



BLACK DIAMOND PRESS

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An Annual Update from The Little Cities
of Black Diamonds Council

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COUNCIL'S 20TH YEAR UNFOLDS

Art, Theater, History, Recreation & Tourism Mark Region's Story

Twenty years ago this year, the first meetings of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Council were held following the first ever Little Cities of Black Diamonds Day. From those humble beginnings, we celebrate 20 years of collecting, researching, analyzing and celebrating our provocative story! Started as a southern Perry County effort, the Council quickly grew to include all of the Hocking Valley Coal Field towns located at the corners of Hocking, Athens, Perry and Morgan Counties. What follows is a glimpse at what the Council looks like 20 years later.

The **13th Annual Little Cities Appalachian Spring** kicked off with a **20th Anniversary** event at the Tecumseh Commons in Shawnee featuring Marietta artist Geoff Schenkel's installation of **Victorian Brain Architecture** and a potluck supper on April 23. A representative from the Secretary of States office recognized the event with a proclamation and Council member Rodney Embry enhanced the event with display of 20 years of framed LCBD Day posters.

Schenkel's room-sized interactive exhibit featured many artifacts from the Victorian era, which coincided and influenced the architecture of the Hocking Valley Coal Boom of the late 1800's. Much like the Council, Schenkel's installation goes beyond reminiscing, making a statement about how the re-formation of remnant pieces from a bygone era, can form a new work of beauty!

Appalachian Spring continued during Nelsonville's Fi-

nal Friday as **Little Cities Cantilever Theater** made its second appearance after premiering at last fall's LCBD Day. *Agents of Change*, a series of vignettes featuring heroes from the region's past, was performed from the second story porch of the Dew House Hotel by Little Cities Living History characters. The performance is set to repeat again at Final Friday on June 26.

On Saturday, May 2, the 10th Annual **Little Cities Tour de Forest Benefit Bicycle Ride** launched from

Nelsonville's Public Square. 48 bicyclists traveled between 5 and 100 miles through the region's forests, raising over \$1,500 for the Council's educational programs.

The Council's summer has included a slate of guided tours and step-on tour guide services for such groups as the Perry Soil and Water Conservation District, Ohio University's Upward Bound and Ohio's Hill Country

Heritage Area. Council-sponsored **guided tours** are being made available to the public in July and August with labor and opera house themes. (Story page 2). Five Council associates took a 32-hour **National Association of Interpreters** Interpretive Guide course this spring. The training assists them in presenting interpretive tours and programs.

The balance of the 2015 program year will focus on the **21st Annual Little Cities of Black Diamonds Day** set for Sunday, October 16 in Shawnee. Your membership, as always, helps make these unique offerings possible!



Like the Little Cities Council, Victorian Brain Architecture Installation Fashions Beauty from the Forgotten...

LITTLE CITIES SUMMER TOURS

Labor's Crossroads • July 18th

In 1869, an Intersection of destinies in the historic coalfields of southeastern Ohio transformed the face of organized labor and the lives of working men and women to this very day.



Knights of Labor Statue, Shawnee

Travel the path of early labor pioneers from the canal and railroad eras with National Association of Interpretation Certified Guides Cheryl Blosser and Jeff Wunderly. Follow the story of immigrant laborers who are ready for change. They settled the coal camps and fought for power over their own lives. The story begins with the early leaders in the towns of New Straitsville, Shawnee, Corning

and Rendville with the idealism and legacy of the Knights of Labor. It is followed by leadership struggles and progress leading to the formation of the United Mine Workers of America in 1890.

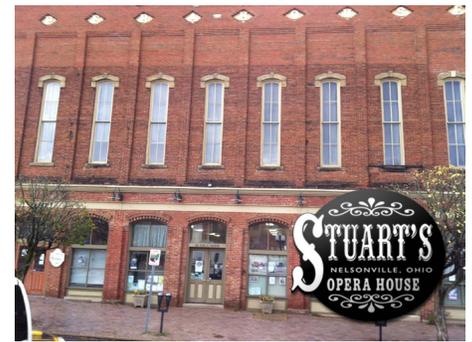
Living history characters will portray union organizers, and local historians will engage participants in consideration of the value of labor and the lessons from this story that are applicable in contemporary America.

Lunch in Shawnee and dinner in Logan is included in this tour that begins and ends at the Old Dutch Restaurant in Logan. Register on-line at www.littlecitiesofblackdiamonds.org or contact the Little Cities of Black Diamonds at 740-394-3011 or via e-mail as lcbd@ohiohills.com. Cost is \$95 for Little Cities Council members and \$115 for non-members with transportation, snacks, lunch and dinner included.

Curtain Up to Encore • August 15-16

The smell of the greaspaint and the roar of the crowd live on in the historic opera houses of southeast Ohio! *Curtain Up to Encore: The Revival of Yesteryears Opera Houses* is a two-day guided tour that will feature the culture of Opera Houses in Southeastern Ohio.

History and entertainment come together in this fascinating behind the scenes look at the beautiful and historic Opera Houses of Nelsonville (Stuart's Opera), Shawnee (Tecumseh Theater) and McConnelsville (Twin City Opera House) that are nestled among the hills and winding roads of Southeast Ohio. Explore the integral and enduring role these institutions play in their communities through live music, historical re-creation characters, theatrical performance and authoritative guest speakers accompanied by tour guides well versed in local history and historical interpretation. Highlights include an evening performance of the Ohio Valley Opry at the Twin City Opera House along with dinner and lodging at the Stockport



Stuart's Opera House, Nelsonville

Mill. The experience includes a close look at the three historic facilities. Register on-line at www.littlecitiesofblackdiamonds.org or contact the Little Cities of Black Diamonds at 740-394-3011 or via e-mail as lcbd@ohiohills.com. Cost is \$225 for Little Cities Council members and \$250 for non-members with lodging, transportation, snacks, lunch and dinner included. Tour is led by National Association for Interpreters Certified Guides Dayton Willison and Jeff Wunderly.

LITTLE CITIES AS A CLASSROOM

Ohio University & LCBD Team Up To Advance Relationships!

Over ten years of campus-community collaboration with Dr. Frans Doppen of Ohio University's Patton College of Education has anchored a special relationship between the Little Cities of microregion and Ohio University. Student service learning projects, tours and presentations, course development and joint grant proposals are among the examples. Building upon Doppen's work, Dr. Bernhard Debatin and the Scripps School of Journalism and have bolstered efforts as have other Colleges and interested faculty at the University, utilizing the region as a classroom for their students.

The relationship grew to a new level in 2014 as the Council joined with University in commemorating the 50th Anniversary of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty speech in Athens with a guided tour through the region and two-day symposium on campus that explored 8 key development themes for the region (health, cultural heritage, anti-poverty, public education, higher education, business, environment and innovation).



The university further endorsed the effort last year with the award of an OU 1804 Fund grant to support advancement of the collaboration. Funds allowed for a two-day Little Cities as A Classroom Campus-Community event in April 2015 with a symposium in Athens where mutually beneficial projects were featured, followed by another day-long tour of the region open to students, faculty and citizens. Since then, university stakeholders have encouraged the emerging collaboration to formalize and submit a proposal to the university's new Innovation Fund. If successful, the Fund would support the formation Little Cities as a Classroom Collaborative, plan and fund mutually beneficial projects between faculty and community partners, conduct regular orientation tours for faculty and students, and provide for sustainable service learning and research projects that meet the needs of regional partners such as the Council, Sunday Creek Associates, Rural Action, the Buckeye Trail Association and Trimble Twp. Community volunteers. Stay tuned for updates!

TWENTY YEARS

20 Milestone Accomplishments

1. Organizing Local History Groups
2. Little Cities of Black Diamonds Day
3. Chautauqua Series (Corning, Murray City, Haydenville)
4. Oral Histories, Books & Publications
5. Research & Humanities Scholar Support
6. Web Site Development/Social Media
7. Little Cities Archive (pictures, artifacts, documents)
8. Thematic Learning & Exhibits
9. Living History Characters
10. Miner's Registry
11. Guided Tours (Geo-, Heritage-, Eco-, Civic Tourism)
12. Maps & Driving Tour
13. Little Cities As A Classroom (OU, Hocking & K-12)
14. Ohio Historic Markers & Interpretive Sites
15. Appalachian Spring Festival-Eclipse & Nelsonville
16. Live Music, Graphics, Logos & Art Interpret The Story
17. Re-imagining Ourselves As A Cultural District
18. Little Cities of the Forest Collaborative
19. Historic Preservation of Key Buildings
20. Little Cities Spirit Awards

20TH LCBD DAY

Cantilever Theater, Exhibits & Spirit Awards Highlight Event

This past October, the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Council celebrated 20 years as a cultural district at the 20th Annual Little Cities of Black Diamonds Day in Shawnee. Over the years the Council has educated many people with its publications, web sites, events and themed exhibits. To commemorate these efforts, volunteers set up a special exhibit area with collections representing past themes including music, schools, politics, immigration, childhood, the forest and labor. Members loaned artifacts, pictures, newspapers and documents to accompany the themes. Rodney Embrey unveiled his collection of 20 years of LCBD Day posters. Numerous local volunteers and Ohio University Students helped with set up, tear down, preparing and monitoring exhibits.

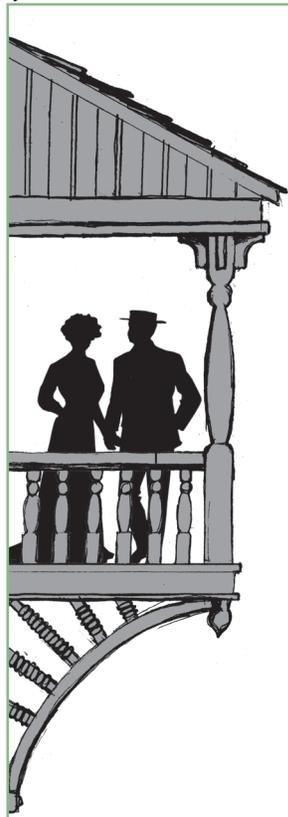
2014 Little Cities Spirit Awards were presented to Corning native **Joe Winnenberg**, of New Lexington, for his countless volunteer hours at the computer creating Little Cities web site, the Little Cities electronic archives, the www.littlecitiesofblackdiamonds.org web site and Little Cities Miner's Registry; New Straitsville native **Myrna Angle** for her nearly 20 years of volunteering with the New Straitsville History Group, and retired Athens County Planner **Bob Eichenberg**, New Marshfield, for his 10 years of volunteer effort with the Tour de Forest Benefit Bicycle Ride and his participation in the restoration of

Eclipse Company Town near Athens.

LCBD Day activities included a morning hike on the Buckeye

Trail, a guided walking tour of Shawnee, Children's games and activities, artisan and vendors sales on the street, and the Southern Perry County Quilt Show. "Mr. Bubblemaker" performed by John Grudwahl delighted children with his soap bubbles, sales wagon and tricks. The Second Wind Bluegrass and Word of Mouth Jazz band provided live music in the Commons. The Tecumseh Theater group served food.

The day was highlighted by a performance of living history characters titled "Cantilever Theater: Our Stories from the Overhanging Porch." Our nationally significant stories of effecting change was told by actors Ken Bowald as industrialist Peter Hayden, Ron Luce as labor organizer Christopher Evans, Kathy Devecka sharing the story of immigration as Mary Holt a coalminer's wife, Sherill Williams as the widow of African-American Labor organizer Richard L. Davis of Rendville, and Dayton Willison as a Civilian Conservation Corps Worker from the 1930s restoring the land by planting trees in the newly created Wayne National Forest.



LCBD Day 2015 is fast approaching. A *Curtain Up to Encore Opera House* theme will be featured at this year's event, with artist demonstrations planned in the Harigle Garage. Mark your calendars now for Sunday, October 18 from Noon-5pm in Shawnee.

PLEASE INVEST IN THE STORY

Membership Makes The Difference!

Sustaining our work means that a child on a school field trip understands the story of his ancestors who came here during the coal boom, the issues of labor that for which they fought and the legacy of the unregulated coal mining era on the streams where she lives. It means developing pride in the place where we live--a place that often gets labels as undesirable. It means logging on to the Little Cities Archive web site when working on a research paper, it means developing a job for oneself as an interpretive guide for tourists. It means extra fund in a businesses' cash drawer at the end of the day because guests on a tour ate the local restaurant or stayed at a local b & b, purchased gasoline and shopped at the local gift shop

Membership is a critical component of our annual budget and grows in importance with each passing year as resources for heritage education and preservation shrink. Please find enclosed a membership card with this Annual Update. We ask that you return it with your contribution and/or pledge of voluntary assistance. "Investing in the Story!" is an investment in the future of this storied region of Ohio! We have been averaging a budget of about \$20,000 each year to operate the Council, which includes our office manager/research/information & referral position held by Cheryl Blosser who works for a very modest stipend. Our only regular grant funding comes from the Ohio Arts Council Arts Access fund which approximates \$3,000 each year. After that, we rely on earned income from tours, events and memberships. In addition to Ms. Blosser's position, key costs go to putting on events, tours and maintaining an office and archive space in Shawnee. Trust us, we do a lot with a little!

GATEWAY TO PUBLIC LANDS TOURISM

The Winding Road Brand Takes Shape Around Guided Experiences

Being known for "something" is a very important ingredient when developing a tourism strategy. We are increasingly known for our rich history, recovering streams and returning forests. Job well done, we might say! Not enough! For visitors, we also need to be known for the quality of the experience they have when viewing these assets. Hmmm! Working class coal regions aren't necessarily known for their skill in hosting tourists. Yet, as we develop our story in the hills of Ohio, more and more people are interested in visiting here and sharing what they learned and saw with their family and friends.

The Little Cities Council has been strongly represented in a three county initiative over the past 18 months that focused on "Gateway to Public Lands" tourism around the Wayne National Forest and Burr Oak State Park. Supported by the Appalachian Regional Commission, The Conservation Fund, National Endowment for the Arts, and more recently USDA Rural Development, stakeholders in Morgan, Athens and Perry County have been working to be known--develop a brand--around visitor experiences in this area. The trajectory of the work is to be known for guided and interpretive tourism. We best host folks when we can guide them around, tell our story, and perhaps even ask them to get involved.

A 32-hour National Association of Interpreters course was held in Shawnee this spring training 14 individuals to be certified interpretive guide. Those from the Little Cities taking the course were Cheryl Blosser, Carla Scott, John Winnenberg, Don Turner, Dayton Willison, Matt Castells, Hannah O'Malley and Chad Seurkamp. The course was instructed by organization friend Ken Bowald. From the training a brand is emerging, anchored by a catalog (both print and electronic) that brings together tours, interpretive programs and adventure treks such as the Tour de Forest, that will make our area known for guided learning experiences. Stakeholder sector groups are forming to develop this process. Persons who wish to be involved, should contact John Winnenberg at jwinnenb54@gmail.com.

RENDVILLE SOCIETY FORMS

Keeping One of The Region's Significant Stories Alive!

A group of current and former residents, as well as friends of the southern Perry County community of Rendville submitted papers to the Ohio Secretary of State in May to become the Rendville Historic Preservation Society, a non-profit corporation operating in Ohio. The organization's purpose is "*to leave a legacy for future generations through the preservation of the history, heritage, and physical structures of the Village of Rendville...to revitalize and economically develop the Village through Civic Tourism...to collaborate with regional institutions of education and local history and cultural community organizations to create, both formal and informal educational opportunities for all stakeholders.*" Incorporators of the group were former resident and Ohio University basketball star Jerry Jackson, Ohio University professor Dr. Frans Doppen, and friend of the village Denver Norman. The next meeting of the group is Tuesday June 30 at the Rendville Art Works at 2:30pm.



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www.littlecitiesofblackdiamonds.org



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