flooring are not eternal. Sooner or later, they're all gonna go! And that's a sign that an update is in your future.

But don't despair. There are a variety of workable solutions available, and consulting

with a design expert (we've provided a few names below) makes the job much easier and the outcome even better.

Main Street Cabinet's Skip Rudderow says, even when working with a budget, a creative kitchen designer can craft cabinetry to look like it belongs in your home. Simplifying the cabinet design will also help control the budget—for example a Shaker design kitchen generally costs less than a Tuscan design.

EFFICIENCY

Energy-hogging appliances are a great reason to make a change that can save on monthly utility bills. More efficient appliances can also help to reduce your carbon footprint. GreenAmerica.org and NRDC.org (The National Resources Defense Council) are two nonprofit groups that offer online tips to consider when shopping for appliances.

Be careful when making your selection, though. Expensive isn't always better. Bells and whistles you don't need can cost you more in the long run when they break.

If you have a large family or do a lot of entertaining, consider replacing your conventional oven with a convection or double-tier to save cooking time. A trash compactor may also be a useful timesaver. And here's a tip from the pros—updating your appliances before they go is always a better idea. Remember Murphy's Law? You don't want your oven or fridge konking out on the day of your next big party.

FUNCTIONALITY

The first step in evaluating functionality is to assess your family's unique needs. Identify what's working and what changes could make your lives easier—such as lighting, storage and counter, eating and work space.

Minor upgrades can go a long way towards making your kitchen the haven it's meant to be. An improvement could be as simple as a new piece of furniture for storing clutter or adding a moveable island for more counter space.

Custom cabinetry can also enhance space and functionality because it fits with no fillers and is designed just for your needs. Tray cabinets, spice racks, knife drawers and



Creative Nook



Main Street Cabinet

Trends

- Appliances: integrated, energy-efficient
- Fixtures/hardware: chrome, brushed nickel, brass
- Backsplashes: subway tile
- Countertops: marble, soapstone, granite, quartz
- Range hood: with outside venting
- Walls: cream, white, pale gray
- Flooring: heated, hardwood, porcelain
- Islands: moveable with storage
- Seating: built-in and face-to-face
- Cabinets/Pantry: light woods, whites, grays; pull-out and vertical shelving
- Lighting: pendent or chandelier over sink and island; recessed lighting under cabinets; industrial style
- Extras: microwave drawer, warming drawer, charging stations, beverage bar

pull-out boxes are just some features that can be individualized for you, says Dave Dilworth of Dilworth's Custom Design.

AESTHETICS

Considering the amount of time you spend in the kitchen, it's a room that should make you smile. If you take a walk of shame every time you enter, it's overdue for a change.

Replacing just one of the many elements in your kitchen could make a huge difference in how it makes you feel. A simple change can breathe new life and comfort into your tired space.

Transitional style—with clean lines and a hint of modern design—is returning to popularity say Michael Walsh of Wall and Walsh and Trez Pomilo of Sugarbridge Kitchen and Bath. And it's a perennial favorite among families.

SUSTAINABILITY

It's not easy being green, but if you'd like to reduce your carbon footprint, the kitchen is a great place to start. If it's time for a new fridge, consider the Thermador—energy efficient *and* it will extend the life of your groceries!

Incorporating reclaimed or recycled materials can add warmth and interest to both traditional and modern design. Sabine Illias of Narberth replaced conventional cabinetry with early-1800s door panels for vertical

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storage. Eliminating bulky cabinets made room for a gorgeous triple window! Search online for local architectural salvage and vintage furniture shops for ideas.

For countertops, Alex Hall of Creative Nook recommends granite versus man-made materials like quartz. He says that

less than one percent of the earth's supply of granite has been harvested.

RESELL

The quickest way to add resale value to your home is to update the kitchen, but DON'T PANIC! Adding value doesn't mean a complete renovation. Updating fixtures, hardware and paint may be enough to give the room a cleaner, modern look. Andy Madsen of Madsen Kitchens saved a recent client more than \$20,000 by recommending just that.

Before the client's home went on the market, dark cabinets were painted creamy white, outdated hardware and fixtures were replaced with brushed nickel and Formica countertops made way for Corian. The house sold in a week!

When upgrading your appliances, note that not all buyers will want to pay for innovative gadgetry. Look at general trends in your neighborhood before deciding and invest in eco-friendly products with universal appeal.

Designer tip: If you've recently purchased a home, consider living with your kitchen at least six months before making any drastic changes. You may learn to love it!

Back to our friends the Joneses ... You don't have to keep up with them anymore. Having a kitchen that works for you and your family is all that matters. Bon appétit! ♦

RESOURCES

To find out more, contact

Alex Hall, Creative Nook, Paoli, 610-644-6665

Dave Dilworth, Dilworth's Custom Design, Phoenixville, 610-917-9119

Andy Madsen, Madsen Kitchens, Broomall, 610-356-4800

Skip Rudderow, Main Street Cabinet, Newtown Square, 610-325-5500

Trez Pomilo, Sugarbridge Kitchen & Bath, Paoli, 484-318-8367

Michael Walsh, Wall and Walsh, 610-789-8530

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Love at First Sight

Story by Matt Freeman • Photos by Tom Crane

EVEN FOR HOUSE-HUNTERS, THE HEART WANTS WHAT IT WANTS.



SOMETIMES A HOUSE-HUNTER JUST KNOWS—IT'S LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT. The house may not include every item on your wish list, but suddenly that seems less important—something that can wait until you're settled in and can update the house exactly the way you'd like.

That's how it happened about twelve years ago at a historic home in Flourtown—the current owner walked in and knew fate had led her family to the right place. “The minute we went in it,” she says, “we knew that's where we wanted to be.”

The kids had made themselves at home already—they were running up and down the stairs. She turned to her husband and said, “We have to have this house.” And they did.



GOOD BONES

And certainly the house as it presented itself when the owners bought it had much to offer. Generously sized, it was framed by mature trees on a nearly four-acre lot that backed up to the Wissahickon Creek.

There were two main structures joined together. One was of stuccoed Colonial-era fieldstone, with the smaller rooms typical of the time. The other was larger, with larger rooms, done in the more formal Federal style, dating from the early 19th century.

There were seven fireplaces, 11-foot ceilings, millwork their architect calls “spectacular,” and distinctive touches like a floor-to-ceiling mirror in the dining room so massive it requires special supports in the basement.

And yet it wasn’t overpowering or museum-like. “It was so grand and yet warm,” the owner says. “It’s just a really great-karma place.” It was also well cared for. “You can tell when a house has been loved,” the owner says.

But like any home, historic or otherwise, that hasn’t been renovated in decades, there were things missing that the owners wanted. It didn’t have “a fabulous modern kitchen,” the owner says, it didn’t have a master bath and dressing room, nor a mudroom. There were any number of features missing from the house and needed for an ideally updated incarnation.

TIME HAD COME

After living in the house for a few years, the owners decided to go forward with the wish-list renovation. They started looking for architects they felt would make the project a “labor of love,” and decided Devon-based architect John Toates was the one for the job. “Very quickly, his vision was similar to ours,” the owner says.

That consensus was not pure serendipity—Toates says his process involves interviews to learn about the homeowners’ basic requirements and desires. He then refines the plans as he learns more about how they live, sifting and refining the myriad options until the new version of the house is a near-perfect fit.

He doesn’t like to call his designs “custom” homes, he says, a term he thinks is overused to the point of meaninglessness. He borrows the term “bespoke” from the world of tailoring to express the goal: a home not just unique but uniquely suited to its particular owners.

CHALLENGES

At the top of the wish-list, the house had a general problem—it was hard to move about freely in it. Many historic homes are like that. “Rarely are the pieces linked together in a way that makes sense as a holistic package,” Toates says.





The house had a living room the family liked to use, but it was a dead end. “Once people got down there, they were trapped,” Toates says. The dining room was a similar cul-de-sac.

So the redesign project included the creation of a butler’s pantry with a wet bar off the dining room that connected to the sunroom that connected to the living room. “This gave a release from that space,” Toates says. “There was another way to enter and exit the space and it felt more natural.”

Other large-scale changes involved taking the stucco outer layer off the original Colonial-era section of the house to help distinguish it from the later Federal section. Both the outside and the basement walls of the Colonial section were done in handsome fieldstone that turned out to be in good condition, so the project added a basement wine room with a set of stairs to make it easier to reach.

A mudroom and family entrance were also added, along with a solarium that opened out to the pool area, making life easier and more convenient for the family. The project also involved an addition to the Federal section with an open porch on one side and a sunroom on the opposite side. “It’s just much more functional than before,” the owner says.



MODERN, YET ...

The kitchen is an example of larger goals and meaningful details woven together. The owners very much wanted a beautiful, modern kitchen, and the modernity shows in the expanses of black marble countertops and gleaming stainless-steel appliances. But past and present are intertwined: The cabinetry, furniture and flooring all evoke the past, and the fireplace is a focal point.

Toates, who cultivates sources of antique furnishings as part of his work, found a period fireplace crane to replace the long-gone original and recreated other elements of that fireplace and the history of the house, he says. He also found the antique cast-iron air duct grills that matched similar arch-top pieces in the front hall—another uniquely bespoke sort of touch—matching that was more meaningful to this house than it would be anywhere else.

The house may be more functional and uniquely tailored to the way its current owners live. But the team who made those changes also respected the house's history as they worked, and this was part of the current residents' vision too. Ted Trethewey, president of E.C. Trethewey Building Contractors, says projects like this require not just experience in historic renovation but the help of a superior architect and clients who share the building professionals' goals. "It really allows us all to do what we do best," Trethewey says.

The owner says her family and the former residents became good friends, and they've talked about their sense of the house's long history. It's a thing you hear from many owners of historic homes—they're writing a new chapter in the house's history, but other chapters will come, and they feel a sense of responsibility toward the future owners and the larger story.

"We're caretakers," the owner says. ♦



RESOURCES

Architect John Toates, Architecture and Design in Devon
 Builder E.C. Trethewey Building Contractors Inc. in Downingtown
 Designer Patty Bullock of PMB Designs in Ambler
 Downingtown architect Jennifer Baxter supervised the construction phase





HUGH LOFTING
610.444.5382; HughLoftingTimberFrame.com



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FINE HOMES & DESIGN

WHERE TO FIND IT GUIDE

Our yearly guide will help you find everything from home furnishings to interior designers, custom builders to appliances, insurance to real estate photographers. From inside your home to outside, we've got you covered.

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CustomBarnBuilding.com

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DilworthsCustomDesign.com

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DutchiesStoneWorks.com

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484-318-8367; Sugarbridge.com

Sylvan Stoltzfus Builders, LLC

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610-444-9192; WaterburyDesign.com

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WhiteHorseConstructionPA.com

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484-354-8618; DevinCampbell.com

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Karen Nader / Brett Jones

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610-474-6520; BFPSIR.com

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AREA INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS HAVE CREATIVE APPROACHES
TO HELPING STUDENTS DEVELOP THEIR CREATIVITY.

CREATIVITY—THE PROCESS OF HAVING ORIGINAL ideas that have value. Ken Robinson, in his chart-topping 2006 TED talk, declared that for students in the 21st century, creativity is “as important as literacy.” Viewed more than 36 million times, Robinson’s talk posits that our education system is misguided, focusing too often on teaching content rather than developing intelligence that is diverse, dynamic and distinct. Education, he believes, must “celebrate the imagination.”

In *County Lines* country, we have many independent schools—some of the best in the country—that are effectively preparing students to meet the unknown challenges of the future. We found much more happening in these schools than the expected college prep, AP and STEAM courses (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math).

So we asked a sample of schools how creativity is taught, or better, nurtured in their students.

THE CENTER OF WHAT THEY’RE DOING

You’ll find a distinctive educational approach at the Kimberton Waldorf School, one of over a thousand schools worldwide prac-

ticing the Waldorf method. Based on the teaching of Rudolf Steiner and practiced for nearly a century, the method emphasizes imagination in learning, striving to integrate intellectual, practical and artistic development.

Headmaster Kevin Hughes says that creativity is “not new” as part of their curriculum. Rather, it’s “at the center of what we’re doing.” Referring to a 2010 *Newsweek* feature on the creativity crisis in American schools, Hughes is critical of the amount of time spent by kids today on adult-organized sports, video games and educational testing. The Waldorf method, in contrast, emphasizes play.

The Waldorf approach, Hughes explains, has always emphasized the interplay of art and academics—“head, heart and hands”—assembled into an experiential approach and geared to the developmental phases of childhood. From preschool, students learn to sculpt, draw, paint, sing In high school, students continue with extensive programs that include arts, crafts and performing arts, developing more critical capacities. But the overall mission remains the same: to enhance problem-solving skills and achieve “full human capacity.”



Friends Central School



School in Rose Valley

CREATIVE PLAY

Although Rod Stanton has been the Head of the School in Rose Valley for just one year, the school itself has been there for 85. In that time, the school’s “core beliefs” have not changed, despite the many changes in teaching and technology. “Free play” remains its “secret of success” where children are guided to know themselves, to delight in learning.

The school is small: only 135 students in six grades with mixed ages, envisioned as a laboratory, encouraging inquisitiveness and experimentation. Rather than grades, a narrative is used to describe each student’s progress.

A special kind of teacher is required here. The curriculum, according to Stanton, is “emergent,” meaning it flows from the student’s experience. For example, a student might collect a sala-

mander from the creek, leading to issues about its biology, food and environment. These, in turn, become laboratories for hands-on experimentation and inquiry where students create knowledge.

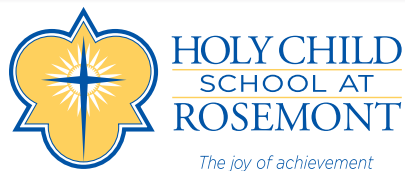
Much of the learning is done outdoors, rain or shine, on a 9.5-acre wooded campus, where students use their imaginations. Students in the so-called “Fort Town” have built small structures from tree branches and other debris. A primitive economy—stones, slate, are traded, for example—has emerged.

Inside, classes are taught, too, but wooden blocks are also on hand. And structures, more complex as the classes become ever more advanced, take shape, demonstrating the mission to create experiences that arouse curiosity, stretch minds, strengthen initiative and stimulate questions.

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DCCS.ORG

LEARNING WHILE FAILING FORWARD

Steve Compton at Westtown School conveys a “big message” to his students: “You can’t be afraid to fail.” Otherwise, how can you create, discover and learn? Ostensibly teaching science as part of the STEAM program, he really teaches entrepreneurship, bringing to bear the lessons of the real world. Animated by Quakerism, Compton’s students “take learning into the community.”

Compton works with about 100 kids each year. Leveraging Westtown’s new \$13-million Science Center—fitted with a laser cutter, CAD software, 3-D printers and other advanced tools—he’ll explore with them their product ideas, then brainstorm, and turn the idea into a business plan, possibly a prototype—a design/build process. The student projects may demand they work weekends, summers or vacations—which they are very happy to do.

From January through March, 40 Westtown students will enter an international robotics competition. Another team sent a balloon into near space; another, a robotic submarine to clean the school’s pond; and another develops an artificial hand for an eight-year-old without one.

The program and the projects are passed on to the next generation of students, as older students teach the young ones, keeping creativity alive and flourishing at Westtown.

MAKERSPACE

When Friends’ Central considered creativity in its curriculum, it looked at what other schools were doing and concluded that, whatever they did, they needed a space—and chose a “makerspace.” For the uninitiated, a makerspace is a central location for creativity, problem-solving and collaborative exploration, tinkering and discovery, driven by students’ interest and inquiry. You’ll find 3D printers, CAD software, electronics equipment, plus more traditional craft and hobby-shop tools.

Colin Angevine, a computer science teacher, was chosen to manage the makerspace, with a goal to “nurture creativity.” He thought it should be “hands-on, non-competitive” and foster “a lot of collaboration,” where teachers provide tools for thinking and the space provides an opportunity to



The Baldwin School



Episcopal Academy

explore. Its popularity has continued to grow, Angevine says happily, so now they’re “utterly swamped.”

The focus is on the process, not the product, yet there have been great successes. In 2013, Friends’ Central makerspace students won \$10,000 from Verizon for an app designed to make sharing ideas easier, and in 2015 students were chosen to present at the World Maker Faire in New York City.

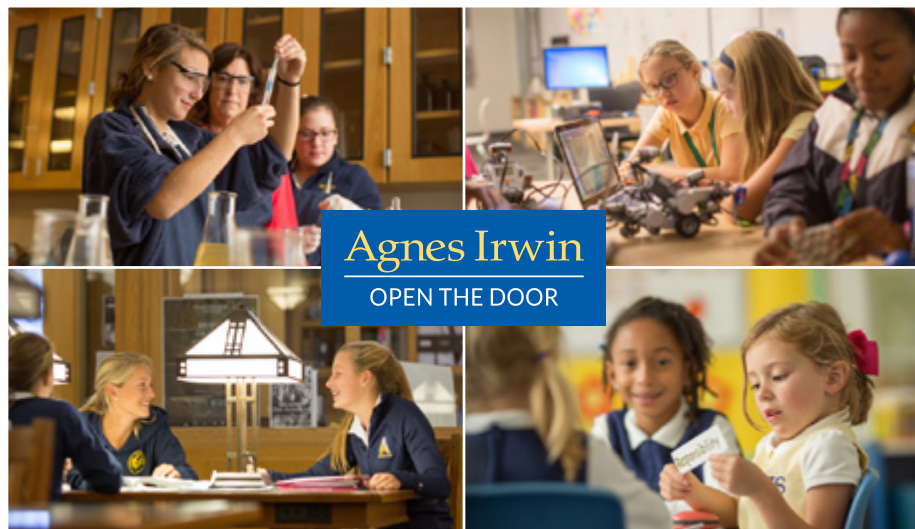
The makerspace is primarily for 11th and 12th graders, who can set it apart in their daily schedule, though lower grades participate primarily through the MAKE club, beginning in 6th grade. In the lower school, “playful learning” has emerged as another key theme of the curriculum. The distinctions are largely formal. Curiosity, enthu-

siasm, commitment and creativity, after all, know no bounds.

TAKE RISKS AND CREATE

The DREAM Lab (Design, Robotics, Engineering, Art, Math) is a focal point for creative programs and projects at The Baldwin School, says Laura Blankenship, Academic Affairs Dean. It’s a hub of design/think activity, where “problems become solutions and through collaboration, result in prototypes.” In three spaces—similar to makerspaces for lower, middle and upper school students—creative problem-solving happens in an interdisciplinary context.

Baldwin middle schoolers have tackled wide-ranging projects, including creating an app with a soothing voice to help Alzheimer



Agnes Irwin

OPEN THE DOOR

SPRING OPEN HOUSES

Lower School: **Tuesday, February 23, 8:30 a.m.–10 a.m.**
 Middle/Upper School: **Wednesday, March 16, 8:30 a.m.–10 a.m.**
 All-School: **Wednesday, April 6, 5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.**
 All-School: **Thursday, April 28, 8:30 a.m.–10 a.m.**

For more information, visit: agnesirwin.org/openhouse

The Agnes Irwin School empowers girls to learn, to lead, and to live a legacy.

Ithan Avenue & Conestoga Road, Rosemont, PA 19010 • 610.525.8400

patients by telling them where they are and the current date. Other students hone creative design skills along with engineering prowess using CAD programs to make unique jewelry. Still others work on real-life, school-based problems, like traffic congestion at morning drop-off and paperless announcements.

All girls learn to ask “what if” and to think outside the oft-cited box in an environment that can be messy and where some things ultimately don’t work, but that’s okay. Addressing a key challenge of educating girls, Baldwin supports students to be better at taking risks, trying again, and learning from everything, even things that are unexpected.

A SPECIAL TERM TO EXPLORE

For Cathy Hall, Assistant Head of School at Episcopal Academy, creativity means “innovation,” and even more so, “passion.” For three years, the faculty and administration discussed and refined its approach. The result, “J-Term”—upper school students’ two-week, between-semesters, experiential and interdisciplinary opportunity to explore. There are currently over 30 offerings in the J-term curriculum.

J-term is offered throughout Episcopal’s upper school, with each class open to all. Sometimes, a J-term class is led by one teacher; sometimes by an interdisciplinary team; or other times classes involve visiting speakers. Often, the courses involve day trips or longer trip, e.g., to the Galapagos.

All J-term courses are very flexible. Some examples: Cracking the Code, where students learn about DNA, banking transactions and music; Making the Magic Happen, which investigates the physics of the theater including acoustics and stunts.

J-Term could be just the beginning of Episcopal’s growing emphasis on creativity. Hall notes that it’s already inspired changes in the lower and middle schools.

Students who are allowed to discover and explore become entrepreneurial, creative thinkers, problem solvers. They gain confidence, learn to collaborate, and become the open-minded and intellectually adventurous leaders we need for the 21st century. ♦

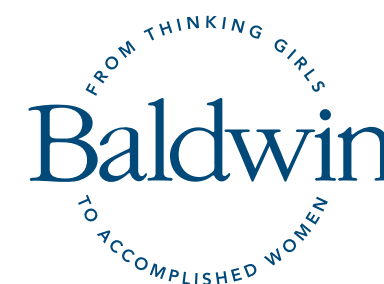


ALL SCHOOL
 Sunday, February 21 at 2 p.m.
 Wednesday, April 20 at 9 a.m.

LOWER SCHOOL
 Wednesday, February 3 at 9 a.m.

Register at BaldwinSchool.org/openhouse

Established in 1888, The Baldwin School is an independent day school for girls. Baldwin combines the region’s premier college preparatory curriculum with distinguished arts, athletics and community service programs. Located in Bryn Mawr, Baldwin attracts talented girls for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 who seek a dynamic, globally focused curriculum within a supportive and encouraging community.



she

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All School: Feb. 21 at 2 pm, Apr. 20 at 9 am

Lower School Tours: Feb. 3, 9 am

Private tours available upon request



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CDSSH.org

CDSSH is an independent, Catholic, college preparatory school for girls Pre-K through grade 12. The school is a member of the Sacred Heart Network of 24 Schools in the US and Canada, an ADVIS member, and Middle States Accredited.



ited. CDSSH is celebrating 150 years of educating young women. Founded in 1865, by the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the school is committed to educating to an active faith, intellectual values, social awareness, Christian community and personal growth.

*Jan. 30, Pre-K-Grade 12 from 11 to 1

*Jan. 30, 6th Grade Entrance and

Scholarship Exam at 8:45 am

register online

*Snow date, Feb. 6

Apr. 30, 7th Grade Pre-HSPT Practice Test

8:45 am to noon, register online

Chadds Ford

Fairville Friends School

216 Pond View Dr.

610-388-1268

FairvilleFriends.org

Fairville Friends is a small Quaker preschool and kindergarten, serving children ages 24 months to 6 years, located in a charming, 100-year-old farmhouse on 2.5 acres of fenced play yards, gardens and meadows.

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DevonPrep.com

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Spring Open House: Apr. 24, 9 to 11 am
Seventh Grade Practice Entrance Test:
Apr. 24 at 8:30 am

Downingtown

Bishop Shanahan High School
 220 Woodbine Rd.
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Shanahan.org

A Catholic co-ed high school in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, on a beautiful 80-acre site. The focus is on each student developing full potential in a safe, faith-filled environment. 100% of graduates pursue higher education. The Class of 2015 had 12 National Merit Students; 3 Semi-Finalists, 9 Commended. There are 64 Advanced Placement Scholars, 25 varsity sports, 40 clubs and great student life. Dual enrollment is offered with Immaculata, Widener and Neumann Universities.

7th Gr. Visitation: Apr. 14 from 8:30 to 1:30
Spring Open House: Apr. 21 at 7 pm



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Feb. 17, Mar. 9, Apr. 6, May 18 from 9 to 11

Immaculata

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610-644-4864

VillaMaria.org

Villa Maria Academy is an independent, Catholic, K-8 all-girls school and co-educational Early Learning Center for 3 and 4 year-olds in the traditions of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary since 1872. Villa Maria Academy empowers young women through leadership and service opportunities where each child is



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TO WIN IT!



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SPRING 2016 VISIT DATES

7th Grade Visitation Day
Thursday April 14, 2016 • 8:30 am - 1:30 pm

6th, 7th and 8th Grade Open House
Thursday April 21, 2016 • 7 pm

Register for these events at [Admissions / Upcoming Events at Shanahan.org](http://Admissions/UpcomingEventsatShanahan.org)

STILL REGISTERING FOR 2016-2017

220 WOODBINE ROAD, DOWNINGTOWN, PA
610.343.6206 shanahan.org

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DAYS AND
TOURS
AVAILABLE

PEOPLE OF GOD; PEOPLE FOR OTHERS



Drexel Hill

Holy Child Academy

475 Shadeland Ave.

610-259-2712

Holychildacademy.com

Holy Child Academy (HCA), is a private, Catholic school for boys and girls of many faiths. Located in Drexel Hill and part of an international network of schools, HCA prepares students to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world and lays the foundation for a lifetime of excellence, achievement, and service. Nursery through 8th grade.

Twilight Tours:

Mar. 9, Apr. 20, from 5 to 6:30

Open Houses:

Mar. 9, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm

Personal Tours also available

Haverford

Friends School Haverford

851 Buck La.

610-642-2334; FriendsHaverford.org



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MEET ELAINE, DVFS CLASS OF 1997

“There was no giving up at DV – you worked until you worked it out. Every option, every idea, every resource was explored until exhausted. That was the commitment, the dedication of the faculty.”

Elaine graduated from LaSalle University with a double major in Elementary and Special Education followed by a Master's in Reading, Writing and Literacy from the University of Pennsylvania. She is a Certified Reading Specialist and has been a Special Education teacher for 13 years. Elaine is Delaware Valley Friends School's 2015-16 Alumna of the Year Award recipient.

READ MORE OF ELAINE'S STORY AND MEET MORE OF OUR GRADUATES ON OUR WEBSITE AT dvfs.org/MeetOurGrads



Delaware Valley Friends School: where bright students who learn differently discover their full potential.

dvfs.org/inquire

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**4010 funding available to school districts

encouraged to reach her potential academically, spiritually, socially and morally.

Mar. 9 at 9:30

Malvern

Villa Maria Academy High School
370 Central Ave.

610-644-2551; VMAHS.org

A Catholic, college preparatory school for girls, rooted in the philosophy of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, empowers young women to lead lives of spiritual growth, intellectual inquiry and Christian service. Founded in 1872, Villa Maria Academy combines rigorous academics, extensive extracurricular opportunities and innovative real-world experiences, preparing young women with the skills and the confidence they need to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Villa Preview Breakfasts for
6th and 7th Graders and their Families:

Apr. 22, May 9, or May 13

7th Grade Practice Exam: Apr. 23 or 30

Visit Villa Days for 7th Graders:

Apr. 29 or May 20



Media

Media-Providence Friends School

125 W. Third St.

610-565-1960; MPFS.org

Media-Providence Friends

School is a Quaker school in downtown Media for students age 3 through grade 8. Every day at MPFS, teachers encourage students to imagine, explore, question and create, while discovering joy in learning and acquiring skills they'll need to make a better world. Small classes allow for differentiated learning in a rigorous academic environment where students are seen, heard and known.

Feb. 19, 9 am



Newtown Square



Delaware County Christian School

462 Malin Rd.

610-353-6522; DCCS.org

Serving 740 students in grades pre-k – grade 12 on two campuses in Newtown Square and Devon. Providing a rigorous liberal arts, college preparatory education within the context of a Christian worldview, DC students are challenged, nurtured and known. New, in-depth courses teach students to engage with authentic problems and current issues, enabling them to experiment with novel ideas and to take meaningful risks. Learn more on their website or schedule a personal tour.

Feb. 9, 9:30 to 11:30; Apr. 2, 9 to 11



The Episcopal Academy

1785 Bishop White Dr.

484-424-1400

EpiscopalAcademy.org

For nearly 230 years,

Episcopal Academy has offered a strong tradition of excellence, providing a challenging and nurturing coeducational program for prekindergarten through 12th grade. The school's unparalleled facilities and innovative curriculum, anchored by its talented teachers, successfully combine classical and cutting-edge methods. All of Episcopal's graduates attend college and more than half gain acceptance into the nation's top-tier schools. The school's graduates go on to become leaders across the globe in a range of diverse fields.

All School Open House: Apr. 19 at 7 pm

Phoenixville

Kimberton Waldorf School

410 W. Seven Stars Rd.

610-933-3635; Kimberton.org



Celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, Kim-

berton Waldorf School offers a unique, holistic education for 300 students in grades PreK–12. On our beautiful 430-acre campus, children are allowed to be children, and teenagers are preparing not only for college admission, but for life. The faculty are experts in child development, and it shows. By removing high-pressure standardized testing from education, Kimberton teaches students HOW to think, not WHAT to think.

Pre-K and K: Feb. 19–20; Mar. 4–5;

Apr. 22–23

All-School: Apr. 17 at 1 pm

Lower School: Apr. 26 at 8:30 am

High School: Apr. 26 at 7 pm

May Faire: May 7

Renaissance Academy

413 Fairview St., 610-983-4080

www.RAK12.org

A tuition-free, college prep, award-winning, public charter school for grades k–12. Their mission is to prepare children for success as students, workers and citizens by providing them with a high-quality liberal arts, college preparatory education.

Mar. 9 from 6 to 8 pm

Pottstown

The Wyndcroft School

1395 Wilson St.

610-326-0544; Wyndcroft.org



Saint Agnes School



Villa Maria Academy High School



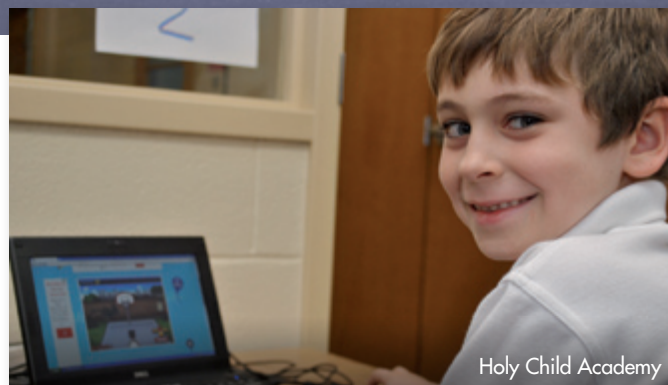
Wilmington Friends School



Wyndcroft School



Stratford Friends School



Holy Child Academy



Media-Providence Friends School



Benchmark School



The Agnes Irwin School

The Wyndcroft School is a co-ed day school for children in grades Pre-K through 8th. They offer a rigorous academic program enabling the child to establish a foundation for a happy and successful future. Their focus is character development, and pursuing excellence in English, history, math, science, foreign languages and the arts. Their small class setting provides a nurturing environment fostering creativity, personal integrity, determination and respect for others.

Feb. 23 and Apr. 3, 9 to 11 am



They believe the first years of education play an outsized role in helping children to achieve a life of happiness, contribution, and success. This coeducational, independent, Catholic school is built around the progressive educational philosophy of Cornelia Connelly, founder of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. The school welcomes children of every faith, offering an intellectually challenging and creative program, delivered in a loving and affirming environment so that children experience "the joy of achievement." Pre-school-8.

Feb. 3, Mar. 2, Apr. 6, & May 4 at 9 am



Westtown, a Quaker Pre-K-12 college preparatory school offers a challenging and diverse curriculum emphasizing action-based learning, critical thinking, creative problem solving, collaboration, service and social action. Westtown provides opportunities for students to find their voice and use it to develop the confidence to take action, declare themselves as leaders, risk failure and stand up for deeply held beliefs, inspiring and preparing its graduates to be stewards and leaders of a better world.

All School: Apr. 25 at 9 am

DELAWARE Claymont

Archmere Academy
3600 Philadelphia Pk.
302-798-6632
ArchmereAcademy.com



Archmere Academy is an independent, Catholic, co-educational college preparatory school, grades 9-12. Founded in the Norbertine tradition, the Archmere education focuses on the whole person, developing students into empathetic leaders and inspiring them to reach their potential. The Archmere experience incorporates top academic programs, a technology-infused curriculum, competitive athletics, and a wide variety of arts and extracurricular opportunities, all in a community of faith and values. Come visit their collegiate-style campus and learn more about what it means to be an Auk.

7th Grade Practice Test:
Apr. 16, 9 am to noon
7th Grade Open House:
Apr. 27 at 7 pm

Rosemont

The Agnes Irwin School
Ithan Ave. & Conestoga Rd.
610-525-8400
AgnesIrwin.org



Spanning more than 140 years of excellence in all-girls' education, The Agnes Irwin School is a nationally recognized independent, college preparatory school for girls in grades PreK-12. Offering a rigorous academic program coupled with competitive athletics and diverse visual and performing arts, Agnes Irwin empowers girls to learn, to lead and to live a legacy.

All School: Apr. 6 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm;
Apr. 28 from 8:30 to 10 am
Middle/Upper Schools: Mar. 16, 8:30 to 10 am
Lower School: Feb. 23 from 8:30 to 10 am

Holy Child School at Rosemont
1344 Montgomery Ave.
610-922-1010; HolyChildRosemont.org



Westtown School
975 Westtown Rd.
610-399-7900; Westtown.edu

West Chester

Saint Agnes School
211 W. Gay Street
West Chester, PA 19380
610-696-1260
SaintAgnesSchoolWC.org



The mission of Saint Agnes School is to develop every student from Preschool to grade 8 spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially in a joyful, faith-based environment that inspires integrity, citizenship, leadership and service to others in the Church and in the world. St. Agnes Catholic School has been recognized by the Department of Education as a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence!

Feb. 3 at 9 am; Feb. 21 at 11:30am
Tuesday Tours at 10 am



Holy Child Academy (HCA) is a private, Catholic school for boys and girls of many faiths from Nursery through Grade 8.

TWILIGHT TOURS:
March 9, 5:00-6:30 p.m.
April 20, 5:00-6:30 p.m.
OPEN HOUSES:
March 9, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Personal Tours also available.
WALK-IN WEDNESDAYS



Holy Child Academy

475 Shadeland Avenue • Drexel Hill, PA 19026
610.259.2712 | HolyChildAcademy.com



St. Agnes Catholic School
2015 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL
VOTED HULAFROG'S MOST LOVED PRESCHOOL
MIDDLE STATES ACCREDITED
Generations of Excellence in Catholic Education since 1873

Catholic School Week

Saint Agnes Catholic School
Find out why Saint Agnes Catholic School has received national recognition as a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence!

Open Houses

January 31st at noon
February 3rd at 9am
February 21st at 11:30am

Tuesday Tours

Tuesday Tours at 10am

Saint Agnes Catholic School • 211 W. Gay Street • West Chester, PA 19380
610-696-1260 • www.saintagnesschoolwc.org



DEVON PREP

Educating Boys. Graduating Leaders.

7TH GRADE PRACTICE ENTRANCE EXAM

Sunday, April 24 at 8:30 AM

SPRING OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, April 24 9 - 11 AM

610-688-7337

363 N. Valley Forge Rd, Devon, PA 19333

devonprep.com pkane@devonprep.com

Devon Prep is an independent, Catholic, college preparatory school for young men in grades 6 to 12 conducted by the Piarist Fathers. Devon Prep emphasizes developing the whole person, academically, athletically, spiritually and socially, preparing young men to be compassionate and responsible leaders.

GAIN confidence.

Since 1970, Benchmark School has been providing a comprehensive academic program tailored to the way each student learns best.

Admissions Open Houses:
March 3, April 7, May 12 &
July 14 • 9:00-11:00 AM

Benchmark Summer Camp:
July 5-August 5

Learn more:
610-565-3741
BenchmarkSchool.org

BenchmarkSCHOOL
Transforming Futures. Empowering Success.

HANDS ON — *minds on*



Friends School Haverford

1885

SMART EDUCATION IN A CULTURE OF KINDNESS

COME VISIT! OPEN HOUSE DATES:

FEBRUARY 17, MARCH 9, APRIL 6, & MAY 18
9:00 - 11:00am | **Nursery School - Grade 8**
Register Online: FriendsHaverford.org/open

Private Tours Available, Call: 610-642-2334
851 Buck Lane | Haverford, PA 19041



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610.388.1268
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VILLA MARIA ACADEMY
EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN SINCE 1872



Spring 2016 Events for 6th and 7th Graders

Villa Preview Breakfasts
for 6th and 7th graders and their families
April 22, May 9, or May 13

7th Grade Practice Exam
April 23 or 30

Visit Villa Days for 7th graders
April 29 or May 20

Register online at www.vmahs.org

370 Central Avenue, Malvern, PA 19355 **610-644-2551** www.vmahs.org

CENTREVILLE LAYTON SCHOOL

Visit Our Open House
First Wednesday of each month
9:00-11:00am
centrevillelayton.org/clm



Now Enrolling PreK-12




Centreville Layton School offers a rigorous educational experience for students who learn differently. Our program identifies academic and social needs of individuals and provides a curriculum that focuses on problem solving and critical thinking. Through intervention and strengthening learning strategies, the school empowers each student to reach his or her potential.



302.571.0230
centrevillelayton.org/clm
6201 Kennett Pike • Centreville, DE 19807



Delaware County Christian School



Devon Preparatory School



PA Cyber School



Archmere Academy

Wilmington

Tower Hill School
2813 W. 17th St.
302-657-8350; TowerHill.org

Tower Hill School inspires students to be their best in a supportive environment that balances rigorous academics with athletics, the arts and service learning. Character education is integrated throughout the innovative curriculum to encourage active citizenship. Tower Hill embraces diverse cultures and beliefs, fostering a strong sense of community. A co-educational independent school serving ages 3 through grade 12.

Mar. 1 & Apr. 6 at 9 a.m.

Wilmington Friends School
101 School Rd. (Rts. 202 & 95)
302-576-2900; WilmingtonFriends.org



This is a community and a great place to grow up. They offer an unsurpassed academic program with depth, asking students to question, collaborate, be creative and take risks, all within a caring community that balances focus on the individual with responsibility to the common good. Join them for an Open House or visit during a school day. Reggio Emilia inspired preschool, 1:1 laptop program, and International Baccalaureate program. Serving students preschool-12.

Preschool & Lower School: Apr. 9 from 9 to 11 am
Meet Us on Monday: every Monday,
from 9 to 11 am & 4 to 6 pm

LEARNING DIFFERENCES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

PENNSYLVANIA Downingtown

Devereux Autism Assessment Center
600 Boot Rd.
267-788-6892; Devereux.org/Autism



Holy Child School at Rosemont



Tower Hill School



Bishop Shanahan High School

The Devereux Autism Assessment Center in Downingtown provides comprehensive services to address questions and concerns about Autism Spectrum Disorder. This program offers the gold-standard in Autism assessment including the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS). And this program strives to efficiently deliver the highest quality of services from intake, to thorough assessment, to intensive follow up. This center is in line with Devereux's mission of providing individualized and comprehensive services for children and adults with special needs.

Malvern

Devereux
484-595-6773; Devereux.org
Also: *Glenmoore & West Chester*



With 104 years of high quality programming and instruction, Devereux continues to offer excellent educational programs addressing a wide variety of learning issues. Small classroom ratios allow for individualized instruction in a safe, therapeutic setting. Using Positive Behavior Intervention & Support approach, community-based instruction and work study programs, Devereux helps students return to local educational communities. An Approved Private School, Devereux is able to offer 4010s to school districts. Devereux offers an

Autism Assessment Program in Downingtown.
Schedule a tour today

Media

Benchmark School
2107 N. Providence Rd., 610-565-3741
BenchmarkSchool.org



Serving students who learn differently, helping them

become confident, self-advocates. Students typically arrive with labels such as dyslexia, auditory processing difficulties, ADD and ADHD. Benchmark develops an understanding of each student's strengths and challenges and uses this profile as a basis for instruction. Graduates know who they are as learners and can apply the strategies they develop here to take charge of their learning and meet with success in high school, college and their careers.
Mar. 3, Apr. 7, May 12 & July 14, 9 to 11 am

Newtown Square

Stratford Friends School
2 Bishop Hollow Rd.
610-355-9580
StratfordFriends.org



Stratford Friends School educates elementary and middle school students with language-based and similar learning differences through a structured,

multi-sensory program that celebrates students' strengths, builds self-esteem and develops self-advocacy. Their proven curriculum and teaching methods, such as Orton-Gillingham for reading, combined with small classes are great ways to support children on the path to becoming independent learners.

Feb. 3, Mar. 2, Apr. 6, May 4 at 9 am

Paoli

Delaware Valley Friends School
19 E. Central Ave.
610-640-4150; DVFS.org



Unlocking the Power to Learn.

A national leader in educating bright students (grades 6-12) with learning differences. Students, who may have struggled elsewhere, thrive in the school's comprehensive, research-based, college prep curriculum, individualized instruction, cutting-edge assistive technologies, successful college placement, and an emphasis on self-advocacy within a community based on Quaker values. DVFS is the only school program in PA, DE and NJ accredited by both IMSLEC and IDA—the leaders in multisensory instruction.

*Registration required: Feb. 7 from 1 to 3 pm;
Mar. 9 & 30, Apr. 13, May 11 & 25
from 9 to 11 am;
Apr. 27 at 5 pm;
June 16 at 7 pm, featuring alumni panel*

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for your child?

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PAcyber.org



Media-Providence
Friends School



Summer Camp!
June 20th - Aug 19th

Admissions Open House
February 19th 9am

125 W 3rd St • 610-565-1960 • mpfs.org



THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Stratford Friends School educates elementary and middle school-age students with language-based learning differences through a structured, multisensory program that celebrates students' strengths, builds self-esteem, and develops self-advocacy.

Our research based programs feature:

- K-6 Student - Teacher Ratio: 6:1
- Middle School Student - Teacher Ratio: 12:1
- Multisensory Academic Program
- Orton-Gillingham Reading
- Daily Two Hour Literacy Block
- Saxon Math® and Making Math Real®
- Metacognition and Executive Function Supports
- One-to-One Student Technology Initiative

2016 Open House Dates

Feb. 3 • March 2 • April 6 • May 4, 2016



2 Bishop Hollow Rd. | Newtown Square, PA 19073 | 610.355.9580 | www.stratfordfriends.org



Serving students from early childhood through grade 12.

If you want your child to master knowledge, not just memorize it, come here.

If you believe creativity is more powerful than conformity, come here.

Inspiration is the key to preparing our children for the future.

Come explore all that Kimberton Waldorf School has to offer. Schedule a tour today.

KIMBERTON
WALDORF SCHOOL
THE ART OF EDUCATION

610-933-3635 x108
www.kimberton.org
admissions@kimberton.org
410 West Seven Stars Road
Phoenixville, PA 19460



From China
to Delaware
to Australia

Tower Hill students are going places.

Xinya "Cinderella" Teng from Beijing enrolled at Tower Hill for a global education, which then took her to Australia with our summer cultural exchange. At Tower Hill, language instruction begins in preschool, international travel starts in middle school, and a global perspective throughout the curriculum prepares all of our students for active engagement in a dynamic world. Schedule a personal tour by calling 302-657-8350.

TOWER HILL SCHOOL

2813 West 17th Street, Wilmington, DE 19806 towerhill.org Age 3 - Grade 12



VILLA MARIA ACADEMY GIRLS K-8TH GRADE CO-ED PRESCHOOL 3 & 4



VISIT TO VILLA

March 9, 2016

Session begins at 9:30 a.m.

R.S.V.P. at villamaria.org

1140 King Rd., Immaculata, PA 19345

(610) 644-4864

Quaker matters. Come see why.

OPEN HOUSE

Preschool - 5th grade
April 9 from 9 to 11am



Call 302.576.2930 or visit wilmingtonfriends.org to register for an Open House or to customize your tour.

Ask about our
Early Learning Center
and Reggio Emilia.



Royer-Greaves School
118 S. Valley Rd.
610-644-1810; Royer-Greaves.org



Royer-Greaves is a small PA-approved private school, serving students Pre-K-12 with complex educational needs, such as those that result from medical, vision, hearing, or physical impairments. Located in suburban Paoli in northern Chester County, their family and home-like environment provides each student specialized instruction with skilled teachers, therapists, focusing on the whole child. Admissions are year round.

Call to schedule a personal tour

DELAWARE

Centreville

Centreville Layton School
6201 Kennett Pk.
302-571-0230

CentrevilleLayton.org

Centreville Layton School offers a rigorous educational and cultural experience for students who learn differently. The program identifies academic and social needs of the individual and provides a curriculum that focuses on problem solving and critical thinking. Through intervention and strengthening learning strategies, the school empowers each student to reach his or her potential. Grades PreK-12.

First Wed. each month from 9 to 11



EDUCATION SERVICES

PENNSYLVANIA

Plymouth Meeting

P.A.I.S.
37 E. Germantown Pk.
302
610-567-2960

paispa.org

Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools' accreditation is a family's assurance that the school meets standards of excellence in administration, program, personnel, health and safety, and physical facilities. Member schools provide academic excellence, value the arts and athletics, and prepare students for a global society. PAIS is approved by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education to accredit schools in the Commonwealth. ♦

You can visit CountyLinesMagazine.com for Open House updates throughout the school year.



What if
her teachers
found her
spark
before she
knew how to
tie her shoes?

With over 215 years of experience, Westtown delivers a transformative, college prep education to students in grades Pre-K through 12.

- ♦ Emphasizing academic excellence, service and reflection
- ♦ Featuring programs such as Action Based Education and Global Leadership
- ♦ Inspiring graduates who are prepared to be stewards and leaders of a better world

For more information: admissions@westtown.edu
or 610.399.7900

Lower School
STEAM Day
at Westtown School
Sunday, April 24th
Free admission
for 2nd - 5th graders
Registration Required
[www.westtown.edu/
communityevents](http://www.westtown.edu/communityevents)



WESTTOWN SCHOOL

Spirited Quaker education since 1799

The Wyndcroft School

An Excellent Education in a Nurturing Setting for students
in Early Childhood through 8th Grade



Join us for an Open House on Sunday, Feb. 21 at 1:00 p.m.



1395 Wilson Street, Pottstown, PA 19464

(610) 326-0544 - www.wyndcroft.org



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EVERY TUESDAY!
@COUNTYLINESMAGAZINE

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COUNTY LINES
MAGAZINE

f t p i



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Rigorous academics.
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Inspiring future leaders since 1785.



The Episcopal Academy
Independent | Pre-K through 12 | Co-ed | Day School
www.episcopalacademy.org

Discover The Episcopal Academy at our
OPEN HOUSE: Tuesday, April 19 at 7 p.m.

BOURBON IS BOOMING!

Laurel Anderson

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT IT?

AS THE ONLY TRUE NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRIT, bourbon is enjoying a boom in popularity. Pennsylvania's Fine Wine and Good Spirits expert, Jane Merritt, says the surge started two to three years ago, citing bourbon's approachability and sweeter taste (it's made from corn, the sweetest grain). Craft distilling, the resurgence of cocktails, and interest of both younger and female drinkers—who are less fond of smoky, peaty scotch—have all added to its growing fame.

So what is it about bourbon—this barrel-aged, corn-based, distilled spirit beloved by Southerners—that makes it America's number one exported spirit (about two-thirds of total exports, amounting to \$1 billion)? It's also the number two choice in Pennsylvania—after vodka and before flavored vodka. In fact, some high-end bourbon is so popular here that there's a lottery when the famed Pappy Van Winkle is released in the fall.

Made in the USA

The short course: All bourbon is whiskey, but not all whiskey is bourbon. There's Tennessee whiskey, Canadian whiskey and rye, plus Irish whiskey and Scotch whisky (without an e), to name a few popular styles.



And bourbon whiskey is regulated by U.S. law. These regulations arose, in part, because distillers had adulterated, diluted and tampered with their whiskies.

By federal regulation, bourbon made for the U.S. market must be: 1) made in the U.S., 2) made from at least 51% corn, 3) aged in new, charred oak barrels, and 4) distilled to no more than 160 proof, placed in the barrel at no more than 125 proof, and bottled at 80 proof or more. (If you check the Code of Federal Regulations, please do so while sipping some bourbon.)

The regulations produce some interesting consequences. Although any state can produce bourbon, 95% is made in Kentucky. And while bourbon must have at least 51% corn, most distillers use 67 to 75% corn for a sweeter taste. The remainder of the mash can be other grains, though most are a mix of rye (richer and spicier than corn), wheat and even barley.

Bourbon must be aged in *new*, charred oak barrels, so the old barrels have found many uses—aging scotch and tequila, fermenting beer, storing coffee, tobacco and maple syrup. Some sources say the used 53-gallon barrels trap three to five gallons of bourbon in the wood, adding extra flavor to the new contents.

Ah, the benefits of being green!

Finally, you'll note there's no minimum time required for aging. And there's no requirement that bourbon older than four years have an age printed on the label. Any age you see is the age of the youngest bourbon in the mix. And to oversimplify grandly, the warmer climate of Kentucky, as compared with Scotland, is a reason bourbon ages quickly.

How to Enjoy Bourbon

Responsibly. But there's more ...

Decide if you're going to try straight bourbon—from a single batch, aged two years (unlike scotch, there's not much blended bourbon)—or cask-strength bourbon, also known as barrel-proof bourbon, which is undiluted and can range up to 124 proof. Other choices include single barrel or small batch bourbon, the later made from a small number of select barrels, not just one.

Consider cocktails. You may want to start your bourbon exploration with the classics—a Manhattan (sweet vermouth, bitters, straight up with a maraschino cherry), Old Fashioned (simple syrup, bitters, on ice with orange wedge), or Mint Julep (simple syrup, crushed mint, over crushed ice in a



silver cup). That should cover the basics.

For sipping bourbon, our expert Jane Merritt recommends you cool the dark liquor and add a drop of spring water (I'd hoped she'd say branch water). The cooling creates a chemical change that enhances the flavors, and Merritt is a fan of liquor stones to cool and not dilute the precious elixir. She recommends trying a variety of styles and price points to experience different tastes and see what appeals to you. And, perhaps, your friends.

If you're looking for a bourbon guide, try Fred Minnick, *Wall Street Journal* writer

and author of *Bourbon Curious: A Simple-Tasting Guide for the Savvy Drinker*. Minnick covers about 50 bourbons and breaks down the flavors into four categories—grain, caramel, cinnamon and nutmeg—to guide your tasting. In our tastings, we also noted vanilla, toffee and smoky notes.

Or you can sample bourbon in your cooking. It's great in desserts (pecan pie, bourbon balls), in BBQ sauces, and cooking glazed ham or pork loin. Your southern friends can likely share family recipes.

February is a great month for exploring bourbon. Especially on that extra day. ♦

FUN BOURBON FACTS

The first fun fact is that America's Test Kitchen developed a three-ingredient hack to instantly "age" cheap bourbon. Check our website for the secret process. Here's some material for you to drop into your bourbon tasting conversations.

- The name has been attributed to the French Bourbon dynasty, Bourbon County, Kentucky and Bourbon Street in New Orleans.
- There are more barrels of bourbon than people in Kentucky.
- The Kentucky Derby's official mint julep is *not* made with bourbon, but with Early Times Whiskey.
- Tennessee whiskey, like Jack Daniels, is essentially bourbon that's been filtered through sugar-maple charcoal, making it even sweeter. But still not bourbon.
- During World War II, bourbon distilleries were repurposed to produce penicillin, which required fermentation.
- September was *unanimously* declared National Bourbon Heritage Month by the U.S. Senate in 2007.
- The Bourbon Hall of Fame includes

President Howard Taft, Senator Wendell Ford and several Beams (think Jim Beam, the top-selling straight bourbon).

- Elijah Craig is generally credited with inventing bourbon in 1789. Ironically, he was a Baptist minister.
- About 30% of bourbon drinkers are women, and women drinkers increased over 50% since 2011.
- Angel's share is the amount of bourbon lost to evaporation or soaking into the wood during aging.
- Pappy Van Winkle bourbon—with its cult-like following, Pappy Tracker app and \$65 tab for a 2-oz. shot at a bar—was the subject of a major heist in 2013. Nine were recently indicted, and bourbon fans are pleading that the recovered bottles not be destroyed, but to "Pardon the Pappy."



Blackboard Brews. Attention craft beer enthusiasts! **Victory Brewing Company** brings the culinary concept of blackboard specials to bottle and tap with their **2016 Blackboard Series**. Every three months an audacious new beer will be released using seasonal ingredients and alternating bottle and draft availability. Up first: Agave IPA with Grapefruit—a crisp and refreshing winter fruit beer—available in 4-packs through March. Stay tuned in April for their next creation. More at VictoryBeer.com.



Eat Your Heart Out. Craving even more restaurants in West Chester—beyond Malcolm Johnstone’s picks in our January issue? The Borough doesn’t disappoint, with more new spots for 2016. Try **The Mediterranean Bakery**, right next door to the original on Gay St., for homemade baked goods. Be on the lookout for **Restaurant 51’s** opening at the West Chester Fire Company’s former home on Church St. And keep your eyes peeled for **The Marquee at The Hotel Warner**, a new restaurant/bar combo opening soon on High St. More at DowntownWestChester.com.



Literally Farm to Table. Ever wondered how the meat you eat goes from the animal to your dinner plate? **Wyebrook Farm’s** new classes show you the behind-the-scenes process. Learn the fine art of butchering and making charcuterie and sausage—complete with demonstrations and a farm tour. A perfect foodie outing! Limited spaces available, so

hurry before they fill up. *150 Wyebrook Rd., Honey Brook; 610-942-7481. WyebrookFarm.com.*



An Amish Opening. After months of waiting, the **Westtown Amish Market** is finally here! At the intersection of Routes 202 and 926 in its 25,000-square-foot home, this community favorite is already packed. Farm fresh meat, rotisserie chicken, crab cakes—just a few things to pick up as you browse the booths of Amish goodies. *Open Thurs. through Sat. 1165 Wilmington Pk., West Chester; 610-492-5700, On Facebook.*



Wait For It In Wayne. Wayne has another new restaurant popping up in Peppercorn’s former home in Eagle Village Shops. **Autograph Brasserie** is the latest addition to Marty Grims’ restaurant creations, including the ever-popular White Dog Cafés. Autograph will have a New American feel with Chef Ralph Patrick Fernandez overseeing the kitchen. Watch for their opening, planned for this month! Follow their progress on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/AutographBrasserie) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/AutographBrasserie).

Cuban Food

Laura Muzzi Brennan

You don’t have to travel far for the flavors of Cuba.

LAST YEAR, WHEN THE UNITED STATES and Cuba reestablished diplomatic relations, many Americans traveled to Cuba for the first time. I was not among them. So I decided to explore this Caribbean island from the comfort of my kitchen with Chef David Gear as my tour guide.

In his role as executive chef at Seasons Culinary Services, a boutique food service management and catering company, Gear calls on techniques and ingredients of various world cuisines to create inventive, flavorful dishes. When I caught up with him, he’d just taught “The Cuban Table” through Albertson’s Cooking School and Main Line School Night.

“Cuban food is peasant food,” explains Gear. “It’s got lots of influences—African, Spanish, Chinese—and while it’s often salty, sweet or bitter, it’s generally not spicy.” He also emphasizes that although Cuban, Mexican and other Latin and Caribbean cuisines share similarities, they have their own unique identities.

Cases in point: Cuban food is not “tortilla-driven,” and it generally does not rely on fresh herbs. It also often uses plantains when they are green and therefore more savory than sweet—like a potato with banana essence.

In his classes, Gear introduces students to Cuban food’s two main flavor profiles—sofrito and mojo (also called mojito). While every Cuban cook puts a personal



Plantains



Coconut Rice Pudding

twist on these flavor combinations, sofrito usually includes onions, garlic, sweet or hot pepper, tomatoes, cumin and bay leaves. Mojo incorporates sour orange juice (or a mix of orange and lime juices), garlic, olive oil and oregano. In addition, warming spices—like clove and nutmeg as well as capers, olives and raisins—add depth and complexity

to numerous Cuban dishes.

As for the main ingredients, let’s just say carnivores find a lot to love on Cuban plates. Chicken, pork and goat are mainstays as are many inexpensive, lean cuts of beef that take kindly to braising. The popular ropa vieja (“old clothes”) is made with flank or skirt steak, cooked low and slow then shredded. Gear’s favorite is brisket cooked for 14 to 16 hours, yielding tender meat and a rich broth. And a Cuban meal would be incomplete without frijoles negros (black beans) and arroz (rice).

For a sweet finish, plain desserts—what many think of as comfort foods—top the list. There’s tres leches cake, (“three milks”), flans (rich egg custards) and many versions of arroz con leche (rice pudding).

Whether you take a plane or travel by way of your kitchen table, the flavors of Cuba are worth a trip.



Chef David Gear

Cuban-Style Chicken Fricassee

You can find fricassees in many cultures, but this chicken stew showcases mojo, a marinade central to Cuban cuisine. Recipe courtesy of David Grear, Seasons.

1/3 C. fresh lime juice
1/3 C. fresh orange juice
5 cloves garlic, lightly smashed
Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste
6 chicken thighs, 1 per person
3 oz. oil
1 green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and thinly sliced
1 white onion, thinly sliced
1 C. semi-sweet white wine such as an Argentinian sauvignon blanc
1 lb. Yukon potatoes, peeled and cut into medium-size pieces
1/3 cup pimento-stuffed queen olives
2 Tb. capers
1/4 C. raisins
1, 28-oz. can plum tomatoes, chopped
1/2 C. chicken stock
1 C. frozen peas

In a bowl, stir together lime and orange juices, garlic, salt and pepper. Add chicken and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Heat oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Remove chicken from marinade; pat dry using paper towels. Reserve marinade.

Sauté chicken until browned, 3–4 minutes per side. Transfer chicken to a plate.

Add the pepper and onion to the pan and cook until onion is translucent, 3–5 minutes. Add wine and cook, scraping up everything from the bottom of the pan, until it has reduced by half, 3–6 minutes.

Put chicken back into the pan and add the rest of the marinade, potatoes, olives, capers, raisins, tomatoes, salt, pepper and stock. Reduce the heat to low and cook, until chicken and potatoes are tender, about 12–15 minutes.

Stir in peas at the last minute. Serve over rice.

Makes 6 servings.

Ropa Vieja

This dish is tailor-made for the slow cooker. Its name (“old clothes”) refers to the tattered look of the steak after it’s been cooked and shredded.

2 lbs. flank steak

1 1/2 Tb. Adobo seasoning*
3 oz. tomato paste
1/4 C. plus 1 Tb. red wine vinegar
1 C. beef broth
1/2 tsp. cumin
Salt and pepper, to taste
5 large garlic cloves, roughly chopped
1 red pepper, cut into strips
1 green pepper, cut into strips
1 large onion, cut in half and sliced into 1/4” pieces
1/2 C. green olives (with or without pimentos)
*I used Goya brand Adobo with Pepper.



Rub the flank steak on both sides with Adobo. Allow to sit for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk together tomato paste, vinegar, beef broth and cumin. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Place flank steak in slow cooker. Scatter garlic cloves on top. Then add peppers and onions. Pour in tomato sauce mixture. Cook on high for 4 hours.

Using two forks, shred beef. (You can do this right in your slow cooker.) If beef doesn’t shred easily, cook it another 1/2 hour or more.

Turn heat to warm and let sit for 15 minutes or more. Mix in olives. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve over rice.

Makes 6 servings.

Cuban Tres Leches Cake

This cake (meaning “three milks”) is popular in Cuba and many other Latin countries with recipes passed down from generation to generation. Here is Chef David Grear’s version of the classic.

For the cake:

Butter for greasing pan

1 C. sugar

6 large eggs, separated (3 of the whites will be reserved for meringue topping)

1/3 C. coconut milk
3/4 tsp. vanilla extract
1 C. all-purpose flour
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
3/4 tsp. cream of tartar

For milk syrup:

1, 12-oz. can evaporated milk
1 C. sweetened condensed milk
1 C. heavy cream
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 Tb. dark rum

For the meringue topping:

3 reserved egg whites (see cake above)

3/4 C. white sugar

1/4 C. water

2 Tb. sugar

To make the cake:

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter a 13x9” baking dish.

In a large bowl, beat 3/4 C. sugar and all 6 egg yolks until they are fluffy, about 7 minutes. Fold in the coconut milk, vanilla, flour and baking powder.

In another bowl, beat 3 egg whites to soft peaks, adding the cream of tartar after a minute. Slowly add the remaining 1/4 C. sugar and continue beating until the egg whites are firm.

Fold the white mixture into the yolk mixture. Pour the batter into the baking dish.

Bake the cake until it’s firm and a toothpick comes out clean, about 35–45 minutes. Let the cake cool completely. Unmold onto a platter. Pierce the cake all over with a fork or toothpick.

To make milk syrup:

Combine evaporated milk, condensed milk, heavy cream, vanilla and rum in a bowl. Whisk together. Pour the syrup over the cake.

To make the meringue topping:

Place 3/4 C. sugar in a heavy saucepan with 1/4 C. water. Cook on high heat to the soft ball stage (240° on a candy thermometer) about 8–10 minutes.

Meanwhile, beat the 3 remaining egg whites to soft peaks. Add the 2 Tb. sugar and continue beating to stiff peaks.

Pour the boiling sugar syrup in a slow stream into the stiff egg whites. Continue beating until the mixture is cool to the touch. Hot syrup cooks the egg whites.

Using a spatula, spread the top and sides of the cake with a thick layer of the meringue. Refrigerate the cake for a few hours before serving.

Makes 8 servings.

Cuban-Stuffed Pork Chops

What’s better than a Cuban sandwich? A Cuban sandwich stuffed inside a pork chop! Chef David Grear pays homage to Cubans’ love of pork in this inventive dish.

1 C. fresh orange juice
1/4 C. fresh lime juice
1/4 C. lemon juice
2 Tb. fresh oregano
8 garlic cloves, chopped
1 Tb. ground cumin
3 Tb. palm or brown sugar
1/4 C. oil (cook’s choice but **not** olive oil)
4, 5-oz. pork chops, pounded thin, about 1/4”
Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste
1 Tb. Dijon mustard
8 slices Swiss cheese
8 slices ham
2 dill pickles, sliced thin
Oil as needed to cook cutlets
2 Tb. cilantro leaves and stems, chopped

In a bowl, stir together orange juice, lime juice, lemon juice, oregano, garlic, cumin, sugar and 1/4 C. oil.

Add the pork and coat all the cutlets. Refrigerate and let them marinate for at least 2 hours.

Take the pork cutlets out of the marinade and pat dry. Reserve marinade.

Put the cutlets on a table and season them with salt and pepper. Paint one side of each cutlet with Dijon mustard.

On the mustard-painted side, place a piece of Swiss cheese, 2 pieces of ham, a couple pieces of pickle and another piece of cheese.

Fold one side over to the other to make a half moon shape. Repeat with the rest of the ingredients until they are all used. Season with salt and pepper.

Put a little oil into a sauté pan. Add cutlets and cook 2–3 minutes on each side until they are browned and the cheese is melted. Remove from pan.

Add reserved marinade and cilantro to the sauté pan you used to cook cutlets.

Bring to a boil. Season with salt and pepper as needed and pour over cutlets.

Makes 4 servings.

Ham Croquettes

Crispy on the outside and soft in the center, these croquettes deliver a big ham flavor and are very filling. You can also substitute cooked chicken. I adapted the recipe from Martha Cortina’s Authentic Cuban Cooking.



1 1/2 Tb. butter
1 Tb. finely chopped onion
1/4 C. flour
1/2 C. whole milk, room temperature or warmed
1/4 tsp. salt
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 lb. ground ham
2 Tb. finely chopped parsley
Garlic salt to taste
2 eggs, beaten
1 1/2 C. breadcrumbs
Oil for frying (I used canola.)

Melt butter over medium heat and cook onion for a minute. Do not let onion brown. Add flour and stir to combine. Whisk in milk, salt and pepper and cook until the consistency is very thick and resembles mashed potatoes.

In a large bowl, combine “mashed potatoes” with ham, parsley and garlic salt. Cover and refrigerate for 15–30 minutes so mixture will be cold enough to hold its shape.

Shape into 8–10 cylinders (about 3” long and 1” thick). Roll in bread crumbs, egg and in bread crumbs again. Place on a plate, cover with plastic wrap and freeze for 1/2 hour.

In a large skillet, heat 1/4” oil to 350°. Fry croquettes until golden. To make sure you end up with crispy exteriors, do not over-

crowd the pan. (You’ll probably have to do two batches.) Drain on paper towels.

Makes 8–10 croquettes.

Piñon (Cuban-style meat and plantain pie)

This Latin “lasagna” is also popular in Puerto Rico. The recipe comes courtesy of my friend, Sarah Lopez. In addition to seasoning with salt and pepper, Sarah sometimes adds Goya’s Adobo, Sazon, or Ham Concentrate.

For the filling:

2 lbs. lean ground meat (beef or pork)
2 medium onions, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
2, 14-oz. cans chopped tomatoes
1/2 C. pimento-stuffed olives, cut in half
Generous 1/2 C. raisins
4 garlic cloves (or more to taste), finely chopped
2 Tb. ground cumin
2 tsp. crushed oregano
Salt, pepper and seasoning, to taste (see headnote)

For the plantains:

6 ripe plantains (yellow with dark spots) or frozen (El Sembrador brand is good.)
1/3–1/2 C. olive or canola oil

For assembly:

4–5 eggs
2 Tb. water
1 lb. grated white cheese (Cotija and farmer’s cheese both work)

To make the filling:

Heat a large nonstick skillet and crumble meat into it. Cook over medium high heat, stirring and breaking up any clumps, until no longer pink, about 5 minutes.

Add onion and bell peppers and stirring frequently, cook until vegetables are softened, juices evaporate and meat browns, about 6 minutes. Stir in tomatoes with reserved juice, olives, raisins, garlic, cumin, oregano and seasoning to taste.

Simmer, partially covered and stirring occasionally, until most of the liquid evaporates, about 30 minutes. Cook filling uncovered. (Filling may be made 2 days in advance, covered and refrigerated.)

To make the plantains:

Cut ends from plantains and peel. Diagonally cut plantains into 1/3”-thick slices.

In a large nonstick skillet, heat ⅓ C. oil over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking.

Sauté plantains in batches, without crowding, until golden brown, 1–2 minutes per side. Add remaining oil to skillet as necessary. With a slotted spatula, transfer plantains to paper towels to drain.

To assemble:

Preheat oven to 350°. Oil a 9x11" (about 1½" deep) baking dish.

In small bowl, beat together eggs and water. Pour half of mixture into baking dish, tilting to coat bottom and sides.

Tightly layer one-third of the plantains over the bottom of the baking dish. Spread half of meat filling on top and sprinkle with half of cheese. Arrange half of remaining plantains on top. Then top with the rest of the meat filling and then the rest of the cheese. Top pie with remaining plantains. Pour the rest of the egg mixture over the top, tilting dish so egg spreads to the edges.

Cover with foil and bake in the middle of the oven until heated through and bub-

bling at edges, about 1 hour.

Makes 8 servings.

Coconut Rice Pudding

I adapted this recipe from the cookbook Three Guys from Miami Celebrate Cuban.

2 C. uncooked white rice

4 C. water

6–8 (or more) very thin 1–2" ribbons of lemon zest

2 cinnamon sticks

½ tsp. salt

2 C. unsweetened coconut milk

3 C. whole milk

1 C. sweetened coconut flakes

¾–1 C. sugar

2 C. whipping cream

1 mango

Combine rice, water, lemon zest ribbons, cinnamon sticks and salt in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook uncovered until rice is soft. Remove cinnamon sticks.

Stir in the coconut milk, whole milk, coconut flakes and sugar. Stirring frequently, cook on very low heat for an

hour until liquid is absorbed.

Stir in the cream and heat through.

Top with thin mango slices or cubes.

Makes 8–10 servings. ♦

Laura traces her love of all things culinary to the first time she leafed through her mother's Betty Crocker's Cooky Book—which still occupies a place of honor among her 600+ cookbooks. A passionate supporter of local food, she co-founded a farmers market, judges area food contests, and anticipates restaurant openings with the excitement most people reserve for winning a Mega Millions jackpot.



For more great recipes visit
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talking with

The Property Brothers, HGTV

Even those who aren't hard-core HGTV fans have likely heard of the Property Brothers, Jonathan and Drew Scott. These identical twins—a realtor and a licensed contractor—help couples find, buy, remodel and transform extreme fixer-uppers into their ultimate dream homes on time and on budget, using CGI (computer generated images) to show images of what could be. If you missed them at January's Philadelphia Home + Garden Show, catch one of their TV shows, *Property Brothers, Buying & Selling, Brother vs. Brother*. They were kind enough to share some home improvement advice with us.



Everyone wants to update their living space. What's the easiest way to do that?

We can't stress enough how important decluttering is in a space. You have to make sure that your furniture pieces aren't too big for the room and that your paint palette isn't too dark, as that makes a space feel smaller.

When renovating, what part of the home do people tend to neglect the most?

The master bedroom is typically the last room to be considered for a reno because the focus is always on the 'entertaining' areas. That's kinda crazy to me because the homeowner should have a wonderful, relaxing oasis to kick back in at the end of the day. We always put everybody else's needs ahead of our own. That needs to stop. Put in that amazing soaker tub. How about a fireplace in the master? Or even a massive walk-in closet to admire your shoe collection.

Is there a remodeling project that should generally be done by a professional?

Anytime you're doing major electrical, plumbing or structural ... use a professional. These are areas where one small mistake could cost thousands of dollars or worse yet put the occupant's life in danger.

What project can most homeowners tackle themselves?

If you're tired of staring at a boring blank wall in your living room, take on a fun weekend project to install a reclaimed wood feature. You can buy a reclaimed wood veneer product that comes with adhesive on the back. Or to save some money, you can buy real reclaimed wood that has been processed and is ready to install. Or to save even MORE money, you can find real rough reclaimed wood and prep it yourself with a wire brush. It's a beautiful feature and fairly easy to install.

Do you have a favorite type of home improvement project?

We absolutely love outdoor living spaces. It's a great way to add livable square footage without doing an actual addition. Nothing beats kicking back with friends around a fire pit.

What's the best part about what you do?

The most rewarding part is when homeowners throw their arms around us and say thank you for helping them do what they would never have been able to do on their own. Oh, and the demolition part is a lot of fun too.

If homeowners need to tackle one project at a time, what's the best place to start—what room or what project?

Start with the areas that will make your life easier. Kitchen if you like to entertain or always prepare family meals. Basement with bathroom if you need more space for the kids. Expanded laundry if you're struggling to keep up.

What's your best tip for staying within budget?

Organization is key. Plan everything in advance. Look for deals on all materials and fixtures well before you need them. Otherwise you are at the mercy of the retail price at that time.

What's your best advice for finding the right home?

Location. You can do anything you want to improve a home ... but you can't upgrade your community. So never turn a blind eye to things like an airport or train in behind the property. ♦



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The Agnes Irwin School	62	Delaware Co. Christian School	60	Main Street Cabinet.....	42
Alegacy Furniture.....	23	Delaware Valley Friends School.....	68	Martin Appliance	35
Angel Companions.....	31	Devereux.....	64, 68	Media-Providence Friends School	75
Archmere Academy	64	Devin Campbell Photography	43	Nittany Valley Offset.....	86
B & D Builders.....	41	Devon Preparatory School	71	Penn Medicine	
The Baldwin School	63	The Devon Senior Living.....	6	Chester County Hospital	4
Ball & Ball.....	27	Dilworth's Custom Design, Inc.....	22	PA Assoc. of Independent Schools.....	21
Bayada Home Health Care	31	Dutchie's Stone Works, LLC	35	PA Cyber Charter School	75
Benchmark School.....	71	E.C. Trethewey Building Contractors, Inc.....	11	Royer-Greaves School	63
Berkshire Hathaway Fox Roach /		The Episcopal Academy	77	Saint Agnes School	71
Country Properties.....	9	Fairville Friends School.....	72	Somethings Unique.....	16
Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate...	30	Flowing Springs Landscape Design	35	Stoltzfus Enterprises Ltd.....	5
Bishop Shanahan High School	67	Friends School Haverford.....	72	Stratford Friends School.....	74
The Book Agency at Farmers Insurance.....	12	Gateway Medical Associates.....	8	Sugarbridge Kitchens & Baths	back cover
Brandywine Fine Prop./Sotheby's /		General Warren.....	84	Sylvan Stoltzfus Builders LLC.....	27
K. Nader, B. Jones.....	7	Griffiths Construction, Inc.	24	Tower Hill School.....	75
Centreville Layton School	72	Heritage Design Interiors, Inc	37	Villa Maria Academy High School	72
Chester County Hearth & Home.....	26	Holy Child Academy	71	Villa Maria Academy	76
Chester Co. Historical Society		Holy Child School at Rosemont.....	60	Walter J. Cook Jeweler	12
Antiques Show	18	Hugh Lofting Timber Framing	34	Waterbury Kitchen & Bath	87
Chester County Library	16	Key Financial, Inc.....	3	Welcome Neighbor	86
Christopher Chocolates / Fine Foods	84	Kimberton Waldorf School.....	75	Westtown School.....	77
James A. Cochrane, Realtor	30	King Construction.....	25	White Horse Construction, Inc.	35
Country Day School of the Sacred Heart	62	Lennar Homes / Town Centre Crossing	15	Wilmington Friends School	76
Creative Nook	2	Madsen Kitchens & Bathrooms.....	41	The Wyndcroft School	76

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