

WestFest, from page 1

crease membership. There is no admission charge, but the Association hopes that members will renew, and alumni who are not members will join. A one-year membership is \$20, and a Lifetime membership is \$200. (See, also, and use the form on Page 3.)

The volunteers are needed for one-hour shifts:
—to help with setting up (at 11am)
—to help at the Membership table
—to help at the Commemorative Pavers table
—and to help with the clean-up (6pm).

Volunteers (and donors) should get in touch with Association Corresponding Secretary, Cheryl Smith, cherylasmith@comcast.net

It should be remembered that the Association is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, so donations of any kind are tax-deductible for the donors. Grill items as well as other food and beverages are needed, as well as contributions to purchase these.

Please note that there may be a significant traffic problem and detours late in the afternoon, because of an evening event at the nearby Mann Center. The best advice is to come early.

Please Note

The Alumni Association's website has been redesigned, so check it often for the latest about WestFest, the Gala, and other events.

WPHS Alumni Ass'n
P. O. Box 7906
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Address Correction Requested

Not an Alum, But Ronald Nichols Was a 'Speedboy' in Spirit

He was not a West Philly graduate, but for the last 37 years of his life, he had the Speedboys spirit and showed it during football season when he would stand on the sidelines during games and try to yell louder than the coaches.

Ronald Nichols, who died in June, held the demanding job of groundskeeper of the school's athletic field.

Not only did he keep the grounds in pristine condition (a very difficult task, as anyone who has seen the field will confirm), but also he was devoted to the school, especially its sports programs. He knew the players and coaches and they knew him as a supporter and father figure. His shouts of encouragement to the players resounded across the field.

According to his family, "He served as a mentor and father figure to many West Philly High School athletes, males and females alike, and established bonding relationships with numerous students. He urged them to study and do well in school and helped them to pursue college and/or work. But students also sought him out for personal guidance and advice. He was both a sports and a life coach."

He not only lovingly maintained In addition to maintaining the Pollock Field grounds and playing field, but also he kept an amazing collection of indoor houseplants, some reaching the ceiling of his

field-house office and workspace.

He grew up in South Philadelphia and played football at South Philadelphia High School and always enjoyed a variety of physical activities. Over the years, he was an ardent cyclist and biked to Atlantic City often to help raise money for charity. He was a student of tai chi and martial arts, a fitness buff who researched exercise regimens and

soothing balms and home remedies for aching and bruised muscles.

He worked in construction for a short time before going to work for the school district and was assigned to West Philadelphia High School as the groundskeeper. He did that for 37 years. He was 62.

He and his voice will be missed, when the Speedboys open their football season in the Fall.



WPHS Alumni News

Volume II, Number 2

West Philadelphia High School Alumni Association

July 2012

Prizes from Alums Help Make This Graduation Unique

This year's Commencement Ceremony for the School's graduates, held at the University of Pennsylvania's Irvine Auditorium, on June 14, was unlike any in the school's 100-year history.

During the ceremony, Principal Mary Dean proudly reported, after she listed the students and the colleges they were attending, and their awards, that the aggregate was a remarkable \$371,700.

This sum included more than \$21,800 from the Alumni Association, four classes, and individual alums.

Heading the list of alumni benefactors is the remarkable Class of 1966 [see story, page X] which awarded \$9000 in scholarships and book grants, after its intensive eight-day "Achievers Workshops." The 1923 Girls Alumni Awards presented three \$1000 prizes.

The 1960 Class presented two \$500 awards; the combined 1961/1962 classes presented two \$500 awards. Steve Bivins presented three \$500 awards in memory of three siblings.

The Alumni Association's two \$1000 Book Awards went to Sarai Wilkins and Damion Cox. Sarai has been admitted to LaSalle University, and Damion has been admitted to the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

The graduating class was sworn into the Alumni Association by Paula McKinney-Rainey, president.

Mark your Calendar!

Gala to end Centenary Set for October 14

The Centennial Gala, which will conclude the Alumni Association's year-long observance of West Philadelphia High School's 100 years, will be held on Sunday, October 14, 2012, in the Banquet Hall of the historic Belmont Mansion, in Fairmount Park.

The event will be from 5 to 9pm, and the cost is \$100 per person. The Gala will be an ideal opportunity for alumni to have mini-reunions by buying tables of ten.

Tickets for the Gala can be purchased through PayPal, or mailed to the Association's address.

Plans are still being formulated, but so far:

- There will be a Reception with an Open Bar and hors d'oeuvres from 5 to 5.45pm
- Dinner (chicken and fish) will be served at 6pm. (Those with special dietary requirements should contact the Co-Chairs)
- A memorable program is being planned
- A photographer will be present to record the historic occasion
- There will be a mix of music across the generations
- Each attendee will receive a Gala Keepsake
- There is ample free parking on site

Those wishing to purchase ads in the Souvenir Booklet will find information on the Association's web-site.

The historic 18th-century building, with the best views of Philadelphia, is now the "Underground Railroad Museum," and is operated by the American Women's Heritage Society, Inc.

Audrey Johnson-Thornton, director of the Museum, and Dr. Delores Williams, a former WPHS principal, are co-chairs of the Gala Committee. For more information, call 484.442.0171, or visit www.wphsaa.org.

Attention

It has come to the attention of the Alumni Association that there is a bogus site collecting \$10 membership dues.

Please note that the Alumni Association does collect online dues via its website (wphsaa.org), but we do not offer a \$10 membership. Our membership levels are \$200 for a

See **Bogus**, page 2

Successful Bowling Night Nets 2 \$1000 Book Awards

The Association presented \$1000 Book Awards to two graduates at the new School's first commencement as a result of the successful support of the Bowling for Scholarships night, on April 28.

More than 150 alums and family

Annual WestFest Set for August 5; Aids Membership

Once again, the call is out for volunteers and donations for the fifth annual WestFest, to be held on August 5, at North George's Hill pavilion, in Fairmount Park.

The festivities will start at noon and will end at 6pm, although, if last year was any example, people lingered for more than two hours, as they met and chatted with classmates. Almost 1000 people attended last year.

On display will be the American flag that was used during the Presentation of Colors at the Commencement ceremony by the school's Air Force Junior ROTC. It is a gift to the Association by the unit.

Alumni should bring their own food or the necessary equipment to prepare their food on-site. Entertainment will be provided by a DJ. There will be portable toilets.

The WestFest is the Association's one and only massive event to in-

See **WESTFEST**, page 4

WPHS Students Treated to Philadanco Show

As part of its Centenary Year program, the Alumni Association sponsored a performance of the famed Philadelphia Dance Company (Philadanco) at the School for the 11th- and 12-graders, on June 1.

The founder of the world-famous group is Joan Meyers Brown, a member of the 1949 class.

That evening, Philadanco performed at the "Art After 5," program at the Philadelphia Museum See **Dance**, page 2



An ensemble routine from one of the three dances in the show

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West Philadelphia High School
Alumni Association
4901Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19139
Telephone: 267.217.2018
e-mail:wphsaa149@gmail.com
Website: www.wphsaa.org
Direct all mail to:
WPHS Alumni Association
P.O.Box 7906
Philadelphia, PA 19101
President Paula McKinney-Rainey
Editor Andrew Kevorkian

From the President. . .

Greetings and welcome to the **WPHS Alumni News** over what has been a busy and productive mid-point of the centenary of the school and the Alumni Association's theme—*Still the Best: A Centennial Year of Celebration*. By now you are all aware of the Centennial Gala culminating event on Sunday, October 14, 2012, at the Historic Belmont Mansion in West Fairmount Park. The Planning Committee was open to all alumni, beginning at the February meeting and repeated in group email messages in the subsequent months. Additional information on the Gala and the Philadanco performance for the students is available elsewhere in the issue. The General Meetings have consistently been attended by more than 50 alumni willing and eager to participate in our efforts to provide support to our students in their new home. We forged a productive working partnership with the principal and administration of Mrs. Mary Dean, who brought along her entire leadership team to our December meeting to report on the first months of the school year and her plans for the immediate future. All General Meetings were kicked off with presentations from managers of the various school activities: Coaching staff (football and basketball); Librarian; Student Success Center; Nursing Department. Our Bowling for Scholarships on April 28th again allowed us to provide awards to two students, this year in the amount of \$1,000 each and we thank all the alums

MEET OUR ALUMNI

Elaine Hoffman Watts, June 1950

An 81-year-old drummer who leads her own band. Not just any band, but a Klezmer band—The Fabulous Shpielkes. Elaine is the third generation carrying on the family tradition. Her daughter Susan—the fourth generation—is vocalist and plays the trumpet. One of only eight artists from Pennsylvania to receive the National Heritage Award from the National Endowment for the Arts, Elaine has also received the coveted Pew Fellowship in the Arts. She was the first woman percussionist to be accepted at the Curtis Institute of Music, from which she was graduated in 1954. She has performed and taught for more than 50 years, working in symphonies, theaters and schools. Klezmer is a musical tradition of the Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe and originally consisted largely of dance tunes and instrumental display pieces for weddings and other celebrations, but has now expanded to concert halls. Just as the Klezmer repertoire has been handed down from generation to generation, so, too, has the Klezmer tradition been passed down in Elaine's family where her musical skills and cultural knowledge includes special and distinct songs for each child, grand-child, and special occasions. Her father was the famed Jacob Hoffman, a Klezmer xylophone player and bandleader from the 1920s who also played with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Ballets Russes Orchestra. While still at West Philadelphia, who supported the Bowling party. Finally, at the Commencement this year as last, we were honored to participate in the program with the Alumni Induction of the Class of 2012. Poignantly, following their last official ceremony, Sgt. Ramirez of the JrROTC felt it fitting to turn over their flag to the Alumni Association. It will be proudly displayed at the 5th Annual WestFest Membership Picnic on Sunday, August 5, 2012, from Noon to 6:00 PM at North George's Hill Pavilion. See you at WestFest 2012!

Paula McKinney-Rainey

where she was also a Grade Direct for, her drumming skills were noted enough for the yearbook to refer to her as a "talented drummer." Little did they know how far she would go! **Dance**, from page 1 of Art. The idea of the Association's Norman Brown, the appearance was arranged by Dr. Delores Williams, the Association's event co-ordinator. In the one-hour program, Philadanco's junior dancers performed excerpts from three of their major productions, "Pursuit," "Everything is Everything," "and "Music+Style=Jazz." The middle number was a duet by Tommie Waheed Evans and Lindsey Holmes. A dozen members of the troupe performed in the other numbers. The morning's program was opened and was closed by the School's Principal, Mrs. Mary Dean. The students were welcomed by Dr. Williams. After a dance by the School's dance troupe, Mrs. Brown was introduced and gave a brief history of the troupe and how she was encouraged to "become a dancer" by Mrs. Virginia Lingenfelder, a gym teacher. **Bogus**, from page 1 lifetime and \$20 for an annual membership. You can only become a paid member of the Alumni Association by completing our official membership form (see page three, or on our website) and submitting it to the Association as noted on the form. We also have our Annual Membership Drive (WestFest) each August in Fairmount Park. (For the record, the BOGUS site is: www.alumniclass.com/west-philadelphia. DO NOT JOIN **Request** Please send us your stories—of your activities, of your class's activities and reunions, of our alumni and their activities. We want this to be your publication. Send items to the editor at akprous@aol.com

REUNION SET

Class of 1967—45th Class Reunion November 2-4, 2012; Fri, 11/2 - Happy Hour and Games Night, Renaissance Philadelphia Airport Hotel Sat, 11/3 - Love and Happiness Reunion Celebration dinner and dancing, Renaissance Hotel. Tickets are \$90 per person until September 14th; \$100 after 9/14. Contact: Audrey Smith Walden, 215.280, 8520, auwalden@verizon.net or Karen Browne Smith, 267.226. 2813, kbsmith1439@gmail.com; wphs1967@hotmail.com

Class of 1972 – 40th Anniversary Reunion ("Old School Caberet"—BYO drinks and Food). August 4, Holmes Center, 55th and Chestnut Sts. (entrance on Ludlow St.). \$35. Contacts: Willetta Nelson, 610.259.4101, sluggownel@ren.com; Valerie Thomas, 215.806.4674, valoette@aol.com

Class of 1987—3-day 25th Anniversary Reunion, August 24, 25, 26. Happy Hour, on the 24th; Cookout/Reunion on the 25th; Church Service, on the 26th. Cookout \$20; with Reunion \$65. Days Inn, Philadelphia Airport. Church Service, 10am, Sharon Baptist Church, Wynnefield. Contact Ann Nettles: theweddingandpartyplanner@msn.com

THIS GROUP. We repeat, IT IS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH your West Philadelphia High School Alumni Association. Once you have paid your \$10 to join you will receive a message noting that the site has no affiliation with the school or school district—but it's too late then.) Unfortunately, several folks have been scammed by this site and have paid the \$10 for a membership that has nothing to do our our Alumni Association and serves no purpose. Don't be the next victim.

Life Members: Distinguished, Not Exclusive

Although it is a distinguished group, it is not an exclusive group, and anyone can join. Below are the names of the Life Members of the Alumni Association, people who have paid the one-time fee of \$200 and now do not need to remember to renew their membership supporting the Association. It easy to join this group: Fill in the form on page three/below, or go to the web-site and join, or come to WestFest and sign up. As of July 1, the following are the Association's Life Members: Shahara Ahmad-Llewellyne, Robert Archie, Stephen Bivins, Joan Meyers Brown. Anthony Campolo, Carolyn Flower Coker, James Cornish. Wanda Draper Cousins, and Aaron Draper, Clifton Edwards, Jeannette Scott Gillison, Levan Gordon, Ed Hipp, Ray Israel, John Izzard, Linda Jenkins, and Jerry Jordan, Emanuel Kelly, Andrew Kevorkian, Reginald Lewis, Wilbert McCabe, Diane McKinney-Whetstone, Gwen McKinney, Paula McKinney-Rainey, and Havel McLaurin, Norman-dene Murphy, Adrienne Nolan Owens, Roslyn Pierce, Gwendolyn

Class of 1966 'Achievers Workshop' Aids Students Toward their Goals

Of all the classes and all the individual alumni who have shown interest in the current graduating classes of West Philadelphia High School, that of the Class of 1966 stands out. For the fifth consecutive year, the Class has conducted "Achievers Workshops," which can best be described as "what happens when you leave Western." In the intensive eight-day program (two 1.5-hour sessions a week for four weeks), the youngsters are instructed in how to span the gap between their graduation to the start of their careers. Mark Twain is reported to have said: "Education is what happens after you finish your schooling." and the Class of 1966 is intent on giving the youngsters the kind of education they will need to make their way in the world. The general idea of the program is to help the students find college and career information re-Larry Price, Kenneth Scott, Diane Rucker Sembly, Karen Strange Shanks, and Veronica Suber, Sharmain Matlock-Turner, Alvin Vaughn, Jacqueline Gregory Waiters, John White, Delores White Williams, Ozzie Wright. sources, help avoid problems because of lack of information. and help them find financial opportunities and resources, all aimed at getting the youngsters a solid start on their futures. The program starts with basic principles such as character building and personal presentation, and lets the students know the hard facts of life without a college and further schooling. Self-motivation is a given in almost every stage of the program. Nothing is taken for granted even when the actual training program begins with introduction to the computer and Internet access, when the first instruction is "Turn on"! After that, they are instructed on how to use and take advantage of the computer and the Internet. There is instruction on how to select a career, and how to determine what is involved and what has to be done to prepare for that career, where to get the necessary information. They are told about money and how to handle and manage it, interest rates, credit ratings including the advantages of good ratings and the problems associated with bad credit ratings. Eventually they are instructed in how to select the college for the ca-

reer they seek to pursue, and how to conduct themselves when they are admitted, including how to study and how to prepare for tests. They are taught the importance of Networking and how to go about it. Throughout it all, the students have to submit written reports. The Workshops were devised by team led by Jerome H. Johnson, when the group decided to award a scholarship to a graduate of the 1977 class, with the profits from the class reunion in 1976. Together with a generous donation by from George Robinson, one of the team, this annual award continued until 2008, when it was decided that more could be done to help the youngsters. The idea of a workshop to further aid selected students was born. Together with financial support from the William M. King Charitable Foundation by way of another classmate, Lamont King, the training program was set up. The 20 students in the program are selected by the school. In addition to four Scholarship Awards (two for \$2500, and two for \$1500), 20 Book Awards, totaling \$1100, were given based on participation, attendance, and a short essay.

WEST PHILADELPHIA HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION Membership Form

Yes, I wish to join the West Philadelphia High School Alumni Association

[] I wish to join for Life. I enclose my one-time payment of \$200
[] I wish to join on an Annual basis. I enclose my first payment of \$20. I understand that the dues "year" is from September to August.
[] I was graduated within the past three years, and I wish to join at the special \$5 rate

Name_____ Class _____
Address_____

(ZIPCode)_____
Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Make check or Money Order payable to:
West Philadelphia HighSchool Alumni Association
Mail form and dues to:
WPHS Alumni Association,
P.O. Box 7906
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Please note that the Alumni Association is now a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization