



The Anneslie Times

A publication from the Anneslie Community Association

SUMMER 2026

A New Vision for Stoneleigh Church

The landmark property
could be transformed
into a recreation center
and music school.

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Anneslie Community Association
P.O. Box 39251
Baltimore, MD 21212

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BLOCK CAPTAINS

SO YOU WANT TO BE A BLOCK CAPTAIN? Email Rachel Rock Palermo, rachelrockpalermo@gmail.com, or visit Anneslie.org/block-captains.

Block Captains are a vital part of maintaining a close-knit community in Anneslie. Thank you Block Captains (past, present and future!) for all your work. We'd like to thank Jen Hudak (700 block of Murdock) and Gail Vernick (700 block of Dunkirk) for their many years of service. Jen has passed the baton to Samantha St. Germain (samanthalhaas@gmail.com) and Gail has handed off to Sarah Van Tiem (svt@vanlaich.com). Gail and Peter will be missed but we wish them all the best in their move.

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NEWSLETTER DESIGNED BY GERRY FEY

Clearing a Path with Kindness

Ice Storm Thawed By Neighborly Love

BY DOUG DONOVAN

There's really no telling what one act of kindness for a neighbor may lead. But here's one story that serves as a lesson for us all about how looking out for one another can often have implications we might have never predicted.

It was that dark and freezing night in late January when a brutal winter storm dumped layer upon layer of snow and sleet and ice across the Baltimore region, including on every street and sidewalk in Anneslie.

Like many Anneslie residents that night, Kelly Animashaun of the 700 block of Dunkirk paid some kids to shovel her walk and dig out her car. But also like so many of us she received the service too early – before the inches upon inches of ice came piling up, wiping out all the work of the shovelers and trapping her inside.

"My neighbors called to check on me," said Kelly, who lives with her three children in the home. "The husband came over and it took him two hours to dig me out. He cleared the entire front including the car. And he wouldn't take any money."

She didn't know it yet, but the neighbor's kindness was about to pay karmic dividends for she and one of her sons.

"Maybe two hours later, my son hit his head on the mirror and gashed his forehead while he was brushing his teeth," Kelly said. "I had to rush him to GBMC to get stitches. But how would I have



PHOTO COURTESY OF TED HULL

done that if I had had no way of getting my car out. What would I have done?"

She knows what her neighbor's act of service meant.

"That was love," she said. "A little act of kindness goes a long way."



Trivia Question

What is the biggest snowfall ever to hit Baltimore Washington Airport?

See Page 10 for the Answer

From Sanctuary to Community Hub?

Stoneleigh Church Could Become Rec Center, Music School

BY JON MORGAN

The Stoneleigh investment banker who purchased First and St. Stephen's Church says he's interested in converting it into a community recreation center in coordination with Anneslie and other area communities but he's also exploring other uses if the details can't be worked out.

Steve McIntire, 50, paid \$1.1 million for the York Road landmark, which was put up for sale due to declining membership and rising maintenance costs.

The purchase included the adjacent rectory, a six-bedroom home that McIntire intends to renovate and sell. He figures that could recoup his investment.

"So for me, it was opportunistic," McIntire says of the purchase. "This is a good deal. My No.1 priority is not losing money."

Initial talk of selling the church itself to the Stoneleigh Community Association, on whose board he serves, raised some concerns from another member about a conflict of interest. But he says he always envisioned other communities in the area being investors in a separate nonprofit that would repurpose the structure.

"My personal view is the Stoneleigh is not the ideal purchaser, but a separate 501-c3 that involves the other South Towson neighborhoods, especially Anneslie, Rodgers Forge, Wiltondale, etc., in leadership positions," he says. "I envisioned Stoneleigh kicking off that effort, because I already know and respect its volunteers and because the church is in Stoneleigh, but I believe a broader community effort is critical to success."

Selling to a nonprofit would permit him to take a tax deduction that would help him recoup his investment. "I'm envisioning selling it at below market value," he says.

"Nonprofit is a better setup also because you get

a discount on property taxes and other benefits, people can make tax free contributions."

Robert Fisher, president of the Anneslie Community Association, said in mid-May that "I have not heard from him, but from what I've heard the church needs a lot of work from HVAC, plumbing, electrical, roofing, etc."

Meanwhile, McIntire has been approached by a local educational institution he doesn't want to name that is exploring using the building as a temporary site for giving music lessons to students. The various rooms could house pianos, for example.

He hopes the preschool that is housed there will remain long term. The church is also planning to conduct services and choir practices through at least September.

"There are a couple ways this could happen. One, I could go and do all the work and say, here's the use, here's what it will cost. Do you want it or not? And yeah, maybe it'll come to that someday," he says. "But the idea was put it out to the community, and say, 'Hey, what do you want to use it for? Do you have any ideas?'"

McIntire agreed to answer some other questions for the Anneslie Times. Here are his responses, which have been edited for length:

AT: Where did you grow up in Stoneleigh?

SM: My parents moved here in 1974 right after my father graduated law school. We lived on Regester Avenue until I was in kindergarten and then moved to 910 Wellington Rd. where my mother still lives.

I never seriously considered moving back until a couple years after we had kids. We were living in Dubai, coming back here every summer and it became harder and harder every time to get back



PHOTO BY DOUG DONOVAN

on the plane. So, we moved back in 2014/2015.

AT: Explain your professional background.

SM: I've always enjoyed working in entrepreneurial environments and investing in real estate. I left Stoneleigh to attend [the Wharton School of Business], concentrating in Finance and Public Policy. In 1996-97 I took a year off to co-found a start-up that wired the first private apartment building in Philadelphia for high-speed internet. I stayed in Philly and worked for ATX Communications, a long-distance company that was getting into internet and local telephone business. I met my wife there. At the end of 2004, I moved into investment banking (focusing mostly on lower-middle market M&A) and back to Baltimore, living in

Mount Vernon. When my firm was sold in 2008, I moved to Dubai to set up a business brokerage with a college roommate.

AT: Talk more about the rec center idea

SM: There is some misinformation floating around that my goal is to sell to the SCA. First, I

bought this because I thought it was a good price for a marquee property in an awesome neighborhood. As more people found out, there seemed to be a lot of enthusiasm in the neighborhood for some sort of community rec center, indoor courts, meeting spaces, etc. But I'm less convinced than some it's a good idea.

On one hand, buying the church could be the best community investment since Stoneleigh bought the pool out of bankruptcy in 1937. I'd happily forgo economic profit on this project to make that sort of outcome possible for everyone in my neighborhood. On the other hand, it's a heavy lift for volunteers to make a project this big work and, even if successful, the property could one day become a burden that outstrips volunteer capacity and/or doesn't offer amenities that people really value. I want nothing to do with that outcome. Whichever direction this goes depends on community members' willingness and ability to rally behind a beneficial and financially sustainable use case.

That effort has to come from people other than me, even though I want to help them succeed."

Thai Corner Owner Aims to Be Baltimore's King of Thai Food

Montree Wongchalee is bringing the authentic flavors of Thailand to Baltimore from the former Nana space

BY JON MORGAN

Montree Wongchalee is on a mission to bring the authentic cuisine of his native Thailand to Baltimore.

The 43-year-old opened the Charm Thai Corner at Reister and York late last year, taking over the space previously occupied by the dearly departed Nana.

This is his fourth Thai restaurant in the region, starting in 2018 with Bodhi Corner in Hampden and, two years later, Bodhi Federal Hill (the Bodhi tree is a sacred fig in India under which Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment). The Dara opened in Fells Point in 2023.

The restaurants have received positive reviews from critics and on social media. "Where Bodhi Corner truly excels is in the complexity of its entrees, both the Thai staples that many Americans are familiar with and other dishes that many may not have encountered," Baltimore Magazine said in a 2018 review.

He's already working on a fifth, a fine dining Thai establishment called Little Forest to open as early as April near the Whole Foods further north in Towson.

"I like cooking," Wongchalee says during a break in the action at his Stoneleigh location. "I wanted to be a chef but decided to become an owner instead."

He grew up in the countryside of Nakhon Ratchasima province of Thailand, the son of a construction worker. As a youth he'd fish in nearby rice paddies, bringing home frogs, eel and fish that his mother would cook. Helping her turn the modest bounty into tasty meals is where he says he developed his love for the creativity of Thai cooking.

He studied food science in college and became

head of quality control at a food processing company in Thailand. He immigrated to Washington in 2013 on a student visa and studied English, eventually landing a job as a server at a Thai restaurant in Dupont Circle. Soon, he and other family members decided to open their own place but realized Washington was awash in Thai food. A friend suggested Baltimore as a less competitive market.

The response to the venture has exceeded expectations, says the manager, Ben Homoab. Sales in the first week hit levels that their other locations took years to reach.

"Thai food is my identity. Every dish reminds me of home – cooking with my mom, helping my family, and enjoying simple meals together."

— Montree Wongchalee

"We feel incredibly grateful to be part of this community. We are so lucky to be in this location — the neighbors have been very supportive from the beginning," says Homoab, a childhood friend of Wongchalee. "Even during the recent storm and freezing cold weather, many customers still came out to visit us, which truly meant a lot to us."

Charm Thai Corner is open Monday-Friday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., then 4:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. It's open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

In keeping with Thai tradition, there is a single menu across the day – no separate lunch and dinner fare. All of Wongchalee's restaurants reflect a distinct take on Thai food. The focus at the Stoneleigh outlet is on Thai street cuisine sold at affordable prices in food stalls and carts and known for



PHOTO BY DOUG DONOVAN

bold flavors.

Though this is Wongchalee's first venture as a solo owner, the family members that are partners of his other shops are still involved. The head chef, Buppta Trakulsri, is an aunt from northeastern Thailand.

Homoab says they will strive to keep prices low and there won't be a mandatory service fee like Nana charged. A low-cost software vendor is processing online takeout and delivery orders.

There is no liquor license, but patrons are permitted to bring their own bottles. The menu includes Thai iced tea for \$5, a Thai drink made from the longan fruit (\$7) and a variety of soft drinks.

"Thai food is my identity," Wongchalee says in a written Q&A. "Every dish reminds me of home – cooking with my mom, helping my family, and enjoying simple meals together."

Menus Are Changing Along York Road

BY JON MORGAN

In addition to the new Thai restaurant that took the place of Nana's, and the closing of Mandarin Taste, other changes have come to the increasingly diverse culinary strip bordering Anneslie on York Road.

Here's a roundup:

Lazydaze Brings Counterculture but Not Pot

Hans Enriquez, the owner and founder of this Austin, Texas-based pioneer of the cannabis dispensary, describes his coffee shops as "Amsterdam-style cafés" where patrons can smoke a joint with their coffee.

But Maryland laws don't permit that so franchisees Crystal and Ben Morgan have shifted the focus to "wellness" products for the shop.

"We're not selling anything that will get anyone high," she says. Gourmet coffee and teas will be available, some infused with micro-doses of various mushrooms, along with therapeutic CBD ointments and other products.

Not available will be any psilocybin mushrooms, famous for their hallucinatory effects. But alternatives that will be offered for sale at Lazydaze can produce a "trippy" feeling if consumed at certain dosages, she says. "It's all legal stuff."

She is an Army veteran who served in Iraq and her husband is a real estate agent. They both have an interest in the wellness industry and travel to conventions and gatherings.

On warm days they plan to set up chairs and tables outside the shop, which will be in the space once occupied by a mattress store. Repairs have delayed their opening, originally scheduled for



PHOTO BY DOUG DONOVAN

April, but were still incomplete as of early June.

Enriquez says he currently has outlets in Texas and New Mexico. "I'm excited about getting to the East Coast," he says.

As the website says, "More than a coffeeshop, we're a destination for ladies and gentlemen who live beyond stereotypes."

He envisions the shops as community gathering places for poetry, music and other events. "We really want to work with the communities," he says.

Crave Is Bringing Gourmet Waffles

This ice cream and gourmet waffle eatery started out in 2022 as Waffle-Licious on High Street in Baltimore, serving Chinese “bubble” or “egg” waffles. They changed the name to reflect an expanded menu that includes crepes and other desserts.

The company says “our mission is to remind you what fresh-made desserts truly taste like.”

The owners, Vlad and Diana Orlov, say they fell in love with bubble waffles while on vacation and spent years perfecting a recipe of their own. They describe theirs as “a light and airy waffle” that is soft and chewy on the inside but crispy on the outside.

Crave will offer carry-out service but intends to mostly be a “hangout,” says Vlad Orlov, a native of Russia and former bartender at Ruth’s Chris steak house in Gaithersburg.

“We’re not a coffee shop. We’re mostly a dessert place,” he says. The restaurant relies on Baltimore-made Taharka Brothers ice cream and the Italian coffee brand Lavazza.

The new shop is in the space once occupied by Gordon’s Florist. Following a “soft opening” on May 28, Crave plans to be open Wednesday through Sunday as they seek staff that will permit a seven-day schedule now planned for mid-July.

Anneslie “is the perfect location for us,” says Orlov.

Bobby D’s Still Pushing

The acclaimed Caribbean restaurant from Hamden opened its Stoneleigh outpost last year and is sticking with it even though the business has fallen shy of expectations, owner Bobby Davis says.

“It could be better. But we’re building” Davis says. “We’re still here pushing.”

He’s come to realize that the orientation of the community means people don’t eat out as frequently as a city clientele. Lunch traffic has been a disappointment.

Nevertheless, he says “It’s a great community.”



PHOTO BY DOUG DONOVAN

“Hopefully we’ll get some more people in,” he says.

Baltoz Eyes Adding Lunch Hours

Baltoz co-owner Vlad Petrovski said he’s trying to open earlier to serve lunch – if he can find the right professional staff. It’s taken months so far.

“I have the products ready to go for lunch,” he says in May. But finding the right cooks for his innovative menu has been a challenge.

He’s been perfecting his recipe for sour dough bagels, ciabatta and falafel sandwiches, which he says will be unlike anything else in the market. But they can’t be prepared by just anyone.

“The biggest drawback is us finding qualified employees,” he says.

The bakery currently opens at 4 but would like to add a 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. slot for the lunch crowd.

“The community has been very supportive,” he says.

The Shoe Doctor is In

BY JON MORGAN

The boom in athletic footwear sparked decades ago by Michael Jordan's Nikes has created a generation of enthusiasts and collectors, known as "sneakerheads."

And, inevitably, a business is growing to provide care and cleaning of shoes that carry price tags in the hundreds of dollars and designer labels by Gucci and Prada.

Enter the Shoe Doctor, the latest addition to Anneslie's busy York Road commercial strip.

"It's a service you didn't know you needed," says Kash Scurry, co-owner and manager of the Anneslie shop, which opened May 2. "It's about protecting your investment."

Scurry is a Georgia native who graduated from the Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts branch in Atlanta and spent years in the restaurant business. He eventually relocated to Detroit to care for an ailing brother and became immersed in that city's sneaker culture.

He's now an investor in the 14-year-old franchise operation owned by his brother in law, which has outlets in the Detroit and Atlanta area as well as Chicago. The York Road shop is the first in Maryland but Scurry said he's already scouting locations for others, including one in White Marsh.

The jarring black sign on the outside of the building doesn't match the others along the Anneslie strip but was required to match the company's other franchise outlets.

The store typically doesn't handle formal dress shoes. Its core business is sneakers. For a fee that starts at \$30 for a child's shoe and \$45 for an adult



size Scurry will hand clean and deodorize a pair, including time spent in a special drying room with UV lights to kill bacteria. For additional charges, yellow soles can be deoxidized to their original appearance and leather uppers can be restored with paint. Damage can be repaired.

As <https://shoedoctorbaltimore.com/> says, "From beaters to heaters, we bring 'em back."

Typical turn-around time is 4-5 days, though same day work is available for an extra fee. Scurry says he's applied for permits to permit the sale of accessories, such as laces and socks in the shop.

"We're trying to keep the sneaker culture alive," he says.



Trivia Answer

The answer to the trivia question is:

**The biggest snowstorm was Jan. 22–23, 2016 called "Snowzilla."
It dropped 29.2 inches on BWI**

The next four were: Presidents' Day Blizzard 26.8 inches, Feb. 16–18, 2003; Blizzard of 1996, 26.6 inches, Jan. 7–8, 1996; "Snowmageddon," 24.8 inches, Feb. 5–6, 2010; Knickerbocker Blizzard, 23.3 inches, Jan. 28–29, 1922.

