Hilltop Storefront Murals
Jo Davies

Recently, the Hilltop Action Coalition saved a little bit of Hilltop history when it moved the last remaining “Hilltop Storefront Murals” into storage.

In these two panels, a collaboration by R.R. Anderson and Morgan Alexander, the viewer is looking through the window of an Italian restaurant where cartoon characters are enjoying large plates of spaghetti and meatballs. They have been mounted on the former sausage factory next to Vallhalla Hall in the 1200 block of MLK Jr. Way since the “Music and Murals” event in September of 2007.

Alexander was the founder of Tacoma Works and in 2006 he organized the community “Hilltop Storefront Murals Project” during which artists and community members created murals for several vacant buildings on MLK. Alexander’s inspiration for the project was based on a similar project in Columbia City. The murals created a vision of what the boarded up buildings could become and some of those visions have come, or are coming, true.

The Storefront Murals Project was one of community building through art. Alexander’s call for artists was answered by practicing and aspiring artists alike who donated their time and talent. Paint and materials were donated by businesses and organizations and volunteers showed up for a myriad of other tasks. Experienced artists coached the beginners and folks stopped by the workshop for a period of time, or just an hour or two. Orzio says “we shared paints and brushes - it all flowed wonderfully.”

For a culminating event on September 8, 2007, the Martin Luther King Housing Development Authority revived the Music and Murals festival which had been on hiatus for three years. The murals became the property of the building owners and most have vanished with the demolition/renovation of those buildings. If you were involved in creating the murals, have pictures of them, or know of their whereabouts, we’d love to hear from you. Please contact the Hilltop Action Coalition office at 253-442-8848

Be ‘Loyal to the Local’ in Stadium & Hilltop Districts
Sound Transit

You can make a difference in your community. When you visit your local neighborhood restaurants, shops and services you not only get a unique experience, you connect with your community. Be loyal to your local. Visiting local businesses during construction will help keep the community vibrant. Instead of driving across town, keep it local.

Are you a business impacted during light rail construction? Sound Transit has tools to help you succeed and is committed to being a good partner to your business while we build Link light rail. The Business Relations program helps local businesses succeed through collaboration, shared tools and resources. Transit helps build a stronger, more vibrant community, including strong businesses, by connecting people and places throughout the region. Contact Rossana Garner, Business Relations Program Officer, at (206) 689-3373 or rossana.garner@soundtransit.org to find out more.

*Loyal to the Local information provided by Sound Transit.
Join Us

Hilltop Action Coalition

Monthly Community Meetings
3rd Mondays @ 6pm

Meet your neighbors and become part of the local Hilltop community. Each month we have presentations and information about community events, activities, policy, and important news. Light refreshments and kid’s activities provided!

Hilltop Action Coalition

Hilltop Action Coalition is a community-based coalition and 501(c)3 nonprofit that is working to mobilize and empower diverse individuals, families, businesses and other public and community organizations to build a safe, clean, healthy resilient and united community.

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Brendan Nelson

Vice-President
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Office Manager
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Community Engagement Liaison
Jasmin De’Armond

By Brendan Nelson

Today, our community is impacted by rapid gentrification and displacement. Families who have called the Hilltop home for decades find themselves unable to pay sky-rocketing property taxes, effectively pushing them out of the area. A lack of affordable housing options forces low-income families further from education and employment opportunities and people experiencing homelessness is at an all time high.

These are the very issues Hilltop Action Coalition is committed to addressing, every day. We are working in partnership with Tacoma Housing Authority, City of Tacoma, and many other organizations to engage in meaningful dialogue that produce action items for us to aggressively work towards. HAC is also gathering data to influence policy and shed light on issues critical to creating opportunity and prosperity within the community.

As we move forward together, I hope we will be open to the thoughts, ideas and opinions of others and engage in ways that strengthen the Hilltop. Being a part of a community can make us feel as though we are a part of something greater than ourselves. It can give us opportunities to connect with people, to reach for our goals, and moves us towards a vibrant and thriving place to live, work and play.

I am extremely honored to serve the Hilltop and look forward to more challenging and courageous conversations.

In service,
Brendan Nelson
President, Hilltop Action Coalition
The Hilltop Library Planning Committee (HLPC) is grateful to City Council Member Keith Blocker, Metro Parks Executive Director Shon Sylvius and Tacoma Public Library (TPL) Director Kate Larsen for hosting a Town Hall, on February 21st at the People’s Center, to discuss ways to bring library services to the Hilltop neighborhood. TPL opened the Rainier-Micro-library in September and plans to place a micro-library in the Hilltop neighborhood. Micro-libraries (self-service kiosks) contain a browsing collection of traditional library materials, laptop and portable Internet access points, and serve as a pickup location for items placed on hold. The kiosks will accept items being returned and are placed in facilities that have space available for library events. The events and the kiosk collection will be tailored for each community by an Outreach Librarian.

Director Larsen has said that the kiosk is not intended to take the place of a possible future library branch. Rather, it is forming a committee to oversee a feasibility study, conducted by consultants, to determine if there is a need for a branch library in the Hilltop neighborhood. A member of HLPC will sit on the committee. The feasibility study is expected to be completed by the end of this year. HLPC is always open to new members and new ideas. Join us from 6:00 to 7:30 on the 4th Thursday of the month at the Hilltop Regional Health Center, 1202 MLK Jr Way. Email us at contact@tacomahealthplibrary.org for more information.

Successful alumni almost always play a generous role in supporting the aspirations of today’s students. From donating funds to universities to reflect modern trends in education to building organizations that employ students as interns, alumni serve their communities in countless ways, even when they choose to do so in secret. That was the case this time when an anonymous alum urged administrators to act on a gap in its curriculum after donating a large sum of money to The Evergreen State College. Historically, The Evergreen State College is a dedicated liberal-arts college that’s alternative, liberal-arts college with a social mission. The intent is to encourage self-sufficiency and meet the long-term needs of students after they graduate.

The $1.5M donation—rumored to originate from an anonymous alum who excelled in business—is to support the elaborate work of the college to encourage and build on the ideas students developed and applied during their time at “the nation’s only alternative, liberal-arts college that’s also publicly funded.” The donation is expected to fund three years of operations, although other sources of funding are being researched to ensure that there are no gaps in programming. All funds will be used to support student support programs at both campuses of The Evergreen State College.

Before this donation many students relied on grit and ingenuity to start their own businesses. Traci Marzella Harris, for example, an Evergreen-Tacoma alum, who out of frustration with the level of engagement she received from government agencies and community resources while a single mother with four children, sat down at her kitchen table in Kent in 2003 with a friend to start a jointly-owned nonprofit, called True Blessings, to assist low-income families, at-risk youth, and immigrants in Pierce County with essential resources and human services. Their idea was to bring truth, honesty, and integrity to the social service system by only offering food, clothes, and services that they would personally eat, wear, and use. A noble concept that has allowed this organization to receive grants from the Greater Tacoma Foundation and the seal of approval from The Secretary of State’s Office.

Because community is at the heart of The Evergreen State College-Tacoma experience, many students visit the college year after year to update staff and faculty on their personal and professional progress. With large swaths of students earning bachelor’s degrees in social and human services, establishing a co-op at TESC-Tacoma is a natural extension of the curriculum. TESC-Tacoma plans to use its portion of the funds to develop a student-led cooperative to address the long-term needs of its student body. Services the co-op will offer include childcare, food service, and a Sankofa gear store. Each service will develop independently as resources become available.

A Sankofa gear store merchandised with t-shirts, sweaters, and hoodies will open in December 2018, just in time for winter.

“We want to start small with a solid base, and then build on that base,” says Dr. Zaragoza, a Political Economy Professor at Evergreen-Tacoma. “We want students to get good at finding opportunities, have the skills to build those opportunities and, more importantly, have the ability to work together cooperatively, make decisions cooperatively, and own and control things cooperatively.”

At a college that values reciprocity, inclusivity, civility, and hospitality, the Tacoma campus has a rich history of community building and giving back. From its annual spring fair to its open-door policy for community members to join and participate in all Lyceum and classroom discussions, student and community success is at the forefront of this college’s mission. In addition to students learning marketable skills in team-building, collaboration, recruiting and training and fundraising, customer service, and retail operations, students will develop creativity and innovation and learn how to be self-sufficient in an uncertain world. Above all, students will be able to test their ideas in a safe “skills-building laboratory” and master business principles that they can immediately use in their businesses, communities, or on the job.

According to Sheriswa Beck-Atkinson, the Student and Activities Board Event Coordinator, the challenge is documenting and preserving the progress past students have made during their college tenure. “We have to lay out a kind of blueprint, so the next group will have something to build from,” says Sheriswa. “I don’t want to take all of the secret out of what I’ve learned.”

Because the college had the courage to move forward and reach back—in the spirit of the Sankofa bird—current and future students can now transform their “inspiration into enterprise” the same way she did and help their communities at the same time. You can too.

For details about current and future programming at the Tacoma campus, please call Natasha Lemke at 253.680.3005, email at lemkenk@evergreen.edu, or visit the college at 1210 6th Ave, Tacoma, WA 98405.

## Former Alumni Creates Opportunities for Students and Communities to Thrive

### Jason Reddock

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LaVonne's Room: A Special Kind of Kids’ Store

Bridget Demerson has been working on a new retail storefront in the Hilltop called LaVonne's Room. The store will provide low-cost clothing, toys, and apparel for newborns and young children. You can find the store at 1120 S 11th Street (former Key Bank) and while they don’t have regular hours yet, you can connect with Bridget online at https://www.facebook.com/lavonne Room skewed to store.

Bridget's story is inspiring and shows how one can emerge from a devastating time in their life and find ways to assist families experiencing the same loss. Here is Bridget Demerson's story.

LaVonne's Room started with an idea to properly honor her son LaVonne Kenneth Edlin. LaVonne was born June 26th, 1993, and suddenly passed August 30th, 1993 - cause of death was Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Bridget was a teen mom at the time of his birth, and since his death, she always wanted to properly honor him, his name life.

Back in March, a friend of hers asked what was she was going to do when she decided not to bartend anymore. She said that if she could, she would open a nonprofit children’s thrift store right here in the Hilltop where she has the majority of her adult life. The store would be affordable and affordable to the community. It would be staffed with teen mom volunteers to give them an opportunity to learn some retail customer service ...as a training program with hopes to allow them to earn some elective credits towards their high school diploma. Oakland Alternative High School has agreed to offer this program to their teen moms. Also, the proceeds from the store would go to help low income families who were faced with the same tragedy as Bridget was by providing assistance with burial costs for infants that have passed away due to SIDS.

Now, here we are - LaVonne’s Room has opened its doors for business! This would not have been possible without the support of the community: from all the donations received and the support of key individuals who believed in the idea. Bridget gives special thanks to Roberta and Chris, with the Tacoma Housing Authority, Kaia Daniels from Spaceworks, and her fiscal sponsor who have all worked to make her dream of LaVonne’s Room come true.

Being able to provide our Hilltop Community with this “special kind of kids store” brings so much joy ...this area was in much need of a store just like this where families could come get really cute outfits and affordable necessities needed for their children. The hope is for this to be a success and grow to really make a difference within our community... a positive difference. So, please come check it out! There are great goodies to offer at a great price. Your donations of newborn to 5T clothing, shoes, books, toys, car seats, high chairs, strollers, toddler beds, etc. are also needed to help support this great cause.

The shop is located at 1120 South 11th Street right on the corner of 11th and L Street in the Old Key Bank building. Store hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 12 p.m. until 7 p.m. Thank you, Hilltop Community, for your support!
Printmaking shop appears at Washington State History Museum

Juliana Verboort

Have you ever seen a hand-operated printing press in action? You can do just that at the Washington State History Museum’s Write253 Pop Up Print Shop on select dates through April, 2020. You’ll even get a chance to operate a small press in the shop and make a print to take home.

Write253 is a nonprofit literacy arts organization that provides youth with meaningful and transformative writing opportunities that create community in greater Tacoma. They offer poetry classes, book club, tutoring, writing workshops for college applications, and more. The organization will collaborate with local writers and print artists at the History Museum, and will make and sell limited edition prints with proceeds supporting Write253 programs.

Michael Haeflinger, Write253’s executive director, said “Write253 is very excited to add printmaking to our roster of programs. We think that this art form is an invaluable tool for young people to express themselves and to learn new skills. We are grateful to the History Museum for partnering in this endeavor, and look forward to engaging with the community.”

Printmakers will be on hand in the Write253 Pop Up Print Shop to facilitate visitors with operating a press to make a free print of their own. The artwork will be set up during the exhibition A New Moon Rises, on October 10, 12, and 17 the pop up shop will feature limited edition moon prints for sale, and a moon-related print on the Kelsey printing press for public to engage with. In association with the exhibition Little Black Dress: A Fashion Evolution, the October 18 limited edition print will be a special Little Black Dress designed by Taylor Cox. The take-home free print will also be fashion-related. On November 10, Write253 will collaborate with Tacoma Poet Laureate Abby E. Murray for a unique Veterans Day print.

We are thrilled to partner with Write253 on this project. It offers museum visitors a chance to connect with historical content through a hands-on activity,” said the History Museum’s lead programs manager, adding. “And let’s be honest, printmaking is also just really fun!”

Visit the Write253 Pop Up Print Shop at the History Museum between now and the end of April, 2020. Details at WashingtonHistory.org/ Write253.

Write253 Pop Up Print Shop schedule through 2019:

• October 10, 7:00-10:00 PM  
  Open during Washington In Spac3! (an ages 21+ ticketed event)

• October 12, 1:00-3:00 PM  
  Open during Family Saturday hours (included with admission; FREE for WSHS members)

• October 17, 3:00-6:00 PM  
  Open during FREE Third Thursday hours 
  Open during Bootleggers’ Ball (an ages 21+ ticketed event)

• December 14, 1:00-3:00 PM  
  Open during Family Saturday hours (included with admission or FREE for members)

• December 19, 5:00-8:00 PM  
  Open during FREE Third Thursday hours 
  Open during FREE Third Thursday hours

• December 21, 5:00-7:30 PM  
  Open during Model Train Festival Members Appreciation Night (for WSHS members only).

January through April dates will be scheduled soon.

Homelessness: A Social Problem That Needs to be Solved

Kristine Conan

A lot of people are asking important questions about the homeless population. It’s easy to ask common questions I hear are, “How can we come up with a better solution for this housing crisis?”

Jahleen Mitchell’s name was added to the list of homeless people in the Hilltop. The most common questions I hear are, “How can we come up with a better solution for this housing crisis?”

At the Moment of Blessing, we came together as a community to pray for all involved and to reclaim the space as sacred, a place of life. This act of love reminds those who pass by that life does not belong here – our neighborhood is a place of peace, a place for families, and a place for community.

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If you would like to donate to Jahleen’s funeral and medical expenses, please visit this gofundme page.

Tacoma residents are ready to lead their Welcoming City to peace. A CALL2ACTION march to Put the Guns Down was held at 1pm on this same date as a ‘call to end violence in Tacoma’.
Harvest Fest

Metro Parks People’s Community Center is hosting a Spook-tober Harvest Festival and Halloween event on Thursday Oct 31 from 6:00 to 8:00pm. This event will take place indoors for families and kids, with games, arts and crafts, treats, music, a costume contest and haunted house! All Free!!! They are looking for people interested in volunteering to operate a game, or to bring a table, or help with decorations for the event; and they’re looking for people with decorations to donate. Call (253) 404-3915 if you’re interested!

Voter Registration

Are you Registered to Vote? Need to find a ballot drop box near you? Visit https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/328/Elections today to:
• Register to vote
• Update your address or view your registration information
• Return your ballot or track your ballot
• Request a replacement ballot
• Read the online voters’ guide
• Read the local voters’ pamphlet

Need more information about the General Election? Go to https://www.piercecountywa.gov/6564/General-Election---November-5-2019 where you can read about candidates, resolutions, or view General Election Local Voters’ pamphlets. No online capabilities? Stop by your local library or visit the Hilltop Action Coalition office to register to vote today!
This information is provided by Sound Transit. Please note that Sound Transit does not have a fund to mitigate for business loss during construction of the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension. This would be considered a gift of public funds and is not allowed by the Federal Transit Administration.

However, Sound Transit does have a claims for damages process, which investigates incidents that occur during construction, such as a window breaking or damage to a vehicle as a result of construction. In that process, an individual submits a claims form, which is available on the Sound Transit website at www.soundtransit.org/help-contracts/customer-service/claim-forms.

Questions about submitting a claim? Please contact Liz Satterhwaite, Sound Transit Community Outreach Specialist, at (253) 208-0586.
Are You Expecting?

Community Health Care has the full range of maternity services.

- **FREE pregnancy tests!** No appointment needed!
- Obstetrics & Gynecology
- Have your delivery at a local hospital.
- Specialized maternity program to help you prepare for your baby.
- You can choose your doctor from a staff of 12 physicians.

Hilltop Regional Health Center
1202 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Tacoma
(253) 441-4742
Learn more at www.commhealth.org