



Chestnut Hill Local

(/)

Thursday, December 26, 2024

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2024 HEADLINES THAT HIT HOME

2024: What we'll remember from this passing year

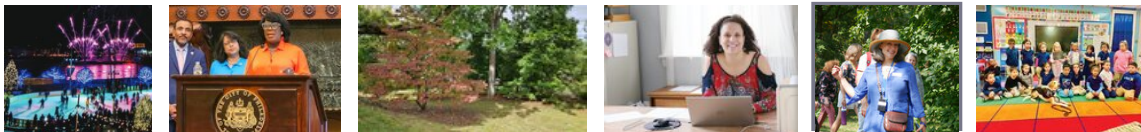
Looking back on a year of big changes and notable events



(<https://alpha.creativecirclecdn.com/chestnuthilllocal/original/20241225-095524-452-lori.jpg>)

Lori Salganicoff helped the Chestnut Hill Conservancy grow in revenue, membership and personnel over her 10 years as executive director. She is stepping down at the end of December.

PHOTO BY CHRISSY CLAWSON



Posted Wednesday, December 25, 2024 12:00 am

by Donna Shaw and Carla Robinson

Whether it was soaring taxes, scorching heat or a drought that dulled autumn's palette, 2024 tested the resilience of Northwest Philadelphians while marking major milestones of achievement.

Economic pressures hit home for many residents as property taxes rose substantially across Northwest Philadelphia. Chestnut Hill faced the city's steepest increases in dollar amount, despite its 19 percent assessment increase matching the citywide average. With the neighborhood's single-family homes commanding the city's highest values, the average increase of \$1,500 was nearly five times the citywide average of \$330, raising concerns about maintaining economic diversity in the historic neighborhood.

While politics grew contentious in a disputed presidential year, voting day in November proceeded without major incidents in Northwest Philadelphia, though poll workers reported long lines at some sites.

Northwest Philadelphia weathered significant environmental, economic and social changes in 2024, as climate challenges and rising costs reshaped daily life while the community continued to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances.

It was so hot that the city enacted early dismissals for dozens of schools lacking adequate air conditioning, disrupting the educational routine for thousands of students and their families on the first days of the school year. With temperatures soaring into the mid-90s and heat indices potentially reaching 103 degrees, district officials opted to release students from 63 schools three hours early on two days, including in Chestnut Hill, Mt. Airy and Germantown.

Then, with the late summer and into fall, came drought. The fall leaf colors were muted in 2024 as Philadelphia's trees sent out distress signals, with drought and heat forcing them to shed their leaves weeks ahead of schedule. According to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Drought.gov website, a large portion of Philadelphia County experienced moderate drought in July and drier-than-normal conditions in June and August. As a result, experts at Morris Arboretum & Gardens reported that the city's trees were turning color two to three weeks earlier than normal – an early transition that not only shortened the fall foliage season but also may result in duller leaf colors. “Because we're in such a drought deficit, a lot of plants are deciding, nope, 2024 is done,” said Vince Marrocco, the arboretum's horticulture director.

The region's wildlife patterns also shifted. At Fort Washington's Militia Hill, where more than 200 volunteer citizen scientists gather annually for the Wyncote Audubon Society's Hawk Watch, observers noted an unusual quiet in skies typically teeming with raptors. The site, also known as "Hawk Mountain," has long served as a crucial monitoring point for migration patterns. Experts attributed the change primarily to wind patterns, noting that birds prefer energy-conserving tailwinds for their migration, suggesting that changing climate patterns might be affecting traditional migration routes.

People and personalities

The Chestnut Hill Local welcomed a new publisher in July. Daralyse Lyons brought impressive credentials – as well as an extensive network in Philadelphia journalism circles. Lyons, who has long lived in both Mt. Airy and Germantown, is a recognized TEDx speaker and recipient of a 2023 PA City & State Impact Award, which acknowledged her as one of the 75 most impactful individuals in Pennsylvania. She is a journalist and author with more than two dozen books to her credit, and earned a summa cum laude degree from NYU with a double major in English and religious studies and a minor in history.

After a decade of preservation victories, Chestnut Hill Conservancy executive director Lori Salganicoff announced her departure, having helped avert a dozen demolitions of historic properties and protect more than 50 acres of open space. Under her leadership, the Conservancy substantially grew its archives, led collaborative community planning efforts, and introduced popular programs such as the tour and lecture series and "Night of Lights."

Mt. Airy mom Alison Cohen became the nation's largest bike share operator after acquiring BCycle from Trek Bicycle Corp. of Waterloo, Wisconsin. It marked a milestone for Cohen, as her company, Bicycle Transit Systems, officially became the largest docked bike share provider in the U.S. by number of communities served. In Philadelphia, dubbed the "City of Bicycle Love," the bike share system operates under the name Indego.

And 29 after being defrocked as a United Methodist Church pastor for revealing her same-sex relationship to her First United Methodist Church in Germantown congregation, Beth Stroud was reinstated following the UMC's repeal of its anti-LGBTQ bans. Her reinstatement, requiring a two-thirds vote of clergy from the UMC's Eastern Pennsylvania region, marked a historic shift in religious acceptance.

Meanwhile, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission concluded its investigation into allegations of discrimination at the Mt. Airy Art Garage, finding insufficient evidence to support claims of homophobia and censorship. The controversy, which began in April 2023, centered on the treatment of artwork by MAAG co-founder Arleen Olshan. The commission's investigation revealed that the organization had "removed Complainant's art in accordance with Rules and Regulations that Complainant helped create and implement," bringing closure to a dispute that had divided the arts community.

Growing activism around housing issues emerged as a tenant advocacy group formed to address conditions in the area's historic apartment buildings. These grand structures, mixing with modern developments, sometimes mask deteriorating conditions inside, prompting increased community organization. Meanwhile, election day proceeded smoothly despite long lines at some polling places, demonstrating the community's ongoing commitment to civic engagement.

HBO's upcoming crime drama "Task," a spinoff of the acclaimed "Mare of Easttown," brought Oscar-nominated actor Mark Ruffalo and production crews to Wissahickon Valley Park. The production activity, including both the construction and dismantling of various structures, brought national attention to the beloved green space while showcasing the region's growing role in film and television production.

As most of us knew from the nonstop publicity machine, the San Francisco 49ers and the Kansas City Chiefs fought it out in the Super Bowl on Feb. 11 in Las Vegas. But even though the Eagles were a bust late in the season, another area resident was competing for a championship on Super Bowl Sunday. Linus, of Wyndmoor, a foxhound-beagle-pit bull-Alaskan malamute mix also known as Dave, took the field as one of 131 players in the annual "Puppy Bowl," a popular canine version of the big game aired annually on the cable network, Animal Planet.

OTHER ITEMS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

Bridges, trains, water and parks: Infrastructure ... (/stories/bridges-trains-water-and-parks-infrastructure-challenges-of-2024,35013)

A year of change for our built environment (/stories/a-year-of-change-for-our-built-environment,35014)

Bass, Council back \$1.3B Sixers arena plan (/stories/bass-council-back-13b-sixers-arena-plan,34935)

GMA returns to Chestnut Hill (/stories/gma-returns-to-chestnut-hill,34936)

Donate to CHCA Annual Appeal (https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=HNBT34YY8VANC)

LOCAL CALENDAR

Wed, Jan 08 @6:00pm Sponsored

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Thu, Dec 26 @2:30pm Sponsored

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Hospitality & Business Networking | Elevating Your...

Turtle Talks

Thu, Dec 26

STOMP

Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

Thu, Dec 26

Community Crafting Circle - Queen Memorial Library

Queen Memorial Library

Thu, Dec 26

LIVE THEATER - PETER PAN

The Arden Theatre Company

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THE LATEST

Dec 26, 2024 issue (/stories/dec-26-2024-issue,34978)



[\(/stories/dec-26-2024-issue,34978\)](/stories/dec-26-2024-issue,34978)

GA hoopsters go 2-1 in non-league basketball bouts (/stories/ga-hoopsters-go-2-1-in-non-league-basketball-bouts,35026)

In the first two basketball games they played last week, the girls of Germantown Academy defeated a top team.



(/stories/ga-hoopsters-go-2-1-in-non-league-basketball-bouts,35026)



(/stories/celebrating-a-diverse-year-of-magic-for-our-local-theaters,35025)

Celebrating a diverse year of magic for our local theaters
 (/stories/celebrating-a-diverse-year-of-magic-for-our-local-theaters,35025)

Two outstanding holiday shows cap a year of diverse and captivating theater in the Chestnut Hill region.



(/stories/a-historic-organ-restored-and-anniversaries-celebrated,35024)

A historic organ restored and anniversaries celebrated
 (/stories/a-historic-organ-restored-and-anniversaries-celebrated,35024)

The Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Chestnut Hill, finally made its re-debut.



Milestones mark a banner year for NW Philadelphia arts (/stories/milestones-mark-a-banner-year-for-nw-philadelphia-arts,35023)

NW Philadelphia's arts and cultural institutions celebrated significant achievements in 2024.

(/stories/milestones-mark-a-banner-year-for-nw-philadelphia-arts,35023)



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last Thursday

Good Morning America returned to the Hill for the second time in two years to feature Bredenbeck's Bakery and their gingerbread truck sculpture.



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GMA returns to Chestnut Hi...

It was "Good Morning America's" s...

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