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WORTH THE TRIP

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Evansville provides welcome distractions close to home



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photographed by  
Angela Jackson

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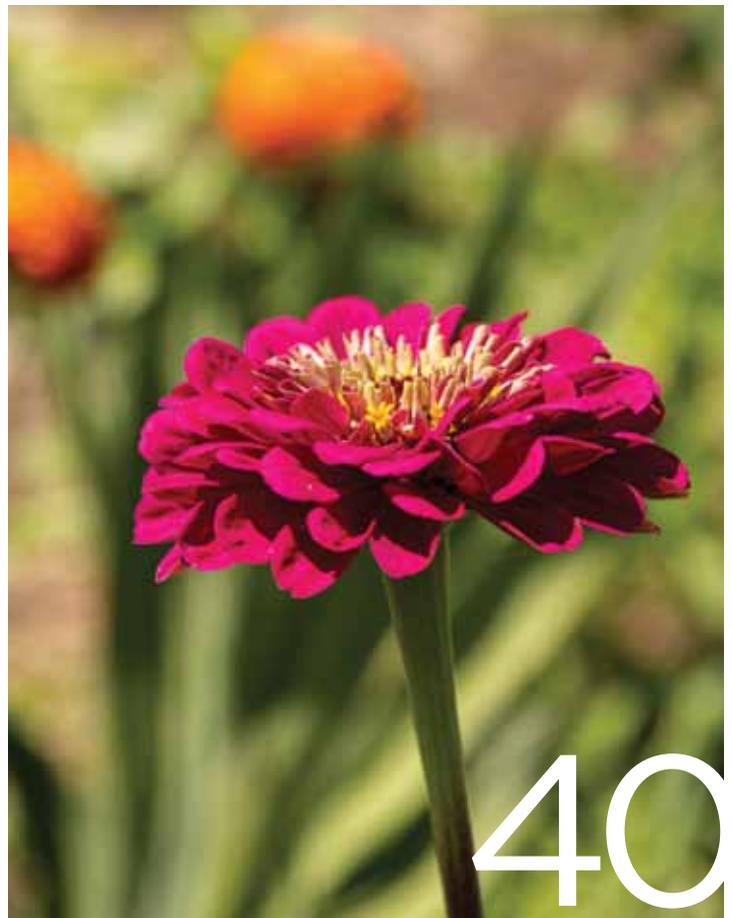
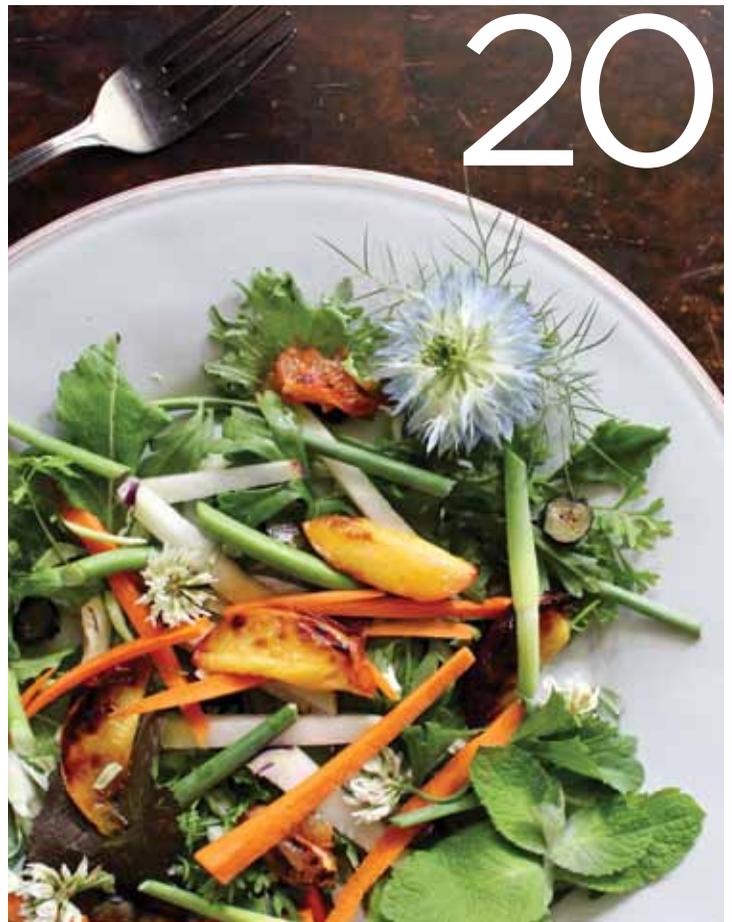
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# COLUMBUS

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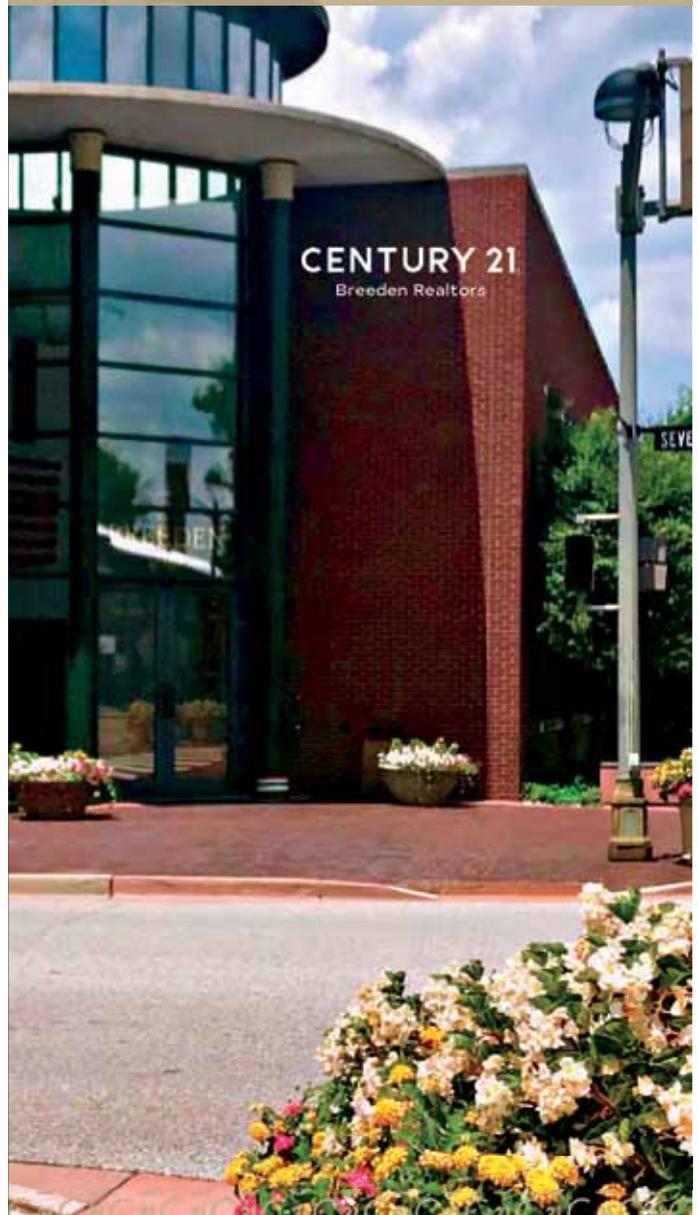
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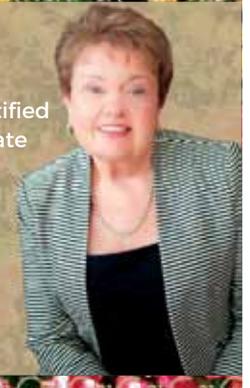
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## Hello from me and Eli!

In my last editor's note I talked about being on "vacation" for 12 weeks for maternity leave. I anticipated these weeks to be full of joy and challenges, and I was not wrong. I spent months preparing for Eli to be here. I read articles, listened to podcasts and watched countless videos, but nothing can really prepare you for what it's actually like to care for a newborn.

They aren't kidding when they call the first three months the fourth trimester. This period is called the fourth trimester because babies are entirely dependent on their parents. I was expecting a baby that was entirely dependent on me, but not to the extent that my son is. I can't put him down for five minutes without him screaming his head off, he breastfeeds nearly every hour and refuses to sleep anywhere but my arms (we are going to have to kick that habit soon). I barely get any time to myself. I'm lucky to sneak in a shower before my husband gets home from work.

I think the hardest part of this period is that he is learning how to communicate with us, and we are learning to understand him. Learning his cues for being hungry, tired or just wanting to be picked up has been a bit of a challenge. Especially since Eli wants to eat nonstop. He's doing this thing called cluster feeding where he eats nearly every hour instead of the normal two to three hours. It's apparently supposed to signal my body to produce more milk for him, but all it's getting me is 3 hours of sleep a day. But hey, since I only get 3 hours of sleep, I have plenty of time to watch all the TV shows and movies I want. I've watched so much TV lately that I have resorted to picking random shows on Netflix and hoping they aren't terrible.

Aside from the sleep deprivation, constant breastfeeding and lack of time to myself, the first 6 weeks of Eli's life have also been full of joy. The first moment I saw him I was filled with so much happiness. I was so happy to finally meet him and to finally be relieved of labor pain.

Since his first day of life, I've enjoyed seeing him grow and seeing some of his firsts like the first time he smiled and the first time he giggled in his sleep. I've also enjoyed seeing him get to meet my family and friends over these first few weeks. There will be many more firsts as he grows up and I am so excited to see them.

I hope you're getting more sleep than I am, but while you're awake, read about Beth Stroh's work at Viewpoint Books, delicious fruit choices for hot summer days, the local community garden and what you can do for fun in Evansville.



*Keely*  
Keely Spitler

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In each issue of Columbus, we ask people for their opinions on a variety of topics. This month's question:

# If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?



I would go to the Maldives because I love scuba diving and that is supposed to be one of the best places in the world for it.  
— *David Leach and Holly*



If I could travel anywhere in the world I would go to Cancun, Mexico, because we have been twice and it is just paradise. I love the taquitos. They are tortillas with chicken in the middle and they put sour cream and pickled onions on top and they are so good!  
— *Sierra Agnew*



I would love to go to India. It is my home country first thing and second thing is I just love to shop over there. I have not been because of COVID and if we went he could see his grandparents.  
— *Ragha Nagineni with her son Seyon Chintam*



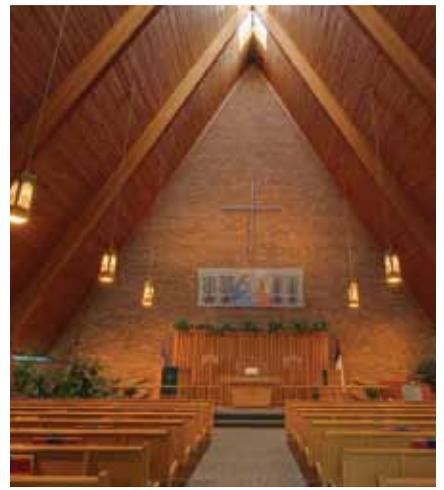
I would go to Tokyo, because I have never been to anywhere in Asia and I think it would be fun. I have a friend who grew up in Japan and I would take her so she could translate.  
— *Rachel Woods*



I would go the Amazon rainforest in Brazil where I would see one of the most ecologically dense places on earth.  
— *Tucker Lang*



I would go to Paris, France to see the Eiffel Tower.  
— *Kristen Thurman*



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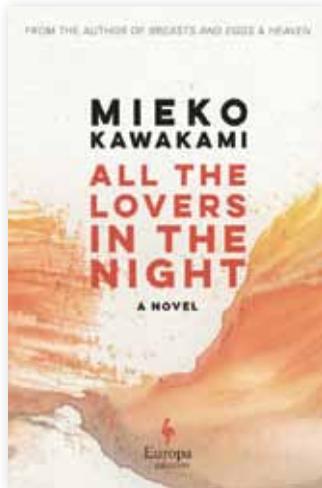
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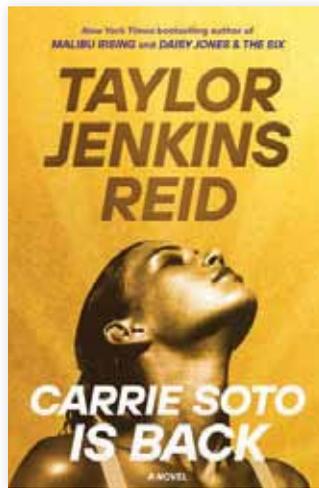


### “All the Lovers in the Night”

By Mieko Kawakami

This is one of the most interesting books I’ve ever read. I read most of it in a matter of hours; I simply could not put it down. I found myself completely captivated by the characters’ words and lives. There were moments when I read a line or paragraph and was left gaping. I loved the focus on relationships but not necessarily romance, which I found superbly refreshing. It made me remember how much a good book can affect you. I don’t think I’ll ever look at the word “light” in the same way.

— *Kylie Brooks*

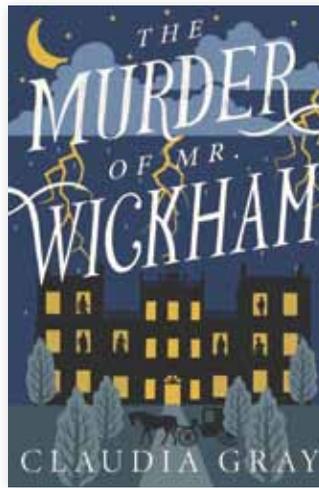


### “Carrie Soto Is Back”

By Taylor Jenkins Reid

Customer/staff favorite author and TikTok sensation Taylor Jenkins Reid is back with a novel about a legendary athlete who attempts a comeback when the world considers her past her prime. Carrie Soto was the best tennis player the world has ever seen. Six years after her retirement, she decides to return to the sport for one last year to reclaim her legacy. Did I mention there might even be a bit of a romantic side story with her trainer? What? You have no interest in a “sports story”? Well, have you really ever read a Taylor Jenkins Reid novel? You might learn a little bit about professional tennis, but I can promise you there will be drama, LOL moments, romance, family drama and a story that will grab your heart, make you cry, want to hang out with the characters, and then start messaging Reid for a sequel. “Carrie Soto Is Back” is a great end-of-summer, fun read — with substance. Releases August 30 by Ballantine Books. Pre-order now; we may have signed copies!

— *Nanne Cutler*

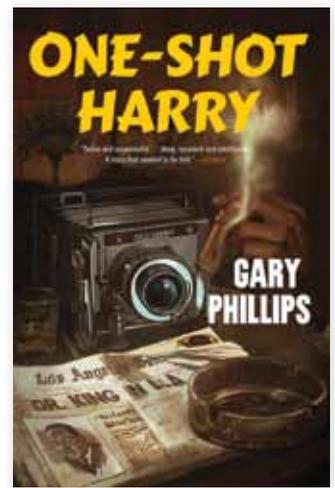


### “The Murder of Mr. Wickham”

By Claudia Gray

Jane Austen meets Agatha Christie meets the Hallmark channel. Imagine Austen’s most popular characters gathering for a house party. Each of the guests has a secret connection to the dastardly Mr. Wickham who shows up uninvited and ends up ... well, the title says it all. And as if that plot isn’t enough, in true Jane Austen fashion, there is a delightful romance budding between the next generation of Austen characters. This isn’t a “can’t put it down” thriller but rather a slow unveiling of convoluted clues, so it’s just right for poolside reading. It’s the perfect combination of great mystery and engaging sub-plot.

— *Suzanne Fountaine*

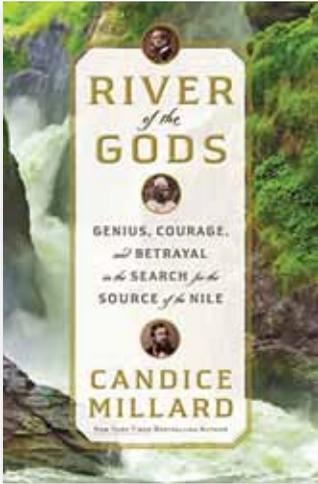


### “One-Shot Harry”

By Gary Phillips

Harry Ingram is an African American Korean War veteran who works as a news photographer and process server in 1963 Los Angeles. He learns of a fatal car crash involving a former army buddy of his. The police deem it an accident, but Harry is skeptical and sets out to find justice for his friend. There are many historical cameos which give insight into the turbulent and complex history of LA during the 1960s.

— *April Ginnings*

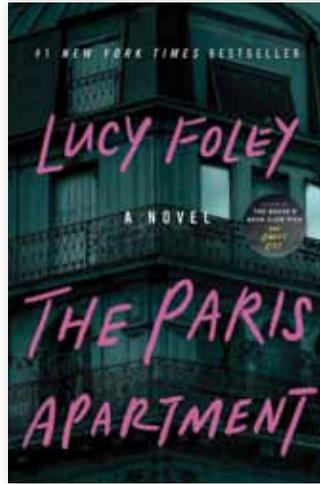


**“River of the Gods: Genius, Courage, and Betrayal in the Search for the Source of the Nile”**

By Candice Millard

With so many great, recently released fiction titles to choose from, how about selecting a non-fiction title to mix things up? Candice Millard’s latest, “River of the Gods: Genius, Courage, and Betrayal in the Search for the Source of the Nile”, delivers on all accounts. Follow the harrowing quest of Richard Burton and John Speke, who start out as friends and end up enemies. Like Millard’s earlier book, “The River of Doubt”, this book will take you on an adventure you won’t forget.

— Kate Stinebring



**“The Paris Apartment”**

By Lucy Foley

Lucy does not disappoint in her latest thriller, “The Paris Apartment.” Jess left her job in London under less-than-ideal circumstances. She contacts her stepbrother, Ben, in Paris to see if she can stay with him while she tries to get her life back together. He says yes but doesn’t seem very excited to hear from her. This isn’t the first time he has helped Jess out of a jam. When Jess arrives in Paris, she is astonished to see the elegant apartment he is living in. She is also baffled by the fact that he is not there. The tenants of the apartment building are an eclectic bunch: the rich couple that lives in the penthouse suite, the nice guy, the timid girl who won’t talk, the alcoholic, and the elderly caretaker. The longer Ben is missing, Jess realizes that these people know much more than they are telling her. When I read the ending to this book, I yelled out loud, “I did not see that one coming!” You do not want to miss this entertaining thrill ride!

— Kelli Stricklin

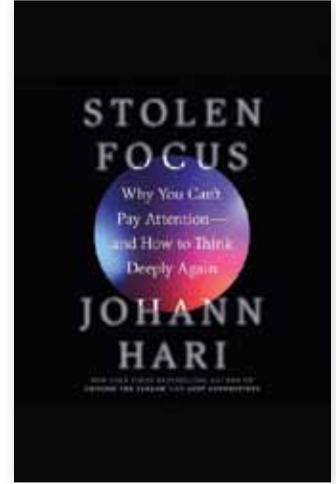


**“Lizzy and the Cloud”**

By The Fan Brothers

You can count on finding me sitting with a little girl — or two or three — on the wide cushioned swing, happily reading lots of children’s books all summer long! The Fan Brothers — Terry and Eric — are well-known to our family, and their most recent book is already an oft-requested favorite. “Lizzy and the Cloud” is a gorgeously illustrated, sweet story of a little girl who chooses a cloud as her pet. Members of the Cloud Appreciation Society (Yes! That’s a real group for people who love the sky!), the Fan Brothers have created a lovely and engaging picture book that reminds us to look for beauty in the ordinary and that sometimes the best way to love something is to let it float free.

— Beth Stroh



**“Stolen Focus: Why You Can’t Pay Attention – and How to Think Deeply Again”**

By Johann Hari

“Stolen Focus” by Johann Hari is getting some media buzz. Perhaps you heard Bari Weiss’s podcast with the author? We’re not even halfway through the year, and this is my pick for most important book of the year. I’ll go so far as to say that it should be required reading for ages high school and up. The good news? You’re probably NOT developing dementia. The bad news is that our attention spans have been hijacked, and technology is not the only culprit. Follow Hari through his “screen detox” and subsequent eye-opening research. I almost never subscribe blame to external factors without first looking at personal responsibility, but much of this book rings true. Time to focus, folks, and reclaim our ability to deeply noodle on ideas and solutions. (P.S. This is approachable nonfiction for all and a fantastic book group pick!)

— Polly Verbanic





# Summer Sips

BY BARNEY QUICK //  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANA JONES

Creative applications for fruit have flourished alongside those of other food groups. Juice creations, smoothies and waters flavored with fruit essences have been proliferating in recent times, and Columbus has certainly gotten in on the trend. Let's explore the possibilities for a tasty burst of concentrated nutrition to be found around the city.



## Agua Fresca

Fresh Take's line of agua frescas is one of the original offerings of this downtown establishment focused on healthy fare.

"We wanted to do something simple for us to make that would also be a delight for our customers," says manager Tucker Schwarz.

It's proven to be Fresh Take's most popular beverage.

Veronica Phillips makes them. The process involves cutting up fresh fruit and straining it, and adding that and simple syrup to water.

"Depending on what it is, we may add other seasonings," she says.

She changes the featured fruit once a week, but makes the Agua Fresca daily. Flavors she rotates include watermelon, banana, coconut (as well as a variation including key lime) and peach.

Fresh Take also offers Puck's soda and lemonades.





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## Jugolandia Lupilla

2171 State Street | (812) 964-4571

This unassuming little shop is part of a constellation of businesses clustered around State and Illinois streets on the city's east side. They're all owned by members of the same family and include a car repair shop, a hair salon, and a restaurant and bakery. The siblings, kids and parents all stop in to visit each other on a regular basis, and are usually ready to engage in conversation with visitors.

Jugolandia Lupilla gets its name from owner Lupe Mojica's nickname.

The emphasis is on visually arresting fruit creations. Along with such edible offerings as fresas con crema and pepinos al gusto, Lupe makes elaborate bouquets from fruit that are big sellers for occasions such as Mother's Day.

She sells a mango smoothie, made with frozen mango and milk, but the real attraction is the mangonada. It starts with a smoothie, to which she adds a sweet and tangy solution — and a dash of chili powder — which settles on the bottom for a layered effect. It's garnished with a tamarind stick, which is fun to chew after it's soaked up the delight into which it's plunged.

## The Nifty Beet

901 Washington Street | (812) 799-7546

Ross and Kirby Keller came to town and opened this all-organic-smoothies-and-coffee emporium earlier this year. It's enlivened the vibe in the Ninth-and-Washington area. For one thing, there's now a downtown space in which one can relax with a newspaper or good book and a cup of Joe on a Sunday morning.

One of their most distinctive smoothies is The Cha Cha. It involves cherries, chia, cacao, banana and agave.

"When I was in south Florida, selling kombucha and living in an RV in the brewery's parking lot, I would make this before I'd go to the beach," says Ross.

Kirby remarks that "cherries and chocolate go really well together."

They also stock their cooler with various juice blends that pack a nutritional wallop.

Ross notes that what they offer are "kind of oddball things you wouldn't see in a normal smoothie shop."

## The Cha Cha





# Energy JR

## El Rincon De Las Delicias

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El Rincon offers a panoply of Mexican delights — tostadas, menudo, enmolada and tamales, to name a few — but is also rightly renowned for the array of juice drinks Rebecca Martinez creates. There's carrot-orange, which, if you'd like to kick it up a notch, can be served as a combinado by adding beet juice. Green juice, which includes cucumber, pineapple, celery, spinach and apple, is quite popular. The concept behind the Energy JR is that one chooses the three-fruit combination: papaya, cantaloupe and mango; or the veggie combo: carrots, beets and celery.

The hibiscus water is made by boiling hibiscus flowers and adding that essence to water that's then refrigerated.

A few months ago, El Rincon moved to its present location on the Central Avenue side of the 25th Street Shopping Center. The spacious dining room has plenty of tables, and there are also lots of oh-so-comfy stuffed chairs in which one can relax while waiting for a to-go order.





## Summer Greens Salad w/ Roasted Peaches and Citrus Herb Vinaigrette

BY TWINKLE VANWINKLE

Makes about 5-6 one cup servings

Add this ode to summer to your weeknight menu, a plate filled with pops of flavor and color.

### Vinaigrette:

- ½ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons fresh chopped dill
- 3 tablespoons fresh chopped chives
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped cilantro
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 cup champagne vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Kosher flake salt
- 1 clove fresh garlic, smashed then minced finely

### Roasted peaches:

- 4 peaches, sliced thin
- 2 tablespoons honey

### Salad:

- 6 cups chopped arugula or other summer greens (collards, swiss chard, watercress)
- 1 cup fresh green peas
- 1 cup ruby radishes, sliced thinly
- ½ pound fresh asparagus tips, cut about 2" long

### For garnish:

- Thinly sliced serrano chile
- 2-3 tablespoons radish, beet or broccoli microgreens
- Shredded Parm

### Directions for vinaigrette:

1. Place all ingredients in a food processor and process for 1 minute in short bursts.
2. Transfer to a clean bottle or mason jar and store in the refrigerator for at least two hours before using so flavors will have time to open up.

### Directions for roasting peaches:

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. Slice peaches, lay out flat on a parchment covered sheet pan.
3. Brush gently with honey.
4. Bake in oven for 10 minutes, or until honey begins to caramelize.
5. Remove and cool.

### Directions for salad:

1. Wash, rinse and dry greens. Tear them a little to create bite size pieces, about 2-inch-by-2-inch pieces.
2. Toss with asparagus, peas, radishes and peaches.
3. Garnish with chiles, microgreens and parmesan.
4. Drizzle with vinaigrette and serve.

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Self.e Alley in downtown Evansville. Photo by Alex Morgan



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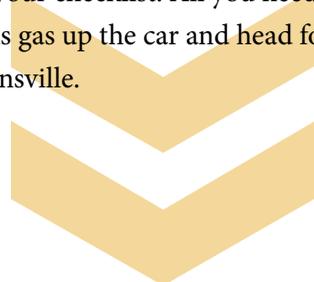
# EVERYONE

BY GLENDA WINDERS

Evansville provides  
welcome distractions  
close to home

If you're like most people, your post-pandemic getaway requirements might seem almost impossible to fulfill. The place you're dreaming about needs to be close enough that you don't have to get on an airplane, offer lots of ways to spend time outdoors and provide fun activities for children as well as sophisticated museums, shopping and restaurants for the adults. Does such a place even exist?

Lucky for you it does, and it offers even more than you thought to put on your checklist. All you need to do is gas up the car and head for Evansville.





Photos by Alex Morgan

T

Indiana’s third most populous city after Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, Evansville is also the cultural and economic hub of the Kentucky-Il-linois-Indiana tri-state area. Sometimes called “River City” because of its location on the Ohio River, Evansville was founded in 1812. But indigenous people have lived here for at least 10,000 years, leaving behind signs of their lives that you’ll be able to see. Today the vibrant population of 118,588 supports just about any activity you’d care to pursue.

“The E in Evansville stands for ‘everyone,’” says Hailey Reynolds, marketing manager for Visit Evansville. “With all the amenities of a big city, Evansville offers a unique blend of Hoosier hospitality and Southern charm.”

The best place to delve into Evansville’s rich history is at **Angel Mounds State Historic Site**. Here you’ll want to start out at the interpretive center to get your bearings, then stroll around the 600-acre park to see the mounds built by the Middle Mississippian Society for residential and ceremonial purposes some 1,000 years ago. A 4-mile hiking loop will lead you to discover even more archaeological surprises.

To further acquaint yourself with this diverse area, head to the **Evansville African American Museum**. Galleries here depict life for African Americans as it would have been

around 1938. The building itself is historic — the last one remaining of Lincoln Gardens. One of President Franklin Roosevelt’s federal housing projects, it was dedicated by his wife, Eleanor.

The **Reitz Home Museum** was the Victorian-era residence of John Augustus Reitz, a lumber baron whose mill produced more feet of hardwood lumber than any other mill in the country. The home, said to be one of the finest examples of Second Empire architecture in the United States, is outfitted as if the family still lived there, complete with period pieces, many of them original.

The **Evansville Museum of Arts, History and Science** examines the city through the lenses of these three disciplines. Exhibits on display until the end of the year include a celebration of women in art and the Evansville Shipyard in photographs. At the Koch Immersive Theater take in a movie about nature or a planetarium view of the skies over the area. The **Evansville Wartime Museum** has as its centerpiece a P-47 fighter plane that was built locally in 1945, and at the waterfront you can tour an **LST-325**, the only D-Day landing craft in the United States.

If children are with you, they might be getting restless, so now could be the time to



Reitz Home Museum

surprise them with the **Children’s Museum of Evansville**, a colorful, busy place unlike any they’ve seen so far. The Art maker Studio is a science lab, wood shop and art studio where they can do projects. In other galleries they will discover international cultures, splash in water, put on plays, learn how things work and find out how to live a healthy life.

More fun and fresh air can be found directly across the river in Henderson, Kentucky, at the **John James Audubon State Park**. Make a stop at the museum to learn about the famous birdwatcher and see some of his original artwork. Catch a program on art or the environment at the nature center in the same building, then head outdoors to walk on paths, hike on trails or take the boardwalk through the wetlands to get close-up views of the animals and birds just as Audubon might have. Fishing and golf are available, too, so you might want to book

one of the cabins here and stay on for a few days.

Speaking of education and nature, make sure to plan for some time at **Wesselman Woods**, the largest old-growth urban forest in the United States. The mission here is to create experiences that connect people with nature, motivate them to lead sustainable lives and take action to protect wildlife and wild places.

“You’re transporting yourself to a time before colonial settlement,” says Zach Garcia, associate executive director. “This is what the forest looked like when indigenous people were living here.”

Forest bathing — the practice of consciously and contemplatively immersing yourself in the sights, sounds and smells of the woods — is at its best here, with Garcia leading a class titled “Finding the Forest Within Yourself.” At the adjacent 3-acre

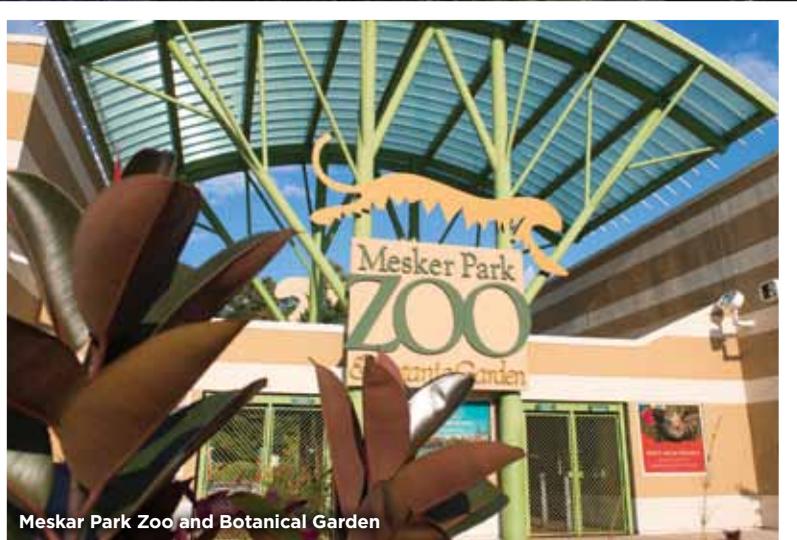


Burdette Aquatic Center. Photo by Alex Morgan

Nature Playscape children are encouraged to run off-trail, climb trees, splash in a waterfall and look under rocks and decomposing logs. Or they can discover a fort, a log crossing and a teepee as they learn about land stewardship and the people who lived here before recorded history.

More outdoor enjoyment can be found at **Burdette Park and Aquatic Center**, one of the largest aquatic centers in the Midwest. Swimmers will love the Olympic-size pool with two diving boards, the family pool with its dramatic water slides, a carefully guarded children's pool and an interactive toddler spray park. Or stroll, jog, skate, ride your bike or walk your dog on the **Pigeon Creek Greenway Passage** that runs right through town.

The mission at the **Mesker Park Zoo and Botanical Garden** is to connect people with wildlife from all over the planet. Its more than 700 animals come from Africa, Asia, the Amazon and North America, and at the Children's Enchanted Forest kids can interact with some of the more playful ones.



Mesker Park Zoo and Botanical Garden

The vibrant botanical gardens change throughout the year, and at their center is Lake Victoria, where you can take a relaxing paddleboat ride.

Golfers in your party will have their pick of courses. Several of the 11 possibilities are public or municipal, and others are destinations in themselves. Sports-lovers will also want to take in a game at **Bosse Field Baseball**



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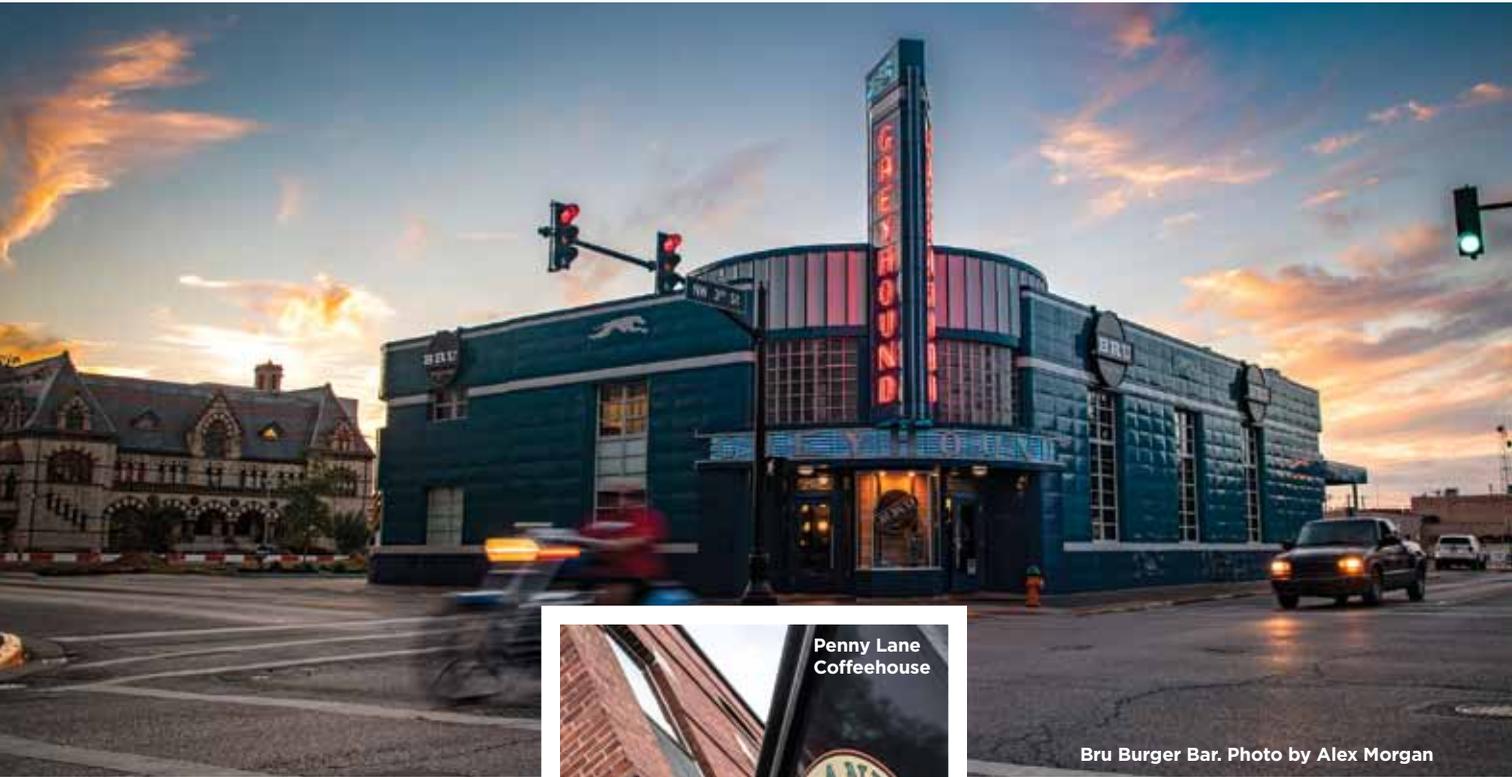
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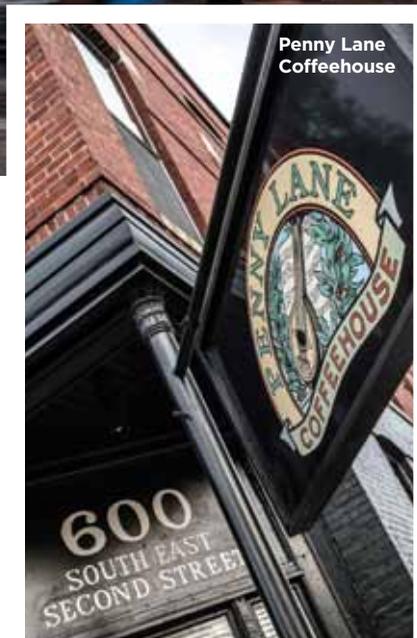
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Bru Burger Bar. Photo by Alex Morgan



**Park**, home of the Evansville Otters. Dating to 1915, this historic park was the first municipally owned stadium in the United States, and it remains the third largest in the country after Fenway Park in Boston and Wrigley Field in Chicago. Another part of its claim to fame is that several scenes from “A League of Their Own” were filmed here. **Ford Center Arena** is home to the Evansville Thunderbolts hockey team and the University of Evansville basketball team as well as a performance venue.

Perhaps the best way to get to know Evansville’s unique personality is to wander through its neighborhoods, 13 of which qualify as historic. **Haynie’s Corner Arts District**, for example, is a creative community of four neighborhoods (Riverside, Culver, Goosetown and Blackford’s Grove) adjacent to the Ohio River and converging at the corner where George Haynie built his drugstore in 1888. Today it’s filled with unusual shops, art galleries and clubs as well as restaurants and B&B inns (more about some of those later).

First Fridays here are a celebration of music, art and food. West Franklin Street is the place to be for festivals and

bazaars that range from Mardi Gras in the spring to holiday events in December. Then there’s downtown, the University of Evansville area and more.

But back to those good places to eat in the arts district. Plan to start your day at **Penny Lane Coffeehouse**, where former President Bill Clinton and NBA basketball star Derek Anderson have both stopped in for cups of Joe. **Madeleine’s Fusion Restaurant** is the first and only fusion restaurant in the tri-state area, featuring a creative menu that changes to incorporate high-quality ingredients and spotlight the cuisines of various regions. The elegant

surroundings feature a “show kitchen” and a wine cellar.

Also in the arts district is **Bokeh Lounge**. The daily menu here includes the candied bacon burger and blue cheese-burger, and on Saturdays and Sundays it adds a brunch that invites you to pair your eggs, waffles and burritos with a mimosa or bloody Mary. The big draw here, however, is live music and dancing.

Evansville isn’t short on ethnic dining, either. **Arazu on Main** serves up mainly Middle Eastern treats such as kebabs, baba ganoush, onion bhajis, falafel and Moroccan lentil soup but also adds Thai-style fresh wild salmon, gyros and Polynesian chicken. The vast and tempting menu at **Yak and Yeti’s Himalayan Cuisine** includes curries and goat, lamb and seafood, dumplings and noodles among standard favorites. Or make a meal out of grazing on appetizers such as Everest Samosa Chat (chopped samosas covered in chickpeas with yogurt and chutneys) or Alu Chop (potatoes mixed with eggs, onions and cilantro).

The food at **Gerst Haus** is about as European as it gets, ranging from German sauerbraten and wiener schnitzel to Hungarian goulash and Polish kielbasa.



If what sounds good is a burger, though, head for **Bru Burger Bar**, where you'll lunch or dine on classics in a refurbished Greyhound bus station.

When you've exhausted the day and are ready to turn in, you'll have plenty of choices, depending on what kind of experience you want to have. If gaming is your thing, you might enjoy staying at the **Tropicana Evansville Hotel**, home of the state's first casino. **Le Merigot Hotel** also has a riverside casino along with a nightclub and fitness center.

Romantics will opt for the **Cool Breeze Bed and Breakfast**, which has been operated by Katelin and David Hills for the past 27 years. The historic home was built in 1902, and now the Hills invite you to

stay in one of their three large bedrooms with adjoining bathrooms. The inn takes its name from a one-bedroom school in West Virginia where Katelin's grandfather once taught.

"The rooms are all named for writers," she says. "The McGuffey Room (from the McGuffey Reader) was the master, and the Wordsworth Room was the children's and nanny's room. In the Margaret Mitchell room, I have a small collection of figures and books from 'Gone with the Wind' and an oil painting of Scarlett O'Hara."

Or cross back over to Henderson, Kentucky, to check in at the **L&N Bed and Breakfast**, where another historic home overlooks what's happening on Main Street. The owners forewarn that the

1895 house is next to a railroad track, but that is part of its charm. After the local railroad bridge was completed in 1932 an employee of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad operated it as a rooming house, as did its subsequent occupants.

While the **DoubleTree by Hilton** might not be as intimate and cozy or as historic and interesting as an inn, its location makes just about everything you want to see and do within walking distance.

Or maybe you did decide to stay in a cabin at the Audubon park, and after a day of hiking, fishing and golf you're already tucked in for the night. You couldn't do better for a peaceful night's sleep.

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A woman with glasses and a dark patterned dress is seen from behind, looking at a display of books in a store. The background shows a large arched window and bookshelves. The text is overlaid on a white rounded rectangle in the upper right.

# Behind the Books

Viewpoint Books  
supports community

BY GLENDA WINDERS // PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANGELA JACKSON

Beth Stroh behind the desk at Viewpoint Books

The first time John and Beth Stroh came to Columbus together was during their honeymoon in 1982. John was about to finish law school and had accepted a position at the firm that has since become Sharpnack, Bigley, Stroh and Washburn. Naturally he wanted to show his new bride where they were going to live.

The visit turned out to be prophetic since the first store they walked into when they were exploring downtown was Viewpoint Books, then owned by Terry and Susan Whittaker and located in the Commons Mall.

“It became one of our favorites forever,” Beth said. “Our children grew up going to play at the train table and pick out books.”

In 2015, when the Whittakers decided to sell the shop that had by then moved to 548 Washington St., the Strohs decided to buy it.

“We couldn’t see Columbus without a bookstore,” Beth said, “and while I was doing valuable work for United Way of Central Indiana in Indianapolis, it wasn’t my home. It wasn’t something I was doing with my neighbors and for my community.”

They announced on Independent Bookstore Day in April 2016 that they were going to buy Viewpoint and that Beth would be the owner-manager of the store. A teacher by profession, she headed off to a weeklong “bookstore boot camp” to learn about what her new job would entail. Since then she has weathered obstacles such as the rise of online shopping, economic downturns and a pandemic, but she and the bookstore are still going strong.

While she said online stores are big competitors, she believes there is room for them in the marketplace alongside what she

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is doing.

They offer convenience, sometimes a lower price and the opportunity to buy products that aren't available locally, she said, but local shopping offers many advantages with which online stores can't compete.

"The whole online shopping entity is a very unfriendly and unsupportive one," she said, "and it's very intrusive. They take a very deep look at your buying habits, but who we are is so much more than formulas and numbers. I think people value us, not just the store and the place where they can go but the people who are here. At online stores they won't get a real person asking 'Is this a gift and would you like for us to gift-wrap it for you?'"

Beyond wrapping a gift, they'll also deliver it for free. They hold special events,

host book groups and give their customers special discounts. They also provide Nomad Arts, a group of teenage artists, a place to meet. Beth said that instead of worrying about what online stores are doing, she'd rather concentrate on coming up with ways the store can serve its customers even better.

"I spend my time focused on what can we do that will distinguish us as a place that people want to be and spend money and shop," Beth said, "a place where they feel like they can walk in the door some days and walk out again without buying anything at all but they had a good conversation. They're richer for that, as are we."

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, presented an exceptional challenge. She and her full-time team — Maya Baker, Grace Hundley and Nanne Cutler —



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Beth Stroh with gift-wrapping supplies

along with regular part-timers changed their way of operating practically overnight. Beth requested two reserved parking spaces for picking up orders, and the city granted her wish the next day.

“We couldn’t have done any of it alone,” she said. “We just tried to be as thoughtful and creative and work as quickly as possible to be responsive to what we felt like people wanted and needed.”

They kept a book cart at the front door and acted as personal shoppers, greeting customers with books they had ordered over the phone or going to find the items they had come to seek. They ordered more jigsaw puzzles and games than they had

ever stocked so that families stuck at home would have something with which to pass the time. And they started making deliveries.

“We tried every way we could think of that we could help or be a solution, a kind of bright shining light in the darkness,” Beth said. “There were a lot of people who needed some joy and needed to be surrounded by comfortable things, and having us leave books, games and puzzles on the front porch in a bright red bag that they knew was from Viewpoint seemed to make a difference.”

Work behind the scenes changed, too. Every box UPS delivered had to be sanitized along with its contents

after it was opened. The store had to be rearranged to provide for social distancing once they could open again, and that involved installing additional shelving in the basement and moving much of their inventory down there. They also increased their social-media presence significantly. Part-time staffers were tasked with reading more and writing reviews. They also came in to box and ship books. Everyone kept working, and no one missed a paycheck. When they were finally able to host events again, they held them outside.

“It was hard, there’s no question about that,” Beth said, “and we were tired, but we also had a lot of fun figuring it out and meeting people

on the phone and online, all kinds of ways. It felt like they wanted to support us, so we wanted to do everything we could in return to help them.”

She said customers bought more books and gave away more gift cards. Some made donations, others declined discounts. Principals at local schools gave gift cards and books to teachers for Teacher Appreciation Week, even though they weren’t physically in school. One school made bags for every teacher to be given out when they could gather. The county increased their purchase of books, especially those to be used through the court system.

In association with other independent booksellers who support one another, Viewpoint currently offers a tag designed by local artist Amy Lienhoop that can be validated as customers visit bookstores around the state. At the end they are eligible to win prizes.

Beth characteristically declines to take much credit for all the work she does, not only at the bookstore but also for the community. Others, however, are quick to sing her praises. One of them is Cindy Frey, president of the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, who has known Beth for more than 20 years.

“Beth has done a lot of great work,” she said. “She’s played many pivotal roles in the community in leadership positions, just quietly leading change. She is the epitome of a servant leader.”

Frey ticked off a list of her friend’s accomplishments that included being involved in education reform, policy change and funding of early learning initiatives on the regional level. She was a leader of the Tech Reconnect program that restored computers discarded by schools and corporations and distributed them to low-income families.

“We tried every way we could think of that we could help or be a solution, a kind of bright shining light in the darkness”

— Beth Stroh

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A business card for Gypsy Rose Events. The card is white with a floral design and features the text: 'GYPSY ROSE events', 'Coordinating Serene &amp; Stylish Events that Bring People Together', 'Partial Planning, Wedding Day Management &amp; A La Carte Packages Available', 'WWW.GYPSYROSEEVENTS.COM', 'hello@gypsyroseevents.com', and 'a.gypsrosevents | 812.552.3697'. At the bottom are icons for phone, Facebook, Instagram, email, Pinterest, and a globe. The card is placed over a background image of a bride and groom.

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Interior of Viewpoint Books

As president of the Columbus Housing Authority Board she worked for low-income housing for perhaps a decade, and she has served on the community advisory board for the Bartholomew County Public Library.

“She does so much and does it so quietly that you almost don’t notice,” Frey said. “She’s been involved in so many different initiatives to make the community a better place to live and

play, and as a small business owner she works constantly to ensure that downtown continues to thrive.”

Indeed, the Strohs live downtown and spend their money there whenever they can.

“Especially during the time so many of the restaurants had to be closed we were getting carryout and taking things home,” Beth said. “We’re very aware of supporting downtown

businesses — sweet treats from Gramz, coffee from Lucabe or lunches from Ramen Alley or Dairy Queen. We try to spread it around. There is an awareness that as a downtown community we should be the first to support one another.”

One of those businesses she supports is The Savory Swine.

“Where do I start?” said Catie Rix, co-owner of Swine and Dine. “Beth

is lovely in every sense of the word. I've had the pleasure of working with her in many capacities from our wine-and-book pairing collaborations to joint events between Viewpoint Books and The Savory Swine. She's unbelievably creative and I look up to her as a mentor in the business world as I begin my journey into business ownership."

Beth, whose father was in the Air Force, was born in Morocco and had dual citizenship until she was 21. Home was Indianapolis, where she graduated from North Central High School with a special interest in the performing arts and later Butler University. John graduated from the same high school but 11 years earlier. He believes they first met when the choir in which he was singing put on a show for an audience that included her first-grade class. They met officially when Beth turned up in his classroom at Fall

Creek Elementary School to do her teaching practicum and he turned out to be a tough taskmaster.

"It was an inauspicious beginning to what has become a 40-plus-year relationship," Beth said. "We had a lot of differences, but they were differences that complemented one another rather than divided."

Today their family includes a son, Dan, who is an attorney in Cincinnati, and a daughter, Mary, also an attorney, who works in her father's practice. They also have three granddaughters, with whom they spend as much time as they can. Most days, though, you'll find Beth hard at work at Viewpoint.

"Every day I come home from the store happily exhausted," she said. "Some days it's more happy, and some days it's more exhausted. Mostly it's a combination of those things, and then there's no better place to be."



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Columbus Community Garden

# DIGGING IN *The Dirt*

Community gardeners share their thoughts about a 40-year tradition in Columbus.

**BY REBECCA BERFANGER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY VASQUEZ**

Since 1982, originally managed by the Irwin Sweeney Miller Foundation at the old fairgrounds on 25th Street, the current location of NexusPark, and later taken over by the city and moved to airport property in 1984, Columbus residents have been able to test their green thumbs and grow pretty much any produce they can manage in community gardens.

The practice has grown in popularity in the last couple of years as more people want to be outside. It's also a way to do something good for not only their wallets — many of them use the plots for their personal produce, canning and freezing excess fruits and vegetables — but also for their mental wellbeing, and to appreciate a sense of community with their neighbors.

“Originally they were started for those who may not have had room in their backyards or apartment dwellers who wanted to garden but didn't have space available,” says Robin Hilber,

assistant director of Community Development for the City of Columbus, who herself learned about gardening from her grandfather. Hilber visits the space every couple of weeks, while another city employee checks in weekly to see how things are

going.

“I think many of them probably gardened for the purpose of raising crops for their families. But over the years it waned a bit, and probably five or six years ago we had quite a few garden plots that were available. One of the problems with having extra garden space is that those plots were growing weeds, which really presented a problem for those gardeners who were trying to keep their gardens free of weeds,” she says.

Seeing a surplus around that time, a local news story helped raise awareness about the gardens to try to maximize the use of the land around Cessna Drive, which is a part of airport property, and has been the garden’s location since 1997.

“Some people who might have been new to Columbus didn’t realize these plots existed,” she says. “I think that quipped their interest. And, of course with COVID, people didn’t want to go indoors, and were looking for more outside activities. This was something they could do with the family, with their children.”

As of this season, there are 51 small plots at 22.5 feet by 22.5 feet, and 62 large plots — double the size at 45 feet by 22.5 feet. Small plots are \$15 each, and large plots are \$25 each. The Aviation Board, Columbus Engineering Department, City Garage, City Parks and Recreation, and Columbus City Utilities also provide non-financial support.

There is also a limit per gardener — either four small plots or two large plots — and a waiting list to be able to start planting in early April.

Before the season starts, gardeners from the previous year get first dibs, including whether they want to keep the same plot as before, knowing exactly what kind of soil they’ll be getting in that space, or to seek more or fewer plots. Registration then opens up to new gardeners, with a waitlist the last couple of years. However, Hilber says, in some seasons there may be a handful of gardeners who can’t use the plots due to the time commitment or other reasons and they’ll reach out to waiting list folks to see who might want to jump in mid-season.

“We tell them they might have some weeds to tend to,” she said.

The only thing gardeners have been restricted on is the use of herbicides, and they can’t raise bees in their garden plots.

“In the last couple of years, we have had gardeners who have called us wanting to put a beehive in the garden to help pollinate everything in the garden,” she says. “We’ve told them no, because young kids are out there. And we can’t take that liability if some people are allergic to bees.”

As a compromise, another group has put in pollinator parks around the city and was going to plant some pollinator plants near the very front of the community garden to attract bees and butterflies.

For the price of a garden plot, gardeners receive a space that was already tilled. They also get access to free water, free mulch, and free compost throughout the season. Plus, each gardener is issued an identification card with their contact info and their plot numbers as a way to deter would-be theft from anyone who doesn’t respect the bounty of each garden belongs to the individual who has paid for it and put in the labor.

So far, says Hilber, they have helped, considering they can’t offer 24-hour surveillance of the area. Essentially, gardeners



# Chaotic Tuesdays at The Commons

**CHAOTIC TUESDAYS | 12-1PM | FREE**  
On Chaotic Tuesdays we flip the switch and Chaos I roars to life. Learn some fun facts about its history and stop by the kids craft table as the sculpture clangs and whirls about.  
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Graziella Bush tends her plants



are asked to garden at their own risk. However, she adds, they do all look out for each other. She also says that the more experienced gardeners will informally mentor newer gardeners.

She adds that some of the long-time gardeners sell their produce at farmers markets and local restaurants, including Graziella Bush, who grows Italian produce with her sister and sells it locally.

Another long-time gardener who mentors new gardeners, Sande Hummel, was interviewed for this story while weeding her garden plots. Hummel, who is at her garden every day, says she learned to garden from her dad starting around fourth grade while growing up in Pittsburgh, and it continued to be of interest to her, in-

cluding close to 30 years in community gardens. She would also like to start a more formal mentoring program among the gardeners.

This summer, she says, she is growing “15 varieties of peppers, onions, cabbage, eggplant, beans, zucchini, squash, tomatoes, herbs and flowers,” plus pollinator plants around her garden to attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

“This is a great environment, a great community effort,” Hummel says. “It’s multi-cultural, there are wonderful people to meet. I’m interested in the ways they grow things and interested in the various foreign foods they are growing.”

Hilber agrees, saying she has seen garden plots that belong to families

from all over the world, including India, China, Italy, England and Scotland.

While Hummel expects this year’s bounty to go toward canning and freezing efforts later in the season, she does make pepper jellies she sells at farmers markets. She, along with other gardeners, will also donate some produce, including fresh cherry tomatoes and green beans, to Love Chapel Food Pantry.

Hilber adds that other churches and food pantries have benefitted from the community gardeners.

Another gardener, who has a plot near Hummel and frequently speaks with her about gardening and non-gardening topics alike, is Brad Gonsalves. Gonsalves says he learned about

about gardening by watching his grandparents, and has been gardening at the Columbus Community Gardens for at least 24 years.

“I came in when it opened up to gardeners who wanted to do it for recreation instead of only food for need. I’ve had a couple plots and raised the basics like okra, kale, collards, mustard greens, normal vegetables,” says Gonsalves.

“Why I keep doing it, is it’s a nice peaceful place to go. In the morning I hear the birds and the planes flying,” he says, adding it’s a quick drive from his home and he spends at least 15 minutes a day, five days a week, at his garden plot. For longer stints, up to a half an hour or more, he says he’ll “bring some music and sit and hang out for a while.”

When his adult children were growing up, he had more space and would grow something new each year to teach them. He recalls growing sweet potatoes one year. “It was like an Easter egg hunt,” for the kids to find them. While they’ve since moved out of the area, he says both of his children are gardening themselves — one is trying to get a community garden plot near where he lives.

In addition to trading gardening tips, he says, gardeners also tend to exchange produce. And while he considers his efforts something he does for fun and personal use of the produce he does grow, he will look forward to going back every year.

“Probably for me, it’s just being able to get out and clear my head and clear my mind. I do other things, exercise-wise, so gardening isn’t really my exercise, but it’s peaceful, it’s quiet. My favorite time is 7 a.m. on Saturday morning. It reminds me of Joni Mitchell’s album, ‘The Hissing of Summer Lawns.’ ... It’s a nice way to spend time.”

“This is food for the soul,” says Hummel. “This is positive mental health, this is your happy space. You can sit down and just let your mind relax, put your earbuds in, and listen to your favorite music.”

As for the newer gardeners coming around starting in the last couple



LEFT:  
Brad Gonsalves's granddaughter, Mary Lou Hladik, waters the plants.

RIGHT:  
Brad Gonsalves's granddaughter, Annabelle Hladik, holding a kale leaf.

of years, she says, I believe people did it for mental health. They had the time to come out and really do it, and I think that worked for them. There are more people out here.”

Hilber also shares that sentiment.

“Unfortunately, we live in such a contentious society. I’ve had some of

the gardeners say they do this for their mental health,” she says. “You can go out there and you don’t have the noise, you’re not connected to a computer. You can just get into the dirt, and turn the troubles of the world off. It’s great therapy. You don’t have to pay for it and you feel better about an hour later.”

# Salute!

Columbus North High School  
May 27

1. Rick Vale, Columbus Indiana Children's Choir and the Columbus Philharmonic perform in the annual SALUTE! concert at Columbus North High School in Columbus, Ind., Friday, May 27, 2022. The concert was moved indoors due to rain and thunderstorms in the area.
2. US Air Force Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Mark Pillar welcomes guests to the annual SALUTE! concert at Columbus North High School in Columbus, Ind.
3. Rick Vale sings the national anthem during the annual SALUTE! concert.
4. Misty McCawley twirls an American flag as she waits for the start of the annual SALUTE! concert.
5. Columbus Philharmonic Artistic Director David Bowden holds his hands over his heart as he is presented with a Sagamore of the Wabash award by State Rep. Ryan Lauer before the annual SALUTE! concert.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE WOLANIN



# Hogstock

Hog Molly Brewing Co.,  
830 Depot St., Columbus  
June 11

1. Sign over the stage during Hogstock at Hog Molly Brewing, Saturday, June 11, 2022
2. People mingle, eat, drink and listen to the music during Hogstock.
3. Lines of customers during Hogstock.
4. Terry Miller during Hogstock.
5. Kathleen Haegele and Noah Adams during Hogstock.
6. Donmichael Thompson buys food from Greg Schmelz, owner of Party Chef, during Hogstock.
7. The E In The Middle band, Luke Galle, from left, Evan Elsbury and Austin Elsbury perform during Hogstock.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CARLA CLARK





# Summer shade

Jonathan Nesci designed the Lady Bird Stools under the pavilion designed by Randy Royer with the Hitchcock Design Group located in downtown Columbus, adjacent to Lincoln Elementary School.

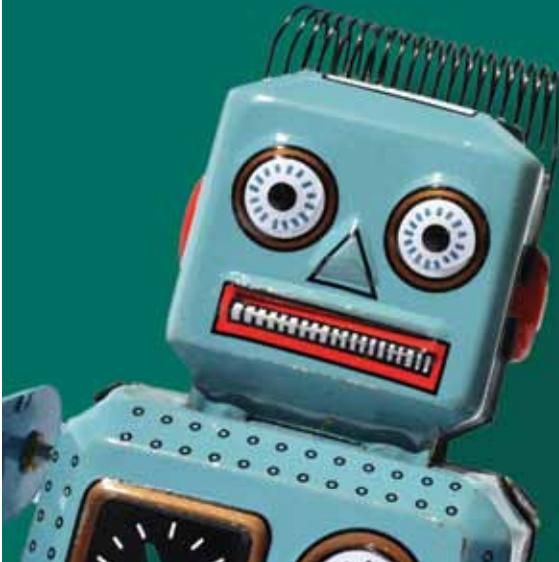
PHOTO BY TONY VASQUEZ | [WWW.TONYVASQUEZ.NET](http://WWW.TONYVASQUEZ.NET)



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