

HAMPDEN HAPPENINGS

The latest news and updates from Hampden, Baltimore



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President's Message

by Eli Lopatin, HCC President (hccpresident@gmail.com)

Happy New Year, Neighbors,

While we're certainly not out of the woods yet, the days are getting longer, and before long, warmer weather will be returning to Hampden.

COVID-19 transmission rates are trending down in our city, but it is important that we remain diligent in following public health guidelines, wearing masks, and maintaining social distancing, as the vaccine rollout continues.

I know that I, for one, am so thankful for the resumption of recycling pickup as a sign to some returning sense of normalcy, and thank the new City administration for making that happen.

Neighbors are continuing to demonstrate their commitment to protecting each other, and we know that before long we will come through stronger than ever, together. Read on for more great content from our newsletter team, and find ways to stay involved in the community from a distance.

We hope to see you at our online community meeting on February 22, and hopefully back in person soon!



In Memoriam

With great sadness, we regret to inform that longtime Hampden resident and business owner Francis “Frank” Falkenhan passed away on November 24, 2020. Mr. Falkenhan opened neighborhood staple, Falkenhan’s Hardware in 1968. His family continues to honor his legacy with friendly professionalism. He will be sorely missed.



Happenings at the Hampden Family Center

By Ashley Wilkes

We are thankful for each of you who joined us this past year – facing the challenges, serving our neighbors, lending creative ideas and simply not giving up! We are currently open by appointment for mail pick up and case management services Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 10am – 4pm. Please feel free to contact us at 410-467-8710 if you need assistance – we are still here for you!

WEEKLY FOOD DISTRIBUTION. Every Friday – 12-4pm we provide nutritious food, health and hygiene items to members of the Hampden neighborhood. No sign up necessary.

CASE MANAGEMENT. Our services connect clients to benefits including SNAP, Energy Assistance, Medical Assistance, and WIC. Through a quick screening, the benefits counselor can determine your eligibility and assist you throughout the application process.

YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS. If your child is looking for something engaging and fun to do outside of school and connect with others in the community, our program is a perfect fit! For students in grades K-5, we are offering virtual art, dance and language classes, coding sessions and fun nutrition tips & activities for the whole family! We hope to incorporate in person programs and individual tutoring soon. Contact Pierre Sanders, Program Manager, at 410-467-8710 to sign up.

COUNSELING. Are you searching for individual and family counseling, trauma, crisis and victim services, but not sure where to start? Hampden Family Center has partnered with Springboard Community Services to offer in person or telehealth appointments. To complete a referral through the Center, please call us at 410-467-8710. Medicaid is accepted.

Join Us:

- Visit our Amazon wish list for our most needed items.
- If you are interested in volunteering please contact Pierre Sanders at 410-467-8710
- Donate directly at www.hampdenfamilycenter.org/donate.

Kathy Krampien

Fleckenstein Gallery celebrates 20 Years

The Fleckenstein Gallery would have celebrated twenty years of artistic excellence in October and like many 2020 celebrations, it fell victim to the shutdown. But like a ray of sunshine on a bleak winter day, Fleckenstein is back.

Proprietor Terrie Fleckenstein has selected an appealing group of artists for her 20th anniversary. Some are longtime Baltimore luminaries such as Mary Opasik and Kini Collins and up and comers like Ram Brisueno.

Mary Opasik has always made mixed-media pieces that are humorous and complex. A couple of fish are her offerings here and they look like clever trophies suitable for any robot's home. Kini Collins went to Italy and brought back some lovely brown and caramel colored pigments.

She used these new paints to create warm golden abstracts. Small round pieces are painted Lazy Susans which makes the work ever changing and interactive. The long vertical piece is a warm glorious work. Comforting and sexy, like an expensive blanket.



MK Dilli creates dark monochromatic head shots that remind me of an early David Lynch, when he was an unknown painter in Philly. The work is dark but deep, offering to take you to a place where many are unwilling to travel. Around the corner are works by Arin Mitchell. They are sophisticated and polished displays of musicians intent in their craft.

Also in this show is Ram Brisueno. Ram's work here is good but it's not his best. It's because he is also having a solo show at The Blue Door Gallery on Park Avenue. His work combines painting and mixed media. It's sensual, spiritual and deeply mystifying. It can be viewed through February either virtually or via a private showing.

The show at Fleckensteins runs indefinitely. It too can be viewed virtually or in person. As always wear your mask, if going in person.

Artwork by: previous page top right - Mary Opasik.
Bottom left MK Dilli Bottom right and this page Arin Mitchell

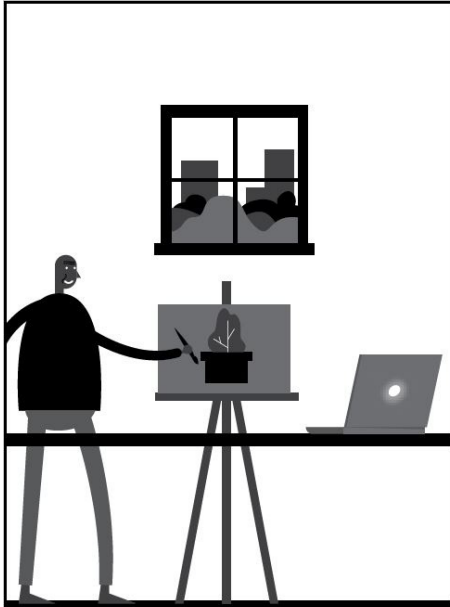


The Baltimore Art Gallery: Current Offerings

The Featured Artist for February is MICA grad Sheila Wells. Her otherworldly landscapes created through paint pouring have the sparkle of mined gemstones. Opening is Friday February 5th.



"Deep #1" by Sheila Wells, 16" square



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Editor's Report

by Kathy Krampien, Newsletter Committee Chair (hccnewsletter@gmail.com)

The Politics of Motorhomes



I generally write cultural fluff but after the events that occurred in DC, I've decided to change up. The problem here is how do you write about something that's like a modern version of Shakespeare. You've got a slippery mess of comedy, tragedy and drama starring a wide cast of characters both dubious and heroic with numerous misconceptions and hidden agendas. Every angle you take will turn someone bitter and resentful. So, I've decided to write about motorhomes instead.



The beauty pictured above is a Travco motorhome. I was driving around for the Census one September afternoon and spotted it sitting in a vacant lot on Loch Raven Blvd in Baltimore. I nearly caused an accident trying to pull over. It was parked on a trash filled lot looking forlorn but still hopeful. The original, so 70's white paint with stripes still shiny, longing for another highway adventure. Calling out to a different America, one full of hope and the discovery of the open road.

Travco is short for Travel Coach. This one was built in a small factory in my hometown of Brown City, Michigan sometime during the 70s. They were the darlings of the motorhome set for many years. The rich and famous would fly in on their private planes, landing on the air strip behind my childhood home. There are a number of them still on the road and admirers have an active presence on social media. During this time small town America was thriving, every town was bustling with some form of industry. Small businesses fed other small business by putting money into the pockets of the locals. There were bowling leagues and drive-in movies.

It was a good life. My mom's family were gentlemen dairy farmers, fine Christian people. They were staunch republicans and held the same state senate seat for many years. My parents were blue collar people. My mom worked for a local bank and my dad for General Motors - Buick in Flint, a long drive for a prestige factory job. I have more photos of them partying and wearing paper lei's than of them going to church. Guns were for hunting pheasants.

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Everyone got along. There was no angry bickering during the holidays, just shouts of disappointment over another loss by the ever pitiful Detroit Lions. Non- football fans played card games and Scrabble. As I said before, it was a good life.

It was also the turbulent 70's coming off an equally turbulent 60's. Anguished, disenfranchised people marched in Selma, Detroit and DC calling out with voices begging to be heard. Crying out for justice that we could never understand because we couldn't see the problem, never felt it. And more than that we couldn't understand that these people wanted to be recognized, needed to be validated, needed to matter.

Travco closed in the 80's as did many small businesses. GM shuttered the Buick plant along with many others. People whose families had worked at the same plant for generations now found themselves at a loss. Small farming was no longer viable, and several farms failed. People left and those who stayed clung to a life less vibrant and for some even bleak.

People stopped feeling like they had anywhere to belong. It was during this time, in the same county in which Brown City sits, that Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols hatched their plot for the Oklahoma Bombing.

What struck me during the riot at the Capitol was how desperate many of the participants seemed. Voices of the disenfranchised rang as loud on January 6th as it did at any previous marches. They lack the awareness that the validation for which they are clamoring resonates at the very heart of the BLM protests. People seeking to belong, to feel protected and valued.

Marches in DC are heady and the rush amazing. You feel strong and powerful, part of something bigger than yourself and you want to be heard. I've marched towards the Capitol numerous times for multiple causes. And other than a private tour of the Senate press room, I never ventured beyond the lawn. I once slipped past the guards and the construction barriers to see the tomb of John Paul Jones at the Naval Academy in Annapolis. My friend and I were humming the theme song from "Mission Impossible." None of these actions justified my going beyond letting my voice be heard or having my curiosity sated.

There is no justifying violent action, nor any abhorrent behavior. Some people involved on January 6th were dangerously militant, but others merely disillusioned fools sucked into an echo chamber designed to call them patriots. What it churned out was misguided Americans now facing long federal prison terms for following the crowd, for wanting only to be a part of something bigger than themselves. In the mugshots of those arrested, some are still defiant and some still clueless but for others the look on their faces reveals an awakening to a life now in ruins.



My cousin who owns what remains of the family farm, sold off part of the dairy herd in 2020 because market trends have made it a losing venture. We no longer hold the senate seat, the last I paid attention it belonged to a Hispanic democrat from Port Huron, a mid-sized city bordering Canada. One of the last manufacturing facilities in the county became a Covid hotspot. Travco motorhomes are only remembered by subcults on social media and a few Brown City folk.

For some of us, being disenfranchised has been a bitter yoke since the day their ancestor's bare feet touched American soil. For my family and friends, it began in the 80's with the transfer of wealth both upward and globally. For still others it's a more current development. The question remaining is, how do we bring all of these groups together? How to restore something as splintered as a dropped mirror.

We need more equitable economic development that elevates the middle and lower classes and people of all colors, genders, etc. The woman who was shot was losing her business. Government intervention alone won't be enough. We as individuals need to step out of our own echo chamber and listen to what's not being said.

I live in the Baltimore neighborhood of Hampden, I moved here because it reminded me of Brown City. Politics here flow primarily one way. There are only a few souls in my neighborhood who voted for that guy and only one brave enough to post a small sign announcing his denomination.

I don't know that individual well and after 20 years, I don't even know his name. We've spoken a few times and he's always been pleasant. In 2021, I intend to get to know him, to know his name. I'm going to try and ascertain his place in this world. We need to initiate dialogue about the things that unite us and leave off talking about the things that divide. It's a small step and might not solve anything but it's somewhere to start. We need to be neighbors again.

And I need to revisit that motorhome.



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