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## News Library

### YES WE CAN

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Once again, the winners of The News' annual outstanding service awards prove that success has little to do with the sure th means wanting it more than those standing in the way.

KEVIN COTTRELL\Glimpsing the future through the past

When Kevin Cottrell dons the chains and ragged clothing of a fugitive slave, he's doing more than looking back toward the dreaming of the future Cottrell, a history and heritage enthusiast who has walked in the steps of those who traveled the Un Railroad to freedom, burst upon the local preservation scene last year with plans to restore the landmark Michigan Street B

The energy and vision he brought to the proposal captivated not only the congregation, but also leaders of the African-Am community, local historians, city leaders and the community at large. Not content to stop there, Cottrell also has taken wor project to national conferences, and last year hosted tours of the Michigan Avenue site for cultural history experts and the l for Historic Preservation.

The non-profit Michigan Street Preservation Corp. he founded and heads now has support across any barriers of race, age, geography. And Cottrell has dreamed even more than the 10-year, \$1.3 million church building; he envisions a cultural his with museum exhibits and research libraries outlining a community and national legacy here.

Cottrell's own roots in historic preservation were set when the state parks employee got interested a few years ago in herita is a partner in Motherland Connexions, which provides customized tours of local Underground Railroad sites, and once he caravan that traced that 19th century freedom trail from the South to the Canadian border.

If his church restoration project succeeds -- and many are hoping it will -- Buffalo will have another historic jewel. Now h William H. Henderson's El-Bethel Church, the building at 511 Michigan Ave. was built in 1845, is the oldest structure in V York continuously occupied by African-Americans, and already is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The church, now the focus of a preliminary \$10,000 architectural study, served as a station on the Underground Railroad a by such historical figures as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois.

-Mike Vogel

Joseph E. Goodell/Maestro of the comeback

Hardly anybody viewed Joseph E. Goodell as a savior when he agreed to become unpaid interim executive director of the t Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra in late 1995.

Certainly not John Reinhold, who was chairman-elect of the orchestra society board and Goodell's close friend. Reinhold r the retired American Brass Co. president to be caretaker long enough to find a merger partner for the Philharmonic, which survived its latest acrimonious contract dispute with musicians.

And least of all Goodell, who admitted to being musically challenged. "My daughters wouldn't even let me sing in church l couldn't carry a tune," he says.

Less than two years later, Goodell has engineered a comeback that has folks on Symphony Circle whistling an optimistic t time in years. Almost every indicator points to a reversal of fortune: Ticket sales, earned revenues and donations are all up long-suffering musicians have begun to recoup some of the money and benefits they gave up as contract after contract was the pre-Goodell era.

How has the good-natured former captain of industry pulled it off? Unable to interest the Rochester Philharmonic or any of a merger, Goodell, 59, canned the idea and rolled up his sleeves. He agreed to stay on indefinitely -- still without pay.

"Everybody's got good ideas -- bunches of them," he says. "But it's easy to get into artistic things and get all twisted up. I s We're going to quit worrying about a recording contract and that other stuff and concentrate on selling tickets. That's going focus.' And it has worked."

Goodell won over the musicians, who had every right to feel bitter after years of contract concessions and squabbles with I management.

"Joe came from American Brass with a record of fair and honest dealing with labor unions," Reinhold notes. "Our union ha trust him. He did what he said he'd do."

Finally, the Philharmonic under Goodell and Reinhold is filling seats and making contributors happy. The most recent evic percent increase in ticket sales during the first half of the 1996-97 concert season, including three sell-outs of Kleinhans M

Goodell, who lives in a waterfront condo with his wife, Mary Ellen Hager, and often uses his private railroad car to travel, another career change anytime soon.

"I'm enjoying this," he says. "I think I'm making a difference."

-Tom Buckham

Savannah Wallard/A case study in fighting back

She is a profile in courage.

Savannah Wallard had a choice -- stand and fight, or run.

Running wasn't an option.

"That wasn't the way I was raised," she says.

Instead, she stayed in the apartment building in the Allentown neighborhood she loved. She has been there for six years. A nice place to live, populated with young mothers and elderly people. But trouble started after new management came in a c ago.

New tenants weren't tightly screened. One apartment "went bad." Then two, then three. Suddenly there was litter in the hal beer cans in the elevators. The smell of urine in the halls. A broken security door.

Non-leaseholders moved in with tenants. People were sleeping and having sex in the basement. Tenants were afraid to use room. Storage lockers were broken into. Outdoor hedges hid drug deals. Loud music played late. People smoked pot on the

Ms. Wallard, 38, didn't like it.

"It's a privilege to live in subsidized housing," she says. "You shouldn't abuse that privilege."

What she did is a case study in how to fight back.

She kept a log of incidents. She called agencies -- Citizen's Action, the Allentown Association, Fair Housing in City Hall, 1 Way. She went to every seminar and block club conference. She enlisted neighborhood homeowners. "I just grabbed them and said, 'Aren't you embarrassed about what's happening here?' " says Ms. Wallard, an artist and furniture maker.

She restarted the tenants' association. She got the names and addresses of the building owners in Florida and the local man company. She fired off letters of complaint.

By speaking up, she took a risk. She lives in the same building as those she complained about. She saw them in the halls. F in the elevator.

"Sometimes," she says, "you'd get a look or a comment, like, 'We know what you're doing.' "

She did not stop.

Some think the pressure and attention persuaded the company that managed the building to get out. Soon afterward, a young man had confronted the loitering druggies had her car tires slashed.

Ms. Wallard called the building's new management with a question: Are you going to get someone to manage this property somebody have to get killed?

In the following weeks, problem tenants were evicted, security lights were installed, and other changes were made.

"It's not over," says Ms. Wallard. "But it's better."

It's better because Savannah Wallard decided to fight.

-Donn Esmonde

Molly Bethel/Arts for all children

Founder of a neighborhood art school that has served generations of disadvantaged city children. A fierce advocate of the arts and a successful businesswoman. All these qualities are reasons that Buffalo native Molly Bethel has become a News **Citizen of the Year**.

Founder of the MollyOlga Art Classes Inc. at 138 Locust St., Ms. Bethel for 37 years has brought the arts -- what she has called an essential part that makes us human -- to children from Buffalo's poorest neighborhoods.

Ms. Bethel is a Vassar College graduate who returned to the city in 1959 and began teaching painting to children in the kitchen at home. The MollyOlga project now enrolls 350 students each year and gives them hands-on experience in painting, clay sculpture and other visual arts.

Supported through a combination of private and public grants, the program was selected by Harvard University in 1993 as one of the "Safe Havens" projects in the United States for educational effectiveness. The Harvard study evaluated 300 community projects.

"Anyone who wants to paint or draw or create ought to have a chance to do it," Ms. Bethel says. "There is a great deal of talent around in our society, and society can't afford to waste anybody's talent. My talent happens to be in art, or teaching art. You know, 'Shame on me' if I don't use it." Despite its nationally and locally recognized success, the school has had to fight for survival for years because of cutbacks in government funding for the arts. Students pay modest fees if they can afford to. But the school is an asset that has proved their value over generations. Many MollyOlga students have gone on to college, some making it into the art world.

"The arts belong to everybody," Ms. Bethel says. "And public funding is the right, decent, responsible way to go."

"It is expensive to learn about art, and when you insist on making people pay for that, you make art exclusive and exclusive art wastes 80 percent of the talent in this world."

In reviewing an exhibition that covered 35 years of artwork by the school's students, Buffalo News Art Critic Richard Hunn wrote that the school's young and more mature students demonstrated that they have absorbed key creative lessons.

"This kind of fearless drawing and unexpected viewpoint is typical of children's art," he wrote. "It is especially visible in art from out of MollyOlga, a school that holds that instruction must encourage individuality at all costs."

-Carl Allen

Jerri Wegner/Saving the children so they can save us

Once again last year, about 20 young South American children who never knew the comforts of a loving home left a Bogota orphanage for a new life in Western New York.

Tears always flow at the emotional homecomings at the Buffalo airport. There, proud and beaming new parents hug their children who have brought them the priceless gift of life.

And it's all due largely to the volunteer efforts of one Orchard Park woman, Jerri Wegner.

Close to 200 boys and girls from Colombia, ranging from infants to early teens, now call Western New York home, thanks to Wegner's tireless work over the past 10 years.

Nine years ago, she founded a local chapter of an adoption group with ties to the Bogota orphanage FANA (a Spanish acronym for the Foundation for the Adoption of Abandoned Children).

Some 150 Western New York families now belong to the local Families of FANA adoption group, which has a dual mission support group for families, and raising money for both the orphanage and local children's charities here.

Through an annual golf tournament and other fund-raising efforts, the adoption group Mrs. Wegner founded raises \$100,000 for the Bogota orphanage and more than \$10,000 for local children's charities.

Mrs. Wegner, the mother of three FANA children, remains the group's adoption facilitator, serving as the contact between the group and the orphanage. She screens prospective parents, funnels the volumes of paperwork, greets the arriving babies and answers questions and problems.

"We aren't saving children," she says. "They are saving us. They could have gone to Paris, Luxembourg, anywhere in the world and they've ended up in Buffalo. We'd better make it good."

"Jerri is the glue that has kept the mission alive," says local FANA Board President David W. Moslow, the father of two FANA children. "Whatever drives her is rare."

On a recent night, Moslow, like many other parents, walked into his sleeping daughter's bedroom to ponder the miracle of children.

"I'm thankful to God," he says, "that Jerri was in the right place at the right time for me."

-Gene Warner

Lawrence Quinn/Thinking big and taking chances

Buffalo could use 50 Larry Quinns.

A hometown boy whose intelligence and drive rocketed him up the leadership ladder at City Hall, Quinn became the youngest development commissioner ever at age 27. Then it was off to the national stage, where he gained 10 years of experience as a developer.

The match was made when the late Seymour H. Knox III, chairman of the Buffalo Sabres, asked Quinn to come home from New York in 1992 to jump-start his floundering arena project.

Quinn was familiar with local government, the turf battles and political egos that can thwart big ideas. He had also left to learn the provincial ways of Buffalo and returned knowing how things get done in the rest of the country.

That result is now being enjoyed by thousands of Western New Yorkers watching hockey and other events in comfort few other American arenas can match. The 19,000-seat Marine Midland Arena opened in October, on time and within budget.

As for Quinn, 44 -- well, a rolling stone gathers no moss. Only a month after the arena opened, he was named president of the Buffalo News. Either of those accomplishments would qualify him for Buffalo News **Citizen of the Year**.

A hockey lover who still likes to swing a stick in bar leagues, Quinn and his wife, Vivian, an attorney, live in the city. The children, Molly, a student at Boston University, and Matt, who attends Boston College.

-Kevin Collison

Franklin and Kristen Redd/Bailey Avenue Show Time

Franklin and Kristen Redd are an attractive and energetic young couple committed to making their Bailey Avenue neighborhood a great place to live.

Nearly a year ago, they bought a former porno movie house at 3167 Bailey Ave. and converted it into a family-friendly theater featuring second-run films for a \$1.50 admission price.

Even more remarkable, the couple financed the purchase with resources from their insurance agency and mortgage broker Redd & Associates. In addition, they paid off more than \$50,000 in liens on the property, rolled up their sleeves and took care of the refurbishment of the theater themselves.

Hollywood stars Denzel Washington and Whitney Houston could play the leads in a silver-screen adaptation of the Redds' course, would end with our heroes triumphant over adversity.

Real life is more ambiguous, however.

After six months of operation, the Redds last month temporarily closed the theater.

"Our main business is still the insurance agency and mortgage brokerage firm," says Redd, 31.

"Running both operations, our staff was working 17- to 18-hour days, and it began to wear us all out," he continues. "We're someone else to operate it, a church or community group."

In the meantime, not wanting to add to the blight in the neighborhood, the couple continues to operate a coffeehouse inside which continues to cater neighborhood birthday parties for youngsters in the community.

The Redds still hope to transform the still-unnamed facility into what they call "a full-service community theater," featuring family movies but also live performances, including plays, talent shows and recitals.

"It's a shame that we always have to go out to the suburbs to entertain our kids. Why can't we entertain them here?" says M graduate of Buffalo Academy of the Sacred Heart High School in Eggertsville and Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Redd, a Hutchinson-Central Technical High School graduate and alumnus of Syracuse University, says the couple was motivated to purchase the theater not merely for the challenge, but also because of the lack of positive, family-oriented fare available in the area.

The parents of two small children, the Redds are firm believers in family, hard work, entrepreneurship and commitment to the community.

"I really believe that the Lord has blessed us," says Mrs. Redd. "I feel that the Lord has placed us here because we have a purpose."

The Redds are hoping that if their venture is successful, there will be a spinoff effect that spurs other such ventures in their area and in other East Side communities.

-Harold McNeil

Northrup R. Knox/Still honoring his name

Northrup Rand Knox was born to greatness -- and it is a privilege he has always honored.

A banker like his father and grandfather before him, he is perhaps best-known for bringing major-league hockey to Buffalo with his brother Seymour H. Knox III.

Since Seymour's death in May, he has stepped down from the chairmanship of the Marine Midland Bank conglomerate and his involvement with the Buffalo Sabres -- of which he has been a principal owner since the purchase of a National Hockey League franchise for Buffalo.

At the opening night of Marine Midland Arena in September, the man everyone knows affectionately as "Norty" beamed a smile that was a brother's dream.

"If we pull together, there's no limit to what we can accomplish," he said.

Nationally known in world court tennis, squash and polo circles, Knox is the son of the late American art patron and philanthropist Seymour H. Knox Jr., and the grandson of the late banker and businessman Seymour Horace Knox Sr., founder of the S.H. Knox stores and an early partner with his cousin, Frank S. Woolworth, in what is now the Woolworth Corp.

Northrup Knox is vice president and a director of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy -- the governing body of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. He is also honorary co-chairman of the gallery's \$9.5 million "Campaign for the 21st Century."

Chairman and a director of the Seymour H. Knox Foundation Inc., Knox is a director of the University at Buffalo Foundation. He is also national chairman of UB's "Pathways to Greatness" campaign -- which surpassed its goal by \$4 million, raising \$56.3 million for the university between 1987 and 1992.

Made a member of the Sabres Hall of Fame in March, along with his brother, Knox also received an honorary doctorate in business from UB in October. His brother received one as well, posthumously.

A member of the U.S. Court Tennis Association and Greater Buffalo Sports Halls of Fame, Knox has received numerous o over the years.

In 1986, he and his brother shared the Red Jacket Award of the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society.

In 1970, they were both named Citizens of the Year by The News -- making this year's designation an even more significant Knox's continuing love for his heritage and community

Photos by Mark Mulville.

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