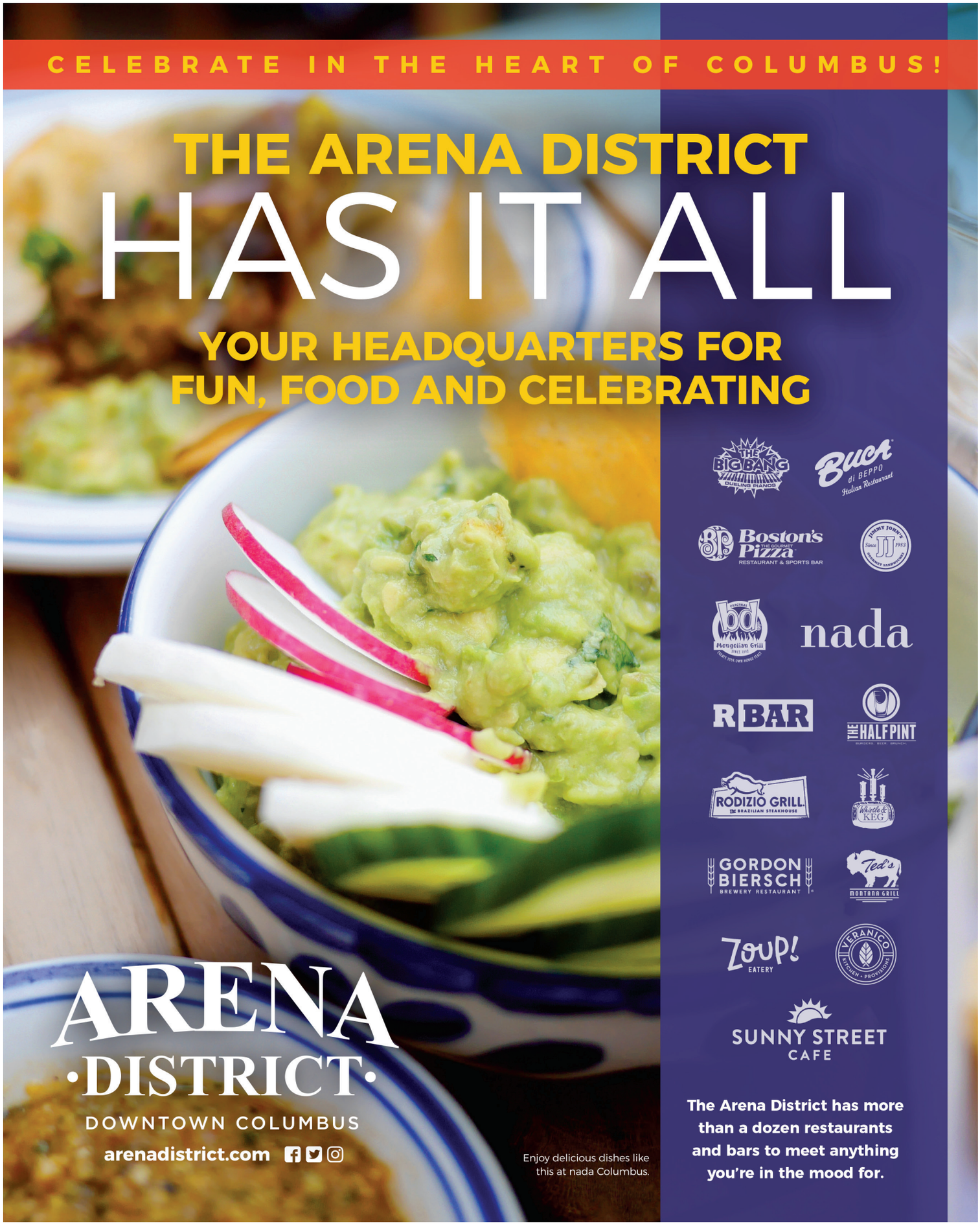
(614)

MARCH 2020 | FREE



GAME ON

INSIDE THE COLUMBUS ESPORTS REVOLUTION


CELEBRATE IN THE HEART OF COLUMBUS!
THE ARENA DISTRICT
HAS IT ALL
YOUR HEADQUARTERS FOR
FUN, FOOD AND CELEBRATING
THE BIG BANG DUELING PIANOS
BUCA di BEPPO Italian Restaurant
Boston's Pizza THE GOURMET RESTAURANT & SPORTS BAR
JIMMY JOHN'S Since 1983
bd Mongolian Grill
nada
R BAR
THE HALF PINT
RODIZIO GRILL the BRAZILIAN STEAKHOUSE
Whistle & KEG
GORDON BIERSCH BREWERY RESTAURANT
Ted's MONTANA GRILL
Zoup! EATERY
VERANICO KITCHEN + PROVISIONS
SUNNY STREET CAFE
ARENA
·DISTRICT·
DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS
arenadistrict.com
Enjoy delicious dishes like this at nada Columbus.
The Arena District has more than a dozen restaurants and bars to meet anything you're in the mood for.

KNOW YOUR DISTILLER

ECHO

COLS. OH DISTILLING

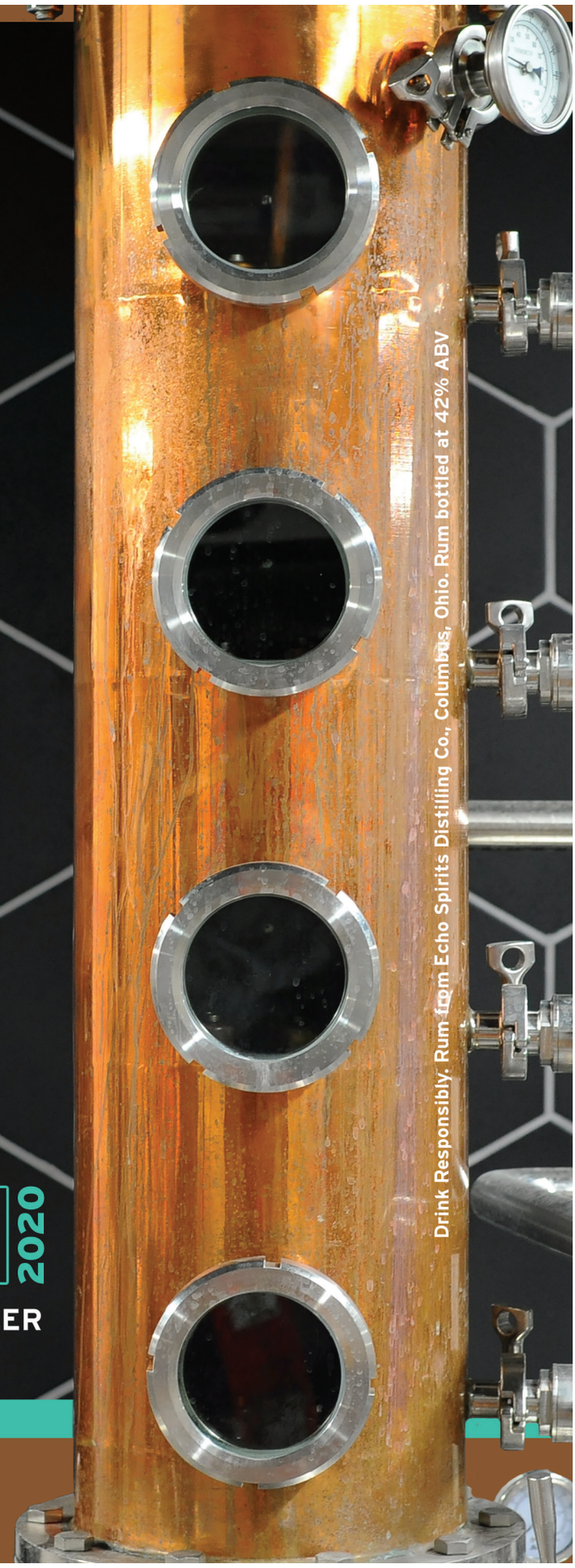
SPIRITS



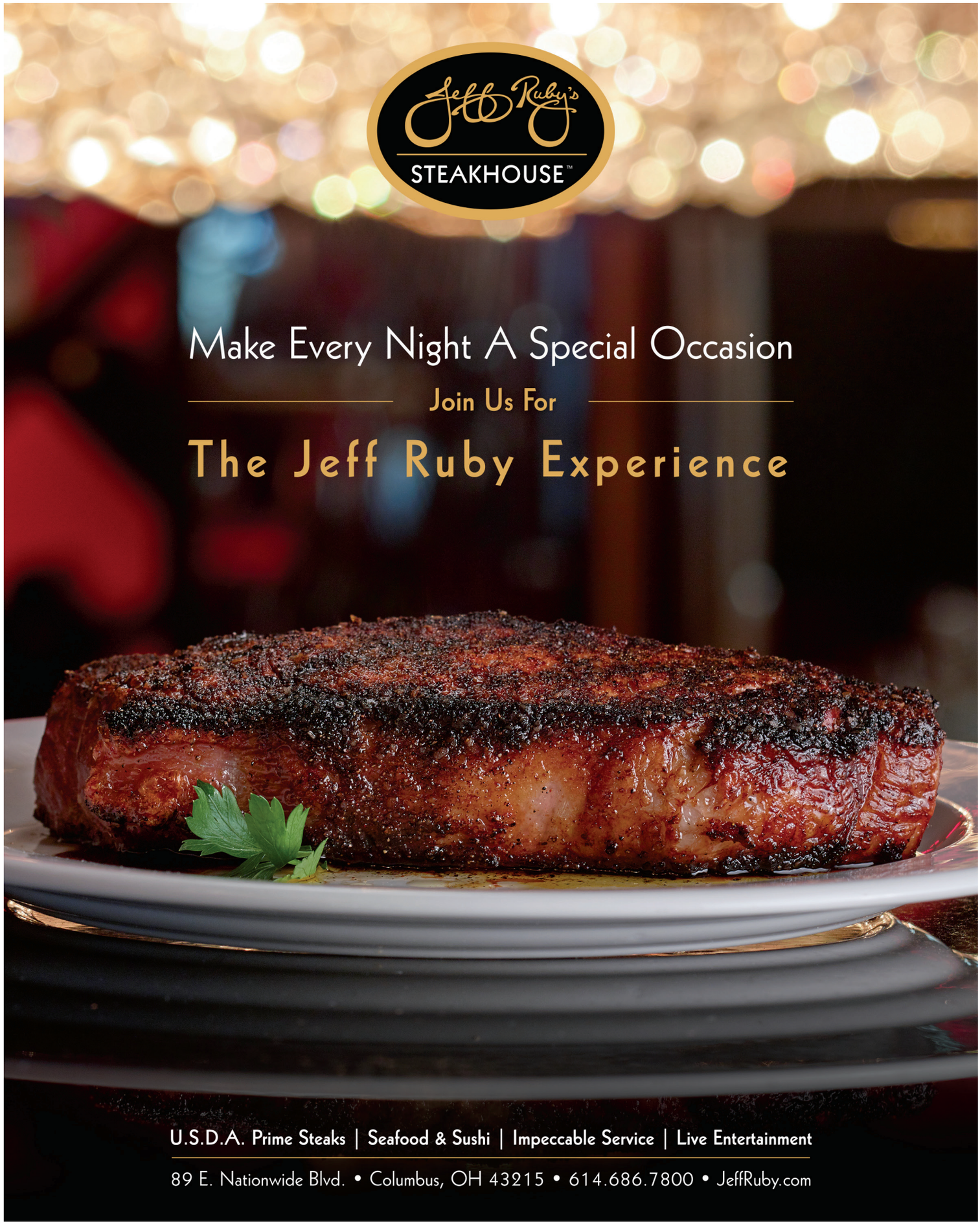
MARCH 2020

GET TO KNOW YOUR DISTILLER
(AND YOUR BARTENDER)

echospirits.com
985 W. 6th Avenue
Columbus OH, 43212



Drink Responsibly. Rum from Echo Spirits Distilling Co., Columbus, Ohio. Rum bottled at 42% ABV


Jeff Ruby's
STEAKHOUSE™
Make Every Night A Special Occasion
Join Us For
The Jeff Ruby Experience
U.S.D.A. Prime Steaks | Seafood & Sushi | Impeccable Service | Live Entertainment
89 E. Nationwide Blvd. • Columbus, OH 43215 • 614.686.7800 • JeffRuby.com



FPG FINANCIAL PROVIDENCE GROUP

To learn more visit **fpgroup.us**



SPEND YOUR HAPPY HOUR TAKING FIRST STEPS INTO HOMEOWNERSHIP. NETWORK WITH OLD AND NEW FRIENDS, ENJOY GREAT FOOD AND CRAFT BEER, LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS.

- Home Ownership has never been more affordable
- Interest rates are at historic lows
- $0 Down Payment for Teachers, Nurses, Firefighters, Police Officers, Veterans
- $0 downpayment options available for recent college grads
- Student Loans? Not a problem
- Learn from Central Ohio's top Realtors and Mortgage Brokers
- Homeownership tax advantages give you more take-home pay
- Homes specific to your choices sent to your I-pad

Sponsored by

The Kathy Chiero Group

kw GREATER COLUMBUS
KELLERWILLIAMS. REALTY

OurOhioHome.com

THE MAY-SINE TEAM | AMERICAN EAGLE MORTGAGE

Company NMLS 1938 Loan Officer NMLS 249997

ADVERTISEMENT



HOPS & HOMES

GRAB A BEER. TOSS A LANDLORD.

There is a reason that purchasing a home is called "The American Dream." There is an unparalleled sense of accomplishment when the payments you are making each month are going toward building your own wealth instead of that of the landlord. There is an incredible bonding that comes from joining with someone you love and making a house a home. There is no better place to cement the relationships you have built over the years than on a patio you built looking out onto a garden you tend.

The Dutch have a word they use that is believed to be at the heart of the Dutch culture: gezelligheid. Derived from the Dutch word gezel which means "companion" or "friend," it describes the positive emotions generated from spending time with people you love and valuing those *relationships* above *things*. In the Netherlands It is the highest compliment to have created a home of gezelligheid—one which is inviting, has social warmth, and fosters an atmosphere of togetherness. That is the dream in The American Dream.

The Kathy Chiero Group at Keller Williams Greater Columbus and The May-Sine Team at American Eagle Mortgage would love to help you achieve your dream, your home of gezelligheid. We invite you to "Hops & Homes," a seminar to show you first steps toward homeownership.

DOOR PRIZE

SUITE FOR YOU AND 10 OF YOUR FRIENDS TO SEE OUR COLUMBUS BLUEJACKETS AT NATIONWIDE ARENA

TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 6:30 - 9:00

DOGTAP BREWERY

96 GENDER ROAD CANAL WINCHESTER OH 43110

$10 PER PERSON

SEATS ARE LIMITED

INCLUDES HEAVY HORS D'OEUVRES AND DRINKS

Register at www.OurOhioHome.com Click on Hops & Homes.


BUA
IRISH WHISKEY
BUA
IRISH WHISKEY
TRIPLE DISTILLED
SMALL BATCH MATURED
NON CHILL FILTERED
Bua is a victory of time and patience over our fast paced world – the time taken to mature this great whiskey and the patience to do it in five distinctive barrels. BUA, a winner from the start.
FIVE BARREL MATURATION
BUA
IRISH WHISKEY
A WINNER FROM THE START
PRODUCT OF IRELAND
TRIPLE DISTILLED
FIVE BARREL MATURATION
NON-CHILL FILTERED
NO ADDED COLOURING
NO ADDED FLAVOURING
LOCALLY OWNED
GLUTEN - FREE
NON-DENOMINATIONAL
VEGAN
FECKING DELICIOUS
BUA (boo'ah) noun. 1 Win or Victory in the Gaelic Irish language.



Byrne's PUB

25TH ANNIVERSARY TENT PARTY

ENTERTAINMENT LINEUP

SATURDAY, MARCH 14TH:

OPEN 8:00AM

THE RICE BROTHERS, McIANS, MARY'S LANE AND APPEARANCES BY THE PIPES AND DRUMS

MONDAY, MARCH 16TH:

OFFICIAL BLUE JACKETS WATCH PARTY

TUESDAY, MARCH 17TH - ST. PATRICK'S DAY:

OPEN 8:00AM

DOGWOOD ROAD, THE DROWSY LADS, McIANS AND APPEARANCES BY THE PIPES AND DRUMS

1248 W 3RD AVE, COLUMBUS, OH 43212 | (614) 486-4722
WWW.BYRNESPUB.COM @BYRNESPUBGRANDVIEW





Designer furniture without the designer prices.

Designer Looks®

FURNITURE

Shop your favorite styles in stores and at VCF.com
Buy online, pick up for free!

VCF VALUE CITY FURNITURE®


KILLER



BIG PICTURE

Killer Queen is guarenteed to blow your mind. Read more about Close Quarters Gaming Club on page 33.

PHOTO BY KYLE ASPERGER









CONTENTS

COVER PACKAGE

GAME ON: INSIDE THE COLUMBUS ESPORTS REVOLUTION **51**

GALLERY SPACE: *ART AFTER STONEWALL* **31**

CLOSE QUARTERS GAMING CLUB **33**

LIFESTYLE CAFE **39**

COAST WINE **42**

ECHO SPIRITS **46**

(614)FAMILY **79**

GOOD GRUB, GREAT GETAWAYS **89**

(614)HOME: NEED FOR SEAT USA **110**

ON THE COVER:
Photo by Brian Kaiser
Design by Sarah Moore


Clarke Hinkle
Jimmy Conzelman
admiration.
What will you find in Ohio?
Celebrate the home of professional football at Canton's Pro Football Hall of Fame. Join sports fans from all over and cheer during this year's Centennial Celebration.
Ten perfect road trips await you at RoadTrips.Ohio.org
Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton
Ohio
find it here.™
ohio.org

OPENING VOLLEY

I used to think there were two kinds of gamers.

The first type was focused purely on entertainment and kept it old school, preferring games from the Super Nintendo era, a bit of nostalgia embedded in every click of the *start* button. These are the folks you'll find on Sundays at 16-Bit and similar arcades, balancing a beer in one hand and a joystick in the other as they show their children that—yes—they were once good at something, even if the technology they mastered requires an abnormally large box by today's standards.

Then there was the second type, the modern *gamers*, the folks I imagined in basements wearing headsets, slight blisters on their thumbs. They have new systems, preferred titles, and social networks revolving around gaming. Games for them are entertaining, of course, but also serious and competitive, and they make investments to continuously improve. These could be financial, to keep up with latest titles and high tech gear; mental, focusing on developing strategies for improved performance; and even physical—if leveling up requires skipping the gym or losing a little sleep, so be it.

Of course, in many cases, when you set up a binary expecting to find an *either/or*, you instead find a *yes/and*. That's been my experience editing this issue. My assumptions rested on my personal experiences—I fall deeply in the old-school camp—and what I thought I knew about *gamers*.

This is an instance where it's nice to have been proven wrong.

Instead of a binary, interest in video games falls on a continuum; and if you've ever kicked back with a controller, you fall somewhere on it. On one end, you can think of casual players; on the other side are those who take gaming seriously. But what became increasingly apparent as we researched and refined the articles about gaming in Columbus for our cover package was just how much substance there is in between these endpoints.

While entertainment is an important aspect of games, it's far from the only function, and that's not just true for serious gamers. Video game technology is used in healthcare to help people regain mobility as they recover from injuries, or measure their progress during treatments for diseases like muscular dystrophy. Meanwhile, schools are starting esports teams to bring the positive benefits of training and organized competition outside the realm of traditional athletics.



PHOTO BY BRIAN KAISER

(614) first looked at gaming in Columbus in 2015. Since then, the industry has continued its massive global growth streak, bringing in $137 billion in 2018 (that's more than movies and music *combined*). This growth is not just happening in far-off places, however. In fact, Columbus is a national leader in the field.

Businesses are springing up around town with the intention of giving esports professional stature by training and supporting players, building state-of-the-art arenas for competitions, and creating networking opportunities. Meanwhile, leaders from local gaming communities are collaborating with city planners with the intention of positioning Columbus as an esports destination, building up the industry while attracting top talent. And not wanting to pass up learning opportunities, area schools are giving ever-younger students opportunities to get involved.

Of course, the entertainment aspect of gaming shouldn't be overlooked. Most of us pick up a controller for the first time not because we hope to become professional *Fortnite* players, but because we're intrigued by the fantastical world that's in front of us and the characters we're given the power to control. From a cutting-edge esports facility, to an old school-inspired social gaming club, this month's issue of *(614)* includes some places that you can get your game on. And if you're serious about esports, we've got news for you on a local pro team called Vanguard.

Video games and technology have an impact on families, too. We're talking to the creator of a locally-designed app that connects parents with babysitters, helping to solve the age-old childcare conundrum. Or if you want to take your kids with you when you go out, a new play called *Press Start* will introduce them to classic video game characters and let them participate in the production. We've even found a company making custom gaming chairs that could be a great fit in any home.

Finally, for readers whose idea of an escape doesn't involve a screen and a controller, we've put together some destinations in Ohio with top-notch food and wine that will help you feel far away without traveling very far at all.

We at *(614)* highly encourage you to check out numerous destinations this month, whether online or off. Since you never know exactly which castle your princess is hiding in, you might as well explore them all. We wish you well on your quest.

Cheers,



Linda Baird, Editor-in-Chief

(614)

PUBLISHER Wayne T. Lewis

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Linda Lee Baird

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Mitch Hooper

PHOTO EDITOR
Brian Kaiser

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS
Rebecca Tien, Amy Glass, Olivia K. James
Kyle Asperger,

614NOW EDITOR
Regina Fox

STAFF WRITER
Mike Thomas

SENIOR CONTRIBUTORS
J.R. McMillan, Jaelani Turner-Williams, Jeni Ruisch

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
John McLaughlin, Melinda Green, Melissa Braithwaite
Kerry Francis, Olivia Miltner

COPY EDITOR
Dan Sponseller

LEAD DESIGNER
Sarah Moore

CREATIVE DESIGNERS
Justin Remotap, Imana Onipe, Hugo Albornoz, Paul Barton

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Meggin Weimerskirch

SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Derek Landers

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES
Nikki Harris, Mindy Wilhite

DIGITAL ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Lori Brittenham

EVENTS & SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR
Taylor Staus

VIDEO PRODUCER
John Thorne

OPERATIONS MANAGER
Megan Sheedy

VP OF SALES AND MARKETING
Lindsay Press

(614) Magazine
458 E Main St., Columbus, OH 43215
Office: (614) 488-4400 | Fax: (614) 488-4402
Email submissions to: editor@614columbus.com
www.614now.com

©Copyright 2014 by Lewis & Clark Media LLC. Reproduction of any content, in whole or in part, without written consent of publisher is strictly prohibited. (614) Magazine is not responsible for return of unsolicited materials, manuscripts or photographs. '614 Magazine' is a registered Trademark of Lewis & Clark Media, LLC.



home

/hōm/

---

a place where loved ones gather
and precious memories are made.

THE Charles™
AT BEXLEY

WWW.THECHARLESATBEXLEY.COM

(INSIDE *the* PARENTHESES)

BY MITCH HOOPER

STAFF PICK 6

Video Game Characters

This March, *(614)* is nerding out about video games. Whether it's a fond memory of dropping quarters in at the local arcade or LAN parties in a friend's basement, video games hold a nostalgic spot in many of our hearts. And in celebration of all things animated and awesome, we're sharing our favorite video game characters throughout our years of gaming down.



Solid Snake from *Metal Gear Solid*

"The OG hero who proved that stealth is a winning strategy on the battlefield. That, and taking lots of phone calls during firefights. 'Snake? SNA-AAAKE!!'" **— Mike Thomas, Staff Writer**



The straight line in *Tetris*

"Rarely there when you need it—but when the stars align, this is the key to *Tetris* glory." **— Brian Kaiser, Photo Editor**



Link from *The Legend Of Zelda*, et al.

"Name one video game character that pulls off a tunic better than Link. I'll wait." **— Mitch Hooper, Assistant Editor**



Clank from *Ratchet & Clank*

"He's just really cute." **— Sarah Moore, Lead Designer**



Mario from *Super Mario Brothers*, et al.

"There's just nothing better than putting a flying racoon costume on an Italian plumber." **— Linda Baird, Editor in Chief**



Any of the riders in *Sled Storm*

"There's nothing like whipping sleds through the pow with the Rob Zombie-studded soundtrack cranked at full volume as a pre-adolescent." **— Regina Fox, 614Now Editor**

ICYMI

Are you following 614now? It's our online publication dedicated to being the users' guide to Columbus. Here are the top stories from last month. You can find these and more at *614now.com*.

(1): One of Ohio's "Nine most abandoned places" is just 30 minutes from Columbus

Are you a connoisseur of all things creepy? Do you get a rush from ruined buildings? Love the feeling of things forgotten? If so, check out these nine places courtesy of *Only In Your State*.

(2): Four months later, ODOT shares impact of SmartLane

The I-670 SmartLane has only been open about four months, but its effects on traffic are reportedly paramount. According to Ohio Department of Transportation Public Information Officer Brooke Ebersole, since the SmartLane opened in October, average commute times on I-670 East have been cut in half.

614 NOW's

Street Quality Control Team

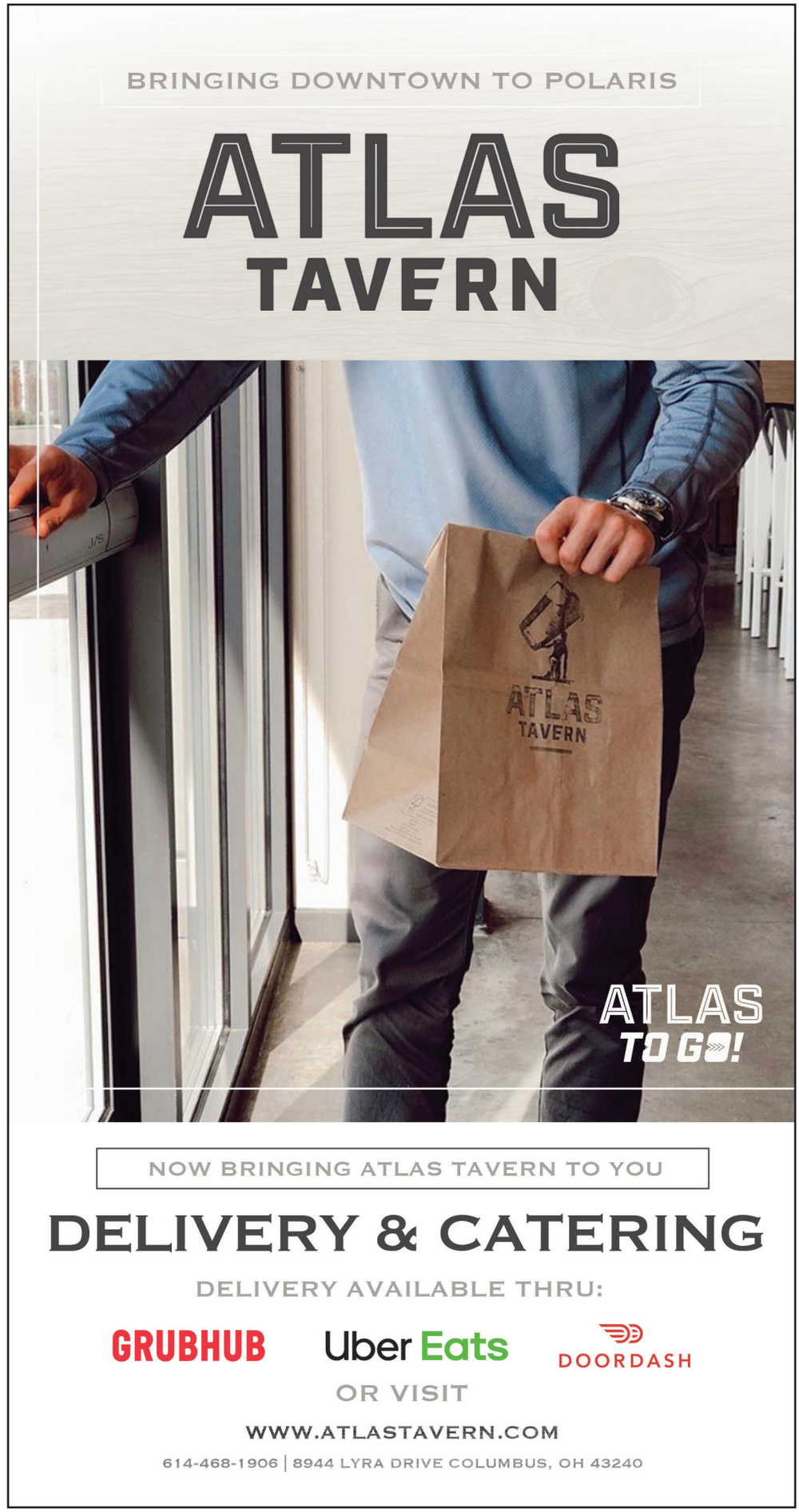
Every month, we post tons of content on 614now.com. And with the high volume of posts we do, our audience of dedicated readers are never ones to shy away from voicing up in our comment section. We see you, comment section warriors, and we applaud your efforts. Here's our favorite from last month.

614Now: The Rest Is History: Couples in Columbus share their stories of falling in love

Our Favorite Comment

Ahmed Mirza: Love, love, you know what love is? Love is an illusion created by lawyer types to perpetuate another illusion called marriage to create the reality of divorce and then the illusionary need for divorce lawyers.

It looks like Ahmed Mirza recently watched *Marriage Story* on Netflix. We hope nothing but the best for you, man. Stay away from those Frank Ocean albums in these trying times. ■

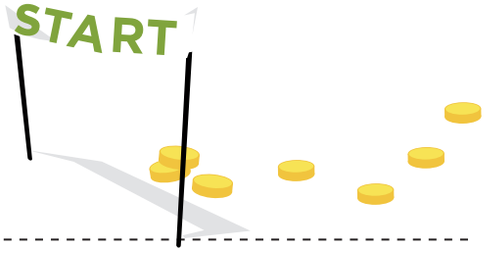


INSIDER //

WELCOME TO THE INSIDER!
Have an event you want to shout-out?
Send an email to *events@614mediagroup.com.*







05.

OHIO STATE BUCKEYES MEN'S BASKETBALL VS ILLINOIS FIGHTING ILLINI

// The Schottenstein Center

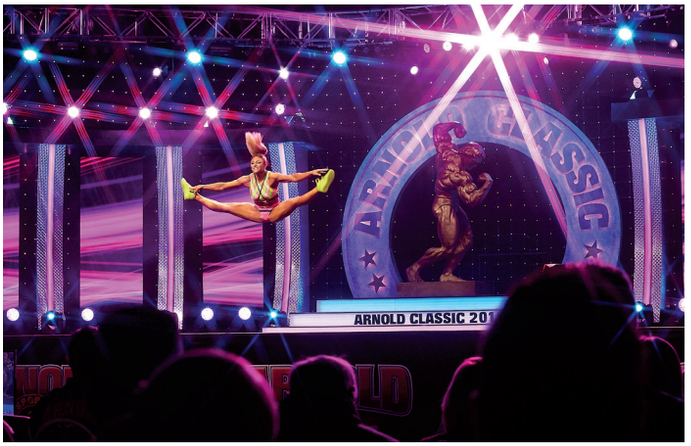
The Ohio State men's team has had it's ups and downs this year, but anything is possible in March. Illinois comes into Columbus as one of the top teams in the Big Ten while the Buckeyes are still piecing together parts of the puzzle in hopes of securing a spot in the big tournament. If anything can help your March Madness resume, it's wins against the top contenders, and the Fighting Illini are no exception.

3.5.20 - 3.8.20

ARNOLD SPORTS CLASSIC

// The Greater Columbus Convention Center

Arnold is a man of his word. When he says, "I'll be back," he means it. The Arnold Sports Classic is back and buffer than ever as it will take over The Greater Columbus Convention Center for fours days. Stock up on free swag, test out some supplements, and meet all your favorite body builders.



06.

SNARLS RELEASE SHOW

// Ace Of Cups

If you haven't caught snarls on stage yet, don't miss your chance! This local band has caught some national attention as media outlets like NPR and *Rolling Stone* have recognized the group as a band to look out for. Stop out at Ace Of Cups early in March to see them live and in action.



PHOTO BY BRIAN KAISER

08.

POP-UP PLANT SHOP

// Seventh Son

Break free from the grips of winter with a breath of spring at Seventh Son. At the pop-up, you'll find a plethora of plants waiting to be taken home. Warmer days are almost here, Columbus! Hang tight!



TAKE UP SPACE: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

// Strongwater Food and Spirits

International Women's Day is March 8, and Strongwater is putting together a star-studded cast of female leaders to celebrate. This all-day event is broken up into a morning session with guest speakers including Aslyne Rodriguez, founder of Empowerbus, while the evening session will focus on women of color with sounds, spoken word, and art from artists such as Miir, Gabrielle Solange, and WYZE.



11.

THE PEKING ACROBATS

// Southern Theater

The Peking Acrobats are a spectacle in every sense of the word. The gravity-defying aerial acrobats are electrifying and the live music provided by traditional Chinese instruments serve as a soundtrack to the performance. Watch in amazement, and don't try this at home!





12.

COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS VS PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

// Nationwide Arena

It will be a showdown of some of the top teams in the Metropolitan Division when the Penguins come to Columbus in March. Let's show this Pittsburgh team a thing or two about the good old hockey game. Go Jackets!



13.

ZAC BROWN BAND

// Nationwide Arena

Zac Brown Band's discography is loaded with hits—"Toes," "Knee Deep," and "Chicken Fried" are just the tip of the iceberg. The group will be bringing their country and bluegrass sound to Nationwide Arena playing all of the favorites as well as new songs from their album *Owl*, which was released in 2019.

RON WHITE

// Palace Theatre

While Ron "Tater Salad" White rose to fame with the Blue Collar Comedy Tour, he's maintained his superstar status on his own with more than 14 million comedy recording units sold and two Grammy nominations. He will be taking the Palace Theatre stage in mid-March, presumably with a glass of liquor close by.





Funny Bone
COMEDY CLUB RESTAURANT

UPCOMING SHOWS!

SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT
MAR 4
WHINDERSSON NUNES

MAR 5
JAY STEVENS

SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT
MAR 6 - 7
NICK SWARDSON

MAR 8
KRISTINA KUZMIC:
THE HOPE & HUMOR TOUR
SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT

MAR 8
JAY STEVENS

MAR 13 - 14
LIL DUVAL
SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT

SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT
MAR 20 - 21
DAVE ATTELL

MAR 25
ALL OHIO KINGS OF COMEDY
FEATURING JOE TORRY
SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT

SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT
MAR 26
THE PUMP AND DUMP SHOW

MAR 27 - 28
T.J. MILLER
SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT

MAR 29
CASH LEVY

APRIL 2
NICOLE BYER
SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT

ALL ACTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE
VISIT US ON THE WEB
www.columbus.funnybone.com

TEXT FUNNYBONE TO 31279 TO JOIN THE VIP FUNNY BONE TEXT PROGRAM
(msg & data rates may apply)

VISIT US ON
145 Easton Town Center
Columbus, OH 43219
RESERVATIONS ARE A MUST!
614-471-(JOKE) 5653

THE BLIND NINJA DINNER CHALLENGE

DINNER IN THE DARK

Prepare yourself for the most exciting culinary adventure your tongue has ever journeyed.

FIND YOUR FOOD.
FIND YOUR MOUTH.
EAT... (MAYBE!)

614-681-1567
COLUMBUS@BLINDNINJACHALLENGE.COM
560 S. High St. Columbus, Oh 43215
blindninjadinnerchallenge.com



14.

COLUMBUS CREW VS REAL SALT LAKE CITY

// Mapfre Stadium

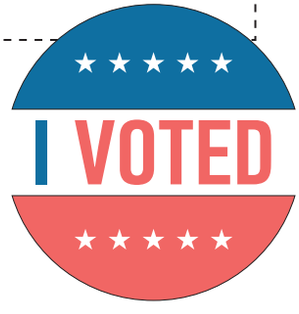
To hell with a name change! This is The Crew. Be loud and be proud as our hometown soccer squad takes on Real Salt Lake City at Mapfre Stadium.

17.

THE OHIO PRIMARY 2020

// Varies

Amid all the fun St. Patrick Day celebrations and concerts going down in March, the Ohio primary will be taking place to help decide who will be on the November ballot. Make sure your voice is heard!





FLANNAGAN'S ST. PATRICK'S DAY 5K AND CELEBRATION

// Flannagan's Dublin

The only way to justify slugging back green jello shots all day is participating in a 5K in the morning at Flannagan's Dublin. Or not; we promise not to calorie count or tell. However you decide to go about your St. Patrick's Day celebration, Flannagan's is always a solid bet.







20.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT LIVE

// The Palace Theatre

There are two types of people in this world: those who want to be the next contestant on *The Price Is Right*, and liars. The iconic game show will be taking place live in Columbus near the end of March to test Columbusites' abilities in Plinko games and guessing grocery prices. Our word to the wise is to start taking notes at Easton now.



24.

RIFF RAFF

// Skully's Music-Diner

In one word, RiFF RAFF is eccentric. Between his legendary zig-zag beard to his colorful hairstyles, he's definitely created an image for himself. And beyond all the funny and sometimes wild antics, he's also a talented hip-hop artist who has worked with the likes of Mac Miller, Childish Gambino, and Mike Posner.

DILLON FRANCIS

// Express LIVE

Ever since Dillon Francis came into the EDM scene, he's been making waves. His 2014 album found its way onto Rolling Stone's Best Electronic Albums of 2014 list, and his follow up LP, *This Mixtape Is Fire*, rose to the top of Billboard's Dance/Electronic Albums Chart in 2015. Catch the electrifying DJ at Express LIVE with rapper Yung Gravy.







28.

UFC COLUMBUS: NGANNOU VS ROZENSTRUIK

// Nationwide Arena

For the first time since 2016, UFC Fight Night is returning to the Capital City and we'll be feasting our eyes on a heavyweight bout. This time around, Francis Ngannou will be taking on Jairzinho Rozenstruik for the main event, with both fighters ranking in the top five of their weight class.



COLUMBUS BREW FESTIVAL

// COSI

If you think about it, brewing is a form of science, so catching a buzz off beer at COSI doesn't only make sense—it's scientific research. The Columbus Brew Festival is bringing more than 150 different beers from 60 different brewers to COSI for one boozy evening. Browse through the museum and enjoy your buzz!



14 W. Pacemont Rd. Columbus, OH | 614.407.4420 | cbdhemphealth.com

aab india
RESTAURANTS
www.aabindiarestaurants.com
Award-Winning Authentic North Indian Cuisine
Follow us @aabcbus
Like us on Facebook


Looking for a Banquet Hall?
Offering CATERING SERVICE and EVENT SPACE
for up to 90 people
Grandview
1470 Grandview Ave. Columbus,
OH 43212 614-486-2800
Bexley
2400 E. Main St. Bexley, OH
43209 614-237-5500



29.

CRAFTIN' OUTLAWS

// Columbus Museum of Art

The Columbus Museum of Art will be getting extra crafty at the end of the month as it welcomes in loads of artists and vendors for Craftin' Outlaws. This free-to-attend event starts at 10 a.m. and runs until 5 p.m. giving you plenty of time to browse, shop, and buy all your crafty needs.

SESAME STREET LIVE!

// The Schottenstein Center

The iconic show *Sesame Street* is coming to Columbus! Catch Elmo, Big Bird, and Abby Cadaddy for a brand new adventure taking place at The Schott. Parents, this is your chance to make your little one's year!





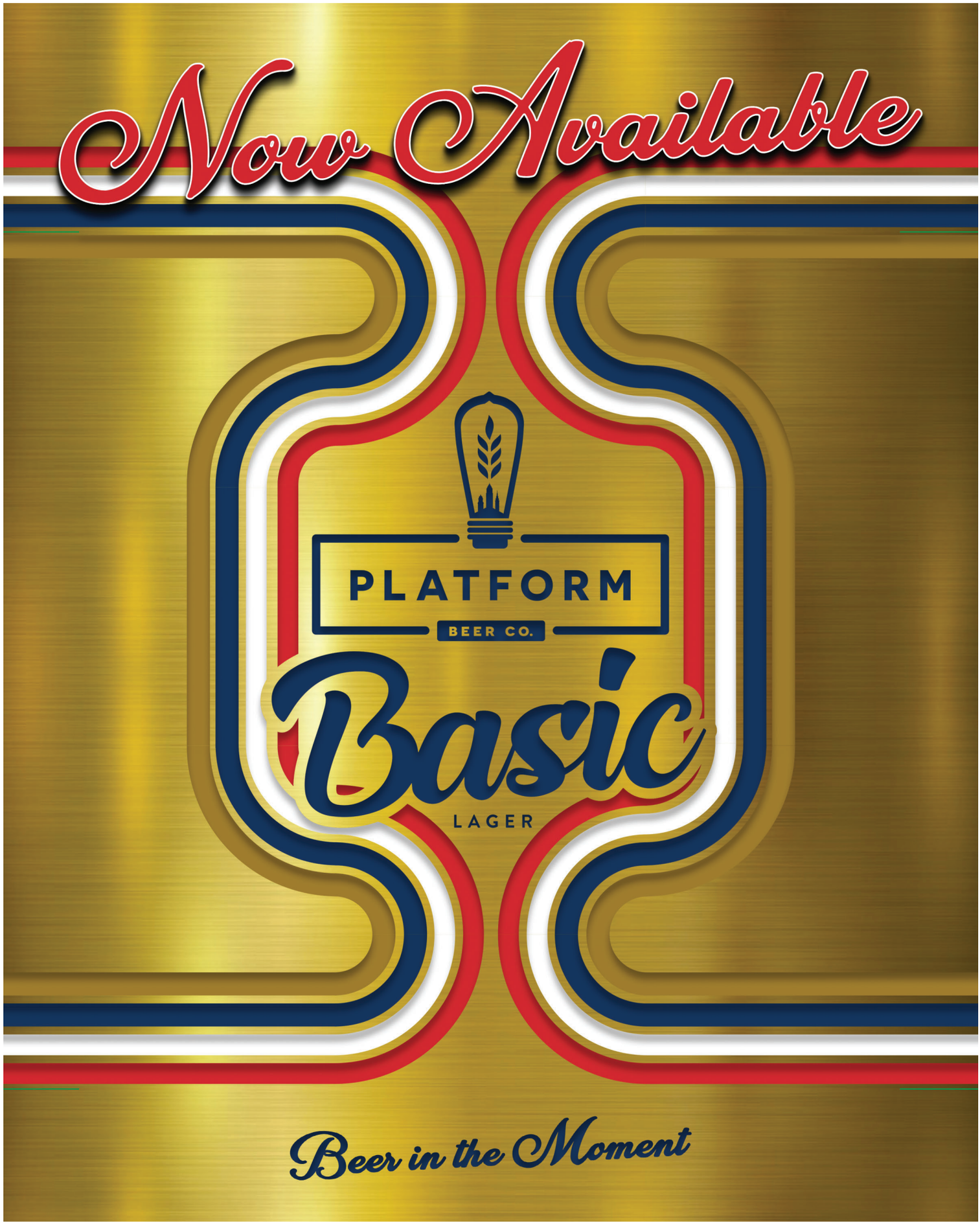
apr

05.

CHOO CHOO 9 MILER AND 5K

// Genoa Park

As spring returns in Columbus, so do the 5Ks and marathons. April will play host to the Choo Choo 9 Miler and 5K taking place at Genoa Park. Lace up your running shoes—it's time to get moving!


Now Available
PLATFORM
BEER CO.
Basic
LAGER
Beer in the Moment



CHAMPION COMPANIES

17 Communities Across Central Ohio

POLARIS | WORTHINGTON | DUBLIN | PICKERINGTON
HILLIARD | WESTERVILLE | POWELL BE THE FIRST TO LIVE HERE!

VISIT US ONLINE TO SCHEDULE A TOUR! livewithchampion.com/614mag



©The Triften Company, 2000
KODAK Gray Scale
Kodak
LICENSED PRODUCT

Gallery Space

↑ DIANA DAVIES, UNTITLED (MARSHA P. JOHNSON HANDS OUT FLYERS FOR STUDENTS AT N.Y.U.)

A Revolutionary Time

ART AFTER STONEWALL SHOWCASES DEFINING WORK BY LGBTQ ARTISTS

BY MELISSA BRAITHWAITE

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE COLUMBUS MUSEUM OF ART

The idea to curate an exhibition commemorating the Stonewall riots started over dinner. After working together on *Shared Intelligence: American Painting and the Photograph*, artist and art historian Jonathan Weinberg and Columbus Museum of Art Executive Director Nannette Maciejunes were "being the art geeks they are, when they started talking about doing something else together," says Melissa Ferguson, CMA's director of marketing and communications. "They were looking for something relevant and fun to do."

It was 2011, and with the 50th anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall Riots still eight years away, Weinberg and Maciejunes began compiling their wish list of artworks from museums and private collectors around the country. Because it can take a long time for those requests to be granted, they started early, in 2016. They soon realized that they were going to have the largest and most comprehensive exhibition for the 50th anniversary of Stonewall, because they were getting all the pieces they requested.

Art After Stonewall, 1969-1989 will come home to CMA on March 6, following stops in New York and Miami. CMA curated the groundbreaking exhibit, which *ARTnews* named one of the best and most important exhibitions of the decade. This expansive survey features more than 200 works of art and related visual materials that explore the profound impact of the LGBTQ civil rights movement on the art world.

"It's well over 200 objects, and the range of objects in the exhibition and the artists is incredibly broad and diverse," explained Daniel Marcus, Roy Lichtenstein Curatorial Fellow at CMA, who was responsible for the installation in Miami and New York. "I think people in Columbus will be taken with the depth of opportunity this exhibition affords. There are a range of emotional experiences the show offers; I think it warrants repeat visits." ▸

“ Because [the exhibition] takes us through the 1980s, there’s a perception that many of the artists aren’t still with us, but so many artists are. ”

Ferguson says that lesser-known artists, such as Vaginal Davis, are represented equally alongside celebrated artists like Keith Haring. “So many artists in the show are under-represented in a way,” said Marcus. “Although I am not sure all the artists would see that as a deficit.” Another notable theme the show highlights is the extraordinary explosion of activism after the Stonewall riots of 1969.

“For many of the artists who became activists, the idea of having a gallery or museum career was sort of anathema to how they saw themselves as ambassadors of visual culture,” Marcus said. He explained that this creates a palpable tension in the exhibition that stems from the post-Stonewall politics of visibility. It is a combination of “coming out with sexuality and organizing with other people, and on the other hand, a sort of measured arms-length approach to the official institutions of the art world.”

The exhibition has received critical acclaim in New York and Miami, where it opened in 2019. Although Marcus has worked in the New York art world and has seen his fair share of exhibition openings, he says the *Art After Stonewall* exhibition opening at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art in New York was like none he had ever experienced, in that it was “kind of like a family reunion.”

“Because [the exhibition] takes us through the 1980s, there’s a perception that many of the artists aren’t still with us, but so many artists are,” Marcus says. “The atmosphere at the opening was totally enthused and a familial scene. It was amazing, especially for us who had worked on the show for so long. It was incredible to see people taking photographs with their own work, especially for the artists who have struggled to gain recognition.”

Just because the exhibition has already opened in New York and Miami, don’t think that Columbus is getting the short end of the stick. In fact, Marcus said the Columbus tour stop and grand finale of the exhibition is really the definitive version of the show, the way it was originally intended.



← ROB HUGH ROSEN, SYLVESTER AS LADY DAY

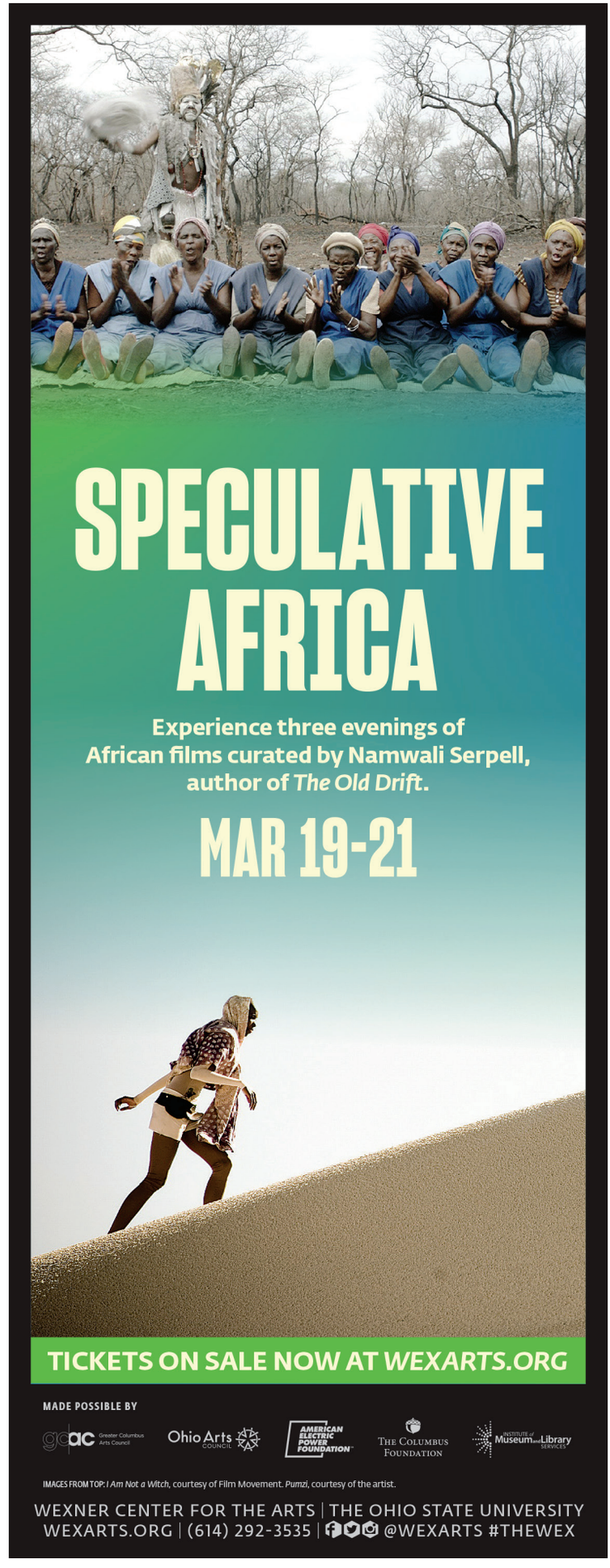


↑ VAGINAL DAVIS, FERTILE LA TOYAH JACKSON NO. 2

In addition, it will include several projects that reflect Columbus histories. For example, there will be a section of works by local gay icon and trailblazer Corbett Reynolds, owner of the now-shuttered club Rudely Elegant in Franklinton that was host to many outrageous all-night parties in the late 1970s and 80s.

CMA also commissioned an audio installation from a collective of local artists to reflect on their own community with an eye toward the city's nightlife. Artists involved include Emma Levesque-Schaefer, Bobby T Luck, Twinkle Panda and Prince Shakur. This project explores the diversity of queer histories and stories in Columbus and will interject a range of voices—including artists, activists, DJs, and dancers—into the exhibition galleries. "We felt it would be important to include Columbus histories in the show because these histories matter to the larger story we're telling," Marcus said. "It's going to be so amazing; minds will be blown." ■

Art After Stonewall *will be on display at the Columbus Museum of Art from March 6 – May 31. To learn more, visit columbusmuseum.org/art-after-stonewall.*





Active learning fuels curiosity

On our 231-acre campus, academics merge all modes of creativity — building and coding, drawing and sculpting, music-making and performing, exercising and playing. Students are guided by teachers who believe that children have the capacity to create new breakthroughs and discoveries every day. In our multidimensional learning community, self-expression builds self-esteem, inspiring children to take their curiosity further.

This is the Academy experience.

Young students throw and catch scarves while exploring high and low sounds in Music, Movement and Drama class with teacher Michelle Schroeder-Lowrey. Cultivating active minds by promoting active bodies is an essential tenet of learning at Columbus Academy.

Visit our campus! Contact our Admissions Team at **admissions@columbusacademy.org** or **614-509-2220.**

Columbus Academy

Columbus Academy, 4300 Cherry Bottom Road, Gahanna, Ohio • Age 3–Grade 12, coeducational, independent



DYNAMITE WITH A LASER BEAM

Franklinton's Close Quarters Social Gaming Club is home to niche gaming communities

BY MIKE THOMAS
PHOTOS BY KYLE ASPERGER


KILLER QUEEN
JOSHUA DEBONIS & NIKITA MIKROS
THREE WAYS TO WIN
CHARACTER OVERVIEW
HOW TO USE GATES



Success comes in many forms, each with its own unique challenges. You can slave away as a humble drone, stacking your meagre financial treasures until they amount to a fortune. Or, you can tackle obstacles like a sword-wielding valkyrie, dominating the competition until you crash and burn. Then again, you could always just ride the big pink snail into the wicker basket thingy.

As Close Quarters Gaming Club founder Blake Compton can tell you, there's no "right" way to play *Killer Queen*, the five-on-five arcade game that is the centerpiece of his establishment. Whatever path to victory you pursue, the thing that sets this game apart is its unique potential for building community.

"The differentiating factor between [*Killer Queen*] and other games is that you can't play against people online," Compton explains. "You have to play in person, meaning you have to coordinate 10 people to show up at the same time, so there's a lot of energy."

For the uninitiated, *Killer Queen* is a real-time strategy platformer that pits teams of up to five players each against each other in a bee-themed world. One player on each team assumes the role of a powerful, warlike queen, with others playing as drones. As previously mentioned, victory in the game comes in several forms: collecting special berries, by assassinating the enemy queen, or by riding a giant snail god into your team's goal.









While *Killer Queen* puts a unique spin on the format, Compton has a long history with cooperative gaming. In his college days, he spent his free time playing the online multiplayer game *Defense of the Ancients* on a national-level competitive team. After graduating, Compton started a successful construction company and fell out of the hardcore gaming scene for a time. It was discovering *Killer Queen* that brought him back into the fold.

"I enjoyed it because, at the time, no one knew me," Compton recalls of his early experiences playing the game at the original Arcade Super Awesome location. "I had built up a company and people knew me around town, but now there was this segment of the population who didn't care who I was—I was just another guy, and if I sucked at the game I sucked at the game."

With a growing community of passionate players emerging around the game, Compton realized the potential for creating a purpose-built space for the *Killer Queen* community in Central Ohio to call home. When an opportunity to rent a space in Franklinton presented itself, Compton turned to the community to help make his vision for the gaming club a reality.

"It was truly member-run and member-built," Compton says of his club, which got off the ground thanks to crowdsourced help in every area from construction to branding. "I invested a lot of money, but a lot more could have been spent if not for the 20 or 30 people who helped build this thing."

The resulting member-built club is part chic, modern lounge and part micro-game arena, complete with commentator's booth for live-streaming tournaments on the gamer-centric online streaming platform Twitch. And of course, there's the twin game cabinets of *Killer Queen*, the game that serves as the focal point of the space.

In addition to acting as a hub to the local *Killer Queen* community, Close Quarters is the sometimes-home to



events for other niche gaming interests. In particular, the Columbus fighting game community—which includes competitive players of titles like *Street Fighter, Mortal Kombat,* and *Super Smash Bros.*—frequently rent the space for their tournaments.

"We have so many different cultures and so many different-sized venues that, these days, we just kind of pick what kind of atmosphere we want out of an event before we even pick the venue," explains Kyle Keister, a leader in the local fighting game culture who frequently hosts tournaments at Close Quarters. "This place is nice because it's got built-in streaming, and the home living room feel."

Beyond the gaming world, Compton has found ways to incorporate his community-minded approach through the local arts scene. He partnered with the consultancy Side Hustle Syndicate, which uses the club as a venue for events, and has also secured a grant to host Franklinton Friday galleries in the space featuring the work of local creatives. In the same vein, gamer-themed murals from renowned Columbus artists Hakim Callwood and Mandi Caskey adorn the outside of the building.

Want to check out this thriving community for yourself? $5 will get you in the door for a single day. If you like what you see, membership to the club runs $40 a month. Whether you're in it for glory on the *Killer Queen* cabinet, or just looking for a friendly gathering of like-minded gamers, Close Quarters offers a more welcoming and homey environment than most bar-arcades.

"I don't run it as a typical business, where you're trying to make money and have employees and make a viable scheme. I run it more like an uber-hobby," Compton says of the club. "It's kind of like your mom's gamer basement on steroids." ■

To learn more, visit socialgamingclub.com, or find Close Quarters on Facebook.





columbus BREWING Co

GOOSE ISLAND BEER CO.

(614)

(614) LAGER

BUD LIGHT SELTZER

PIZZA

+BEER WEEK

$8

ALL PIZZAS*



APR 20-25

EAT614.COM

* All Pizzas 9-10" start at $8.00. Tax, gratuity not included. Extra toppings may cost extra.



POWER TO THE PLANTS

Lifestyle Cafe is bringing vegan options back to Old Town East

BY MITCH HOOPER | PHOTOS BY OLIVIA K. JAMES

As a vegetarian, I rarely start my day off the proper way. Typically, it's an excess amount of black coffee until the hamster on a wheel operating my brain finally wakes up. And if one thing is for certain, options like chicken and waffles or bacon and egg sliders were breakfast specialties I waved goodbye to many years ago.

That was until I discovered Lifestyle Cafe.

Lifestyle Cafe is a new plant-based restaurant rising from the ashes of the former Angry Baker spot on Oak St. in Old Town East. Thanks to the chef-driven mind of Shanna Dean, also known as Chef Bae, and business-geared brain of Dawn Dickson, Lifestyle Cafe is offering approachable and familiar options that are exclusively vegan. The aforementioned chicken and waffles can be made with a soy-based protein, or cauliflower, and the waffles are gluten-free. The final product is a crispy and subtly spicy chick'n atop cinnamon and coconut waffles with real maple syrup and maple cream drizzled over it all. On the other hand, the bacon and egg slider features smoky coconut bacon, fluffy vegan Just Egg eggs, and an avocado aioli. ▸



"Cooking food is not just about putting a bunch of different things together; your energy goes into the food and that's why we created the vibe that we did."

Dean, a graduate of the culinary arts program at Columbus' Bradford School, said she knew she wanted to pursue a career as a chef, but wasn't sold on the idea of a fast-paced kitchen with a large staff to manage. It was Dickson, a long-time friend of Dean's, who presented the idea of starting the restaurant. Dickson also provided the confidence Dean needed to go through with it.

"I was really nervous, like *how is this going to be?* In real life as best friends, we're great; there's no problems because there's no business," Dean recalled. "She gave me one of the best compliments ever. She said, 'I travel the world and eat vegan food. Yours is some of the best vegan food I've ever had.' To have that confirmation from someone I know who has tasted food everywhere [...] I was like, 'Alright, let's do this.'"

Dickson and Dean switched to a vegetarian and vegan diet in 2007 and the two agreed that things have come a long way. Both of them recalled going out to eat and mostly being stuck ordering salads with just tomatoes. Their hope with Lifestyle was two-fold: one, fill the plant-based gap that was now open in OTE, and two, bring some more hot plate foods to the growing vegan and vegetarian game in Columbus.

Now, the restaurant is operating every day except Mondays. The menu is diverse, with some options on the standard breakfast side, while others, such as the vegan shrimp and grits, play more towards a brunch crowd. Dean is leading the charge in the kitchen alongside her sous-chef Christi Jackson.

"I did one interview with her, I really liked her and she had all the experience," Dean explained. "And since she's been on the team, she's been everything you can dream of in having a number two."

With the high volume of fresh produce and products being used at Lifestyle, the job demands long days, and the dynamic between a chef and her sous-chef is an obviously important aspect. The two are no strangers to being in the kitchen as early as 4 a.m. Dean is very much empowering Jackson in the kitchen; the sous-chef is free to experiment with current menu options, add new offerings, and manage new locations if and when expansion time comes.

"Lifestyle Cafe has definitely been about bringing together the right people to accomplish something really, really beautiful," Dean explained. "Cooking food is not just about putting a bunch of different things together; your energy goes into the food and that's why we created the vibe that we did."

The interior of the restaurant is similar to the former Angry Baker, but with a face lift. The tables are minimally decorated with terrariums, while the windows are full of greenery and house plants. Much like the Angry Baker, the bar is still a highly coveted spot where patrons can enjoy an Upper Cup cup of coffee or a BakeMe Happy treat with the kitchen area still wide open as if to say, "Watch us, we've got nothing to hide."

Ordering your meal is as simple as pressing a few buttons on an iPad, thanks to Dickson's PopCom operating system which manages data on the backend. Guests are invited to leave a love note on the blackboard, whether it's related to the food, or just some good news. And as each person exits Lifestyle, an affectionate "love ya" is shouted by Chef Bae.

The love they are spreading reaches beyond just the Lifestyle Cafe menu. As previously mentioned, Upper Cup Coffee provides the java and Bake Me Happy, the vegan bakery once residing in the OTE Angry Baker, still has

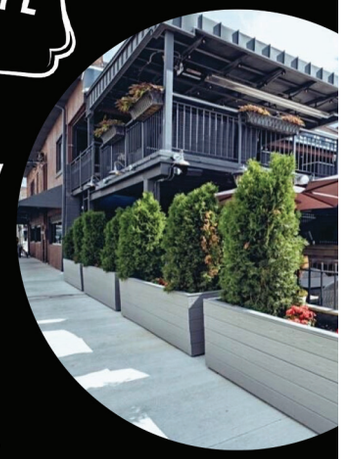


favorites like vegan pop tarts available. Chef Bae also has her own personal brand of herbal and fruit infused spring water available for purchase which comes in flavors like blueberry basil detox. This list of outside vendors inside Lifestyle is something Dickson said she hopes to grow, so expect to see more options in the coming months.

"We tell our clients when they leave, 'I love you,' and it's really real," Dean said. "When I hire everybody, I tell them, 'when people come here, we're serving love.'" ▸

Lifestyle Cafe is located on 891 Oak St. For hours and operations, visit facebook.com/PlantBasedLifestyleCafe.

The Historic
GRANDVIEW CAFE
RELAXED, SPIRITED EATS
Since 1925



- Trivia every Wednesday at 7pm upstairs!
- Late Night Burger: $3 Diner Burger after 9pm

Grandviewcafe.com
@Grandviewcafe
1455 W 3rd Ave | 614-725-1077

HADLEY'S
BAR + KITCHEN



- White Claw Wednesday! Live music and $3 Claws from 6-8pm
- Late Night Burger: $2 Diner Burger after 9pm

Hadleysbar.com
@Hadleysbar
260 S 4th St | 614-222-3022

BALBOA
KITCHEN + BAR + PATIO



- Live music every Thurs from 6-8pm!
- $2 Tacos on Sun & Tues
- Late Night Tacos: All tacos are $2 after 9pm!

Balboamexicanrestaurant.com
@Balboagrandview
1312 Grandview Ave | 614-745-1201



COASTING ON GOOD TIMES

Dublin's Coast Wine House puts hospitality first

BY MIKE THOMAS | PHOTOS BY OLIVIA K. JAMES

While a spontaneous trip to the Napa Valley might be out of your budget, fans of wine in Central Ohio can experience a taste of the California lifestyle right in the heart of Dublin.

"I spent a lot of time on the west coast in my previous professional life, and it has just become the inspiration for the vibe in the space," explains Coast Wine House owner Dustin Snow, who recently opened shop after pivoting out of a career in corporate retail. "We want to transport you to a different place, and the kind of optimism and pace of life in California is something that we wanted to bring here as much as we could."

Since opening their doors in late 2019, Snow and his wife and business partner Molly had a clear vision for their business. Turned off by the decidedly highbrow atmosphere of the traditional wine bar, the two hoped to create a relaxing, unpretentious environment for their guests to enjoy.



"People are drinking wine a lot. They're drinking it at home, they are drinking it [while] out to dinner, but it didn't seem like they were really going to wine bars," Snow says of the research that he and his team undertook before opening Coast. "Through that research, we developed a space that was just as much about the wine as it was about creating a really approachable, relaxed, comfortable environment."

Even from the street, the homey, welcoming nature of Coast Wine House is immediately obvious. Converted from an old residential home near the heart of Old Dublin, the interior of the space charms with its rustic hardwood floors, dinner table-style seating, and inviting hearth.

"Our number one thing is that we want you to feel like you're coming into our home and sharing a glass of wine with us, as opposed to bellying up to a crowded bar," Snow says of the wine house's laid-back vibes.









Not exactly a wine connoisseur? No problem. You won't find the words "fine wines" used anywhere at Coast, nor will a sommelier try to drill you with hard science about tannins and terroir. Instead, Snow's hospitality-first approach focuses on the stories surrounding individual winemakers, helping the drinker understand the unique values behind each product.

Above all, Coast Wine House explores the potential of wine to serve as the centerpiece to meaningful social interaction. To that end, Snow knew that the modern, resurgent Dublin would serve as the perfect home for his business.

"Dublin is doing everything right to get people to live here, to play here, and to work here. Bridge Park is evidence of that," he says. "There are a lot of young families moving outside the outerbelt, and [Dublin] is becoming a model for this sort of post-suburban community that I think a lot of other communities from around the country are going to look at Dublin and say, 'OK, what are they doing and how can we replicate that?'"

To help promote exploration, the menu at Coast typically features 15–20 wine-by-the-glass options. Visitors can also sample 2 oz. pours, either just to taste, or for a "make your own flight" experience. For the casual wine drinker, there are plenty of familiar favorites (Cabernet, Chardonnay) with plenty more that might be less commonly known—a Kerner from Northern Italy, Aglianico from Southern Italy, or the Carignon from Santa Barbara, to name just a few.

With apologies to the TGIF set, you won't find margaritas or cheap happy hour deals here. What Coast does offer is a lineup of classic cocktails that speak to the winemaking tradition, highlighting ingredients like sherry and vermouth—both of which are actually fortified wines. For the ardent hop heads, Coast keeps a selection of locally-produced brews on-hand as well.

A menu of light shareables joins the mix, currently featuring such classic, wine-friendly staples as cheese, olives, and hummus. Snow plans to grow this portion of the menu in time, but emphasizes that the fare on display will never amount to full-size entrees.

Coast's in-house bottle shop has around 130 wines from around the world in stock. Whether you take one to go, or open it right there, Snow and his team will help you select the right bottle for any taste or occassion. Right now, a Piquepoul de Pinet is one of his favorites.

"Piquepoul is a dry white wine out of Southern France. It is bright, it's refreshing, it's got a good balance of citrus and minerality, and it's really, really well-priced," he explains. "It's very approachable—one that





we would call a 'porch pounder' around these parts."

For a sample of Coast's wine-centered social environment, check out one of its special events. Past events have included an exclusive 12 seat dinner highlighting four to five wines of a particular winemaker, or an engagement featuring $10 flights showcasing wine-producing regions from around the globe.

Looking for a place to enjoy a glass of wine without the pretensions of many wine bars and specialty shops? Just head for the Coast. ■

To learn more, visit Facebook, and be sure to check coastwinehouse.com.

nida's
Thai on High



Happy Hour : Mon-Fri 4-6pm
Sushi Night : Tue & Wed 4-close

@Thaionhigh
976 N. High St.
Columbus, OH 43201



Welcome to The Village

Olentangy Village Apartments is Columbus' most unique apartment community. What was once an amusement park in the 1800's is now a place where historic charm blends with modern amenities in an urban location!

Neighborhood

Steps from Clintonville, miles from ordinary. Olentangy Village is noted not only for its beautiful apartments but for its longevity, scenic river views and friendly atmosphere.



Lifestyle

From our refreshing swimming pool and scenic private park to our spacious fitness center, Olentangy Village offers a variety of wonderful amenities that help you live healthy and happy.

OLENTANGY VILLAGE

olentangyvillage.com | 614.261.0202

NEIGHBORHOOD *Spirit*

Echo Spirits brings liquor from days gone by back to the masses

BY MELINDA GREEN | PHOTOS BY AMY GLASS





On a side street in Grandview, warm light shines out of a few windows into a dark, rainy, February night, illumining the Echo Spirits sign. Inside, co-founders and distillers Joe Bidinger and Nikhil Sharoff, with the help of beverage director Derek Reno, are adjusting their new ice maker, preparing for their bar's official opening in March.

"This will be very much a neighborhood bar," Bidinger says.

Sharoff and Bidinger have been friends since their days in high school at Bishop Watterson. Over the years, they pursued home brewing. They are mostly self-taught, and they credit their brewing experience for a solid foundation in the science that also underlies distilling.

After college, Sharoff became an engineer; Bidinger got a degree in finance and worked in IT. "I liked it, but I wanted something more hands-on," Sharoff recalled. "We both wanted something that was ours, and we'd always been brewing, so we said, 'hey, let's try it.'"

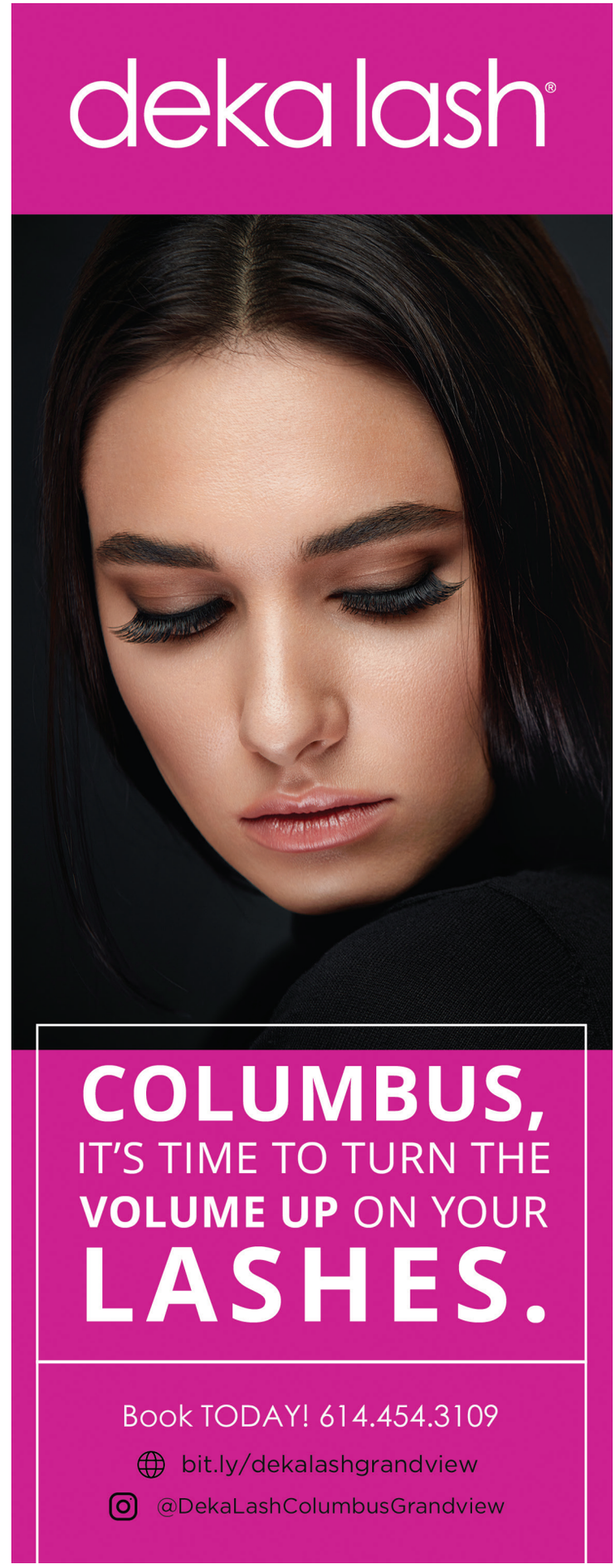
They started the idea for Echo in 2014, originally planning a brewery. "We didn't have a concept of how many breweries Central Ohio could support. At the time there were 12 to 15, and we were like 'That's too many, right?'" Bidinger laughed at the memory. "We started looking ahead, at what would be the next big thing." When they were ready, they spent two years searching for the right location, eventually settling on the former Four String Brewery.

They moved into the space in January 2019 and started distilling in late summer, opening their spirit shop in October. Today, they also sell at select Giant Eagle and Kroger stores, as well as Arena Spirits and Weilands.

Four String's dive-bar vibe has yielded to glass, brick, and tile, a more open, roomy feel in the small space. A brick wall honors the Kickstarter donors who helped fund the large glass back door, and tape marks off what will be the "coveted lounge area" looking into the distilling space.

That space is packed with a 700-gallon mash cooker, 300-gallon still, and two 500-gallon fermenters. That's larger equipment than a lot of places start out with, and also the largest they can fit into the space. It's still small, with low ceilings, for a distillery.

Echo's focus is on spirits that were popular before Prohibition and that lost their popularity in the ensuing years. "It's basically been vodka and bourbon for the last 90 years, but there's a lot more out there," Bidinger explained. ▸



SEESAWCOLUMBUS.COM · @SEESAWCBUS · 906 N HIGH ST. COLUMBUS, OH





SHORT NORTH'S PREMIERE NIGHTLIFE + PRIVATE EVENT DESTINATION

BURGER NIGHT
WEDNESDAYS // BURGER, FRIES A BEER $10

WING NIGHT
THURSDAYS // WINGS + A BEER $9

PLAN YOUR NEXT EVENT AT SEESAW
EVENTS@FORWARDHG.COM

Seesaw









> **“This is not a business to be built up and sold off.”**

Since clear spirits are the quickest to produce and get to market, requiring no aging, Echo’s first product is a white rum. While most distillers pick a single base for their rum, Echo uses both cane sugar and blackstrap molasses. The sugar provides alcohol and vanilla-pear flavor, and the molasses provides depth and body. “This is exactly what we were going for,” Bidinger said, taking a sip. “It even says on our bottle: Rethink What Rum Can Be.”

“When you’ve got a rich, flavorful rum, you can sub it into other things,” Reno noted, referring to their website’s recipe for a rum Manhattan.

Reno has managed bars and craft cocktail programs around the city. “I wanted someone who can run this side,” Bidinger said, gesturing to the bar, “so I can run that side,” gesturing to the production room.

In the next few months, Sharoff and Bidinger will start their first batch of genever, the malty, botanical ancestor of gin. “Most of the classic gin cocktails you see were probably originally made with genever,” Bidinger said. They also made a rye whiskey, in collaboration with Middle West Spirits, which should be available later this year.

Bidinger and Sharoff are hands-on owners. Other than electrical, furniture, and some of the signage, they’ve done most of the renovations themselves. They are full of energy, tossing around ideas about future competitions and collaborations.

“Our whole concept is ‘know your distiller,’” Bidinger explained. Sharoff chimed in, “My dad was like, ‘You put the sugar and molasses in the mash tubs, why don’t you hire someone to do that?’ but that’s the point. It’s our hands putting this together.”

To keep with the neighborhood feel, Echo plans to keep its cocktails mostly in the $10-to-$12 range, rather than the higher prices of some other local distilleries. “We’re not Chicago,” Bidinger joked. Food trucks will be curated to find good meal and cocktail pairings.

During construction, the lights have been on into the evening, and the team pauses to talk with neighbors and local workers, whose curiosity drove them to wander into the space. The spirit shop, tucked away in a front corner, was open for business before the rest of the space was even remotely ready, enticing people passing by to buy some rum and see the work in progress.

“This is not a business to be built up and sold off,” Bidinger said. “The vision is to keep it that small, authentic experience—to grow, certainly, but to be involved with the daily running of things, to pass this down to our families. There’s nowhere else we could have done this, the way we’ve done it, except Columbus.” ■

Echo Spirits is located at 985 W 6th Ave. To learn more, visit echospirits.com







THE BEST

AL PASTOR TACOS

IN THE CITY

Guachos Taqueria





WEEKLY SPECIALS

MONDAYS
BUY 1 TACO AL PASTOR GET ONE FREE

WEDNESDAYS
GRINGAS ONLY $2

DRINK SPECIALS MONDAY - THURSDAY
(SAWMILL LOCATION)

FULL SERVICE BAR

1376 CHERRY BOTTOM RD
Mon - Sun | 11a-11p
614.471.4717

5221 GODOWN RD
Sun - Thu | 11a-12a • Fri & Sat | 11a-1a
614.538.0211

7370 SAWMILL RD
Sun - Thu 11a-12a • Fri & Sat | 11a-1a
614.726.9185

LOSGUACHOSTAQUERIA.COM

GAME ON



Competition. Training. Teamwork. Fan clubs. They're not just for athletics anymore. And esports are no longer just about entertainment—they're big business. As esports rise in popularity, they're bringing professional teams, trainers, and players to town. Get ready to meet the leaders of the Columbus esports revolution—and get ready to play.

UPPING THE GAME

Multivarious wants to make Columbus a video game city

BY LINDA LEE BAIRD
IMAGES PROVIDED BY MULTIVARIOUS



The 2018 movie "Ready Player One"—and the book it was based on—imagined Columbus as a city in 2045 transformed into a wasteland. Residents found an escape from the dystopian landscape of their lives by playing video games.

Chris Volpe, CEO and President of Multivarious—a local company focused on developing video games and creative technologies—has a more appealing vision for how gaming can become part of the city's future. What if we make video games a signature industry here? What if we think of them not as an escape, but instead as a draw to attract top design talent, innovative thinkers, and world-class competitors? What would *that* future look like?

If Volpe's efforts are successful, we may soon find out.

"There's no city right now in the Midwest—and in most of the country, to be honest—that has a claim on this industry, outside of like New York and California," Volpe says. "For seven years I've been beating this drum that this can be the place for it."

"Beating the drum" means more than just talking to the right people; it means building coalitions. Multivarious has given Volpe the platform to do both. Founded in 2011, the company has been a leader in the gaming space ever since. It has developed its own games, (including the dinosaurs-meet-robots puzzle game *Hatch-It*, and the forthcoming Kickstarter-funded *No Mercy*,) and introduced relevant technologies to partners in the education and healthcare fields. Additionally, in 2013, Volpe founded GDEX, an annual gaming convention that unites players, developers, and enthusiasts from across the country every fall. He credits the Central Ohio Gamedev Group—known as COGG—for inspiring and supporting these projects.

Whether it's the explosive growth of gaming events, the reverberations of Volpe's drumbeat finally reaching city hall, or a combination of both, the idea of Columbus as a video game city is gaining some traction. "[We're] focusing on creating Columbus as *the* center of industry for gaming and esports," he said.

That means Multivarious is moving away from its traditional client-service model, where its developers partnered with local businesses to use video game technology to improve services, and towards a leadership role in projects that—if fully realized—will literally change the game here.

"We are looking at creating Columbus' professional esports team, getting that up and running over the next year or two," Volpe said. A professional team needs a professional playing field, (see the recent battle over Crew stadium if you have any doubts,) and Volpe imagines building one for esports, analogous to what he calls "the Hollywood of gaming."

Rounding out his three-part vision are strong developers, crucial both for keeping the systems running and creating new cutting-edge content. Multivarious already hosts an incubator for new developers, and plans to expand it in the near future.

"There isn't a lot of precedent for some of this," he said. "We are looking to create an actual team around certain titles—we haven't announced what those titles are going to be yet—where those players are paid athletes, so they get a salary, they get benefits." He projects that by making these investments, the Columbus brand will grow "into a national leader in the space."

With so much growth already occurring in the city, it's fair to ask whether esports and games are the right industry to put Columbus on the map. Volpe is confident that they are.

"This is an explosive industry that is on the forefront of technology," he said. ▸



"I spend a lot of time trying to get people excited and realize, like no, this isn't just like a silly fad. The writing's already on the wall here. And whatever city or state is willing to put in time, effort, and money, is gonna have probably at least a 10-year advantage."

That advantage would buy us an early stake in one of the most lucrative industries out there. "The game development side alone makes more revenue globally than music and movies combined, times two," Volpe said. This added up to $137 billion in 2018, with esports accounting for a billion-dollar slice of that pie.

Further, Volpe says we have the infrastructure in place for the growth to happen here. "We have some of the best programmers, designers, developers, artists out there." Volpe predicts there would also be an uptick in services related to growth in the industry, including legal, marketing, and public relations.

With the groundwork seemingly already in place, the biggest hurdle to realizing this vision might be overcoming negative stereotypes about gamers and the gaming community. "A lot of people get stuck in this like, 'gamers are 16-year-old white kids in their parent's basement' thing, and it's not true. The average age of a gamer is 38. When you look at gamers broadly across the spectrum, it's about 60 to 40 percent male-to-female," Volpe said.

And while high-profile incidents—such as the "Gamergate" debacle of a few years ago—can give gamers a bad name, Volpe maintains that, in respect to diversity, "we have some of the most welcoming communities that you'll find."

As someone who's considered himself part of the gaming community for most of his life, Volpe leads by example in this area. He gives a platform to gamers who defy the kid-in-the basement stereotype, organizing panels for GDEX with titles like *Women in Gaming* and *Gaming While Black*.

At the same time, dealing with a younger audience in much of his work, part of Volpe's role is constructively growing the community and finding space to educate. "If they do something or say something, we give them the opportunity to correct themselves," he said. Still, he notes the expectations at GDEX and COGG events are very clear, and certain behaviors are never tolerated.

While he acknowledges that it's up to members of the community to police themselves a little bit, they're also dealing with representation in the media that focuses on the negative.

"I've only been approached twice by local television in Columbus to talk about gaming; both were about video game violence. We've never been approached about how much money

"

THIS IS AN EXPLOSIVE INDUSTRY THAT IS ON THE FOREFRONT OF TECHNOLOGY.

"



Learn more at Multivarious.com.

we made for Nationwide Children's Hospital—which is hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of the past 10 years—we've never been approached about our educational efforts, our reaching out to low SES (socioeconomic status) students, our diversity and inclusion work."

Further, the utility of video games for other fields is often overlooked. Volpe shared an example of a program developed for Children's Hospital using the Microsoft Kinect to support kids with muscular dystrophy. Multivarious created a game that young patients could play, making the process fun for them. At the same time, "we are getting clinical grade accuracy on all of their measurements per second. We're able to make measurements faster than a clinician would be able to." Incredibly, these results are achieved on a $150 device, an amazing bargain in the healthcare field.

This, then, is the vision: Columbus as a leader in an innovative multi-billion dollar industry. Smart and talented people working and developing here. Positive therapies and educational opportunites rooted in technology. All this, plus all kinds of games to watch and play. This is a plan for the city's future that I can get behind. And the best part? Unlike *Ready Player One,* no one has to live in the stacks. ■

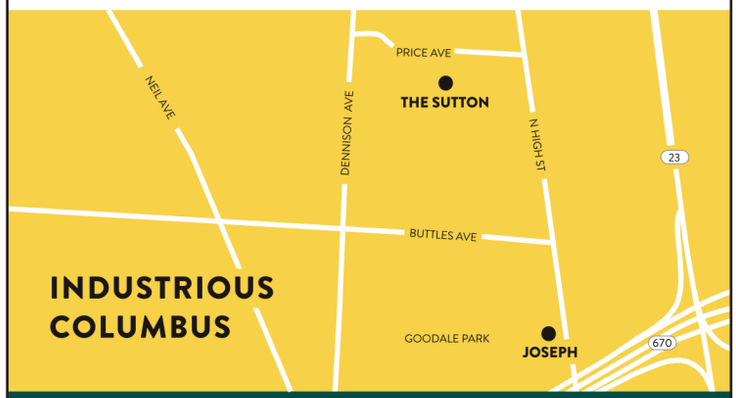


INDUSTRIOUS



Meet Industrious

The Ultimate Workplace Destination



614 Media Group readers can get up to **$1,000** toward your next office space when you book a tour.

industriousoffice.com/cbus

IT PAYS TO PLAY

Esports team Vanguard is finding success through Fortnite

BY MITCH HOOPER | PHOTOS BY OLIVIA K. JAMES

IN 1972, a game took the country by storm. It featured three simple elements: two lines on opposite sides, a dot ricocheting from wall to lines, and a scoreboard. It now stands in the Smithsonian as a relic to the past and a connector to the future. The game is Atari's *Pong*, and not only is it the first-ever commercial success in video game history, it sent waves that eventually led to competitive gaming as we know it today.

While competitive gaming of new seems light-years away from what *Pong* started, it's really not far off. *Pong* is a multiplayer game where only one winner can be crowned a champion. It sucked away people's lives, too; when, in 1975, consoles were released for at-home gaming by Sears, Atari sold 150,000. It was one of the best-selling products of its time in Sears' history.

Throughout the following decades, the trend continued. From the 1980s into the early 90s, Nintendo and Atari were hosting nationwide gaming tournaments, where players were tasked with setting high scores in games like *Mario* or *Pac Man*, competing for prizes such as new cars.

In other words, the craze to game has always been there. Today, competitive prize pools reach upwards of $25 million. The hype might be at its all-time high.

The current landscape of gaming is—for lack of better words—absolutely bonkers. Modern competitive games, or esports, include big-name titles like *Call Of Duty*, *Overwatch*, and *League of Legends*. Top players can earn cold hard cash. These players, better known as e-athletes, have broken the mold of what it means to be a *professional gamer*. Game streaming services like Twitch and Mixer have seemingly made folks overnight gaming celebrities, meaning the only gatekeeper of growing an audience is your skills and personality. And while games like *League of Legends* have followings large enough to fill sporting arenas, it seems no game has gained as much attention as *Fortnite*.

Does *Fortnite* even need an introduction? It's past the point of mainstream—it has become an incubator for pop culture. Amid all the pre-teens flossing on Tik Tok and online memes, there is a growing culture in the esports community that perhaps should be taken more seriously. While on the surface, it may look like young folks spending too much time in front of a television screen, that image is a disservice to the work professional e-athletes are putting in. Just ask Columbus' Jonathan "Yung Calculator" Weber—a



member of the newly-formed gaming team Vanguard—who has already racked up $200,000 by playing *Fortnite* for more than 4,000 hours over the last two years.

Owned by Justin Kogge, an avid gamer and also the owner of the Game Arena in Hilliard, Vanguard is a Hilliard-based esports team that formed in 2019. In addition to Yung Calculator, its e-athletes are Kalvin "KEZKD" Dam, 19; Vinh "Phung" Phung, 24; Kerry "iKerry" Callander, 24; Brendan "Jaomock" O'Brien, 21; and Colin "Colinies" Landals, 20.

Phung, who is also balancing a full-time gig outside of gaming, sees an advantage to being on a team. He explained that Vanguard commits to supporting players during and after their competitive careers. "Whether that be a management position within the organization, referrals to other organizations, or assistance with resume building and acquiring a full-time job in the workforce, [...] Vanguard will be there to help where they can."

For Weber, and the other members of Vanguard, gaming is their full-time job. Their days are spent just like most employees; they have a schedule, expectations, meetings, and a boss. The biggest difference between the nine-to-fivers of the world and Weber? He's only 14-years-old.

Weber attends school three times a week, but takes most of his classes towards earning his GED online. Don't worry: his mom approves. He's not the only one focusing his efforts on *Fortnite*—Dam dropped out of college to pursue this career path.





"WHETHER THAT BE A MANAGEMENT POSITION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION, REFERRALS TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, OR ASSISTANCE WITH RESUME BUILDING AND ACQUIRING A FULL-TIME JOB IN THE WORKFORCE, [...] VANGUARD WILL BE THERE TO HELP WHERE THEY CAN."

The young ages of these athletes presents both benefits and challenges. On one hand, they are still developing their hand-eye coordination, reaction times, and critical problem-solving skills. Kogge said if a gamer possesses high levels of these skills at a young age, their chances of being successful are higher, as their trajectory is still rising.

"We're looking at a period where his reflexes and brain are still developing, so he's not even on the downhill of gaming yet. He's only going to get better," Kogge said, referring to Weber.

But in that same breath, young folks are, well, young. Many of these e-athletes are streaming their games to audiences of 300,000 viewers. One unsightly comment from a gamer could cause long-lasting impacts that could cost them an audience and a platform. Gamers of all ages need guidance, but especially young ones. And that's where Vanguard comes in.

For example, Yung Calculator has a somewhat shocking-but-humorous personality online. He's also becoming one of the premiere gamers in the *Fortnite* scene, with 35,000 Twitter followers and counting. His high visibility rate, combined with his talents, caught the eye of a potential advertiser, but his social media posts ultimately cost him the deal. Since then, he's worked with Kogge on ways to keep Yung Calculator's personality preserved, while also maintaining a relatively professional presence online. For his part, Kogge uses players' mistakes as chances for learning opportunities.

"He wants to be an entertainer; he's actually, specifically, trying to entertain people," Kogge explained. "When you get to meet him in person, he's very well-spoken and intelligent. That's the first thing you realize about him; he's not this toxic kid that doesn't know anything."

The role Vanguard plays in these e-athletes' lives goes beyond gaming. Just like football and basketball, the athletes are expected to maintain healthy lifestyles. Vanguard's staff includes a physical trainer and a nutritionist to ensure diets aren't the typical gaming cuisine of Doritos and soda. Kogge said he doesn't want his athletes spending all day in front of a screen in the same room to avoid isolation and burnout. Kogge has also hired financial advisors and legal teams to Vanguard to ensure that



e-athletes are protected in sponsorship deals.

Helping athletes take care of themselves isn't just an image move, it's for their general well-being. "We want them healthy and working out more than we want them streaming," Kogge said.

But, don't get that last line twisted—it's also an image move. Past gaming tournaments across the world have both exceeded expectations and also confirmed stereotypes. From the chest up, players look formal and professional with matching uniforms and even team logos. However, once some of them stood up to take home the highly-coveted trophy, their Crocs and sweatpants came out from under the table and onto the mainstage. If gaming is to be taken seriously as a sport, it needs to consider its image, just as other sporting leagues have done.

As for the future of *Fortnite* and Vanguard, things are promising. Kogge predicts *Fortnite* will eventually become the largest competitive game, citing that it has more users and viewers in its second year than *League of Legends*, which boasted more than 80 million users in 2019. As of now, there is no official league or tournament for *Fortnite*, and that's something he sees changing soon. Until then, the e-athletes at Vanguard will be doing what they love most: gaming down, snagging victories, and stacking cash. If you want a modern day version of The American Dream, look no further. ■

To keep up with the team, follow them on Twitter at @vanguardwins.





614

20 COLUMBEST 20

OUT OF THIS WORLD



VOTE NOW

COLUMBEST.COM

JIM BEAM

Maker's Mark

WIN AN ALL-INCLUSIVE VIP EXPERIENCE

at four of the nation's top distilleries in Louisville, KY for you and three friends

VOTING ENDS 3.31.20. MUST CAST 50 VOTES TO ENTER. GIVEAWAY TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY.



ESPORTS 101

Getting elective credit online may now require a headset

BY JOHN MCLAUGHLIN
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

The lights on the big stage are bright and hot. The tournament has winnowed down to two finalists, and the winner will leave the arena $500,000 richer. Thousands of live audience members look on with painted faces and signage. No, it isn't a Pay-Per-View boxing match we're talking about: this is esports.

The last decade witnessed a meteoric rise in professional video game culture alongside the explosion of streaming services like Twitch and YouTube. One of the most important aspects of this is the shift in how gaming is currently viewed: once considered a time-killing hobby or even detrimental, esports competitors are finally getting the respect and attention they've fought for.

Surprising to some is the fact that Ohio is one of the states leading this change. Not only is it home to a pair of universities (University of Akron and Miami of Ohio) offering athletic scholarships for esports, but the state is also making waves as its landmark schools and universities continue to embrace more and more aspects of serious video game culture.

Ohio State is part of this trend, leading the way for competitive gaming. While competitive gaming has been largely relegated to the likes of school clubs or groups in the past, OSU will unveil three university-sanctioned esports teams this semester, competing in *League of Legends, Overwatch*, and *Rocket League*. Tryouts were held in early February, and the teams are preparing for their first actual competition in a matter of weeks.

According to the school's esports director Brandon Smith, Ohio State recognizes that a large percentage of its students are part of the gaming world. The university looks to cater to all of those students, not only the most elite esports athletes.

"We realize that a large percentage of our student body connects with esports culture, and we want to make sure we're engaging as many students who game as we possibly can," Smith said. "We're hoping the arena is a place where we students can relax, a place where new people cross paths."

The "arena" that Smith is referring to was opened in 2018 in Lincoln Tower. It features 80 gaming PCs outfitted with Alienware and high-definition monitors, consoles equipped with popular titles, a virtual reality headset, and even an esports broadcasting booth. With the majority of the computers dedicated to ▸



the general student population (18 machines are set aside for the school's esports teams), Smith notes the response has been resoundingly positive.

"We've had over 1,500 unique scans, meaning 1,500 different students have used the area. And that number is growing every time we look at it," Smith said.

And while esports arenas at the collegiate level are appearing more and more, esports facilities at the high school are still relatively unheard of. Canal Winchester is one of the districts changing this.

"In terms of seeing competitive esports at the high school level, it's really not an issue of *if* anymore," said Canal Winchester Athletics Booster Club President Donnie Musick. "It's a matter of when."

Currently, the school, backed by an ambitious group of athletic boosters, is in the planning stages of constructing an esports training facility, which will be open to students and as a competitive venue. While many of the details are still in the works, Musick envisions an amphitheater-style construction for the space, complete with fiber internet connection. The facility would likely be part of the school's Leadership Training Facility, a state-of-the-art on-campus site for athletics that is currently in the fundraising stage as well.

"The reality is, we see a correlation between student activities of any kind and academic success," Musick said. "If sports are so often setting the culture in high schools, we want to be inclusive of all students, and make room in this for esports too."

According to Musick, the project is still several years away, as the district and athletic boosters work to secure funding. In the meantime, the school will look to grow its esports contingency. Currently, Canal Winchester supports a competitive esports club, but Musick envisions this will eventually become a fully-sanctioned athletic team.

"IF SPORTS ARE SO OFTEN SETTING THE CULTURE IN HIGH SCHOOLS, WE WANT TO BE INCLUSIVE OF ALL STUDENTS, AND MAKE ROOM IN THIS FOR ESPORTS TOO."

And while the Canal Winchester School District is itself taking a progressive stance on esports, Musick and the school's Athletic Director, Patrick Durbin, envision the esports facility as a hub for training and competition that can be shared with nearby communities and school districts.

The move is not only supported by district officials, their constituents appear to back the project solidly as well. "Nearly everyone we've spoken to has been behind it," Musick said.

Meanwhile, Columbus College of Art and Design is planning a broader program for students interested in entering the gaming arena. It's planning to launch a Game Art & Design major for beginning in fall 2020. The new major, under the umbrella of the school's animation program, allows students to learn every aspect of video game creation, from coding to storytelling.

According to CCAD Assistant Professor Liz Keegan, who will be teaching many of the school's new game-related courses, the major is an extension of the school's two current game design offerings: Game Art Projects and Game Art Pipeline.

The Projects course immerses students into the world of video game creation for a full semester, allowing them to work in everything from 2D platforms to virtual reality, and ends with them producing 60 seconds of gameplay. Pipeline, a spring offering, is generally seen as a continuation of Projects, where many students carry over their original work and concepts to streamline it.

"The course helps students see how their game actually works, and how it fits into a system. We help them take that next step toward actually understanding coding and platforms to see what works best," Keegan said.

No matter where you're studying, one thing is clear: esports aren't just for basements anymore. Grab the sticks and get ready, people; it's game time. ■

Learn more about esports at Ohio State at esports.osu.edu and CCAD's programs at ccad.edu/academics/game-art-design.

CROWNE PLAZA®
AN IHG® HOTEL
COLUMBUS - DOWNTOWN



Plan your Staycation with us!

Available overnight packages ofered:

COSI
Columbus Clippers
Columbus Blue Jackets
Franklin Park Conservatory



Contact our Reservations Office for information on our Packages and more!
(877) 283-1700

33 EAST NATIONWIDE BOULEVARD | COLUMBUS, OH 43215
CPCOLUMBUSDOWNTOWN.COM
CPCOLUMBUSDOWNTOWN

EZRA BROOKS®

THE BEST WHISKEY FOR THE MOMENT

WHEN YOU REALIZE

YOU'RE NOW THE ADULT IN THE ROOM.



40004
LUX ROW DISTILLERS
FAMILY OWNED KENTUCKY, USA

EzraBrooks.com

PLEASE ENJOY RESPONSIBLY. ©2020 Ezra Brooks® Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, 45% Alc/Vol (90 proof). Bottled for Lux Row Distillers, Bardstown, KY. ©2019 Ezra Brooks® Bourbon Cream Liqueur, 12.5% Alc/Vol (25 proof). Bottled for Lux Row Distillers, Bardstown, KY.

ESPORTS ENGINE GOES GLOBAL

A local business sets the stage for games to bring people together

BY J.R. MCMILLAN | PHOTOS PROVIDED





Cultural critics used to dismiss video games as an isolated obsession. That's hardly the case anymore, if it ever was. Even back when neighborhood kids used to huddle around an Atari for hours, it was always social, competitive, and often collaborative.

Now with most households capable of streaming data at speeds that would probably melt a dialup modem, online gaming has come of age, and those same critics are now forced to reckon with millions of players engaged in an emerging entertainment medium that scarcely existed a generation ago.

"It's a completely different landscape today than when we launched Major League Gaming. But even then, we predicted that video games would have their own version of the NFL," explained Adam Apicella, CEO of Esports Engine, the Columbus-based startup built on nearly two decades of industry expertise. "It's what we set out to create back then."

That early insight wasn't far from foreshadowing. Through a series of expansions and acquisitions, what started as Major League Gaming in 2002, better known now as MLG, has become a leading player in a global phenomenon—with Esports Engine at the edge of an evolution, backed by gaming industry veterans, long-time collaborators, and the former CEO of ESPN and NFL Network.

Launching Esports Engine in Columbus was always an obvious choice, even if not for Ohio University graduate Apicella's familiarity with the market and the proximity to Ohio State and dozens of additional colleges and universities throughout Central Ohio. Even MLG's 2014 investment in a dedicated, 14,000 square-foot, live competition arena in an empty warehouse that used to be an indoor bounce house, was no less ironic. Gaming had grown up.

"Back in the late nineties, early 2000s, multiplayer games first started to pop onto the scene. I think the first I remember was James Bond *GoldenEye* on the Nintendo. You could have four players on one TV," he explained. "Publishers started to realize these multiplayer components would create longevity for their games. You'd sell a ton of copies, but after they'd beaten the game, they'd put it away and not play as much after that. Multiplayer changed everything."

A ton of copies is not entirely hyperbole. The same month Esports Engine opened its doors this past October, Activision Blizzard released *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*. It was the most successful digital launch



> “GAMING TRANSCENDS A LOT OF THINGS. IT’S BLIND TO RACE, GENDER, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS. IT’S INCLUSIVE. ANYONE CAN PLAY AND COMPETE.”

in the company’s history, generating $600 million in the first three days. For comparison, that’s nearly twice the worldwide, opening weekend box office for the final installment of the *Star Wars* saga. Apicella knows the industry and the stakes well. When MLG was acquired by Activision Blizzard in 2015, he was promoted to vice president, and helped design the launch of earlier *Call of Duty* releases.

“Multiplayer is the bedrock of esports, and publishers saw players would keep playing. Now when a game launches, people still play it years later, spending money within the game through microtransactions,” he revealed. “It’s a completely different line of revenue that didn’t exist when I first started with Major League Gaming.”

Apicella admits that despite concerns about over-hiring in anticipation of brisk business from the moment they launched, they have already doubled the size of their staff in just six months. Created as a one-stop production powerhouse for organizing large-scale exhibitions and competitions, he soon discovered an unexpected demand as a consultancy for those struggling to host their own events, challenges he understood firsthand.

“When we first started out, we had trouble booking venues. We’d have to prepay in full because people thought it was some sort of scam. They didn’t believe this was a real thing,” he recalled. “Now we have cities begging, commissions and convention and visitors bureaus fighting, to bring our business to their markets.”

Despite cities in the U.S. and around the world eager to get in on the ground floor of live, competitive gaming, Columbus was still the right fit for Esports Engine. After considering several sites, Apicella found Smith Brothers Hardware “checked all of the boxes”. Hosting clients from Riot Games and Microsoft to colleagues from Activision Blizzard, the proximity to downtown, the Short North, and the campuses of Ohio State and Columbus State was too perfect to pass up.

“Everyone wants to reach 18 to 30-year-olds and that’s our sweet spot, and we have an epicenter of that demographic right in our backyard. We’ve built out a newsroom style studio, like MTV used to have with Total Request Live, where you can see what we’re producing from the lobby,” he explained. “We can have meetings down here in a premium space, and then go up to Juniper afterward, which is one of the coolest spaces in the city. It was important for us to have an office that was a representation of Columbus when we bring in people who may not be familiar with the city.”

But gaming is more than just college kids blowing off steam or skipping class, and it’s a misperception the industry pushes back as it moves forward; the stereotype of a sedentary, socially awkward kid playing video games in his mom’s basement doesn’t match their broader metrics. Women are among the fastest growing segment of gamers, and the collaborative component of most games forges real friendships that defy typical social stratification.

“Our big, live events are where they meet up, like any sporting event, whether they are players or spectators. Tens of thousands of people, so it’s not a solitary endeavor,” he noted. “Gaming transcends a lot of things. It’s blind to race, gender, socioeconomic status, physical characteristics. It’s inclusive. Anyone can play and compete.”

Despite the enormous economic implications, there’s still a modest, Midwest sense of purpose dating back to the early days of Major League Gaming that resides in the DNA of Esports Engine, and a culture that continues to permeate the entire industry.

“There’s a diversity in this space, men and women playing on the same team as equals. And there’s a lot of crossover,” he noted. “You know what’s awesome? Watching a six-foot-seven NFL player standing behind some skinny kid, going nuts watching him play, cheering him on. It’s a reversal that really doesn’t exist outside our arena.” ■

For more about Esports Engine, visit esportsengine.gg.

WHERE TO PLAY ?

Inspired to get your game on?

The Game Arena is a state-of-the-art esports facility in Hilliard open to enthusiasts of all skill levels. Featuring over 60 computers, new consoles, comfy chairs, and snacks, Game Arena offers options for individual play as well as weekly tournaments and leagues. Rates start at $7 for one hour, but if you can snag a day off on a Tuesday, you can grab a $10 day pass special and play as long as you like.



The Game Arena
3570 Fishinger Blvd.
game-arena.co


WE OFFER FINANCING
FOR YOUR FAMILY TIME
A HOME EQUITY LOAN CAN HELP YOU SPEND
MORE TIME WITH THE ONES YOU LOVE.
telhio
Credit Union
No equity? No problem. Start today at **telhio.org**.
Telhio is open to anyone who lives, works, worships or goes to school in Franklin, Fairfield, Delaware, Licking, Madison, Pickaway, Union, Hamilton, Warren, Butler and Preble counties. Federally insured by NCUA. Equal Housing Lender

ONE DAY

begins your

FOREVER



VOTED BEST WEDDINGS 8 YEARS IN A ROW

740.881.9082 | 7383 Scioto Parkway, Powell Ohio 43065
sciotoreserveweddings.com

SCIOTO RESERVE Country Club

THE REALITY OF VIRTUAL SPACES



Ohio State Professor Jesse Fox discusses how online interactions affect our lives

BY OLIVIA MILTNER
PHOTOS BY REBECCA TIEN

DR. Jesse Fox says she was privileged as a child. Because both her parents were teachers, she had a computer at home before most other kids her age. She started to dabble in coding, but she says growing up in that changing time, seeing both the old way and the new, kept her questioning whether these new technologies were actually beneficial to ourselves and our society. She turned her curiosity into a career as an associate professor in the School of Communication at The Ohio State University, where she studies technology, virtual spaces, social media and their impacts on our lives.

Fox said that the accessibility that comes with technology has changed expectations for the ways we interact. “Having access to someone all the time creates a lot of different pressures for people,” she said. “It just becomes this expectation, this sort of hyper expectation of connectivity.” In addition, she said there’s a culture in some online communities that can lead to bullying and harassment; not being able to see reactions to this behavior in real time can compound the problems. At the same time, technology allows us access to information on an unprecedented scale, which can aid in understanding issues that are otherwise abstract. ▸





(614) spoke with Fox to learn about her research on technology and our interactions, how to deal with toxic situations online, what we can learn from technology, and what constant connectivity means for us.

***(614)*: Can you talk about the connection between gaming and gaming communities and the negative tendencies those groups are perceived to have?**

JF: Most games are competitive. These are environments where people are engaging deliberately, and like aggressive behavior to each other. In that way, a lot of games are very similar to sports and trash talking and that sort of thing. Getting in your opponent's head has been part of sports for a really long time. That's a strategy that people use to try to win. And sometimes that can cross a line.

How is communication online related to online harassment?

People are just more likely to unleash that stuff in an environment where there are no consequences. And so, you are less likely to be identified, so you feel more anonymous.

And you also don't have to see often how your behavior affects someone [...]. When we lack those [nonverbal cues], it's harder for people to detect where that line is, and maybe they don't understand the consequences of their behavior, and they don't know that someone is hurt or scared or uncomfortable when they're saying something.

And then some people are just nasty trolls. You know, they are just nasty trolls who are just out there to try to disempower people and make people feel gross or threatened or harassed. And that's just how they get off.

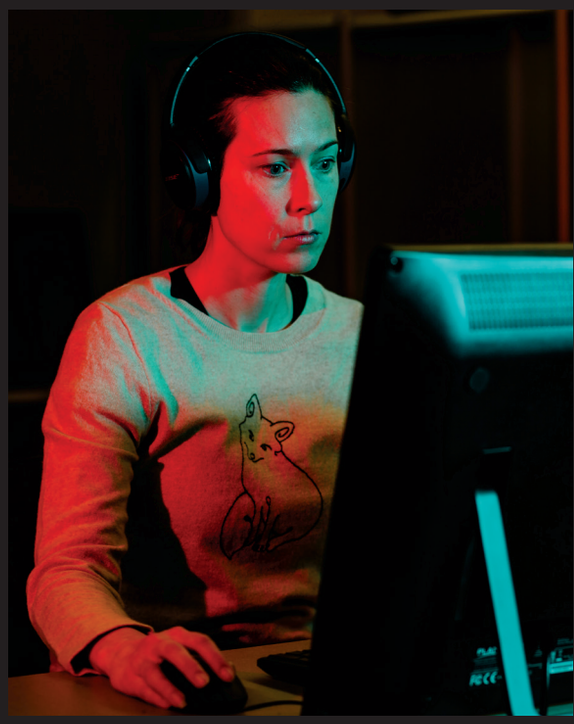
Can you talk about some of the positives that your research has unearthed about relationships in digital and gaming environments?

Online gaming can be a great shared activity for friends, couples, and family members. It can be a convenient way to spend time together and bond even if you're in different states or countries. It also can be an opportunity to make new friends—people you can talk to that are outside of the sphere of your regular life.

You've done some research that involves creating virtual environments encouraging people to be more environmentally aware. Can you talk a little bit about what you discovered during that research?

A lot of this work is related to ideas revolving around something we call psychological distance. [...] One way you can use virtual reality and virtual environments is bringing that message home to people and saying, "Hey, this is what this looks like, and this is something that you do need to be concerned about," and try to minimize that psychological distance.

[For example, someone may say], 'I don't understand what a polar ice cap melting means [...]. Imagine instead of seeing two dimensional pictures, you can be in the middle of it and look around and really experience that. Those can be powerful ways of seeing things, and processing that in a different fashion might [...] heighten that sense that this is something that I need to be concerned about.



As online gaming and other virtual interactions continue to grow, what safeguards should be in place?

Every player should treat each other respectfully and avoid being nasty to other players; one person might think they're engaging in normal trash talk, but the recipient might feel hurt or bullied. Players should also be brave enough to set the norm for respectful behavior and to intervene in harassing situations rather than being a bystander. All players should be aware of reporting systems within games and should use them to report bad behavior.

In general parents should be just as aware of who kids are interacting with online as they are of their friends offline. Parents should be monitoring their children's activity in these spaces regularly and have clear conversations about what's acceptable behavior, how to deal with bad people in the game, and how to resist peer pressure to engage in bad behavior like ganging up and harassing another player. Parents should be particularly aware of the types of sexist, racist, and homophobic language and harassment that occurs in these spaces and should prepare their kids for how to deal with it. ■

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. To learn more about Dr. Fox's work, visit commfox.org



Startup Stars

EFUSE



Columbus-based eFuse connects gamers with real-world opportunities

BY OLIVIA BALCERZAK | PHOTOS BY BRIAN KAISER

Gaming is about so much more than the isolated player sitting alone in the basement: it's about community. Local company eFuse has made creating connections within the gaming community part of its mission, so much so that its official tagline is *for the gamers*.

Since its creation in August 2018, eFuse has grown into something bigger: it's created jobs, awarded scholarships and forged ties between a rapidly growing number of members. In the words of founder and CEO Matthew Benson, "it's the professional hub for esports and video games," akin to LinkedIn for this field.

(614) spoke with Benson, and Thomas Newton, eFuse's director of operations, to learn more about the company and why building connections matters in the gaming community.

***(614):* What was the idea behind creating eFuse?**

MB: Really, it was a combination of a couple of passions of mine. So I grew up a gamer, I played a lot early on, wasn't good enough to play anywhere competitively but loved and appreciated what gaming could do from a unification and exploratory standpoint. [I] just kind of fell in love with the culture of it, but didn't understand necessarily the makeup of it from a business standpoint.

I [...] took a class while I was at OU that allowed us to understand what the professional landscape of each video game actually looks like. When I was in college and also while working with the Ohio Innovation Fund here in Columbus (a venture capital firm), those three experiences led me to see an opportunity in the professional collaboration side of the industry.

So in that sense what we're doing is helping to take talent—so aspiring gamers, aspiring business professionals in the industry, really just people that have a passion for gaming—and then helping to place them into opportunity.

Describe a little bit about what eFuse is?

MB: At a high level, we are a hub for esports and video games. What that means is we are a web and mobile application that is focused on essentially creating a network of professionals in the gaming community. So whether you're a high school student that wants to go play games at the next level or you're an executive in the industry—maybe at a brand or one of the professional teams—you can be on eFuse and join our network.

And at the core, what the technology actually does is help facilitate recruitment to fulfill opportunities. So one of the really unique things about gaming is that as it's achieving the scale and growing as a whole, ▸









new opportunities—like scholarships to play varsity-level esports at universities, tournaments, team openings at the professional level, new jobs and internships—are all being created.

But there's not a great system for organizations to use to recruit talent. And on the flip end of the spectrum, there's not a great way for talent to understand what those opportunities are and access them. eFuse sits in the middle between talent and opportunity, and then helps to facilitate recruitment and collaboration.

Why do you think it's important to provide this sort of service for the gaming community?

MB: [I] grew up a gamer, loved gaming and I think, as the industry as a whole is growing, one of the dangers that arises is it's sort of becoming a buzzword, the hot thing right now. Everybody wants to be in gaming and there's a lot of money being thrown into it.

My concern is the infrastructure to support an ecosystem and a network this size [...] doesn't exist. So for me, eFuse was a way to not only unify the current community, but to provide a structure that can essentially help build the ecosystem and solidify the ecosystem over time to make this a societal norm instead of this outcasting initiative.

TN: One of our missions is [...] helping kids to find their passions, and helping them make those passions their careers going forward. And that is really what we're trying to do at the end of the day. [We're helping] those kids who are interested in gaming, who may not want to play professionally but still have an interest in being involved in the industry. We're trying to help them to find a way that they can continue to live in this space that they are very passionate about, work in a space that they are very passionate about.

We just recently gave a scholarship to one of our eFuse users [...] and just to see the impact on that scholarship for him and his life, for us it made eFuse worth it.



"One of our missions is [...] helping kids to find their passions, and helping them make those passions their careers going forward. "

How have you seen eFuse grow since it began?

MB: The growth has been awesome. As far as product, it's sort of gone leaps and bounds above what we thought it could be and we're really excited about where it's still continuing to go. We actually launched, in full version, on January 2 of this year, so anybody can go on efuse.gg and sign up for our web version. And we'll quickly release our mobile app soon, but we're seeing growth there every day anywhere between 4 and 8 percent, which is really exciting for us. ■

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. Visit efuse.gg to learn more and sign up.




You have homeownership #goals.
But you also have financial #reality.
Did you know that the Ohio Housing Finance Agency helps qualified homebuyers with down payment and closing costs assistance, discounted interest rates and more?
Homeownership. It's Within Your Reach.
MYOHIOHOME.ORG
OHIO HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY
Find out if you're eligible at www.myohiohome.org.
YouTube

(614) FAMILY



PHOTO BY REBECCA TIEN

March can be a tough month—while the calendar may say spring is starting, the weather in Columbus rarely cooperates. This is especially true for families with young children who have been tired of being cooped up inside since the last fall leaf pile was swept aside. But fear not! We've got some ideas for families, including a video-game themed play you can all enjoy together, and an app that can help parents find sitters for nights when spring fever is getting the better of them. We're also talking to the Columbus Diaper Coalition about how they're helping area families. Hang tight, kids and parents, spring—real spring—is just around the corner.



Childcare, Simplified

Though you can swipe for a sitter these days, Amanda Knapp believes in the power of personal connections

BY MELISSA BRAITHWAITE
PHOTO BY REBECCA TIEN

Babysitting is big business; just ask any parent who doles out hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars each month for childcare. You can also ask Amanda Knapp, founder of Sitting Made Simple (SMS), a Columbus-based babysitting service that is opening new locations nationwide as a franchisor.

Sitting Made Simple began 11 years ago out of what Knapp saw as a need in Columbus for reliable, trusted, and all-around great babysitters. But she never imagined the babysitting service that she started to make extra cash would blow up the way that it did. "To be honest, I think it's kind of weird to think about, especially knowing 11 years later everything that was coming my way when, honestly, I was just so naive and not even thinking about what I was really doing at the time."

Having grown up in Kansas the oldest of three kids in a two-working-parent home and the oldest of "like a million" cousins, Knapp had the opportunity to hone her childcare and household management skills. "Running a home and childcare was really just all I knew. So literally, the day after I graduated high school, I walked right into a nanny service," she says. "And my first family, at 18 years old, was with a single father and five kids." Although she had no college degree, Knapp was armed with a lifetime of valuable experience that would pay off in the long-run.

Today, her company is in nine cities, with Knapp at the helm of the franchise business and the Columbus location. Other locations include Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Indianapolis, Nashville and Raleigh—and Knapp says she hopes to soon close a deal for a new franchise location in Denver. The decision to franchise in 2015 wasn't an easy one, but Knapp says it's one of the best things she could have done.

But not just anyone can open an SMS. Knapp is looking for franchise owners that "get it," and that's why nearly all of the owners have been formerly connected to SMS in some way. The Indianapolis owner was a Columbus mom who used the service and saw a need when she moved. Fort Worth's owner used the babysitting service in Dallas, and wanted to bring the service to the neighboring area. Raleigh's owners are sisters, one of whom was a sitter at the SMS Indianapolis location for several years. "We are all definitely in the know as to how the SMS experience works, for sure," says Knapp, who personally and extensively trains every new owner.

How does SMS work for customers? Families join SMS by paying a $50 annual fee and a varying scheduling fee ($10, $15 or $25) based on the amount of notice they give the service. Members can log into their account from a mobile or desktop, pop in the dates they need childcare and then choose a sitter based on their availability. The SMS office takes it from there, with dedicated staff who manage all phone calls and emails to ensure every request is handled with a personal touch.

Although technology has become a huge asset to the business, it has brought with it competition. "We are not an online business, specifically," Knapp says. "There are a lot of those online sites where you are hoping your profile matches with somebody or you connect with somebody; we've never been set up that way." Instead, Knapp or her franchise owners meet with every sitter in-person to ensure they are a good fit, and then they nurture the relationship, which Knapp says helps keep both sitters and families happy.

"[Technology] is a great thing to have. I mean, look, you need the convenience. You certainly need to be able to connect with [sitters]. But the problem is, if you are not

> When you see competition popping up, it really makes you understand what it is you have and what it is you need to do.

meeting and screening in person, there can be problems," she says. "I see many of them for yoga. We hang out each semester. They're required to touch base to talk about things that happened since the last time we updated. There are [sitters] who absolutely need to also feel safe and connected to what they're doing."

Although Knapp says she was surprised when babysitting apps and services started popping up left and right throughout the last decade, she is confident that SMS will achieve continued success if she stays the course. "When you see competition popping up, it really makes you understand what it is you have and what it is you need to do. And I really, to be honest with you, I stay in my own damn lane. I learned a long time ago that I could have been worried when businesses popped up. The problem is, it's been years since all of them started and I've been here and I have not seen any change in [the volume] of our business," she says. "I'm OK with other babysitting services being here; by all means, you know, we don't keep everyone [who applies to be a sitter]. So you've got to have somewhere to push those folks over to."

When you picture a babysitting service, you might imagine a group of teenage girls on their phones a la *The Baby-Sitters Club*, but Knapp's hard-nosed approach to her business is quite the opposite. "This is not the cutesy business that everyone imagines," she says. "This is a hard business to have. I know how to oversee thousands of sits in one city and still sleep every night. And, 11 years later, to still be in business and have a reputation we have here is something. I mean, it's just smart business." ■

To learn more, visit sittingmadesimple.com/columbus.



READY PLAYER FUN

BY JENI RUISCH
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY TERRY GILLIAM

The critics of old who deigned to acknowledge video games as media dismissed them as a vehicle for violence and isolation. How wrong they have been proven. How utterly surprised they would be to glimpse into the future and see those same pixelated characters portrayed on a stage, in a musical production meant to bring generations together—all personified by a surprising new cohort of theater kids who have found heart and soul in their quests, story arcs, and sidekicks.

In *Press Start! An 8-Bit Musical*, CATCO is Kids has brought 21 Central Ohio youngsters together to bring to life some of the most memorable characters of kids' video games from the last several decades. Or rather, versions of them which we will all recognize (without having to pay the hefty trademark fees...) Marco and Lorenzo the plumbers, Speedy the Hedgehog, Princess Pomegranate, and a host of other slightly askew heroes and heroines. These are versions of recognizable people and creatures, not from a single game or even gaming system world, but Nintendo and Sega characters from an era of animation and action that will bring back memories for the adults who attend the play. This jaunt through nostalgia hopes to teach a moral lesson to kids, and strike a nostalgic tone with mom and dad. ▸



← Front row: Lizzie Huelskamp; middle row: Jillian Christie, Preston Hudson, Bobby Loyd, Sam Hardjono, Grace Hardjono and Nick Sanchez-Zarkos; back row: Katie Hjorstberg.



Revolution
MORTGAGE

honey,
i'm home.

we've been waiting for you to say this! let's make moves together.

REVOLUTIONMORTGAGE.COM

EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

ADVERTISEMENT |T2 Financial, LLC. D.B.A. Revolution Mortgage is an Equal Housing Opportunity Lender, NMLS #1686046 (www.nmlsconsumeraccess.org) Terms, conditions, and restrictions may apply. All information contained herein is for informational purposes only and, while every effort is made to ensure accuracy, no guarantee is expressed or implied. Not a commitment to extend credit.

The Columbus Equity theater, now celebrating its 35th year, rests the premise of the play on the philosophical question: 'Can only heroes be heroes?' In this story, the famous characters have run out of lives, and decide to put on a musical to raise gold rings for their cause. But things go hilariously sideways, and the traditional sidekick, quiet Little Mushroom, must look inside itself and find the heart of a hero in order to beat the figurative final boss.

The imaginative spin comes not from the portrayal of 80s and 90s video game characters conveniently timed such that their original child audience now has kids of their own, but in the meta-state of the performance itself. The audience of the musical sitting in the theater is ultimately a part of the production itself, as audience members unwittingly become the captive attendees of the fictional fundraiser.

The involvement develops on multiple levels as, like in a video game, the audience has myriad opportunities to become involved and influence the outcome of the show. Unlike adult-oriented theater, where kids can feel stifled and forced to sit and be quiet, this active format encourages the energy feedback loop that is often implicit in live theater, but out of reach for little ones.

To further enhance the experience, there is a kids' play guide available for parents. This guide can familiarize kids with the characters and provide a framework for parents to contextualize the characters and actions their kiddos will be seeing onstage. In this way, parents can help kids internalize the messages from the production, and help them to bring the lessons home. CATCO is Kids even has a sensory-friendly performance available for a neurodiverse crowd. In this performance, the entire theater experience is modified to allow for an accessible experience for those with different social and sensory needs. Inclusivity is the name of the game both within the worlds of the play, where the characters must look within themselves to decide if they can be the heroes they need; and in the theater, where a new audience will be integrated into the 8-bit world, and the heroes and lessons within it. ■

Press Start! *tickets cost $15 for adults and $10 for kids. To view showtimes and purchase tickets, visit catco.org/kids/press-start.*

↓ Katie Hjorstberg, left, and Bobby Loyd



Preston Hudson, left, and Sam Hardjono



Jillian Christie, left, and Nick Sanchez-Zarkos



CATCO IS THEATRE!

MOONLIGHT and MAGNOLIAS

BY RON HUTCHINSON

March 11–29, 2020

STUDIO TWO, RIFFE CENTER

THE ROBERT WEILER COMPANY

Appraisal Brokerage Consulting Development

ABOVE:
Charles Demuth, AMERICAN, 1883–1935
Flowers (detail)
1919
Watercolor

Columbus Museum of Art: Gift of Ferdinand Howald, 1931.131

It's 1939 and legendary producer David O. Selznick has shut down production of his new epic, *Gone with the Wind*. The all-powerful movie mogul summons famed screenwriter Ben Hecht and formidable director Victor Fleming to his office to rewrite the script. The door is locked, and five days later, they complete a blueprint for one of the most beloved films ever made.

FOR TICKETS AND MORE INFO: CATCO.ORG

CATCO IS GRATEFUL

SEASON SPONSOR Lbrands FOUNDATION

SEASON SUPPORT gcac Greater Columbus Arts Council · The Shubert Foundation Inc. · Ohio Arts Council · Nationwide Foundation · The Columbus Foundation

SEASON PARTNER Columbus Metropolitan Library

MEDIA SPONSOR WOSU public media

ALL PURPOSE K-9 LLC

COLUMBUS' PREMIER DOG TRAINING COMPANY SM

Join our pack!

TRAINING • DAYCARE • BOARDING • GROOMING

LOCATED DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS

614.623.4593 | www.apk-9.com

allpurposek9.oh allpurposek9llc

Columbus Does Good:
Columbus Diaper Coalition

BY LINDA LEE BAIRD
PHOTOS BY REBECCA TIEN



Those early years of parenthood: so precious, so fleeting and, often, so overwhelming. Days upon days where the only constants are sleepless nights and excretions are the difficult reality for new parents.

Now imagine going through those days without having a reliable source of clean diapers at the ready. Unfortunately, it's a situation that many families in Central Ohio face. Diapers aren't covered by SNAP benefits and other assistance programs available to low-income families. They cost around $100 per month, adding a significant expense to an already stressful time.

In 2013, Iris Coker and Lara Smith founded the Columbus Diaper Coalition to supply clean diapers to families that needed them. Since the organization's founding, it's distrubted over 1.8 million diapers across Columbus. *(614)* reached out to the Diaper Coalition's Executive Director, Laura Mullins, to learn about the program and its impact on local families.

_(614)_: How many families do you serve in a given month?

LM: Since families can have more than one child in a diaper, our average is based on the number of children we serve. We distribute on average 30,000–35,000 diapers a month in sizes newborn–six [...] which equates to an estimated 1,000–1,400 children in a month.

How does a family get diapers from the Coalition?

Columbus Diaper Coalition is a supporting agency. That is, we do not directly distribute to individuals; we form partnerships with area non-profits who distribute our diapers into the community. About 60% of our partners are food pantries and the other 40% support mom and baby or baby and family in some way.

Why is there a greater need for larger-sized diapers?

Our most requested sizes are four, five, [and] six, as children are in them for a longer period of time. [...] In addition to the most requested sizes, they also are the most expensive—because bigger diapers have more absorbent material, these sizes have the least amount in a box.

How can people support your work?

Donate financially. Our membership with the National Diaper Bank Network and their partnership with Huggies provides us the access to buy diapers at a steeper discount versus buying diapers at a big box store.

Donate diapers. We accept newborn through size six diapers and all sizes of pull-ups. We accept opened packages of diapers, as we understand babies grow into a new size quickly and we welcome receiving any outgrown sizes as a donation. We also accept unopened wipes.

Local businesses [can become] a diaper drop off location. This allows our donors to have the convenience to donate diapers in their area of town. Donations are picked up frequently by our team. Our goal is to have a drop off location in every suburb of Columbus. Current areas of town in need of drop off locations are the East Side, Westerville, Easton, Dublin, New Albany, and Gahanna.

Committed volunteers [can] help run a packing party. [This includes] pulling orders for our partners and picking up diapers at drop off locations.

Who are some of your community partners, and how do you work together?

The local businesses who are our drop off locations. They are: Skin & Sugar in UA, Canvas Salon in Powell, CD102.5 downtown, Hastie Legal in Grandview, Credit Union of Ohio in Grove City and Hilliard, and State Farm Insurance in Clintonville.

Our partner agencies who distribute diapers into the community. We currently partner with 15 area non-profits and we couldn't distribute without them.

Besa provides volunteers for our packing parties, which allow us to get packs of diapers ready to distribute to our partners. We have a standard packing party on the first Wednesday of the month and volunteers can sign up on their website. In 2019, they contributed 245 volunteers and 345 community service hours.

The National Diaper Bank Network provides support and helps assist us with resources which allow us to thrive and sustain our diaper bank in this community. Their relationship with Huggies is instrumental in our ability to maintain our inventory.

What does it take from an operations standpoint to run this as an all-volunteer organization?

It's all about multi-tasking. It's about building relationships with people who I can depend on for assistance or advice. I have a great team of regular volunteers, who are small in size, but mighty in their passion and efforts to get diapers to babies in need. [...] I tell people I have two full time jobs, one during the day which I get paid; and the other I don't get paid, and do my best to run during alternative hours.

I volunteer at a food pantry every Saturday morning, and get to experience firsthand the relief of a mom or dad when they receive diapers. [...] Just this past Saturday, I had a mom come into the pantry with three kids and they were in dire need of diapers and had just spent the night in a shelter. Stories like that keep me motivated and push me forward. ■

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. To learn more, donate, or volunteer, visit columbusdiapercoalition.org.



"

I have a great team of regular volunteers, who are small in size, but mighty in their passion and efforts to get diapers to babies in need.

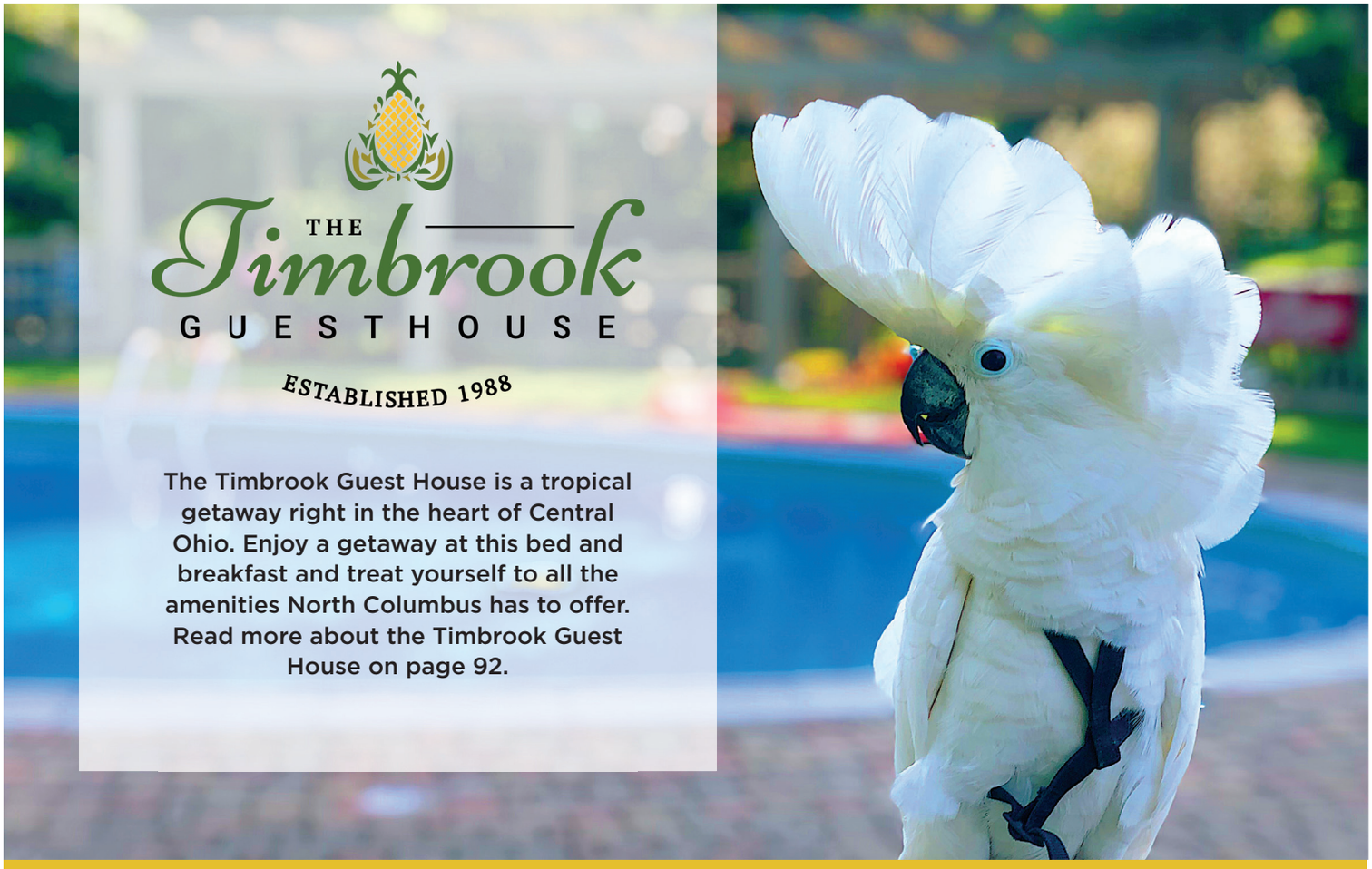
"







ADVERTISEMENT



THE Timbrook GUESTHOUSE

ESTABLISHED 1988

The Timbrook Guest House is a tropical getaway right in the heart of Central Ohio. Enjoy a getaway at this bed and breakfast and treat yourself to all the amenities North Columbus has to offer. Read more about the Timbrook Guest House on page 92.





GOOD GRUB, GREAT GETAWAYS



PHOTO PROVIDED BY GERVASI

IN planning a vacation, a major part is often left out of the equation. We all know to plan for the lodging, factor in transportation, and splurge on an excursion or two to keep the getaway exciting throughout. But what about the food and drinks? Who wants to get out of the city for an extravagant adventure only to settle on Applebee's for dinner?

This month, we are taking a look at the various ways you can get up, get out, and get your grub on. In the proceeding pages you'll find stories about a hotel making hotel food exciting again, wineries with vinos from across the globe, and an inn that pays homage to its roots from Scotland.

Pack your bags, Columbus. Spring break is just around the corner. ▸

CHERRY ON TOP

Local lodge-turned-hotel features four distinct dining experiences

BY J.R. MCMILLAN
PHOTOS PROVIDED





When planning any getaway, the most crucial question that often goes unasked is *what do you hope to escape, or discover?* With 200 well-appointed rooms, purposefully preserved accents, distinct dining options, an on-site day spa, and the industry's only enclosed arboretum in the country, Cherry Valley Hotel may offer the answers to both.

Many may ask why they haven't heard of Cherry Valley Hotel before. It's because Newark's newest hotel is nearly three decades old. "The renovation was top to bottom, down to the studs and the cement. Everything came out except the stone and the wood that were signature parts of Cherry Valley," explained Patrick Beaver, director of sales and marketing, and an Ohio State grad who recently returned to the area to oversee the transformation. "We considered staying open and doing it in phases, but there was just too much that needed attention."

Originally intended as a retreat center and training facility, the former Cherry Valley Lodge was actually owned and operated by State Farm Insurance. (No kidding.) Subsequent acquisition and renovation added an onsite water park named CoCo Key to the amenities, an endeavor that eventually led to diminishing returns and a ▸



LMS

LEGACY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

ROOFTOP PATIO • FITNESS CENTER • DOWNTOWN LOCALE



THE VIEW

ON GRANT

LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

INDUSTRIAL MEETS MODERN



RENT WITH LMS & RECEIVE 10% OFF AT ALL STAUF'S COFFEE IN COLUMBUS!

VIEWONGRANT.COM | 614 620 5151

"We look at trends, but aren't afraid to put our own twist on them."



downward spiral in revenue that required a radical reinvention.

Unlike most destination accommodations in its class, Cherry Valley Hotel has both local and national owners, a team of insight and investment that decided to close the struggling lodge and water park for the better part of a year. It was a $20 million decision that carried inherent risks; hotels that close entirely for such extensive updates often fail to reopen at all.

"Once the lodge shifted from a group hotel to a leisure hotel, it hurt our event business, and most of the money coming from the water park was going back into maintaining the water park—but not the lodge," Beaver revealed. "We changed our name from 'Lodge' to 'Hotel' to set ourselves apart from Mohican or Deer Creek. It was an early concept decision. Kalahari and Great Wolf Lodge do water parks well, but we wanted to distinguish ourselves from being either a lodge or a water park. We think we've found our niche."

That niche is hardly narrow. With 60,000 square-feet of event and conference space, Cherry Valley Hotel offers a more affordable alternative for trade shows, yet a scale that still accommodates wedding parties of any size, particularly those that exceed the capacity of typical venues. But perhaps the most underappreciated draw for guests is the serenity of the surroundings, a stark contrast from the bustle of Columbus. The original building was intentionally designed as an octagon, mimicking the geometry of the nearby earthworks built by the indigenous Hopewell people centuries ago. The botanical gardens and lake at the center still evoke fond memories among couples and families who return for reunions, or just a weekend away to unwind or reconnect.

But unlike many hotel dining options that tend to be overpriced and underwhelming, Cherry Valley Hotel offers a menu and atmosphere that rival the best the hospitality industry has to offer, with a focus on elevated fare that isn't intimidating, and options to accommodate any preference or palate.

"Everything on our menu is made from scratch, and we feature local ingredients whenever possible. We look at trends, but aren't afraid to put our own twist on them," noted Robert Olinger, executive chef and Newark native. "Our cauliflower steaks are seasoned and coated in Greek-style yogurt made in Ohio, then we slow roast them to just the right char before slicing them."

The hotel technically operates four distinct dining destinations. Craftsman Kitchen & Terrace offers a classic yet contemporary restaurant complemented by the Lobby Bar's more casual setting for creative cocktails. O&E Taphouse features both craft drafts and bottled beers with its own menu, while the Granville Pantry offers coffee and light breakfast to go or on their patio. But the first three are where you'll find the unexpected.

"I don't want to be known for our burgers, but we use five cuts of Ohio beef ground in-house daily," Olinger confessed, noting their burgers are often a frequent foray for first-time diners. Plant-forward patrons will likewise swoon over veggie burgers made from a blend of roasted peas, mushrooms, beets, and chilis. "Our fish and chips are almost as popular. We use Lake Erie walleye, beer-battered with lime zest, and serve it with baton fries we steam and chill before they're sliced and fried. It's the most light and delicate fry you'll ever find." ▸







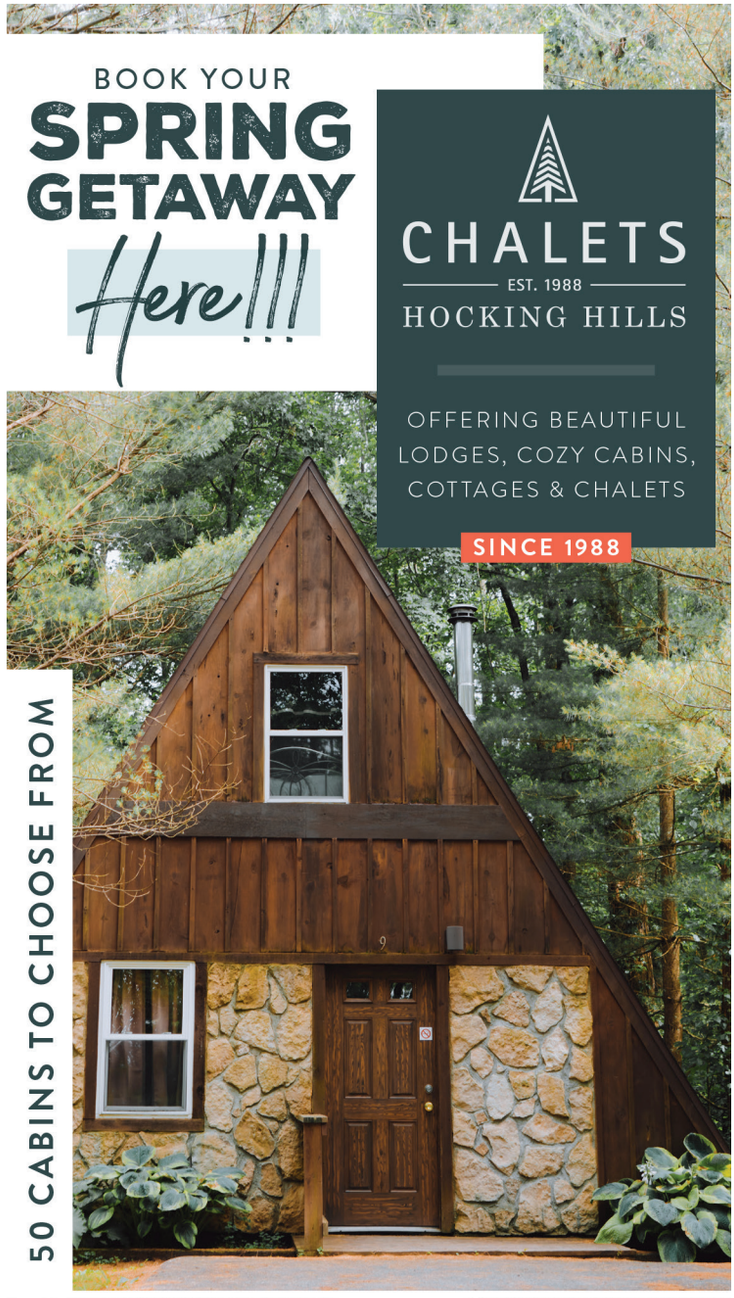
BOOK YOUR
SPRING GETAWAY
Here!!!

CHALETS
EST. 1988
HOCKING HILLS

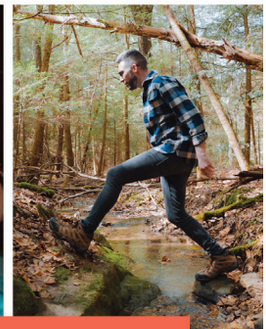
OFFERING BEAUTIFUL LODGES, COZY CABINS, COTTAGES & CHALETS

SINCE 1988

50 CABINS TO CHOOSE FROM







BOOK YOUR STAY AT
WWW.CHALETSHH.COM

@CHALETSHH
18905 STATE ROUTE 664 S | 844.336.0923





Utility and versatility are the measure of any credible kitchen, and Cherry Valley Hotel epitomizes both. The same fontina and white cheddar sauce you'll find drizzled on the cottage fries with kimchi is also in the kids mac and cheese, the chorizo fondue, and the lobster cavatelli. The kitchen presses each pasta shell by hand, and there's a rhythm to doing it right. Oligner insists the secret is rolling them to classical music (and if his offering is evidence, he may be right.)

Whether it's the wild boar sliders, cut with just enough pork butt to tame the gaminess and topped with crunchy daikon slaw with a hint of watermelon, or the perfectly pungent French onion soup, simmered low and slow for 48 hours with stout, sourdough, and Gruyère in humble harmony, there is nothing ordinary anywhere on the menu. Even their chicken wings are inspired, serving the whole wing three ways: Newark hot, country rub, or "buckeye" style with a dark barbecue and tahini sauce sprinkled with black sesame that somehow evokes the intersection of chocolate and peanut butter. Weird, but wonderful.

"Our most hands-on dish is our ancient grain pilaf, with toasted farro, quinoa, grilled artichokes, feta, olives, and a lemon curd. You spoon it into butter lettuce cups, like a taco," Olinger explained matter-of-factly, despite the dish's deceptive complexity. "The Black Forest chocolate cheesecake is served upside down, crust on top, with a cherry reduction and cherry 'pearls'—like little cherry caviar."

It's this keen attention to detail and daring variation that shows in every dish, and why Cherry Valley Hotel invites neighbors to dine and imbibe with them at any of their eateries, even if you don't spend the night. But with culinary attractions like "Truffle Week," or making your own s'mores by the fire from house-made marshmallows folded with goat cheese and covered in ganache, you may come for lunch or dinner often enough to consider booking a weekend away.

"If you check in on Friday, you could have dinner at the taphouse to start off, then grab and go Saturday morning. You could have lunch in the Craftsman, dinner in the Lobby Bar in the evening, and then room service for breakfast on Sunday," Beaver said. "You could stay the whole weekend and never eat at the same place twice." ■

For more on Cherry Valley Hotel, including the menu and amenities, visit cherryvalleyhotel.com.

ART COLUMBUS MAKES
MAKES COLUMBUS ART



I AM APRIL SUNAMI.
MIXED MEDIA IS MY ART.

I create images of strong, spiritual women as a means of proclaiming my personal identity, and empowering marginalized voices. I find that Columbus' greatest resource is its people. I wouldn't be the artist I am today without all the peers and mentors who have supported me, challenged me and inspired me. I am April Sunami, mixed media is my art and there's no place I'd rather make it.

Learn more about April's story and other Columbus artists, performances, exhibitions, concerts, public art and more at ColumbusMakesArt.com

ColumbusMakesArt.com | #artmakescbus

AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER · DMG DISPATCH MEDIA GROUP a GateHouse Media group · abc6 FOX28 · 102 FIVE

THE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION · PNC BANK · gcac Greater Columbus Arts Council · Crane Group · ENGIE

Additional support from: The Sol Morton and Dorothy Isaac, Rebecca J. Wickersham and Lewis K. Osborne funds at The Columbus Foundation.

Photo: Chris Casella | Design: Formation Studio



The Timbrook Guesthouse has six lovely guest rooms available, each with unique layouts and features. Their lovely inn is nestled on four idyllic acres in Northwest Columbus and has an abundance of amenities and packages. You can swim in the outdoor heated pool, soak in the jetted spa, reconnect around the fire pit with a glass of wine, or enjoy the coziness of the Nui Hut (gazebo) where you can experience a bourbon tasting with the Waho Package. For animal lovers, you can even be amused by the inn's five exotic parrots. The amenities are endless. There is something for everyone to enjoy and from the moment you arrive, you will see what they mean by ***"minutes from downtown but miles from reality!"***

No reason for a room? You can still experience the magic of this estate by booking your next Sunday Brunch at The Timbrook Guesthouse.







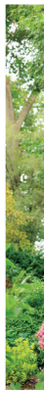


THE Timbrook GUESTHOUSE

ESTABLISHED 1988







ADVERTISEMENT

YOUR Home AY FROM HOME

THE TIMBROOK GUESTHOUSE IS ENTERING ITS SIXTH YEAR FOR DELIVERING THE ALOHA SPIRIT TO COLUMBUS, OHIO. IT REMAINS ONE OF CENTRAL OHIO'S HIDDEN GEMS AND IS A MUST STAY IF VISITING THE AREA NO MATTER THE OCCASION. WHEN YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A UNIQUE GETAWAY OR STAYCATION, DISCOVER WHY THE TIMBROOK IS BED AND BREAKFAST IS AN AWARD-WINNING ACCOMMODATION.







www.TimbrookGuesthouse.com

5811 OLENTANGY RIVER ROAD, COLUMBUS, OHIO 43235

NOW AVAILABLE



THE CORONA OF HARD SELTZERS

0G CARBS | **90 CALORIES** | **0G SUGARS***

Corona® HARD SELTZER

SPIKED SPARKLING WATER

Relax responsibly*. Corona® Hard Seltzer Spiked Sparkling Water with Natural Flavors. Imported by Crown Imports, Chicago, IL
*Not a low-calorie food. Per 12 fl. oz. serving average analysis: Calories 90, Carbs 0 grams, Protein 0 grams, Fat 0 grams

www.HeidelbergDistributing.com @HeidelbergDist /HeidelbergDistributi /HeidelbergDistributing



WINE & DINE

A trip to Gervasi is like visiting Italy—no passport needed

BY REGINA FOX
PHOTOS PROVIDED

> *"You know, work in the morning, have a one-hour nap in the afternoon, and at night go out and have that life. Go out and see your friends and eat tapas and drink red wine and be in a beautiful place."*

Anthony Bourdain said that, and while he was probably referring to life in Venice or Tuscany, he could've very easily been talking about a trip to Gervasi Vineyard—of course without the "work in the morning" part.

This picturesque wine resort in Canton, Ohio will transport you out of the sunless scenes of Ohio's winter and into a 55-acre European retreat with its delicious wine, delectable food, and delightful accommodations.

Ted Swaldo and his family, whose roots trace directly back to Italy, purchased the property in 2009. With a dream and some elbow grease, the Swaldos transformed the dilapidated plot into a handsome estate, complete with a winery, distillery, four distinct restaurants, a coffeehouse and cocktail lounge, multiple indoor and outdoor event venues, 48 luxury overnight suites, a boutique gift shop, and scores of happy guests.

"It starts with setting a high standard," explained Scott Swaldo, General Manager and son of Ted Swaldo. "Our goal every day is to deliver world-class experiences, not just first class, for our guests. We have empowered our staff to go above and beyond to *wow* our guests in many ways."

As you may expect from a vineyard, Gervasi places paramount importance on its winemaking. Calling the process "fastidious," Director of Winemaking and Distilling Operations Andrew Codispoti doesn't miss a blanc or beat in his craft.

"We nurture our estate vineyards by hand so as to produce the finest Family Reserve Wines possible," Codispoti said. "Our wines have the distinction of being served in an elegant ambiance of natural beauty, comfort, and luxury, which collectively elevate our guest's overall experience." ▸





Codispoti has been with Gervasi from the beginning, when the first seeds in the vineyard were planted. In addition to continuously polishing the design and development of the winery, he's grown the portfolio from seven wines in 2009 to today's award-winning list of 24 during his tenure. Among those accolades are the "Best of Class" award in both the Ohio and Finger Lakes wine competitions, the Ohio Department of Agriculture Director's Choice Award for "Best of," and the 2016 "Ohio Winemaker of the Year" award.

"Great wine is not an accident," said Codispoti.

While Codispoti can't single out a favorite wine, saying he "finds plenty of opportunity to take pleasure" in them all, Swaldo recommends Gervasi's full-bodied signature Italian red, Truscano. He believes it is best enjoyed with great Italian food, which, conveniently, is available in abundance at the estate.

The Bistro, for example, offers upscale, rustic Italian cuisine in a stunning restored barn built in 1823. Exposed brick, natural woods, and low lighting make the environment swell with warmth in a way that evokes feelings of permanency and longevity, Codispoti said. It is here that Swaldo's favorite dish is served: the Tuscan Beef Short Ribs. Braised for four hours in a rich veal demi-glace, this tender entree was what landed Executive Chef Jerry Risner his job back in 2009. Moreover, Risner's attention to detail, consistency and hospitality earned The Bistro a USA Today "10 Best



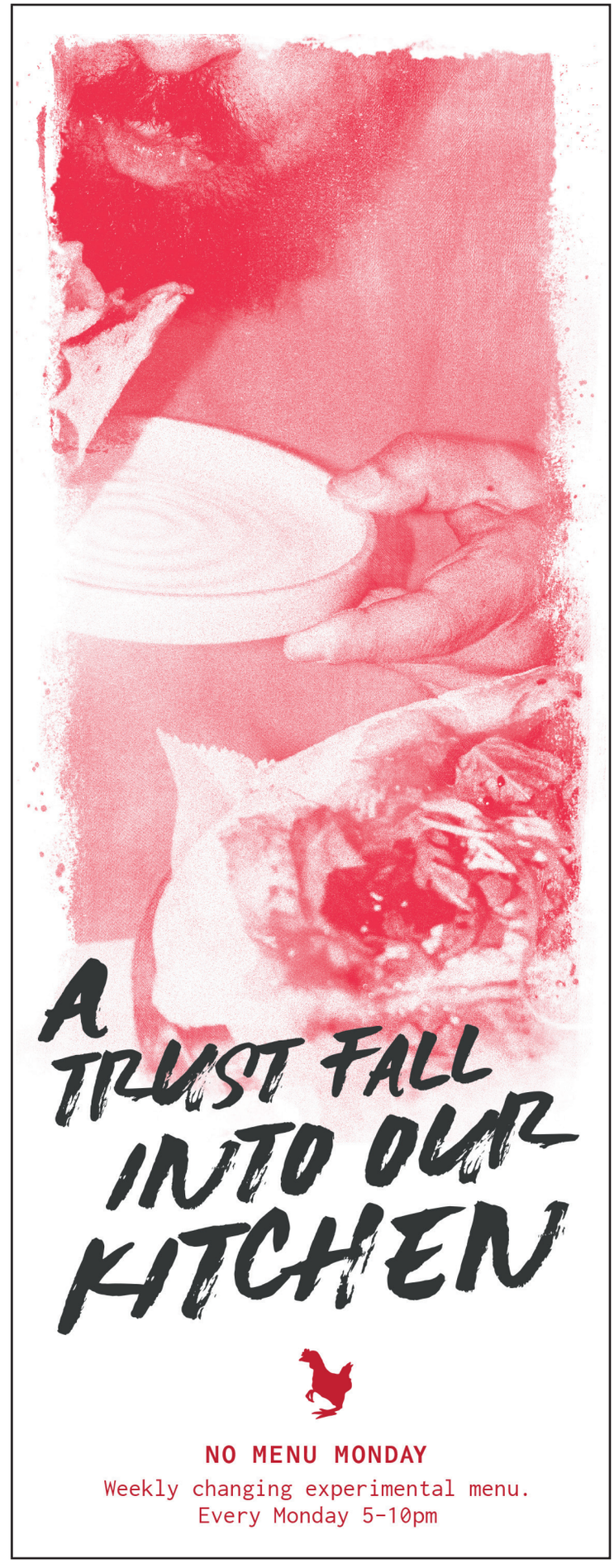
Readers' Choice Award" for "Best Winery Restaurant" in the nation.

"We have not settled; we continue to try to improve on everything we do," Risner said. "After 10 years, I'm still visiting farms to see different products and checking vendors to make sure we are buying the best products that we can."

Aside from The Bistro, Gervasi is home to three more restaurants: The Crush House, The Still House, and The Piazza.

For those desiring a more casual experience, Codispoti suggests The Crush House, which is adjoined to a wine manufacturing operation. "Tubular handrails, steel cables, brick walls with a time-worn appeal and windows overlooking the winery give our guests an integrated experience between food, wine, and production," he said. "Here one may feel they are at the epicenter of Gervasi's wine experience."

You'll find a chapel in every good Italian village, and Gervasi is no exception. Inspired by the St. Gervasio church in Denno, Italy, where the family's grandmother Maria Gervasi was baptized, The Still House combines a celestial environment with distillery entertainment. Guests can enjoy signature coffee blends and a light breakfast by day, while snacks and tempting libations concocted from Gervasi Spirits can be had at night. ▸



THE CREST
CLINTONVILLE

WE'VE GOT
ONE SWEET
SWEET DILL.



$5

$5 PICKLEBACK
SHOT W/ A TALLBOY
EVERY TUESDAY, 3PM-CLOSE

@THECRESTGASTROPUB 2855 INDIANOLA AVE, COLUMBUS



If you're fortunate enough to visit Gervasi during clement conditions, The Piazza features seasonal outdoor dining for lunch and dinner with stunning views of Gervasi's spring-fed lake. Grab a bottle of wine, a fresh-baked pizza, and challenge your friends to a game of bocce or cornhole on the lawn.

As your long day of award-winning wining and prize-earning dining comes to an end, you'll be pleased to retire to one of your three options for luxurious lodging: The Villas, rustic suites inspired by the sights of Tuscany; The Casa, Gervasi's upscale boutique hotel; or The Farmhouse, a four-bedroom inn originally built in 1830. No matter where you choose to stay, Gervasi staff ensures that each guest feels like they're getting an experience tailored just for them.

"Guests celebrating special events with us are always acknowledged," said Susan Monteleone, Director of Hotel and Resort Operations. "Be it a handwritten card in your room commemorating the special event, to chocolate-covered strawberries in room upon arrival, or maybe a floral bouquet celebrating the occasion."

That's really what it comes down to at Gervasi: the meticulously-minded employees who transcend traditional hospitality standards to deliver exceptional encounters to all who visit.

"While Gervasi is built upon providing beautiful surroundings, attention to detail, and exceptional wine and food, ultimately what makes Gervasi Vineyard special is our incredible staff," said Swaldo. "We have built a culture of caring for our guests, caring for each other that provides our guests with memorable experiences to last a lifetime." ■

Gervasi is located at 1700 55th Street NE in Canton, OH. For more information, rates, and reservations, visit gervasivineyard.com.







THE CREST
CLINTONVILLE

THE BEST DAMN BURGER IN THE LAND.



$5

$5 VEGGIE BURGER
+ HAND-CUT FRIES
EVERY TUESDAY, 3PM-CLOSE

@THECRESTGASTROPUB 2855 INDIANOLA AVE, COLUMBUS



SPRING GLENLAUREL INN GETAWAYS

FINDING SCOTLAND IN THE HOCKING HILLS

The Glenlaurel Inn offers a Scottish-style retreat just 90 minutes from Columbus

BY JOHN MCLAUGHLIN
PHOTOS PROVIDED



While Appalachian Ohio might not be the first place in the world travelers would think of heading to find an authentic Scottish estate, the Glenlaurel Inn will likely have you speaking in a burr in no time flat.

Glenlaurel Inn was originally opened in 1994 by Michael Daniels, who aimed to honor his heritage with an authentic Scottish Inn. Today the woodsy hideaway, cloistered away from the rest of the world in the Hocking Hills, offers world-class lodging, recreation, and dining, all within 90 minutes of downtown Columbus.





614-732-5098 | 525 SHORT STREET | MATTANDTONYS.COM

OPEN DAILY
SATURDAY & SUNDAY BRUNCH
11AM - 3PM

MATT AND TONY'S
WOOD FIRED KITCHEN



JOIN US FOR HAPPY HOUR M-F 3PM TO 7PM
$4 WELL DRINKS & HOUSE WINE, $2 OFF DRAFT BEER



Terrasana



GET BACK TO WHAT MATTERS

Terrasana helps patients along their healing journey by providing them with education and safe access to natural medical cannabis from the good earth.

TERRASANACANNABISCO.COM

Daniels eventually sold the establishment to a trio of new owners native to the Hocking Hills area, who had fallen in love with the authentic, antiquated inn well before purchasing it. To add a real touch of the Scottish Isles to the establishment, Jas Barbe was hired, whose lavish Scottish accent greets dinner guests with poetry recitals each night.

Make no mistake about it, Barbe's presence at the Inn is more than just an atmospheric touch. Before moving to Ohio to manage the Glenlaurel, the Scotsman managed some of the most coveted properties in the world—think Nice and the Italian countryside—as a contractor. He now resides at the inn full time. "I decided to come home," he said wryly.

Nestled on 60 lush acres inside the Wayne National Forest, the Inn's property is rife with glens, waterfalls,



and miles of walkable trails ready to provide adventure. It's only a short drive from some of the area's more popular natural attractions, such as Ash Cave and Old Man's Cave.

One of the draws of unplugging in a national forest is the proximity to wildlife of all sorts, and Glenlaurel isn't wanting in this area. "We get so much of it here, and we love it," says Barbe. "Just this morning I watched a deer come right up to a couple of our guests outside their cabin."

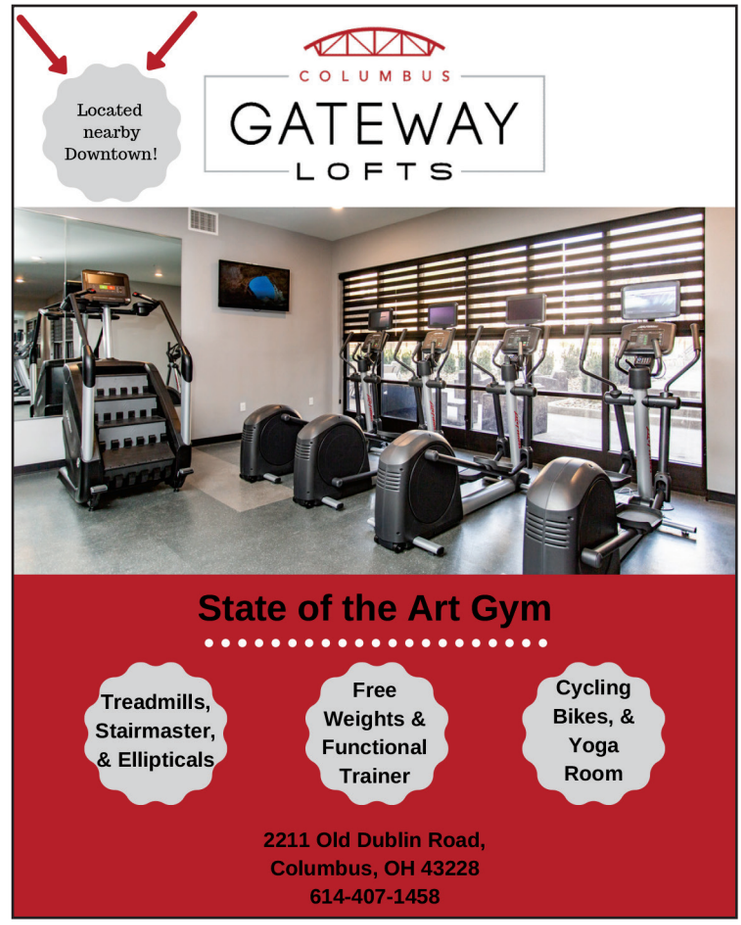
And even though the retreat is a mere stone's throw away from some of the best outdoor recreation in the state, it may be hard to pull guests away from the Inn. One reason for this: a wholly authentic sand green links-style golf course.

The term links actually hails from the Scottish language, and refers to a course made up of longer, sandy grass that requires less upkeep. It is the oldest style of golf in the world. These courses are less refined, and thus golfers feel uniquely engaged with the natural world around them while playing. Glenlaurel is no exception; a smattering of old stone fences and lush vegetation transport players into an era passed.

"We have the only long grass golf course in North America," Barbe says. "Our course was designed by [renowned golf course architect] Michael Hurdzon, and modeled after ancient Scottish courses. It's traditionally played with old hickory canes, and we have some from the 1800s for guests to use."

After a full day of taking in the Hocking Hills and hitting the links, guests will have no doubt worked up an appetite, and the cuisine at Glenlaurel is on par with the rest of its attractions.

Jean-Michelle Matos, a world-class chef with a Parisian culinary education, designed and oversees the Inn's menu. After cooking in France, Matos served as a chef in New York for a host of hotels, and eventually as the executive chef for Norwegian Cruise Lines.





THE SQUARE at Latham Park



Attached garages | Free cable and internet | Trash included
Stainless steel appliances | Granite countertops | Large closets
Round year indoor/outdoor heated swimming | 24 hour fitness center
Free Starbucks | Pet-friendly | Nature trails

NEW - Fully Furnished Units - find us on Airbnb

Specials: $2000 in Visa Gift Cards
(terms and conditions apply)

Use this code to receive an additional $500 Visa Gift Card

Promo Code: **614MAG**

4170 Green Clover Drive Hilliard Ohio 43026 | 614-971-5500 | lathamapartments.com

TheWineBistro

...a place that redefines how to enjoy food & wine



Tastefully Done!

UPPER ARLINGTON
1750 W. Lane Ave, Ste 100
Upper Arlington, OH
614-485-1750

WESTERVILLE
925 North State St
Westerville, OH
(614) 523-4330

WORTHINGTON
8231 N. High St
Columbus, OH
614-436-4000

www.winebistrocolumbus.com

"I'm going to say that my style of cooking is progressive, but with classical overtones," Matos said. His menu, which rotates dishes every single day of the year and features six and seven course meals, is highlighted by a host of strong entrées such as the rack of lamb. "A lot of preparation goes into the lamb," Matos said. "It's oven roasted and coated with a dried cherry and cranberry crust."

Following dinner, Glenlaurel visitors can retire to their authentic Scottish abodes for the night. The Inn offers a number of different lodging options to choose from, including wooded cabins and crofts—slightly smaller versions of their cabins—donning different Scottish surnames. Rooms in the manor house are also available.

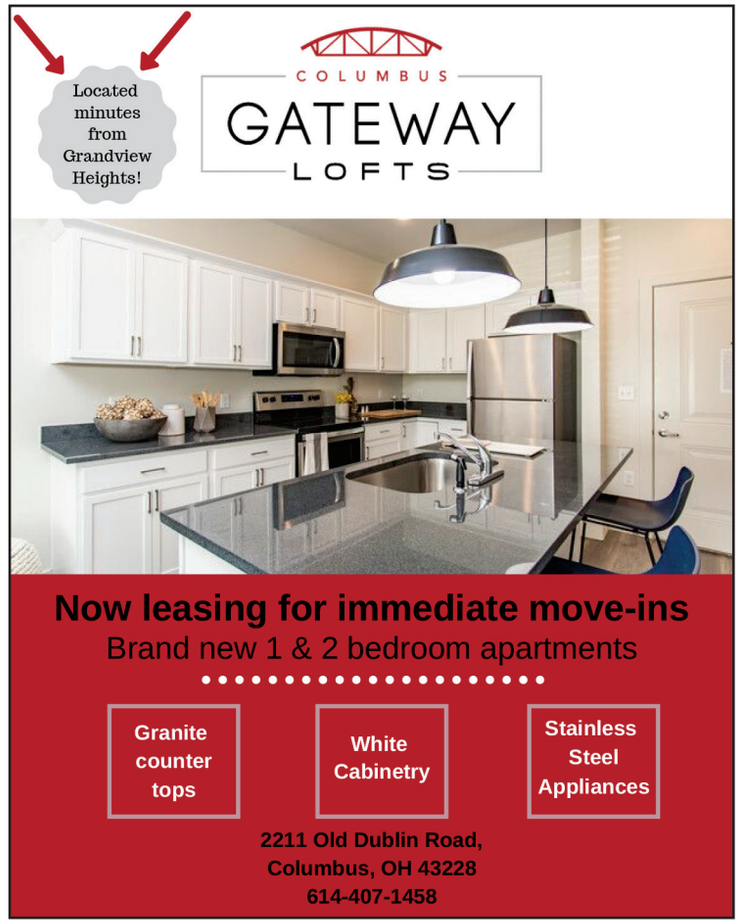
Barbe said that all of their lodgings feature a wide array of amenities and cater specifically to couples. "No matter who you are, or where you are in your relationship, we'll help you get that fire back." ■



“No matter who you are, or where you are in your relationship, we’ll help you get that fire back.”

The Glenlaurel Inn is located at 14940 Mount Olive Rd. in Rockbridge, OH. Visit glenlaurel.com to learn more and book.







TAKE A SEAT

BY KERRY FRANCIS
PHOTOS BY BRIAN KAISER



A SORE BACK AND AN OLD SPORTS CAR GAVE BIRTH TO A COMPANY THAT PUTS COMFORT AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE GAMING INDUSTRY



Like many avid gamers, Thomas Klein spends a lot of time in front of his computer. Back in 2009, he was fed up with his office chair and started looking for a more comfortable option. In a moment of inspiration, he pulled the bucket seat out of an old sports car he was planning to get rid of and mounted it on the base of a chair. It made all the difference.

He started thinking about selling the product to other gamers. After finding some factories that were selling car seats, and others selling base parts, NEEDforSEAT was born. The German company had a beginning similar to Apple, as its first "factory" was in a garage.

The company's transformation to a global name came when it worked with ESL, one of the world's largest esports companies, to set up a tournament. When the NEEDforSEAT name appeared on the chairs used at the event, the chairs went viral in the gaming community.

"People saw the product and thought it looked cool," said Thomas Hodik, chief operating officer of NEEDforSEAT USA The company's growth took off quickly, and the U.S. office opened in Columbus in 2012.

Hodik credits the company's success to its partnerships and customization. The company remains true to its roots, and continues to partner with the gaming industry. Fans can see some of those partnerships right here in Columbus, such as at Gaming Arena in Hilliard and GDEX, a gaming expo that takes place in Columbus every fall.

Customization is a big part of NEEDforSEAT's business, and something that sets them apart. In addition to offering chairs based on the users height and weight, the company offers embroidery.

"There are many chair brands, but they don't customize to the level we do," Hodik said.

That customization can help individual streamers—both well-known names and average joe—increase their profiles. The company can work with a gamer to commission a logo and get a chair made in a matter of weeks. The gamer then has their own brand repping them behind their back. ▸







MORE THAN A CHAIR

For avid gamers, a comfortable chair is a crucial piece of equipment. Hodik said that gamer culture is survival of the fittest, and being able to sit comfortably for eight hours or more is key to performance. To solve the problem, many gamers have tried to fit overstuffed recliners under their desks. NEEDforSEAT's chairs were, quite literally, a better fit.

"This product has become a crucial part of the culture—both professional gamers and hobby gamers," Hodik said. "People have seen the chairs on screen and didn't realize it was a local company."

NOT JUST A GAME

While NEEDforSEAT's chairs were designed for gamers, they can be used by anyone. The company has partnered with universities, including Ohio State and Harvard. Consumers can purchase Ohio State-branded chairs, or test them out in the university's new gaming lab, which is equipped with 90 of NEEDforSEAT's chairs.

Hodik said Harvard uses the chair in one of its labs. "They said, 'We have a really fancy microscope and we want to have a really fancy chair.'"

He said their most interesting partner is the U.S. Navy's submarine school that all Navy personnel attend. The sailors are learning how to use a submarine with an Xbox controller and custom chairs.

"We all need chairs, but we don't think about it. Yet we shop for and compare mattresses," Hodik said. "A chair is at least as important as a bed. Your body will thank you."



"IF I THROW A GRENADE IN THE GAME, THE CHAIR WILL VIBRATE"

WHAT'S NEXT

NEEDforSEAT is always looking to level up, and the company has plans to continue growing its business and products. New models for its most popular chairs are coming that will feature adjustable lumbar support.

"We're always trying to find the best way to make people comfortable," Hodik said. "You can sit in a chair for eight hours or more, and you need to be comfortable."

They also are looking to add accessories that enhance the gaming experience. Currently, they're working on a wireless seat quake—a device that connects with a game console and acts as a rumble pack system for the chair. "If I throw a grenade in the game, the chair will vibrate," Hodik said. "It immerses you in the game."

Hodik pointed out that the company stays true to its roots and focuses on the needs of the end users. "We're very selective about what we do," he said. "We'd never put a speaker in our chairs, because we cater to professional and ambitious gamers, and they use headsets." ■

NeedforSEAT USA is located at 1946 Camaro Ave. Learn more at needforseatusa.com.







Located minutes from Hilliard!

COLUMBUS
GATEWAY
LOFTS



Posh Style Community Lounge

Courtesy Lounge Wifi

Large Screen TVs

Plush Computer Stations & Printer

2211 Old Dublin Road,
Columbus, OH 43228
614-407-1458

Join us for
HAPPY HOUR

1/2 OFF Signature MARGS

$1 OFF TACOS

MON. THRU FRI.
4PM TO 7PM

CONDADO
TACOS • TEQUILA • MARGARITAS
condadotacos.com

(614)

#ASSEENINCOLUMBUS

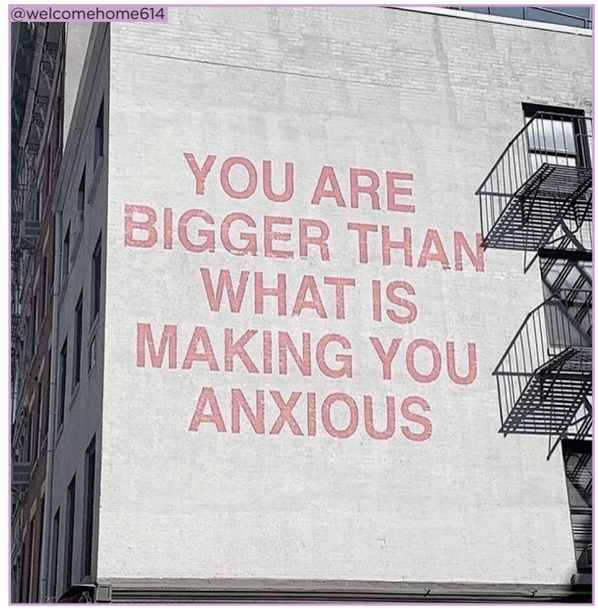
It's difficult for us here at (614) to catch it all. That's where you come in: while you're out there capturing the city, you might as well slide some of your best shots our way. We'll throw a few of ours in the mix, too. There's plenty to see in Columbus, so there's no reason not to share.

#AsSeenInColumbus



































CAPA

Living, breathing art.

MAR 31



MASTERCHEF JUNIOR LIVE!

Palace Theatre
Tuesday | 7:30 pm

MAY 15



SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY AND THE ASBURY JUKES

Southern Theatre
Friday | 8 pm

MAR 11



THE PEKING ACROBATS

Southern Theatre
Wednesday | 7:30 pm

APR 3-5



PAW PATROL LIVE!

THE GREAT PIRATE ADVENTURE

Ohio Theatre
Friday | 6 pm
Saturday
10 am & 2 pm
Sunday
10 am & 2 pm

MAY 26



BÉLA FLECK AND THE FLECKTONES

Southern Theatre
Tuesday | 7:30 pm

MAR 18



NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON:

AN ASTROPHYSICIST GOES TO THE MOVIES

Palace Theatre
Wednesday | 7:30 pm

APR 8



THE WOOD BROTHERS

Southern Theatre
Wednesday | 8 pm

MAY 28



CLASSIC ALBUMS LIVE: *LED ZEPPELIN 1*

Lincoln Theatre
Thursday | 8 pm

MAR 20



NIKKI GLASER:

BANG IT OUT

Southern Theatre
Friday | 7 pm

APR 11



BRIAN CULBERTSON

THE XX TOUR

Southern Theatre
Saturday | 8 pm

OCT 2



BONEY JAMES

SOLID TOUR 2020

Lincoln Theatre
Friday | 7 & 9:30 pm

MAR 20



THE PRICE IS RIGHT LIVE™

Palace Theatre
Friday | 8 pm

CBUS Arts
Powered by CAPA
CBUSArts.com

614-469-0939 • capa.com
CBUSArts Ticket Center
at the Ohio Theatre
39 E. State Street, Columbus, OH 43215

CAPA
Living, breathing art.

SEASON SUPPORTERS

The Columbus Foundation · Ohio Arts Council · gcac Greater Columbus Arts Council · Nationwide Foundation


DIAMOND CELLAR®
THE BEST ENGAGEMENT RING.
WITH THE BEST DIAMOND.
AT THE BEST PRICE. Guaranteed.
EASTON TOWN CENTER | SAWMILL ROAD | DIAMONDCELLAR.COM