Spring has finally arrived and Downtown Hazleton is thawing out after a long winter. Planning is finally giving way to implementation, and the downtown will soon be buzzing with activity with many events planned for the warmer months. Read on for details!

Above: The façade rehabilitation of 13 E. Broad St. (Mount Zion Christian Church, worship center and offices) is complete. A ribbon cutting was held April 10th.

**Strategic Plan**
The Strategic Plan is complete! After nine months of meetings, workshops, surveys, and interviews, the goals, strategies, design concepts, and priority projects for downtown revitalization have been finalized. To review an electronic copy of the plan, visit The Plan tab at [www.downtownhazleton.org](http://www.downtownhazleton.org), or contact Krista Schneider at 570-455-1509 to check out a hard copy version. This plan will now serve as the basis for our application to the Department of Community and Economic Development to have downtown Hazleton designated as a certified “Main Street” community, which will filed within the next month. This designation will make the downtown eligible for special funding and incentive programs to support the revitalization process.

**State Budget Matters**
Over the last several years, the Pennsylvania Main Street and Elm Street programs, once among the most productive and well received community revitalization programs in the United States, were reduced by Commonwealth budget cuts. Taken as a whole, the programs which help to revitalize the state’s historic downtowns and neighborhoods dropped from a funding level of $56 million in 2009, to $6.2 million in 2014-15. Governor Wolf has proposed increasing this level to $21.15 million in 2015-2016. This is good news! If funded, these business district and neighborhood revitalization programs, including tax credit programs, façade grants, and program funds, will help bolster our efforts.

**Second Friday Highlights**
The “Second Friday” of March was marked by several well-attended events, including the grand opening of the “Trompe L’Oeil” (Trick of the Eye) exhibit at the Hazleton Art League, opening night of “13 The Musical” at the Pennsylvania Theatre of Performing Arts, a travelling exhibit of Irish and mining history sponsored by the Hazleton Historical Society and Museum with costumed interpreters Bryan Dunnigan (portraying an Irish miner), Regina Drasher (performing “Big Mary of Lattimer”), and musician Dave Matsinko, who performed several Irish and mining ballads with the guitar, dulcimer, and banjo. Poet Laureate Maria Jacketti also read some of her poems to celebrate the occasion.

Charles McElwee, a dedicated DHAP volunteer, was also recognized with an award for his volunteer service to the City by Mayor Joe Yannuzzi, particularly for his efforts to document and celebrate Hazleton’s Irish-American heritage, and for his help with the Strategic Plan. Sixteen downtown businesses also offered special promotions and discounts to complement the day’s activities, as did the YMCA/YWCA and the Hazleton Library, which hosted children’s programs.

Top: Dave Matsinko performs historical mining ballads on the dulcimer during the March 13 “Second Friday” event. Above: DHAP volunteer and Hazleton Historical Society & Museum board member Charles McElwee receives an Irish-American Volunteer Appreciation award for his service to the city.
April’s Second Friday (April 10th) celebrated the arrival of spring with several “Home & Garden” themed workshops, exhibits, a painting class, and business promotions, as well as an open house and tours of Brandon’s Forever Home at 187 N. Church St., a grand 1907 Georgian mansion now being used to help local foster children.

Façade Restoration Complete!
The Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress hosted a ribbon cutting on April 10th to mark the completion of the downtown’s first façade rehabilitation project located at 13 E. Broad Street, and restoration of one of the downtown’s oldest buildings.

The Alliance coordinated the rehabilitation project and worked with the property owner and the contractors to develop a plan for restoring the upper two floors of the façade while maintaining the building’s historic characteristics.

A ribbon cutting outside the building marked the completion of the project. In attendance were Derek Korpics (Korpics Kontracting), Sue Farley (Hazleton Historical Society and Museum), Ann Vinatieri (representing State Representative Tarah Toohil), George Leitner, Krista Schneider, and Neal DeAngelo III (representing DHAP), Dan Guydish (representing the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce), Mayor Joe Yannuzzi, and Pastor Manuel Nieves and many members of the church congregation.

Façade Rehabilitation Mini-Grants Available
The Alliance is hoping that the successful completion of the 13 E. Broad St. project, along with some financial assistance, will encourage other property owners to spruce up their own facades within the downtown.

Thanks to a grant from the First Federal Foundation, the Alliance is able to offer a mini-grant program to provide property owners with matching grants up to $5,000 to help fund maintenance and rehabilitation of existing commercial properties. The grant program is intended to stimulate building improvements while being mindful of the historical significance and uniqueness of downtown architecture. For more information and to view the grant guidelines, visit www.downtownhazleton.org and visit the Facades tab.
**Featured New Business**

Exclusively Ana’s Clothing, owner Ana Pérez, 41 W. Broad St., Hazleton

Ana Perez (pictured above), owner of Exclusively Ana’s Clothing moved her store from Wyoming Street to Broad Street earlier this year (next door to Carmen’s Bakery & Deli). This move allowed Ana to expand and diversify her inventory (she now sells a wide selection of beautiful dresses, handbags, shoes, and jewelry). As salsa music plays in the background and the sun shines through the big storefront windows, it is easy to feel like you have been transported to the Caribbean. “The move has been really good for business,” says her daughter Julia. The Downtown Hazleton Overlay District Committee, in partnership with DHAP, has been working with Ms. Perez as she prepares to install a new sign and awnings.

**Alan Whitaker Joins DHAP Board**

The Alliance would like to welcome Alan Whitaker as the newest member of the Alliance’s Board of Directors. Alan is a graduate of MMI and Penn State University. He is a Senior Financial Advisor with Wells Fargo Advisors Financial Network, LLC and a co-owner of American Patient Transport Systems Inc. He is also an active member of the Hazleton Rotary club and currently serves on the club’s Board. He resides in Sugarloaf with his wife Lisa and two sons, Alec and Jace.

**Art Youth Expo (AYE5)**

Mark your calendars for April 17 and 18 for the fifth annual Art Youth Expo, organized by the Hazleton Art League. AYE is different than other arts events as it focuses primarily on young artists under the age of 30.

Downtown businesses and organizations within a three block area host the exhibits and performances, which include live music (over a dozen bands as well as wandering acoustic musicians and performers), and over one hundred individual art entries and interactive events, including photography and a phenomenal Fantasy Makeup Show. A schedule of activities and map of all the venues will be available at the Hazleton Art League 225 East Broad Street. For more information or to volunteer, contact Marie Hayes at mhayes18@verizon.net.

Above: Fantasy Make-up contestant in last year’s Art Youth Expo (AYE4). Photo by JPecora Photography. To view other portraits visit: www.JPecoraPhotography.com

**Wanted: Farmer’s Market Vendors**

The Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress, together with the Chamber, is busy planning for this season’s upcoming Downtown Hazleton Farmer’s Market. The market will take place every Friday from 10am to 2pm starting July 17 and running through September 4th. Anyone interested in participating in the market as a new vendor should contact Krista Schneider at 570-455-1509 for details. There is interest in expanding the market to include additional prepared foods, flowers, artisan crafts, and of course fresh produce.

**Parking Garage Update**

After much anticipation and recent press, structural repairs to the City’s parking garage on South Wyoming St. are underway. Gottstein Corporation, the prime contractor for the structural repairs, has begun work on the concrete. According to the City Engineer, Dominic Yannuzzi, there will be more encompassing parking restrictions in the garage over the next few months. Those that use the garage should be extra cautious and aware of the workers and areas restricted to parking as the repairs proceed.

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**Mark Your Calendars**

**First Friday Themes** *(switching to First Friday in May)*

- May 1, 2015: May is for Mom
- June 5, 2015: Summer Fun
- July 3, 2015: Freedom Friday
- August 7, 2015: Crusin’ Downtown
- September 4, 2015: Tastes of Home
- October 2, 2015: Latin Arts Expo
- November 6, 2015: Veteran’s Day
- December 4, 2015: Christmas

**Art Youth Expo (AYE)**

April 17 and 18, 2015

**Farmer’s Market (10AM – 2PM)**

- July 17, opening day; July 24, July 31, August 7, August 14, August 21, August 28, and September 4

**Funfest**

September 12 and 13, 2015

**PTPA Shows**

- May 1-10: Lost in Yonkers
- June 12-24: The Who’s Tommy
- July 3-12, 2015: Mister Roberts
- August 7-16, 2015: Mary Poppins
- September 11-20: A Little Night Music
- December 3-13, 2015: Scrooge the Musical
Victoria’s Candies
Established: 1934
Owner: Paul Esposito, Jr.
Location: 51 North Laurel Street, Hazleton
Phone: (570) 455-6341
Email: paulespo@msn.com

Back in Hazleton, George began making candy for his friends and colleagues with one stove and one copper kettle. His chocolates became so popular that in 1934, George opened his first storefront on East Diamond Avenue and named it “Victoria’s Home Made Candies.” Soon after, Victoria’s demanded a larger factory and so in 1946 it moved to 51 N. Laurel Street and still remains there today.

Gradually George’s five brothers and two sisters joined the rapidly expanding business. George’s brothers Sam, Jack, Joe, Angelo and Carmen became master candy makers and the company flourished. People were coming from all over the region to buy the famous Butter Creams and other fine chocolates. George suddenly passed away in 1956 and his brothers continued his work.

George’s nephew, Paul Esposito Sr. joined the company in 1969 and learned the art of becoming a master candy maker. Paul Sr. then bought the business from his uncles and father in 1979. Paul’s business practice and dedication to high quality and customer service has driven the business to where it is today. His motto of “giving quality without any compromise” has been his key to success! After taking the helm, Paul Sr. saw the need for additional retail space.


In 1982 he opened the first off premise store in the Church Hill Mall on Rt. 309. In 1985 he opened his second off premise store in the Laurel Mall. Paul Sr. knew that people would appreciate the convenience and atmosphere of the new stores. He also developed a fundraising program and a corporate giving incentive program, which still continue today.

This summer Paul Jr. will be opening a new store in the Wilkes-Barre/Kingston Area, and hopes to have more retail stores open by 2018.

Credits: Thanks to Paul Esposito, Jr. for the information and all the wonderful historic photos.