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Preservation champion steps down, leaves a legacy of growth

Outgoing director's 10-year tenure transformed the Chestnut Hill Conservancy



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Lori Salganicoff, who helped the Chestnut Hill Conservancy grow in revenue, membership and personnel over her 10 years as executive director, at a "2024 Discovering Chestnut Hill" walking tour at Awbury Arboretum, led by architectural historian George McNeely.

PHOTO BY CHRISSY CLAWSON

Posted Wednesday, November 20, 2024 12:00 am

by Maggie Dougherty (/browse.html?byline=Maggie Dougherty)

When Lori Salganicoff interviewed for her position as executive director of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy 10 years ago, she decided to be bold. As Shirley Hanson, a co-founder of the organization then known as the Chestnut Hill Historical Society, asked what Salganicoff thought of the name, she politely responded that it was a missed opportunity. "Historical Society" only encompasses part of the organization's mission, she said, but "conservancy" has a broader reach.

Salganicoff's boldness paid off, as she earned the job. And in 2017, the Chestnut Hill Conservancy earned its current name. With Salganicoff preparing to step down from her position in December, a look back at her decade-long tenure is marked by similar examples of bold action, innovative progress and growth.

A life built on preservation

Growing up in Bucks County, Salganicoff's path to preservation wasn't direct. After earning a math degree from the University of Delaware, she moved to New York and was eventually hired to run the office of a small firm that was restoring historic architecture. However, Salganicoff realized she did not want to manage that type of work. She wanted to do it.

This led her to pursue a graduate degree in historic preservation at Penn, where she not only settled on her career path but also met her future husband, Marcos. The couple now has a 27-year-old daughter and 22-year-old son.

Though she was familiar with Chestnut Hill before joining the Conservancy because her mother grew up in Germantown and she had spent time in the Wissahickon, Salganicoff did not fully appreciate the neighborhood until she started working here. "The community is beautiful," she said. "It's rich. It's historic. And it's also well known for defending itself and for being proud of what is here."

A decade of achievement

With decades of experience leading community improvement efforts in the greater Philadelphia area already under her belt, Salganicoff saw "great potential and a great foundation" when she joined the Conservancy.



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"I'd never worked for an organization that had so many amazing, substantial, deep, rich investments...a professional archive, the nation's first accredited land trust, and the strongest preservation organization in the city," she said. "It felt like an opportunity and then I was able to actually act on it."

And act on it she did. Salganicoff's accomplishments throughout her time as executive director range from preservation to conservation, and from archival to educational.

Over the past 10 years, the Conservancy protected more than 20 buildings through designation to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, preservation easements and community partnerships. Two of these buildings even had active demolition permits when the Conservancy stepped in. More than 20 privately owned acres in the Wissahickon watershed were also protected through conservation easements in partnership with Friends of the Wissahickon and dozens of property owners.

Under Salganicoff, the Conservancy's archives expanded from 20,000 to more than 52,000 photos, atlases, books, oral histories, ephemera, architectural plans and other documents dating back to the 1680s. To help the community understand more about the archives, Salganicoff helped develop Night of Lights, an annual exhibition celebrating the history and architecture of Chestnut Hill through themed slideshows and colorfully illuminated buildings.

Salganicoff also established the Visionaries Roundtable, which brought developers and preservationists together in a panel to discuss conservation, preservation and development in the community and multiple tour and lecture series that shed light on the architecture, open space and history of the area. She moved beyond the history of the wealthy industrialists who developed the neighborhood to also focus on the diverse stories of the immigrant Italian artisans who constructed those important buildings.

In addition, Salganicoff oversaw the growth of the Conservancy's revenue, membership and staff. During the pandemic, she helped the organization pivot to producing and sending information online during a period of increased appreciation for neighbors and community – such as converting Night of Lights into voice-over videos and giving walking tours with headsets to accommodate social distancing.

Legacy and future

Salganicoff says the part of the job that has brought her the most joy is the part that's least tangible.

"[People] are understanding more about sustainability and preservation and how to live more responsibly here," she said. "I have seen a shift in that in a good direction...That makes me just absolutely delighted because that's lasting change. It's not a 'thing' we've protected. It's a philosophy we've put forward."

And her decision to step down is bittersweet, she said, because she loves the staff, the board, the community and the work.

"I still sometimes take out my house key when I come to the office here because it feels like home," Salganicoff said. "But I have led this organization through a 10-year growth arc that I'm really proud of...I feel as though there is a different kind of leader that might be able to level up from here."

After more than 30 years of leadership in government and nonprofits, Salganicoff said she is now considering different types of opportunities to make an impact using her skills and interests, after enjoying a bit of a break. She also hopes to spend more time trying new things – crafting, following her favorite musical artists, reading science fiction and learning to speak Spanish.

In honor of Salganicoff's departure, the Chestnut Hill Conservancy has established the Lori Salganicoff Stewardship Fund – which will support projects that improve energy efficiency, expand the archives and grow the property's native plant garden.

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LOCAL CALENDAR

Sun, Dec 08 @7:30pm Sponsored
Christmas Celebration - Music for Choir and Brass

First Presbyterian Church
Morgantown, PA
Wed, Dec 04

Preschool Storytime Playgroup - Lucien E. Blackwell West Philadelphia Regional Library

Lucien E. Blackwell West Philadelphia

Wed, Dec 04

Read Baby Read: Baby and Toddler Storytime with Ms. Susan - Wynnefield Library

Wynnefield Branch

Wed, Dec 04

Wednesday STEAM LEAP Activity

Queen Memorial Library

Wed, Dec 18 @6:30pm Sponsored
6:30 PM - Christmas Sugar Cookie Decorating Class (BYOB)

Rebel & Wolf Cafe
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Sat, Dec 21 Sponsored
Winter Break: Final Days of Witness to Revolution Exhibit

Museum of the American Revolution
Philadelphia, PA

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THE LATEST



Free holiday parking (/stories/free-holiday-parking,34741)

Chestnut Hill is offering free parking in all six of its foundation-managed lots on Wednesday during the annual Stag & Doe shopping event. The Chestnut Hill Parking Foundation announced the ...

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GA basketball's new talent fills gaps left by graduates (/stories/ga-basketballs-new-talent-fills-gaps-left-by-graduates,34731)

Germantown Academy's 2024-25 girls' basketball team has talent, but it may take a while for it to gel into a smoothly functioning unit.

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A big Saturday for small local businesses (/stories/a-big-saturday-for-small-local-businesses,34730)

Small Business Saturday, promoted by the Chestnut Hill Business Association, has many independent retailers among its membership.



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Hill biz district welcomes a new 'storyteller' (/stories/hill-biz-district-welcomes-a-new-storyteller,34729)

For Karise Allen-Crew, walking down Germantown Avenue feels like "opening up a gift."

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INSIDE:

Resolution

HOLIDAY BONUS ISSUE

Hospital staff to protest

By Jimmy Fisher and Carol Johnson

Caring, ongoing concerns about staffing levels and issues at the local health care center at Temple Health's Chestnut Hill Hospital announced plans to hold an annual protest scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 4.

The announcement comes about a month after the staff voted to join the Pennsylvania Association of Health Professionals (PAHP) in December 2023.

"When Temple took over, we had great hopes because, throughout the Philadelphia region, there's a huge need for that Temple care with that in mind, we're looking for the best of both worlds," says James Smith, an ICU nurse and union member at Chestnut Hill Hospital.

He is a signatory on the letter, which says it has a "single" health care team.

(Continued on page 2)

A big Saturday for small local businesses

By Kristin Mulrow-Greig

It's not just about the support for the Chestnut Hill Business Association's annual event, but the community spirit that comes with it. The idea of a community event that brings people together and creates a sense of belonging is what the Chestnut Hill Business Association is all about.

"We want to make sure that everyone in the community has a chance to be part of this event," says Kristin Mulrow-Greig, the association's president.

The event will feature a variety of activities, including live music, food, and a silent auction. The Chestnut Hill Business Association is a non-profit organization that provides support and resources for small businesses in the area.

(Continued on page 1)

Hill biz district welcomes a new 'storyteller'

By Kristin Mulrow-Greig

For Karise Allen-Crew, walking down Germantown Avenue feels like "opening up a gift."

Karise Allen-Crew, a former business owner and community leader, has joined the Chestnut Hill Business Association as its new storyteller. She will be responsible for sharing the stories of the businesses and people in the Hill.

"I'm excited to be part of this community and to share the stories of the businesses and people in the Hill," says Karise.

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