

Out This Week: What's new in books, DVDs, more / E2

2 shows debuting this week tied to Dan Fogelman / E8

Life & Arts

Section E | The Columbus Dispatch | Tuesday, September 12, 2012



SO TO SPEAK

Mausoleum enlivened by energy of volunteer



JOE BLUNDO

A lot of people are resting in peace at the 89-year-old Green Lawn Abbey, but Janice Loebbaka isn't among them.

She is planting shrubs, scraping mineral deposits off marble, sweeping up whatever detritus has filtered in through broken panes of stained glass.

"I've had a passion for preservation and architecture most of my life," said Loebbaka, a part-time dental hygienist.

"I couldn't get this thing off my mind."

As president of the Green Lawn Abbey Preservation Association, she leads an all-volunteer group that has worked to restore the granite building for about 10 years.

She got her first glimpse of the mausoleum, 700 Greenlawn Ave., a decade ago and was immediately smitten by its classical lines — or what she could see of them.

The abbey — the burial place of Columbus Mayor George Karb, the Sells circus family and magician Howard Thurston — lay behind overgrown hedges.

"It looked sad," Loebbaka said. "And then I went inside, and it looked even sadder."

Statues were missing. Bronze gates guarding family crypts had been stolen. Bloodstains and bird droppings fouled the floor.

In the 10 years since, volunteers have raised money, wielded tools and prepared a master plan that envisions the mausoleum as something of a community center.

It is already the site of magic shows inspired by Thurston and programs focused on the lives of the people entombed there (for a schedule of upcoming events, visit greenlawnabbey.org). It will host its first wedding soon. Concerts, art shows and other events are in the grand plan.

SEE BLUNDO, E2

Court-appointed advocate serves those who need 'one consistent adult'



Jackie Milsom, a court-appointed special advocate for Franklin County: "If I'm not doing this, who is?" KYLE ROBERTSON/DISPATCH

A voice for children

By Allison Ward | The Columbus Dispatch

A 5-year-old who had been abused asked Jackie Milsom recently whether she was considered the boss in his case.

"No, that's the judge," she politely answered.

"But I tell the judge stuff. Is there something you'd like me to tell the boss?"

As a court-appointed special advocate with CASA of Franklin County, Milsom provides a voice for an abused or neglected child during court proceedings while ensuring that his or her needs are met by foster parents and other providers as the case is resolved.

"The prosecutor represents Franklin County. And the parents, they have representation," said



THE GOOD LIFE

Twice a month, *Life & Arts* profiles a central Ohioan (or a group of central Ohioans) whose actions make the world a better place.

the South Side resident, 50. "But here's this child — a party to this case and, at this point, the alleged victim. Who represents this child?"

She does.

About 225 volunteer advocates, such as Milsom, fill the roles of guardians ad litem — required by state law — for almost a third of the children in the county juvenile system. They protect the interest of minors involved in lawsuits.

Because it serves only some of the children who need help, the nonprofit typically takes the most egregious and challenging cases, said Kathy Kerr, executive director of the county CASA.

"During this horrible time in this child's life, research shows

SEE GOOD LIFE, E3

GOOD LIFE

Continued from E1

that, if ... (the child) has one consistent adult in his life, he has a much better chance at success," she said. "Many times, that is our guardian. They look after and monitor that child until that child is out of the horrible situation and in a safe home."

Volunteers don't need a background in law; they undergo more than 32 hours of training before assisting CASA lawyers, Kerr said.

What they need, though, are a passion to help children and a willingness to ask tough questions.

"You have to go in someone's house and do things that are not comfortable," said Vicki Rush, a CASA case manager.

"You have to ask them if you can look in their cabinets to see if they have food. You're invading someone's privacy."

Milsom doesn't shy from such challenges: "In the forefront of her mind is this child," Rush said.

Though not the most veteran advocate, Milsom exhibits an attention to detail and a gift for both empathy and objectivity unlike few others, according to Rush and Kerr.

She joined the agency 2 1/2 years ago, shortly after her retirement from a human-resources career.

Her family — husband Paul and grown daughter Alexandria Toothman — worried that she wouldn't find enough meaningful ways to fill her time.

She assures them, though, that she hasn't "had a bored moment since."

With the encouragement of Rush, a friend and a CASA volunteer

At a glance

■ For more information on how to become a court-appointed special advocate or to attend an upcoming October training, call 614-525-4883 or visit www.casacolumbus.org.

at the time, Milsom decided to complete an application to become an advocate.

She thought her skill set — her law degree and previous volunteer work with children — would benefit the organization.

During training, her responsibilities to the child and court were outlined while she gleaned tips on how to investigate cases, write reports and handle emotions.

She also discovered firsthand the prevalence of child abuse in Ohio: A young person is abused or neglected every 17 minutes, according to CASA.

Within a few days of finishing the training, Milsom received her first case.

With each new case since, "I pray really hard," she said.

"It's not a corporation that doesn't have a face or a name. It's a child I am going to color with or do a puzzle with. I'm going to know this child loves 'Dora the Explorer.'"

"Their safety is involved — their long-term happiness — and I don't want any of my children to become a statistic."

Although she is permitted to manage only two cases at a time, Milsom might have multiple children under her supervision.

She has seen other volunteers tackle cases with as many as seven youngsters.

She typically begins an investigation by examining medical reports, which

sometimes include horrific photos documenting the abuse, and interviewing involved parties.

She sees the child at least monthly, as CASA requires, to build a relationship and regularly consults teachers and foster parents. She attends any court proceedings pertaining to the child — including the drug court for updates on a parent's progress.

"Our guardians admit they know the children better than anyone else in the courtroom," Kerr said.

Paul Milsom attests to his wife's commitment, in terms of the time spent on visits and court dates as well as the mental challenges.

"There's an emotional cost to it that you can really see," he said. "There is so much involved with these kids; their situations are often desperate. And she spends a lot of time thinking about the cases and how she can best help these kids."

Nevertheless, he said, he couldn't imagine a better use of her skills.

Although she finds the work difficult at times, Jackie Milsom said, she sees the blessings, too.

She is awed by caseworkers and foster parents who deal with such problems daily.

Milsom has sometimes wanted to close the binders full of photographed abuses or skip yet another meeting about a parent's failed drug test.

Then she thinks of "her" children.

"If I'm not doing this, who is?" she said. "Who makes sure this doesn't happen to a child again?"

"If we're raising happy, healthy, safe children, it's great for our community."

award@dispatch.com
@AllisonAWard

Peanuts

CHARLES M. SCHULZ



B.C.

MASTROIANNI & HART



Hagar the Horrible

CHRIS BROWNE



Hi & Lois

BRIAN WALKER, GREG WALKER & CHANCE BROWNE



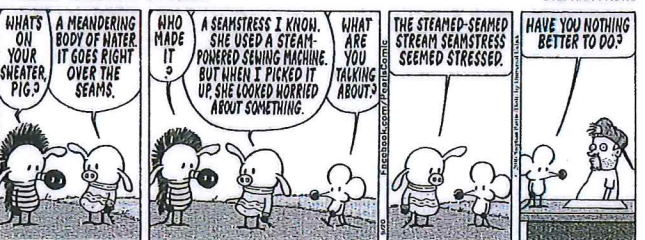
Marvin

TOM ARMSTRONG



Pearls Before Swine

STEPHAN PASTIS



Zits

JERRY SCOTT & JIM BORGMAN



Find new recipes,
Lisa Abraham's column
and much more,
every Wednesday
in Food & Life

The Columbus
Dispatch
dispatch.com