

# NORTH OF THE JAMES®



## Jonathan Austin

is a Northsider who began juggling when he was just 12-years old. Two years later he performed his first professional gig. When he was 15 he became a juggler at Kings Dominion. Somewhere in there he learned sleight-of-hand magic and began perfecting technique. And though he is both juggler and magician, Jonathan Austin is mainly an entertainer with a quick-witted schtick of one-liners that keep audiences of all ages utterly mesmerized.

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#### COVER ILLUSTRATION BY BILL NELSON

This month's cover was created by world-renowned and award-winning illustrator and sculptor, Bill Nelson. Bill's illustrations have graced the covers of The New Yorker, Newsweek, Time, TV Guide, The Atlantic, The New York Times Book Reviews and many other magazines. His work has been exhibited in numerous galleries including the Normal Rockwell Museum, where he exhibited a series of Big Band Illustrations he produced for the United States Postal Service. We are honored to have Bill's work on the cover of North of the James and he will be our cover story for the December edition. Many thanks, Bill.

# NORTH OF THE JAMES

*Independently owned and operated.*

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## Bike Walk Northside's Fun Family Bike Ride



Riders line up at Bike Walk Northside's first ever family fun ride held on May 3, 2015.

Did the UCI Championships inspire you to get out on two wheels? Bike Walk Northside is hosting its second Fun Family Bike Ride of the year on October 24 at 1 p.m. (rain date Oct. 25). Meet at the Westwood Tract, corner of Brook Road and Westwood Ave. We'll have a 1.6-mile course good for all ages, a costume contest with prizes, food trucks, free bike adjustments, and a bike rodeo for kids to test their skills. Find us on Facebook at Bike Walk Northside for updates and more information.

## Oktoberfest 2015 at Once Upon a Vine



Oktoberfest at Once Upon A Vine.

It's been over a decade now that Bob Kocher, owner of Once Upon A Vine, first started his annual Oktoberfest.

This year's event drew hundreds who enjoyed beer and viands of a German persuasion along with live music.

## Richmond 2015 Introduces Bike Safety Program for Kids



John Saunders, director of the DMV's Highway Safety Office.

Added Richmond Mayor Dwight C. Jones: "Educating our children in the City of Richmond and

Richmond-area elementary school students are learning the rules of the road – from a cycling perspective – thanks to a bike safety program developed by Richmond 2015 and funded through a grant from DMV, Virginia's Highway Safety Office.

Richmond 2015 Ride Like A Champion strives to educate students in kindergarten through fifth grade on bike safety.

"Cycling is growing in popularity in Virginia, and with it, so is the need for more education on bike safety," said

neighboring Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico counties on bike safety and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle will have a far-reaching effect for years to come."

The program includes a Ride Like A Champion bike safety booklet and school flag, an online curriculum targeted at parents as well as one for teachers.

In partnership with the Virginia Department of Education, more than 75,000 booklets were produced and sent to every elementary school in the Richmond metro area.

## Christmas on MacArthur Seeking Art & Craft Vendors



Christmas on MacArthur, which over the past three years has been the largest single contributor to the US Marine Corps Toys for Tots in the Richmond metro area, is seeking vendors. But make your reservation now as space for art and craft vendors is limited. This year's event, which takes place on the 4000 block of MacArthur Avenue, will be from 11-4 on Saturday, December 12. Each year thousands attend this popular Northside event which includes a

full-fledged parade, live music, food samples from local restaurants and much, much more.

10'X10' booth space is \$35. If interested contact Teri Phipps at vendor@bellevueweb.org or call 262-3477

Vendor payments must be received at the time of registration. Cash or check only. Bellevue Merchants Association, P.O. Box 15362 Richmond, Va. 23227. Vendors must be on-site no later than 9AM the day of the event.

# FALL 2015

*Hey there friends it almost Halloween and it looks like some of us are already spooking it up! Don't let your house be the one to haunt your neighbors because you don't have time - we can help! Just in case you don't email or say the FBI has confiscated your email servers - give us a call that works too!*



## *Leaf collection schedule*

AREA	DATE
Bellemeade	12/14 - 12/18
Bellevue   Ginter Park   Washington Park	11/30 - 12/11
Broad Rock   Brookbury	12/14 - 12/23
Church Hill   Fulton	01/04 - 01/15
Maymont   Byrd Park   Oregon Hill   Carillon	11/30 - 12/11
Museum District	12/07 - 12/11
Newtowne   Carver   Jackson Ward	11/30 - 12/04

North Side   Highland Park	11/30 - 12/11
Stony Point	12/28 - 02/05
Stratford Hills   Willow Oaks	01/04 - 01/29
The Fan   Shaffer	12/14 - 12/18
Westover Gardens	02/01 - 02/05
Westover Hills   Forest Hill   Woodland Heights	01/04 - 02/05
Windsor Farms   Univ. of Richmond   Far West End	12/14 - 12/31
Worthington Farms	01/18 - 01/29



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## BRIEFS

### Walk to School Day at Holton Elementary



Top: Always dapper, David Hudson at Walk to School Day.

Center: Holton teacher Christol Mark with her daughter.

Bottom: Lining up for the broad jump and roll.

It seemed as if almost all of Holton's student body—along with parents and other relatives and friends—gathered in the parking lot of Once Upon A Vine early on the morning of October 7 to celebrate the Ninth Annual International Walk to School Day. The parking lot of Once Upon A Vine was transformed into a playground for the

kids who enjoyed shooting hoops, tossing bean bags into corn holes, broad jumping and a host of other activities. As always, Principal David Hudson, the Richmond area's greatest public school administrator, was there to meet and greet before the kids made their way up the quiet streets of Bellevue to Holton Elementary School. **NJ**



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# Stir Crazy: The Perfect Blend

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

**L**A TE IN THE AFTERNOON, shortly before closing, the buzz has died down to a murmur and the baristas are sweeping floors and moving the chairs and tables from the sidewalk through the front door for the night. Claire McGowan, who owns this popular coffee shop which is known for its sumptuous lunches and hardy breakfasts, along with the coffees that flow from urns like endless elixirs, sits with me in the conference room in the rear of Stir Crazy. She's a petite woman with blonde hair, blue eyes and the sheer energy of a hummingbird.

Claire purchased the shop (same name, new logo) about two and a half years ago and almost immediately began reshaping it. "We came in here the night of April 22 and painted the walls," she says. "It used to be bright purple, orange and green, but I like earthy tones so we went with grays and greens." They rolled and brushed through most of the night. "The next day, April 23, 2013, was our first full-day here," says Claire. In the intervening two-plus years, she has changed a lot of the interior. She added beaded wainscoting along one wall, rough-hewn board-and-batten from floor to ceiling along another wall, a long bar made of old doors and architectural accoutrement that runs almost the entire length of a third wall. "We left the floors as is because they look old and the ceiling's tin and we left that," she says. "Wanted to keep it cozy."

Claire's vision of the place started with a picture someone had given, a picture torn from a magazine. "This one picture changed everything," she says. "When you were looking at the picture you couldn't tell if you were looking at a bar that looked like someone's kitchen, or a kitchen that looked like a bar. And that's what I wanted to do at Stir Crazy because for a lot of people this is an extension of their homes."

Her vision became reality and scores of people use Stir Crazy daily as a home away from home or an office that feels nothing like an office but very much like a study.

This past summer, Claire again improved on the space with murals painted by Ed Trask, one of the city's leading muralists. He painted massive panels in the rear



One of the last customers of the day.

sitting area just outside the conference room. "He's really creative," she says. "And I told him, 'We really want to do a mural and we really want something Northside specific. So he researched Northside history and all of these pieces in this back mural are historical figures and scenes from this area.' There's a depiction of one of Richmond's original streetcars which travelled up Brook and Hermitage roads. Another of a mounted police officer with his horse. Still another of the Bellevue Arch. And so on.

Claire McGowan with her mother Dale Call.



When Ed Trask studied the arched windows above the interior storefront window—long since boarded up to daylight—he had an inspiration. The arches became the train viaduct that crosses the James just below the RMA bridge. He painted clouds and a blue sky through the gaps between the arches, a hint of the James below, and on the bridge carefully jigsaw cutout boxcars of plywood painted and even given a veneer of railroad graffiti.

While Ed was completing his visual narrative of Richmond and its inimitable Northside, chalkboard artist Ted Anderson applied his own inventiveness to Stir Crazy's menus. "We did chalkboard paint along the sidewall where the menu was and where the drink menu was in the back," Claire says. "Ted turned the menus into art and I love that for a couple of reasons. Coffee shops are places of creativity and so we definitely want to have that creative vibe even with our menu. Because food is art and coffee is art."

Claire had finally captured the ambience she had always sought for her coffee shop. But there are at least two other ingredients that make it work so well. First and foremost is the staff—baristas and manager, full-time and part-time, including Bert, Artsiom, Ian, Jordan, Kai, Susan, Maggie, Stephen, Hannah, Jacob and Leah.

"I love our staff," says Claire. "I could not be happier with the team we have in here right, all of them with different strengths. They are as diverse as our clientele and they work really well together."

And the other piece that works so well is the product Stir Crazy offers its customers. "For coffee we use Rostov's and Shenandoah Joe's just outside



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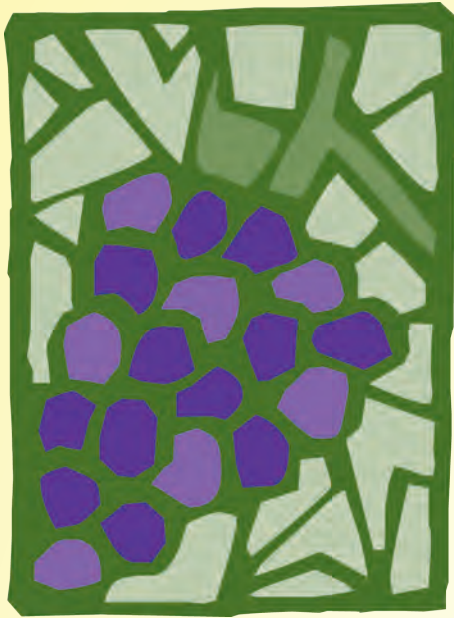
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Top: Ed Trask mural depicts narrative history of Northside.




Bottom: As the day winds down, Stir Crazy staff focus on the paperwork.

Charlottesville, and I love them both," Claire tells me. "We're the only location in Richmond that serves Shenandoah Jo's."

The food dished up at Stir Crazy is about as fresh as it gets. "We've staffed up the kitchen quite a bit," says Claire. "We make just about everything we can here—the pasta, potato salad, coleslaw, soups, quiche. And almost all of the pastries and muffins are from scratch, as are the scones and the bagels are local and the breads are from Flour Garden and delivered fresh each day. And our bagel chips are made here, too."

Stir Crazy is now branching out to catering. "We've started doing boxed lunches for businesses and have been catering other affairs," Claire says.

Sometime in the future, Claire McGowan may well open another location, probably in downtown Richmond, in the center of a neighborhood. "That's our vibe," she says. We are that neighborhood coffee shop, that place you walk to and hang out. That's really our scene."

After a pause, before she joins the rest of her staff to close down for the night, Claire speaks of her gratitude. "My family has been very supportive," she says. "But I've had so much support and it drives me crazy because I think I can never thank people enough. The support we get is unbelievable. This neighborhood has been so gracious to us. And the staff. I am grateful. I love them. We have good people." 

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# Jonathan Austin

## THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

**JONATHAN AUSTIN IS DRESSED LIKE A PRIEST,** minus the Roman collar—black shirt, black pants, black shoes and black pork pie hat. Slight build, muscular, quick-talking as a street hawker, and with an endless supply of one-liners no matter the occasion. Quips spill from his mouth as he begins to perform. He has a feathery touch that lofts bean bag balls into the air. One, two, three, four, and then five, and finally six. Impossible it seems as the balls follow one another in a blurry orbit in what is known among jugglers as a proper cascade. And it is a cascade, a circular and fluid waterfall of colored spheres.

**WE'RE IN THE LIVING** room of my home in Bellevue, one block away from Jonathan's boyhood home where he learned to juggle when he was just shy of becoming a teenager. "The nickname Jonathan the Juggler was given to me when I was living over in Northside," he says. "We lived at 1421 Claremont Avenue and later on Hawthorne. Lots of childhood memories over here. Went to John B. Carey Elementary School."

His first paid gig came on August 8, 1984 at a vacation bible school in Lakeside. He did five shows for the princely sum of fifteen dollars and thought he had arrived. "As soon as I did that show I just started doing shows all the time, as many as I could for whoever would hire me, money or no money," Jonathan remembers.

When he was fifteen, Kings Dominion hired him and he worked there during the season for the next four years. "They hired jugglers for street entertainment so you'd entertain the lines," Jonathan says.

That same year he wandered into One Eye Jacques in Carytown and met a man by the name of Woody Landers, who would serve as a mentor and more to Jonathan. "I saw him doing magic and it was one of those defining moments in life where it picked me up and threw me down," he says. "Woody's no longer with us, but he was quite an inspiration and just a real funny guy and so I just started hanging out there all the time, buying stuff."

In those days before the internet, magicians could not order online. They had to go to a shop. "It was actually much better to get it in person and know what you're getting," Jonathan says. "Woody was a pro and I sure do miss him to this day. He was just real good at manipulation and card tricks and coin tricks. I think he wasn't too much into performing. I guess the phrase that comes to mind is that the world's a stage. It was



definitely Woody's stage. He would be perpetually performing and cracking jokes and one-liners and that kind of funny stuff."

When I ask if Woody influenced his schtick, Jonathan nods enthusiastically and says, "Oh yes, very much so, even to this day. He taught me to always try to get the party going."

The very first magic trick he ever learned was actually one of those novelty tricks you can buy at a magic shop. "It was a little fin-

ger guillotine," he says. "You open the box, read the instructions and two minutes and sixteen seconds later you can do the trick."

But that's what lured him into the art of legerdemain. There was satisfaction in possessing the ability to seemingly changing the laws of physics. Contradict reality, altering matter. All illusion, but so convincing people would believe it in spite of their rational minds. "It's still what gets me thirty-one years later, mystifying people," Jonathan says. "It doesn't get old. The same is true with juggling. As a matter of fact I was at South of the James Farmers' Market this morning and five times I balanced a 10-speed bicycle on my chin." He points to the slight depression between his lower lip and his chin. "You can probably still see tread marks," he says.

When I ask him what his two favorite magic tricks are he shows me.

"Will you light up a cigarette for me?"

Which is what I do.

"Okay, now can I borrow your jacket?" he asks and I nod as he picks up a grey tweed jacket draped over a chair back.

"One assumes you wear this on a regular basis?"

"When it gets cooler, sure."

"What is it made of?"

"Wool," I say.

And then he turns the shoulders of the jacket into a sort of funnel that disappears into his partially clenched fist and with his other hand he raises the lit cigarette and points toward that funnel of wool. At that moment I know where he's going with this.

"Is this your smoking jacket?" says Jonathan with a staccato laugh. "Or maybe I should ask if it's a blazer." With each word the cigarette gets closer to the jacket. "Remember three things when you put this thing back on: Stop, drop and roll," he says. "You're watching every angle now, right?"

And at that moment he stabs the lit cigarette into the jacket and quickly clenches his fist.

"Hocus pocus, chicken bones choke us," he

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN  
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says. "Watch everything now. Yoko Ono, Sonny Bono. You're watching everything." "Yes I am."

Then he releases his grip on the jacket and the cigarette is gone and there's no damage to the wool. I am standing less than two feet from him, and have watched his every move.

"And would you believe the cigarette has now vanished right before your eyes, ears, nose."

"Wait a minute, how the hell did you do that? That was amazing."

"You liked it?" says Jonathan. "I'm glad you did. And for my next trick . . . the invisible deck."

Jonathan holds up nothing in his hand, though he appears to be gripping a deck of playing cards.

"I have an invisible pack of cards," he says and then in stage aside adds, "I sell these too. We do pass the savings on to you. I'm going to take the deck out of the box, you can watch every move." And he pulls nothing out of nothing and then invites me to pick a card out of the invisible deck which he has fanned out. I do as instructed and hold an invisible card. I initially think of the three of clubs but then at the last nanosecond I change it to the Jack of diamonds.

"Now, once again, it can be any card you please," Jonathan says. "Fifty-two choices. Now I'm going to turn them over. You put it down wherever you want, I won't look. Okay, now, I'm going to hand you the cards."

I take the invisible deck from him and slip them into the invisible box and tamp the invisible lid flap shut.

"Now when I count to three just throw them here and I'll catch them," he says. And when he says three I toss them over to him, this invisible deck, but when that deck reaches his hand, it materializes.

"Now, as you can see the cards are here," Jonathan says. "Nothing planned, nothing rehearsed. That is the truth. If I'm lying, I'm dying. Not here to waste somebody's time, especially a man of your caliber. Now for the first time so everybody can hear. Which card was it?"

"Jack of diamonds," I say.

"Now you could have picked any card you wanted?"

I nod.

"Nothing planned," he says. "No power of suggestion or anything like that?"

I shake my head.

"Now I'm going to take them out of the box, slowly, dramatically," says Jonathan.

"You said the Jack of diamonds. If you look, every card is face up. Now if you look even closer, smack dab in the middle of the deck you can see one card that is face down. Nothing planned, nothing rehearsed. You could have picked any card you had wanted but you said the Jack of diamonds."

He stops for a second and then says, "Have you ever had one of those days when nothing goes right?" pauses, then flips the card over. "Fortunately, this is not one of them."

And there it is the Jack of diamonds.

"So that trick and the cigarette trick are my all-time favorites," says Jonathan. "I learned them within the first five years after I started doing magic."

When Jonathan first started juggling in earnest he was a student at New Community School on Hermitage Road. "I had dyslexia and went there from eighth through twelfth grade," he says. "I guess in a nut shell, I didn't have the easiest time in a traditional school setting. I certainly loved all my teachers and everybody who was there, but I couldn't really take tests and all that, and had trouble reading, comprehending what was going on. New Community was fantastic and I graduated in 1989." While in school there, Jonathan took up the unicycle, another element he would incorporate into his act. He even

rode his unicycle to school from the house on Hawthorne Avenue.

After high school graduation, Jonathan had what he calls an early mid-life crisis. He left his job at Kings Dominion and spent the summer juggling at Busch Gardens. In the fall he went up to New York and spent a year at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. "I did some shows in Central Park and definitely kept my chops up with the juggling," he says. The following May he got a job at Disney World, where would work for the next three years. "I'd work about four or five months each year, May through September," he says. "It was a great feeling to be on board with the number one tourist attraction of the world, if you will. I was the street juggler in the Magic Kingdom and it was fantastic. You'd do a twenty-minute bit and then have an hour break. It keeps you on your toes."

In September of 1992 Jonathan moved back up to Richmond and has been here ever since except for a number of out-of-state gigs (he's performed in twenty states and in Canada) and a stint as entertainer on a cruise ship.

Most of his work through the years has been free-lance. "And once again, I'm pretty old school," he says. "To this day I just pass out business cards after shows. I do

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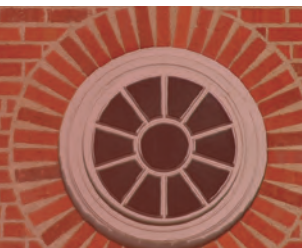
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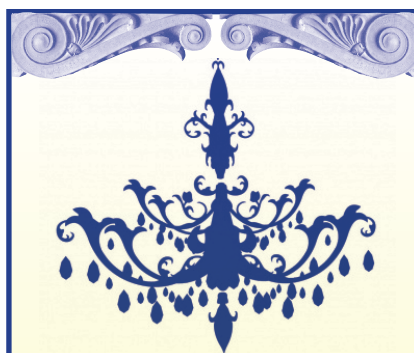
lots of house parties, shows for law firms and special events. Lots of stuff I've gone to for years--Easter on Parade, Watermelon Festival, the Irish Festival."

When I ask Jonathan if he considers himself primarily a magician or a juggler, he shakes his head. "I'm more into performing," he explains. "The people I saw starting out at the impressionable age of fifteen or sixteen when I realized this is what I wanted to do with the rest of my life, were guys like Penn and Teller who are more philosophers than magicians, if you will. I look at the magic, the juggling and the unicycling as probably less than ten percent of what I do. The other ninety percent is the entertainment, the one-liners, the jokes, getting the party going and trying to make other people feel good. I've seen plenty of jugglers who couldn't juggle that well, but boy were they entertaining. And I've seen plenty that could juggle better than anyone else and they were just boring to watch after a minute and thirty-six seconds. Like I said, the juggling, magic and unicycle bits are more of just vehicles."

Jonathan's style of showmanship was influenced by comics from another era. "Old-school ones from the fifties and sixties," he says. "Borsht Belt comedians like Hennie Youngman and Sid Caesar. Guys like Johnny Carson, Bob Hope. And nowadays, to me, most comedians don't have jokes. They kind of tell funny stories. I like the old Carson/ Letterman set-up punchline. Within sixteen seconds you're done with it. You're not telling some funny story about your wedding or in-laws or something." Jonathan's rapid-fire one-liners certainly propel his shows along at a brisk pace and that finally is what appeals to the audience. He's found the perfect way of fusing the best elements of juggling, magic and comedy to create true performance art.

He can juggle anything from bowling balls to flaming torches to razor-sharp machetes, and can ride a ten-foot tall unicycle doing almost anything you can think of. What's more, as with everything he does, Jonathan makes it seem effortless. But this, to: Funny.

"I try to make people happy and keep them entertained," Jonathan Austin says. "That's what it's all about. It never gets old when I'm performing and I make someone feel like a kid again and forget their jadedness and cynicism, if you will. Always upbeat. This interview will be over when the prescription runs out. You should see the rest of my family. I heard this morning I was coming to Belleview and I was like wait a second I'm not going back there again. I'm always upbeat and happy because life is just too short to be any other way. I started doing this and enjoyed the attention and thirty years later I still love it. And people are still cheering me on and not throwing tomatoes at me." 



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# The Immortal Henrietta Lacks

by JACK R. JOHNSON



**O**N OCTOBER 4TH, 1951 a woman died who actually never died. Her name was Henrietta Lacks. She was born on August 1, 1920 and despite her official death being marked in 1951, her cells still live on in what has become known as the HELA line, the first known human immortal cell line for medical research.

Early in 1951, Henrietta Lacks went to John Hopkins after she gave birth to her fifth child and started bleeding profusely. Her doctor, Howard W. Jones, examined Henrietta and found a lump in her cervix. He cut off a small part of the tumor and sent it to the pathology lab. Soon after, Lacks was told she had a malignant epidermoid carcinoma of the cervix. But a portion of the cells from Henrietta's tumor were given to researcher George Gey, who, ABC News Reported "discovered that [Henrietta's] cells did something they'd never seen before: They could be kept alive and grow." Before this, cells cultured from other cells would only survive for a few days. Scientists spent more time trying to keep the cells alive than performing actual research on the cells, but some cells from Lacks's tumor sample behaved differently from others. George Gey was able to isolate one specific cell, multiply it, and start a cell line. Gey named the sample "He La", after the initial letters of Henrietta Lacks' first and last name.

According to the Baltimore City Paper, by 1954, the HELA strain of cells was being used by Jonas Salk to develop

a vaccine for polio. By 1955 HELA cells were the first human cells successfully cloned. Since they were put into mass production, the New York Times notes that "Henrietta's cells have been mailed to scientists around the globe for 'research into cancer, AIDS, the effects of radiation and toxic substances, gene mapping, and countless other scientific pursuits.'" According to the Virginia Pilot, HELA cells have been used to test human sensitivity to tape, glue, cosmetics, and many other products. Scientists have grown some 20 tons of her cells, and there are almost 11,000 patents involving HELA cells.

It should be noted that neither Lacks nor her family ever gave her physician permission to harvest the cells because, at that time, such permission was neither required nor customarily sought. But after years of research, Rebecca Skloot, published *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* about Henrietta Lacks and her immortal cell line in 2010. When Dr. Roland Pattillo of the Morehouse School of Medicine read the account of her life he donated a headstone for Lacks which reads as follows:

*Henrietta Lacks, August 01, 1920-October 04, 1951.*

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**Eleanor Roosevelt's Love Letters**



**E**LEANOR ROOSEVELT, the controversial first lady of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was a crusader for women's rights, civil rights for African Americans, world peace and the plight of the poor. As U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, she often addressed issues of international human rights.

In many ways, Eleanor led a life apart from her husband. She met Associated Press sports reporter Lorena Hickok shortly before 1932 and wore

a sapphire ring given to her while still living in the White House. Wanting to be closer to Eleanor, Lorena left her reporting job and worked in the Roosevelt administration. They often found time together, and when apart exchanged thousands of letters over a period of thirty years.

Many of the letters from Lorena to Eleanor were destroyed. But Lorena made arrangements for the letters she'd received from Eleanor to be published upon her death. In one letter, Eleanor wrote, quote "I want to put my arms around you, I ache to hold you close."

**Keith Haring, Artist and Activist**

Keith Haring was born in Pennsylvania in 1958. As a young man, he discovered both his art and his sexuality. He moved to New York City in 1980 for deeper self-expression.

From 1980 to 1985, inspired by Andy Warhol, he applied artistic concepts on vacant advertising panels in the New York Subway System. His simple, bold, line-work illustrations became a sensation, appearing in hundreds of posters and books, and public artworks in cit-

ies worldwide for hospitals, children's day care centers and orphanages.

Haring died in 1990, among the first generation of gay men lost to the AIDS epidemic. Prior to his death, he was devoted to creating cultural awareness about the disease, and issues related to equal rights for the gay community.

The Keith Haring Foundation, which he created before his death, continues his legacy of giving to children's and AIDS organizations.

**Margaret Mead, Prominent American Anthropologist**

Margaret Mead was born in Philadelphia in 1901. Entering adulthood, she felt urged to advance the understanding of human behavior.

Studying anthropology at Barnard College, she met her mentor, Ruth Benedict. Their relationship would become the most intimate of Mead's life, lasting throughout her three marriages.

Mead's field study in the South Pacific led to her bestseller, *Coming of Age in Samoa*. Her research of various cultures

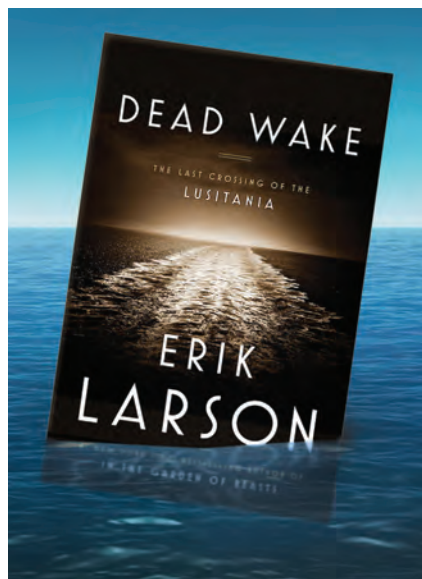
made her one of the first in the modern age to champion diversity. In a 1975 article for *Redbook* magazine, she asserted it was time to recognize bisexuality as a normal form of sexual expression.

She feared that revealing her own bisexuality would close doors in her career. But she said everyone should be able "to choose companionship with a member of their own or opposite sex," which certainly opened doors for the next generation. **NS**

# Sinking The World Into War

by **FRAN WITHROW**

**LOVE THE WAY** ERIK LARSON consistently captivates readers with his nonfiction novels, the latest of which is “Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania.” As always, he has done extensive research, and that rich material is presented for us in a fascinating way as he describes this vessel’s doomed voyage from New York across the Atlantic. The ship was torpedoed and sunk just off the coast of England in 1915, and this played a part in the U.S. decision to finally enter World War I in 1917.



Larson deftly describes the catastrophe from many angles, pulling everything together in the final denouement. Each chapter adds another intriguing layer to the reader’s knowledge. You know the ship is going to sink, but there is much else to discover along the way.

The description of life in a fragile submarine made me claustrophobic. (How did they ever recruit anyone willing to live in such cramped, hot, dangerous quarters?) It was also a revelation to read just how dangerous subs were to ships in the era before sonar.

Unfortunately, the Lusitania, through a series of events that fell before her like a stack of dominoes, could not avoid the German U-Boat lurking in the water near England. Though experts were sure this great ship was invincible, the cold reality was that she sank in an incredibly short 18 minutes. I cannot imagine 2000 passengers trying to escape so quickly, some in their cork-filled life vests (fastened incorrectly) but many without. It is not surprising that only 764 people survived the disaster.

And, of course, there were lifeboat problems. Picture this: as the Lusitania filled with water and tilted sideways, lifeboats on one side swung out to sea, making them almost unreachable by desperate passengers, while those on the other side swung onto the deck, making it impossible to drop them into the ocean.

That’s a major problem. And that

was just one of many.

Larson describes not only the Lusitania’s final trip toward her watery grave, but also critical events that impacted her. For instance, ships tricked each other by painting the colors of neutral nations on their boats when in enemy waters. Since Germans were never sure whether a ship was truly neutral or not, they torpedoed everything. They even torpedoed other ships coming to the rescue, resulting in orders not to aid a sinking vessel. Incredible.

And how about this: English code breakers cracked the German’s messages and knew there were submarines off the English coast. They chose not warn the Lusitania for fear the Germans would realize their code was no longer secure. Can you say “collateral damage?”

Vivid descriptions of sorrow abound: a mother torn between saving her toddler or her baby on different decks; the loss of a rare copy of Charles’ Dickens’s “A Christmas Carol;” Body No. 156: a girl of about three with curly blond hair.

These are hard things to read, but I couldn’t put the book down. Erik Larson’s “Dead Wake” is a gripping, engrossing story, told with finesse by a master storyteller. **NJ**

“Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania”, by Erik Larson, \$28.00, Crown Publishing, 448 pages

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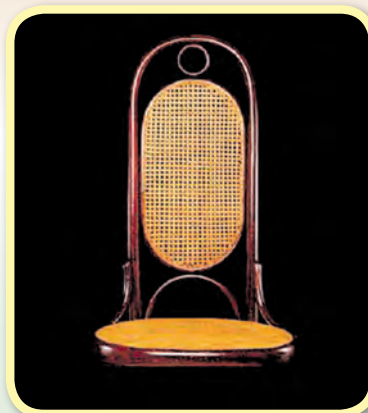
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## CALENDAR

# October



## National Theatre Live: Cumberbatch as Hamlet

Benedict Cumberbatch (BBC's *Sherlock*, *The Imitation Game*, *Frankenstein* at the National Theatre) takes on the title role of Shakespeare's great tragedy. Directed by Lyndsey Turner and produced by Sonia Friedman Productions, National Theatre Live will broadcast this eagerly awaited production live to cinemas. October 18, 3 pm. Camp Concert Hall, Booker Hall of Music.

## Third Practice Electroacoustic Music Festival at UofR

Third Practice celebrates its 15th year of bringing new electroacoustic music and experimental video to Richmond audiences with a collection of brand new pieces commissioned by the festival. Presents cutting-edge work for computers, instruments, video projection, and surround-sound by composers from the United States, Asia, and Europe. Visit [www.thirdpractice.org](http://www.thirdpractice.org) for details. Nov. 6 and 7 at 7:30 pm. Camp Concert Hall, Booker Hall of Music. Free admission.



*Oil paintings by Kitty Shield on display through November at Stir Crazy Café.*

## Stir Crazy Café THURSDAY MUSIC NIGHTS




*My Son the Doctor*

Get your weekly dose of live music at 7:30 pm every Thursday night at Stir Crazy Cafe on MacArthur Avenue in Bellevue.

October 22, Cary Street Ramblers  
 October 29, Small/Merritt  
 November 5, Hotel X  
 November 12, Buzzy Lawler  
 November 19, My Son the Doctor  
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