

EAST ARLINGTON STORY PROJECT: STOREFRONT STORIES



East Arlington
Story Project



Have you noticed giant portraits appearing on walls in Capitol Square? Arlington Public Art's latest project is a tribute to the diverse independent local businesses that give East Arlington a special character. Using paper, wheat paste and words, artists Cedric Douglas, Nilou Moochhala and Julia Roth have put their stories on walls in East Arlington. Use the map as reference to discover them.



WHO IS ARLINGTON PUBLIC ART?

Arlington Public Art, the organization behind The East Arlington Story Project, is a committee of dedicated and activist volunteers who believe that public art belongs in our town. Starting with our first initiative, an enormous mural on the Boys & Girls Club visible from Spy Pond Park, APA has dreamed up ideas for placing art in accessible locations – streets, squares and parks – where people of all ages and walks of life can experience the power and delight of creative expression. APA has organized outdoor exhibitions of site responsive sculpture, commissioned artists to paint transformer boxes, and displayed artwork by Arlington high school students on street banners along Mass Avenue. Much of this work has been financed by the annual *Chairful Where You Sit*, a festive sale of artist-embellished chairs – many reclaimed from the trash, saved from landfill to become objects of art displayed proudly in homes throughout our town.

As chair of APA, I am thrilled to see the culmination of our largest and most complex effort to date in Storefront Stories, a project combining temporary art – giant paper portraits – with the written profiles and documentation collected in this publication. We are so appreciative to the Town of Arlington for granting the funds to bring Cecily Miller, our public art consultant, to partner with us on an initiative celebrating the completion of major redesign of the streetscape in East Arlington. Cecily has worked tirelessly to develop a project that both reflects and honors this community. We've had the pleasure of working with Cedric Douglas, Nilou Moochhala and Julia Roth, three talented artists who created an impactful, beautiful, and engaging project. I would like to especially thank Adam Chapdelaine, our Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen, for their strong and continuous support.

–Adria Arch, *Chair*
Arlington Public Art

WHAT IS STOREFRONT STORIES?



Storefront Stories is a temporary public art project celebrating the diverse independent small businesses of East Arlington with ephemeral portraits – giant photos attached with wheat paste to brick walls throughout Capitol Square – and enduring written stories.

Ask someone from East Arlington what they love about their community, and they will talk about the feeling of living in a small town, knowing their neighbors, running into friends wherever they go. Keep them talking a little more, and they will surely bring up a favorite place to eat or shop, one of the eclectic small businesses that together create a “village center” along the edges of fast moving Massachusetts Avenue. These storefronts offer an inviting hybrid of public and private space, welcoming areas where the community meets, gathers and feels a sense of place affirmed.

For **Storefront Stories**, we asked: who are the people who run these tiny, specialized storefront businesses, and what makes them tick? They work hard, investing long hours with little time off. They take risks, their businesses are vulnerable to economic ups and downs, and they may not make a lot of money. But we found out they share one big reward: they love what they do!

Whether they fix typewriters, cut hair, whip up pizza, or help people express themselves through art, music, clothing or gift giving, local business owners have acquired deep knowledge of their craft and of their customers. Some have stepped into a tradition – a family business sustained for many generations. Others have forged their own way – sometimes by making a transformative career change. But all are eager to share what they do and what they know. They are also appreciative of the community of neighbors and customers – from near and far – who support what they do.

Storefront Stories was created by the collaborative team of artists Cedric Douglas, Nilou Moochhala and Julia Roth, working with working with me as Arlington Public Art's curator/project director. We would have loved to include every storefront making up this community, but had limited resources for our project. From nominations by the public, 12 local businesses were chosen to represent a cross section of the commercial neighborhood along Massachusetts Avenue; we also included stories of some of the people behind the much-loved Edith M. Fox Library and its dedicated Friends group.

We were not surprised to find out that the people we interviewed are experts at what they do, but by the



end of the project, we became convinced that they are also fellow artists, although they might not call themselves that. We see them as artists in the sense that they draw on tradition and training; they practice, experiment and innovate; and most importantly, they express themselves by creating their businesses each and every day.

Whether you have lived in the neighborhood your whole life or have settled more recently, we hope **Storefront Stories** will inspire new connections and conversations. Next time you stop in at one of these businesses, we invite you to talk to the person behind the counter – ask questions, learn more, and share your own stories!

–Cecily Miller, Curator/*Project Director*
East Arlington Story Project
An Initiative of Arlington Public Art

JAN WHITTED

ARTBEAT

212A Mass Avenue



“There is a different kind of art for every kind of person there is in the world. You should try something different, just try it. Because by doing that, you open yourself up to change.”



The chartreuse and magenta letterforms of the word “Artbeat” jump out at you as you approach this art store/studio located a few doors down from the Capitol Theatre. Set against a vibrant blue exterior façade, these words call you in to indulge in some creative fun.

During the warmer months, an 8-foot high yellow giraffe découpaged with green, blue, and red patterning greets you at the entrance, while a chair painted to look like a butterfly is positioned outside inviting you to take a break. This makes you stop and take a look. In the winter, the windows are filled with project ideas, completed pieces, or simply art materials available to buy.

When Artbeat started, it was a rarity – not only a store, but a one of a kind walk-in art studio offering a variety of different projects that could be created with free-form expression– not just in one prescribed way. The concept has flourished though, with customers coming from all parts of Greater Boston as well as down the street. In 2016, Artbeat celebrated its 20th anniversary with a series of festive events.

Jan Whitted, the dynamic owner and founder of this “creativity” store, left a career as director of telecommunications at a university to open her storefront experiment. Artbeat grew out of Jan’s desire to develop a space where people could create a small piece of art without signing up for series of classes or have to invest in buying in too many materials. As she says: “My idea was, let’s have something at YOUR convenience. Come anytime, with anyone. Our customers are definitely families—mothers with young kids, preschool, elementary school kids, teenagers, adults. What’s interesting is all of our activities are adaptable to all ages.”

When you enter the space, the front part of the store has inspiring books, colorful art supplies, and ingenious craft kits to take home. It is an explosion of colors, textures, patterns. Knitting and weaving options line one shelf, while painting supplies occupy another. Easter egg dyes appear in the spring and Halloween-themed masks and supplies for Day of the Dead sugar skulls fill the shelves in the fall.

When Jan’s son was young, she took him to a trade show with her and they both enjoyed doing the sand art available there. Returning home inspired, Jan decided to design her own sand painting boards for Artbeat – mandalas for adults,

simpler patterns for the younger ages. It’s a very tactile experience. She prides herself in having made the Artbeat board designs more open-ended – studio visitors can employ a variety of techniques to make the same board look completely different. Jan believes in respect for materials and uses only natural materials; she recycles everything possible, including tiny bits of paper, felt, and sand.

The studio space is tucked away in the back of the store, but you can’t miss the huge “STUDIO” sign on the wall above a row of tables inviting you to take a seat. Nearly labeled jars of gleaming beads and mosaic tiles stand to attention on one side, while colorful tubes and bottles of paint line up below them. 3D letterforms, boxes and cardboard animals wait to be painted or découpaged. Small bins of items made from natural wood or recycled paper are displayed at a child’s browsing level so kids can reach them easily. You might encounter a dad and two kids working silently away back here, entirely focused on a project, or a more rambunctious group of young friends gathered for a birthday party.

Jan’s philosophy is simple: “There is a different kind of art for every kind of person there is in the world. You should try something different, just try it. Because by doing that, you open yourself up to change. And when you open yourself up to change in one area, who knows what can happen to your life?”

Jan feels that Arlington today is a lot more like Cambridge, with a lively international community. Artbeat, along with the other Capitol Square businesses, offers customers a rich, unique, and personalized shopping experience. When families discover Artbeat they come frequently over the years. She remembers one customer coming in with her sons for sand art when they were little. This woman’s son is now in medical school and she still comes to Artbeat before Christmas to buy the sand art supplies to send him. He has told her “Christmas would not be Christmas without sand art!”

I asked Jan what she thought of the East Arlington Stories project: “I have always found that public art is so important. Coming across something...you have to interact with it, find something, answer questions. That is so exciting. Art adds so much to community and helps people connect with each other in so many different ways.”

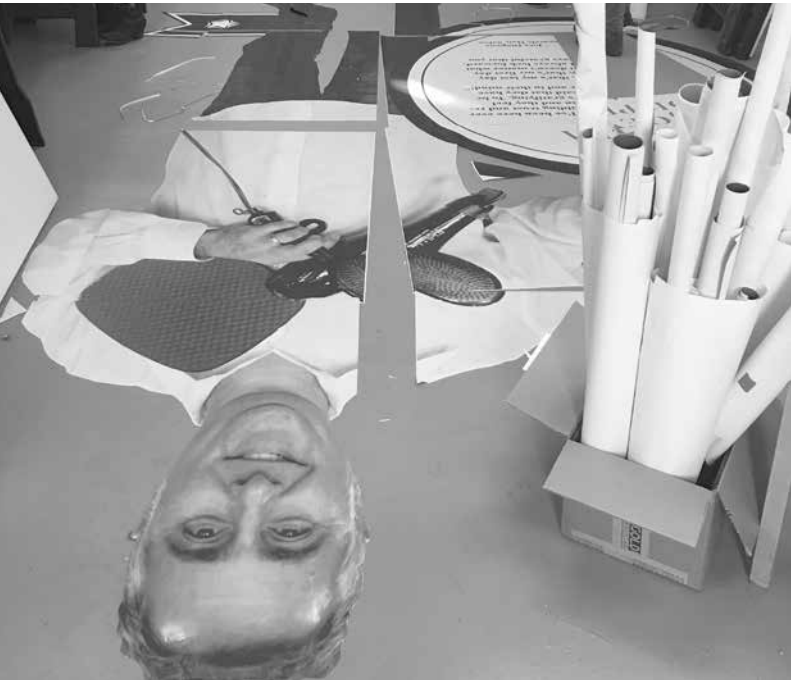


JOEY DISPENA

CONTINENTALE HAIR SALON

214 Mass Avenue

“Sometimes I look around, people from miles away coming here. I think there is lot of space between me and them. They come that distance, you have to step up your game and not take them for granted.”



Continentele Hair Salon, with a well-appointed maroon exterior and simple but bold letters across the top, has been at 214 Mass Ave for over 38 years. When I entered this hair salon I was greeted warmly by Joey DiSpenna, the cheerful Italian-American owner who started this business back when he was an impetuous nineteen-year old.

I asked him what his space was like when he first saw it in the late 70s and he answered, “I looked at this place, it was for rent. Sunday night, it was dusk. There had been a fire inside. The front was all boarded up with wood and a padlock. I looked at it with a flashlight, not knowing what I was seeing. I just said ‘I’ll take it!’ I was young, and never thought I could fail.”

Originally from Cambridge, Joey opened Continentele when he was single. One recent afternoon he looked over to see his kids and grandkids present in the salon – three generations of family sitting with him. He feels lucky to have found something he loves to do. For him, work is an escape, a place to come where he can help others. He views Tuesday, the day he opens each week, as his first day of business and Saturday, when he closes for the week, as his last. He never looks back: “I don’t rest on my laurels, it doesn’t matter what I did...that’s history. I always look forward...You are always grateful that you made it another week.” This fresh attitude each week allows Joey to always give his best to others.

He points out that a lot of the business is about forming a bond with the client. “It’s building trust and relationships over the years. I am their therapist! What’s

amazing to me is people come in and they feel comfortable in my space. It’s nice, it’s gratifying. To be able to help somebody. People have said that they have left here feeling better – in their hair and in their mind!”

“People I know who were single, they got married, pregnant and had a child. The child grew up, they got married, they had children. And all in the matter – like it happened yesterday. It’s mind-boggling.” He remembers Arlington being a very different place, more local. Back then, his clients had grown up or lived in Arlington for many years. He is proud of the fact that he still does haircuts and styling or coloring for those same customers. Ann is a customer who has been coming to Continentele since it opened in 1978. She comes here from Woburn and says that wherever Joey will go, she will follow. I asked her to describe him in one word. She says, “Amazing!”

The salon inside has gone through a few renovations over the past four decades. What one sees today are gleaming salon chairs, a spotless floor, walls lined with mirrors and a few select hair products for sale. There are comfortable chairs to sit in and numerous magazines to peruse while you wait your turn. Joey has a rotating staff of 5-6 people helping him and he is firm about not overbooking his clients. As he quips, “I like to run my business to be slow and steady as opposed to really busy. Almost like a blue-chip stock. We’re always in the same space.”

He supports and appreciates the changes that have taken place in the neighborhood. He says it feels more



European, more walkable and friendly. He always bumps into people he knows when he steps outside. He likes the vibrancy and human connection on the street.

Being on the same block as the Capitol Theatre has helped. It attracts people from Greater Boston and beyond. They might come here to see a movie after which they might stop by, look in, come in. According to Joey, every business here is very complementary to the others. It’s a neighborhood where one can get a lot done. You don’t even need a car. “Small businesses like this, in order to survive, we have to have relationships with people and care...dot our ‘I’s and cross our ‘T’s. Sometimes I look around, people from miles away coming here. I think there is lot of space between me and them. They come that distance, you have to step up your game and not take them for granted. It’s such a tribute.”

Recently, a woman phoned the salon and asked for Joey. He said, “It’s me, speaking.” She raved about the haircut she had at Continentele. So he asked her how long ago she had come in--was it 6 weeks ago, or 8 weeks? She answered, “25 years!” She had moved away and was back in town. She now comes to him regularly for her haircuts and styling. Joey’s philosophy – “You have to stay humble. You are very lucky when that happens. Never get bigger than what you think you are.”

JELENA BABIC & BRIAN PHILLIPS

MAXIMA GIFT CENTER

212 Mass Avenue



“We realize that each one of us [specialty shops] is too small to attract a big audience, but if we get together and promote the same message...we are more likely to be louder.”

The fate and evolution of Maxima Gift Center is woven intimately into the relationship between the owners, the husband-wife couple of Brian Phillips and Jelena Babic. Brian and Jelena met nineteen years ago. She was living in Austria and had come to Boston for a visit. He had grown up in Norwood and always lived in the Boston area. They fell deeply in love, decided to get married and within a few months of tying the knot, Maxima was born!

Jelena is from the former Yugoslavia and originally studied architecture, but ended up gaining experience running a collection of specialty stores owned by her mother in the city of Belgrade before the Yugoslav Wars broke out. Brian had a background in business. “My passion is design, style and working with artists” Jelena explains, “and Brian handles the numbers.” They decided to pool in their creative and business talents to establish Maxima Gift Center. They immediately started looking for spaces all over the city – including downtown Boston and Brookline. While visiting a friend in Arlington, they noticed the storefront space they now inhabit was available for rent. Architecturally it is beautiful, with fine old fashioned woodwork framing a series of elegant arched windows and glass-paned doors. They did not hesitate.

Today when you enter the store, you are engulfed in layers of creative expression – from the artful way that Jelena designs the window displays, to the multitude of wind

chimes, paper lanterns and dreamcatchers suspended from the ceiling, to a series of playful wall clocks ticking away. There are mugs handcrafted by New England ceramicists, local maps etched onto glass tumblers and scarves in various patterns and colors, all organized thoughtfully around the space. Racks of cards are lined up near the entrance in case you need to pop in to send someone a note. Newborn and children’s sections are towards the back, inviting elementary-age kids to browse for favorite authors or toddlers to grab onto a new stuffed toy, game, or puzzle. Gifts for adults are a large part of the inventory as well, from handmade jewelry to European bath and body products to kitchen accessories.

The petite and extremely stylish Jelena outlines their basic philosophy, “We try to have something for everyone.” She is always adorned with a unique piece of jewelry, which is usually available for purchase at Maxima. She and Brian make Maxima a warm, inviting experience by greeting familiar faces, checking in with customers about kids or grandkids and always letting people know they are available to help. They run a rewards program that donates a portion of money spent at Maxima to the public schools in Arlington, where their two sons are students.

Brian remembers the day before they opened in 1997. “It was the night before Labor Day. We were still working to setup

the store. It was hot outside and there was no air-conditioning. After the movies ended in the late evening, people came streaming in. That’s how we started – the late hours of our store were determined on that night. We love being a part of the nightlife of Capitol Square. It’s challenging, but we also think it is important to be open 7 days a week.” They had just enough inventory to start with back on that late summer night. Today there are close to 10,000 items filling their store.



They agree that their biggest competitor is on-line shopping, which has had a negative effect on brick and mortar neighborhood shops for more than a decade now. For Brian and Jelena, keeping the dollars within the Arlington local community is important. On the sourcing side this means finding local artists’ work to sell and on the customer side it is engaging everyone who walks through the brightly painted red door. This community-building approach extends to the larger Capitol Square neighborhood. “We realize that each one of us is too small to attract a big audience, but if we get together and promote the same message and do events together – like the Feast of the East – we are more likely to be louder.”

The offerings are not only about following trends, they are also about hearing what customers want. As Jelena explains, “When we started the store it was only 600 sq feet. We started as a gallery for young emerging local artists: potters, ceramicists, jewelers, etc. That was a nice focus in beginning. But as we got to know what the clients in this neighborhood were looking for, we adjusted our focus. It is important to listen to them, their needs. We expanded to double our size which opened up room for new sections that people were asking about. Arlington was becoming a more family-oriented town and the need for more baby gifts, books, toys, and stationery grew. We are still strong with accessories and home goods. The expansion rounded us out to be a full-around, all-around gift store.”

Maxima will celebrate 20 years in 2017. When I asked them what they are looking forward to in the future, they mentioned trying out a seasonal pop-up store. Finishing each other’s sentences they say, “Who knows what else? We’ll celebrate our 20th wedding anniversary next March, and Maxima’s 20th year anniversary in September 2017!”

ROSEMARY ARDAGNA

CLAY DREAMS

183 Mass Avenue

Have you ever walked by Claydreams, a few doors down from the Fox Library in East Arlington? It’s that neighborhood paint-your-own-pottery store that has a festive jumble of ceramic items in its windows – plates, cups, bowls, trivets, squirrels, dogs, princesses, ladybugs and more. All with swirls and sprinkles of vivid color: light green next to burnt red or shocking orange. It’s a color fiesta for anyone who dares walk through the door!

The yellow walls inside are bright and cheery. On most days, you will find tables filled with children ranging in age from toddlers to teens making something special for family and friends. It all happens by word of mouth and thanks to a great location in walkable Capitol Square. As the name implies, this welcoming storefront was dreamed up by a woman with a vision, owner RoseMary Ardagna who, at 76, has a shock of white hair and twinkling dark eyes. She loves being around people, talking to them, engaging them and helping them make a keepsake for themselves or others. She shares books, ideas and techniques with the customers if they are stuck on an idea or unsure of what to make. She says, proudly and to the point, “I run the whole show.”

Tables are neatly laid out with placemats, napkins, water, paintbrushes and a ceramic plate painted with a color wheel of all the glazes available for painting. It is the color plate that is mesmerizing – each color assigned its spot on the grid – swirling from the center outwards

until it fills it up entirely. Choose the clay item you want to paint and then pick your colors. The clay items that are always in stock are plates, cups, bowls and mugs but there are also fun seasonal options. During Thanksgiving it might be turkeys and fall leaves, while around Christmas one might find ornaments or Santas.

RoseMary welcomes people of all ages and abilities and has many faithful regulars. “I love the kids. I love working with the children. I have a senior coming in every week to make something...I don’t scream, I don’t yell, I’m pretty easy. So many people keep coming back, it’s amazing!” she says laughing. She works with special needs groups, and notes “I have a good rapport with them. I have a lot of experience behind me.”

RoseMary is proud of her ability to connect with all kinds of people, and help them make something that expresses themselves: “I’ve even worked with the blind, helping them choose their colors and go back and forth with the brush. I can help people to be their own artist, not necessarily be the artist myself. I think people, when they sit and they paint, they can put their feelings into what they are doing.”

After spending time in her younger years at the Boston Naval Shipyard working with some of the very first computers – Univac systems with punch cards – she tried ceramics and just loved it. She attended many seminars and classes and received certificates. She had finally found

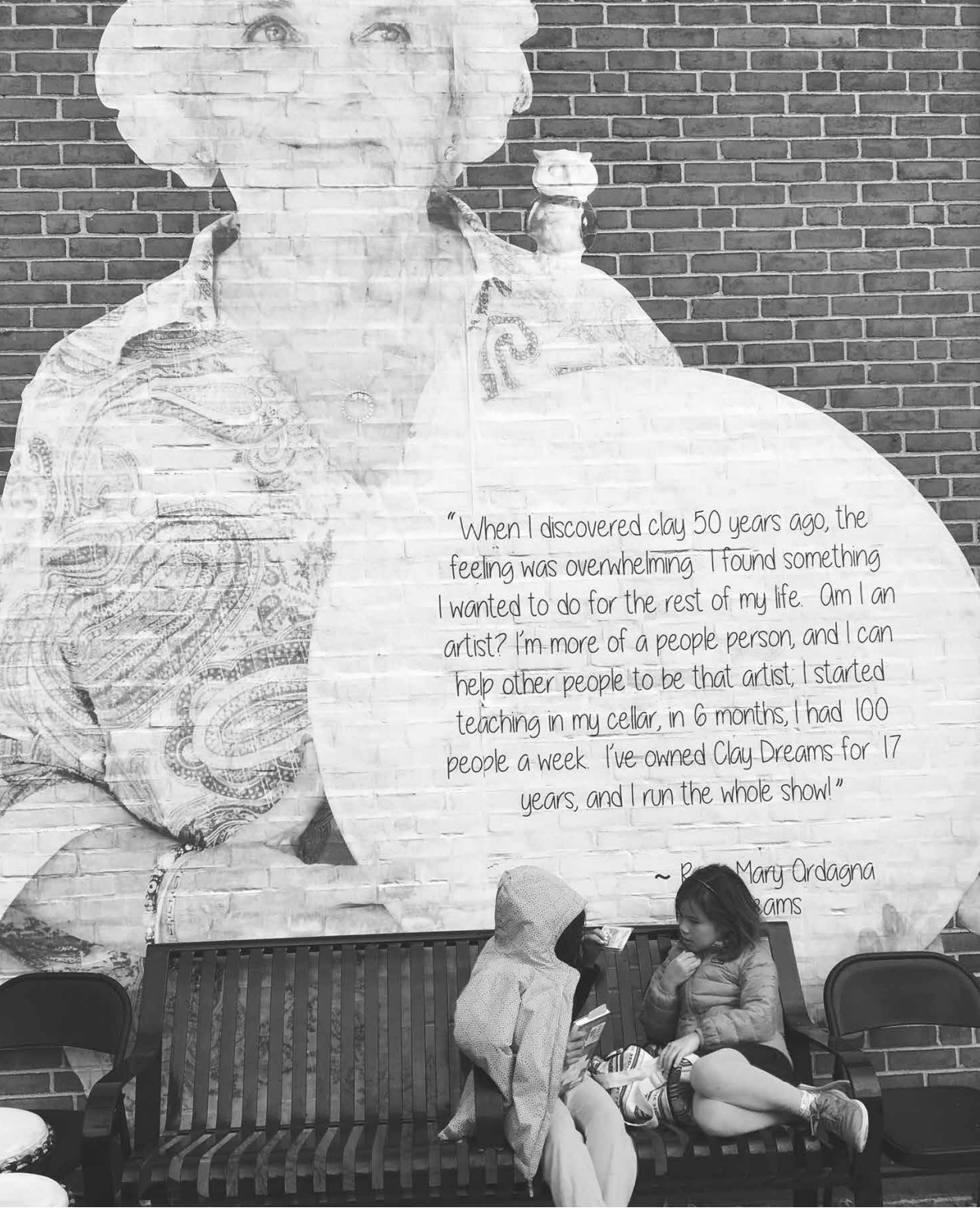
something she really wanted to do for the rest of her life. A childhood memory became a touchstone: “The very first time I made something, I took it home and felt like I could not believe I made it. The feeling was overwhelming.”

It was the 1970s when Claydreams was an inkling of an idea. RoseMary’s kids were in school and she did not want to go back to work, so she took over the basement of her home and started ceramics painting classes. She quickly started getting almost a 100 people a week.

“The very first time I made something, I took it home and felt like I could not believe I made it. The feeling was overwhelming.”

You can sense the community nature of this art space, especially in the small checkout counter. It is lined with 4”x 4” tiles that were created by the community. When Claydreams opened at its current space in 1999, customers were invited to paint a tile for the counter space. As a result, there are tiles with just a few colorful bold strokes painted by babies and toddlers; tiles with houses, starry skies, or animals by older kids and tiles with detailed scenery or more intricate designs created by teenagers and adults. This year, she plans to try that idea again.

As the story of her life unfolds, it is clear that RoseMary has never been one to sit still. She has sold Mary Kaye cosmetics and Tupperware. She ran a wholesale ceramics business out of a space in Somerville for years. She volunteers with the Chamber of Commerce and many other civic groups, and leads efforts to raise money for all kinds of charitable causes. She packs up supplies and brings them to classes at Senior Centers, returning to Arlington with pieces to fire. She knits constantly, donating hats and scarves to homeless shelters. RoseMary says that although she can paint and draw, she does not consider herself an artist. But her life suggests otherwise – what she creates in Claydreams and elsewhere are opportunities for people to connect with themselves and each other and make the world a better place.



EMILY CANNIFF

EDITH M. FOX BRANCH LIBRARY

175 Mass Avenue



Walking into the Edith M. Fox Branch Library, you are greeted by a smattering of fox-themed drawings, posters, signage and even stuffed toy foxes in the main office, if you happen to peek in there. These two foxes are named Fletcher and Sienna, and they accompany the librarians for weekly story-times and sing-a-longs.

It's not surprising that such an appealing and intelligent animal as the fox would become the mascot for this friendly place but the branch is actually named for a patron, Edith M. Fox, who helped provide some of the original funding to expand a smaller space that the neighborhood had outgrown. The tradition of community residents supporting their beloved library has continued with the Friends of the Fox, an active group of volunteers who raise

money to augment funding allocated by the Town to its highly regarded library system.

Emily Canniff is the branch manager at the Fox. Her enthusiasm gives the library a warm feeling and she is very open about how much she enjoys her job: "I don't want to ever retire. I love being here so much! Families really treasure this library. I see a lot of the same kiddos and grownups every week. They are very loyal, I really get to know them. It's like a big family here - the ultimate community center. It's hard to imagine my life without it."

Emily works with what she calls "a complete dream team! Our staff work together every day to support community needs and one another. I think we have a blast doing our jobs and it shows!" Circulation staffers

Laura Faunce and Linda Scoppettuolo are supported by two assistants. Children's librarian Yvonne Coleman comes in on Fridays. This small crew of well-read women make sure that the Fox remains a central hub and destination for the evolving neighborhood of East Arlington, which has been experiencing a demographic surge of babies and young children in recent years. As a result, the Fox is a busy place. Emily notes: "On sing-a-long days, I've counted 39 parked strollers - we call it stroller gridlock! There are at least 130 people attending those events. They always sell out." Describing the library she continues: "It's a quaint, tiny library. The people adore it. They're obsessed, in a good way."

Professional musicians are brought in to lead the sing-a-longs, but the librarians enjoy reading aloud to an eager audience during Story Times: "It's the highlight of my week. I prepare a theme...anything from underwear to dragons!" Emily explains, and stories are complemented by songs and craft activities. "It is my greatest hope that Story Time primes kiddos for a life-long love of reading, but also that they get a time to socialize, be themselves, do what makes them happy and of course be silly!"

The Fox is housed in a one-story corner building constructed in the 1970s. Within a large open intergenerational space, areas are dedicated to picture books and early readers; magazines and newspapers; teen books; and a collection of fiction and nonfiction for adults. Computer stations offer access to the internet and a place to do homework. The open space weaves around the librarians' counter, which has a small stepstool for young readers to climb up and hand over their books or chat with the librarian. A large community room in the lower level hosts diverse programs, from sing-a-longs and girl scout meetings to films and talks for adults.

In the children's area, the librarians have arranged couches with pillows, bean-bags on the floor, and low desks for toddlers and younger elementary-age children to sit and look through picture books or try readers. Children can check out blocks, puzzles or a game and spread out on the carpet to play. The windows that wrap around the front

of this library welcome the light to stream in and warm the space. Art is everywhere. Outside, comical foxes painted in red and blue grin at people passing by. These murals were created by artist Shunsuke Yamaguchi, who lives just down the street and is active with the Friends of the Fox. Inside, large cut outs of Tomie dePaola's *Strega Nona* and Marc Brown's *Arthur* grace the walls above the bookshelves.

Parents of young children can feel isolated at home; many report that the Fox is not just a welcoming social environment for their children. It also gives adults a gathering space where they can meet other parents and catch up with friends.

All in all, the Fox is friendly, inviting and comfortable. The purpose is clear: come in, get a book, and start reading! And while you are at it, meet your neighbors, make some new friends, and discover the community in your neighborhood.



GERRY MENZ

ARTWEAR

185 Mass Avenue

"It's wonderful to be here. It's friendly and comforting. I've always loved this part of town."

Step into this transformed 5¢ and 10¢ store and you enter an inviting space full of rich colors, contrasting textures and arresting styles. You want to reach out and try on that sleek silver necklace, wrap a beautiful silk scarf around your shoulders, or run to the changing room to try on a vibrant patterned top for work or play. Each item is there because of some distinctive or unusual quality. Owner Gerry Menz gave her shop a name to capture her wish to create a place where the clothes are works of art and getting dressed can be an act of self-expression: Artwear.

Artwear's clothes and accessories are carefully curated by Gerry with specific intent: "This is a store for mature women - women my age - who may not have "perfect" bodies but value comfort and workmanship. They want to look unique, stylish." Gerry seeks out things that will make her customers feel happy when they put them on. Her clothes are unconventional; Gerry avoids trends and does not carry the kind of clothes you would find in a mall.

"You have to be a little brave to wear it."

But you are not alone! As so many loyal customers have noted with appreciation, Gerry and her staff will help you find what looks best and you can trust their advice. "It's really important that [my customers] have a choice and can be guided by someone who is not going to lie to them about how it looks. If you want to help people you have to be honest."

It's a good story. The original idea behind Artwear, which opened a few doors down in another space fourteen years ago, was to be half gift store, half studio space, offering sewing lessons, fiber art, and

custom clothes. But that turned out to be unsustainable. People did not necessarily want to learn to sew - but what they did come for was Gerry's sense of style and the comfortable environment she had created.

"It was a sacred space for me. People would just come to talk to me, tell me their problems, talk about kids. I could not exist [financially] that way, but that's how it was. It was like a little sanctuary before, dim and cozy, with wind chimes. It's where I felt my way into the business. I still love it, I love the customers, I love the goods. It's like a baby that grew up. I had to nurture it along."

Gerry herself grew up in Arlington, moved away, and then came back when she had her daughter. She used to be a kindergarten teacher, but even when that was going on, she always wanted to design her own clothing line. That need was always shaped by what other things she was doing. She remembers that as a young person she was constantly dragging around art and fabric supplies wherever she went.

As the original store grew, so did the demand for smaller labels found only in boutique shops and that is where Gerry has focused her efforts. The space she is in now, located at 185 Mass Ave has large floor-to-ceiling windows, hardwood floors and abundant light pouring in. Numerous glass cases house exquisite jewelry, mostly handcrafted by designers. A vintage tailoring mannequin on wheels, draped with measuring tapes, stands guard behind the main shop counter.

The dyes and chemicals used to make textiles are not always environmentally friendly. Gerry has become aware of this and is concerned about the sourcing of her

clothes - how and where they are made and what sort of labor is used to make them. In recent years, Gerry has been much more careful about what she buys and tries to source clothes that are as much as possible ethically made.

Gerry loves having Artwear in the Capitol Square neighborhood, which has this old-fashioned business district within it. She explains, "It's wonderful to be here. It's friendly and comforting. I've always loved this part of town. The customer who is my customer will come here and will also go to Quebrada or Artbeat with their families. What we offer is unique - each store - but we appeal to the same customer."

In 2016 these very customers helped out when Artwear was adversely affected by the delayed construction projects around Mass Ave in East Arlington. Gerry was about to close shop when a group crowd-funded Artwear so that the business had enough money to keep going until it got back on its feet. These dedicated female customers spread the word and made sure Gerry and Artwear had a chance to remain in the neighborhood. She is grateful and feels lucky to have this support.

The business of Artwear leaves little time for designing nowadays. "I am an artist at heart. I am really shy out in the world, but in this store I am comfortable. It's the world that I have created around me. I have my machine. I hope someday I go back to designing clothes. It's in my blood."



SUSAN DORSON & STEPHANIE MURPHY

LITTLE FOX RESALE SHOP

175 Mass Avenue

Tucked away in the back of the Fox Library, you can discover a small children's resale shop brimming with "gently used" treasures – well designed and useful things that still have a lot of life in them, donated by community members and available for reasonable prices. This special place is the Little Fox Shop; although hidden, it is a destination for many families seeking both essentials and extras for their kids. "It seemed like I came every day when I was pregnant with our first child," one person told us, "we got almost everything we needed here."

Susan Dorson and Amy Weitzman opened The Little Fox Shop in 2008 under the umbrella of the Friends of the Fox Library, a nonprofit volunteer-run organization that supports the library. They had a mission to raise funds to protect library services from budget cuts when times were tough and to provide enrichment when times were good. Most of the items are things families are no longer using as their children have out grown them. People can clear out their homes, knowing that their donations may help another family. "I love it when people find exactly what they need. We are thrilled when things go to a useful next place. I love the idea of re-using and recycling. It has always been a part of my life," Susan tells us. "My parents were ministers with modest means so I grew up learning the real value of a dollar. My mom taught me how great resale shops were because you could find what you needed at a great price."

People are often introduced to the shop by friends. "We have sort of a cult following," Susan explains. "We are unique. We are part of the library – bringing people through who come to shop and building a sense of community." This innovative store could be nicknamed "The Little Fox That Could." Although modest in scale, it succeeds in making a mighty difference in the library,

in the lives of town residents, and even in the health of the global environment!

Stephanie Murphy, who manages the shop with Susan says, "It's a very unique space. It's like a kaleidoscope – a mix of everything, and it keeps changing. You never know what's going to come in the door next." The shop space is divided into three areas. In front you will find a wide variety of toys and books. "I love that your kids can play with a truck while you can look for clothes for them." A second area contains clothing for babies to pre-teens; the third area has maternity wear, strollers, cribs and more.

Merchandise is artfully displayed. Colorful miniature outfits are strung on a clothesline across one wall, while playful animal-themed toddler rain boots are lined up in a neat row. Stephanie's marketing background comes in handy. "Aesthetics matter!" she insists.

There is much to look at but it is all precisely organized and tagged. And the bargains! You could find a \$75 pair of winter boots for only \$18. A game that retails for \$18 might only cost you \$5. Moreover, you are helping the planet by re-using unwanted items. This environmental mission is central to both Susan and Stephanie. "In addition to doing good community work, we divert so much stuff away from being dumped in the trash and ending up in landfills," explains Stephanie. Anything that the Little Fox doesn't keep is passed on to other charities. Susan and Stephanie have developed collaborations to get items out to where there is greatest need. Some of Arlington's extra stuff may go as far as a village in Southeast Asia or South America.

"The truth is that none of it could happen without the people who generously give their time and top-quality donations to our cause," says Susan. Volunteers – students, seniors, working people with a few hours to

donate – together contribute more than 80 hours a week. Running the shop is a huge undertaking: "It's a lot of work, but we really enjoy each other's company and there is a lot of laughter!" says Susan. The result? The shop earns enough to keep the Fox open on Fridays (the busiest day of the week), underwrite popular programs and provide for essentials and extras that may not be in the library's budget.

Stephanie appreciates that her work at the Little Fox gets her out of the house and, although rewarding, isn't as demanding as her previous career. "My husband said I need to do this for my sanity. This is what it is. It's not high stakes." She often brings her kids with her to the family-friendly Fox. "They've never complained. This is like their second home."

Susan tells us, "When I had my first son, I would walk from my house. The librarians would talk with me and hold my newborn baby. Having this cozy community space was a lifesaver in those early days of motherhood." She loved the close-knit community atmosphere and the mix of resources in a welcoming intergenerational space – books for kids and magazines for her. This inspired her vision of the Little Fox as a friendly resource for new parents.

"I've seen the Fox become a real community hub and I love getting to know all the people that come through the doors of the library and the shop," says Susan. "Eight years ago I had this crazy idea; it has grown into a constantly bustling shop that makes a difference every day! The Fox Library holds such a special place in my life. I'm so glad that we have been able to create a support system that can help keep it vibrant, open and growing!"



"It's a very unique space. It's like a kaleidoscope – a mix of everything, and it keeps changing. You never know what's going to come in the door next."

SHUN YAMAGUCHI & HILARY RAPPAPORT

FRIENDS OF THE FOX

"The Friends have big dreams for the library! We are passionate believers in the power of books to change people's lives for the better. The Fox brings the community together to celebrate this power!"

A few blocks from the Fox Library down Mass Avenue there is a magic house, sky blue and covered with cartoon clouds. This is the home of artists Shunsuke Yamaguchi and Eileen DeRosas and their children; as the paint job indicates, it is a place where imagination reigns supreme. Eileen creates functional pottery in all shapes and sizes, painted with people and animals. Shun's art includes sculpture, paintings, drawings, animation, and his own version of a traditional Japanese portable storytelling theater. Their apartment is filled to overflowing with their work and their eclectic collections. While not a storefront business, this house is Shun's studio and office, the place "where it all starts," he explains. "Every art project I have, I do from here." To me, this makes Shun an honorary member of Capitol Square's creative small business community.

I ask Shun how he got involved with the Friends of the Fox. The story dates back to 2003 when, although hard to imagine now, the much-loved branch was in danger. "My older kids were very small and we used to go to the library a lot. Reading books is very important for kids, and it happens to be our neighborhood joint – I met many neighborhood people at the Fox. So when I heard the rumor that the town was making budget cuts and it would be closing I thought: 'OK, what can I do? How can I help?'"

The Friends had not formed yet, so Shun acted on his own. He painted a huge banner with a fox running across the grass;

in the far distance three men were chasing it with a net. He installed this banner on the front of his house, and immediately generated a buzz. Shun's painting made the cause visible – Save the Fox! –in a way that galvanized public opinion. "I'm a little over 50, so I think I know what I'm good at, I know how I can affect something, and the way to do it is usually a drawing, or a story. It's easiest when it just comes out, when it is coming from my gut."

Shun explained that when he first envisioned the fox the mascot for the effort to save the library, he did not know that the building was named for Edith M. Fox, an Arlington resident who contributed funds to expand the library back in 1965. But he enjoys the animal's qualities. A few years later, after the library's future was secured, he painted more foxes on the building's exterior; they are reading books to their children and looking mischievous. "The fox in Japan is a tricky animal. They are often in temples and shrines. I like their red hair. It's supposed to be canny. It's cute. Smart. Wild and playful. Also, it's an animal that is very nurturing to their kids – not like a crow or a praying mantis. A fox mom hangs on to the kits until they are ready to go."

Edith M. Fox was the first of many citizen patrons to support this neighborhood library. The threatened closing was an emergency that brought a group together to raise \$50,000 necessary to keep it open. Building on this success, the Friends of the Fox was formally



incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 2008. One of the founders of this hardworking volunteer group is Hilary Rappaport, the current president. Despite her petite frame and delicate features, Hilary is immediately recognizable as the kind of New England civic activist who gets things done, the backbone of small towns everywhere. She is articulate and energetic, and accomplishes a huge amount of work with a generous spirit and sense of humor.

"I grew up in a family that highly valued libraries and I discovered the Fox with my own small children who loved going there every week" she explains. "It was such a great place for families to relax, meet friends, and discover great books!" Hilary also points to the essential service that a public library provides: "I saw the impact the library had on lower income families who lived close by." She organized a program to bring kids to the Fox after school. "For some of them it was their first visit to any library and they loved discovering the magic of the place."

When the crisis was over, the Friends sought to establish sustainable ways to support increased library hours and services. Hilary and former selectman Jack Hurd (another passionate library supporter) negotiated with the town to use a back room. Building on the history of a successful resale shop that operated out of the basement, they recruited Susan Dorsan and Amy Weitzman, who had ideas for a new shop that would serve neighborhood families by focusing on items for children. The innovative Little Fox Resale Shop was born! Mary Ellen DeNatale and Judy Hoer, the dynamic women who ran the basement shop, switched their focus to *Fashion at the Fox*, a hugely successful sale that sends

stylish clothes to new homes several times a year. On top of this activity, the Friends group meets regularly to organize an array of activities and special events as well as raise additional funds from local businesses and individuals.

Hilary is quick to point out that she is just one of many who have made the Friends a success, from the volunteers who donate hundreds of hours to the Little Fox Shop to the other founders, board members, and supporters, including (in addition to those already mentioned): Paul Benoit, Pam DiBona, Amy Ellentuck, Jim Foster, Nancy Gabriel, Liza Halley, Cynthia Tollen, Scott Weaver, and former library staff members Page Lindsay, and Louise Crosby. "So many people volunteer their time to support the library they love!" Hilary says.

Today, funds from The Friends keep the library open an extra day and cover sing-a-longs and monthly programs for adults as well as new books and physical improvements. Branch librarian Emily Canniff praises their efforts: "The Friends of the Fox are truly an amazing support group. They constantly and consistently support the needs of this branch. Just in the last year alone the Friends provided new book carts, a new book return and a beautiful bench in the lobby...among many, many other contributions."

Although past events were the original catalyst, the group looks forward to a vital future. "The Friends have big dreams for the library!" Hilary tells me. "We are passionate believers in the power of books to change people's lives for the better. The Fox brings the community together to celebrate this power!"





Our project started with a visit to Tom Furrier's marvelous store, where stacks of beautifully designed vintage typewriters awaited repair. And it ended with our interview at Za, the first business to agree to lend us their wall, to hear Jeff Broadman and Fabiola Wheelock share their stories.





ALAN TAUBER

DRUMCONNECTION

177 Mass Avenue

DrumConnection. What is it all about? It's not just a store, not just a school. If you want your questions answered about drumming – or about any of the amazing array of percussion instruments from around the world crammed into this tiny storefront; if you want to join a community of good people who show respect and love for each other, who play music together and have fun; if you need your traditionally crafted African drum fixed... this is the place to go!

Alan Tauber is an established musician within the New England area specializing in the art of hand-drumming. His knowledge runs deep and wide. He has performed with many orchestras and bands and is attached to several local music institutions. Over the years, he has studied many different traditions of drumming – from American to Haitian, Cuban and West African – with various masters. Since he established DrumConnection in 1990, it has become one of the foremost drumming centers, a destination for people from all over New England who come to attend workshops with visiting artists, regular classes, or simply to find a drumming community.

Alan initially became an expert in international drumming styles without setting foot outside the US. He studied with master drummers here, including several Haitian Voodoo priests. Then a

girlfriend urged him to go to West Africa, and the trip changed his life. He has been back many times and, through marriage, now has an extended family in Guinea. Alan's teaching philosophy shifted as he interacted with African friends and, especially, his master teacher Famoudou Konaté: "Now, I am the embodiment of what Africa has shown me – it has given me a purpose to live. Once I was cautious about teaching everything I knew; in the old days, people did not want their students to get better than them. Now I know that it is best to share. You hold out your hand with all of your knowledge, and say to others 'you take some' and 'you take some.'"

"Teach people as much as you can and learn from them as well," he continues. "They might achieve your level, but you might have risen to another level, and you can constantly bring them up. If I learn something new, I will teach it. It's a much better way to live. Besides," he adds smiling, "if your students exceed you, if they become famous, people will recognize you as a great teacher."

Watching Alan at work in his store you see his philosophy in action. He patiently explains how an instrument was made and how it works to browsing customers. He might tell them about an African ritual practice – when a carver asks the spirit of a tree to use its wood to make a drum. He gently suggests that they try it, and then

urges them to try out another instrument that he thinks may interest them even more. The customers respond; they follow their curiosity, they experiment, and then they take home a new instrument – and a whole new set of possibilities – after quietly expressing their gratitude for his expertise.

We ask Alan where his interest in drumming comes from, and he shares an odd story. As a child, his family lived above his father's medical practice on Main Street in Waltham, where parades used to go by on many holidays. One time, as a 4-year old, he hid from a loud drumming section that had stopped in front of his house; he remembers his mother finding him and saying, "oh, you are afraid of the drums." "I thought that God was doing that to me for some reason – not to listen to the musical instruments such as flutes but to the drums." Somehow, he was inspired to face his fears and started taking his first lessons at age 5. He learned quickly and his entrepreneurial spirit showed early. "I got pretty good. When I was 10 years old, I had my own students. It would force me to study. That is one of the reasons I continue to teach today!"

The sense of Africa fills the small space of the DrumConnection. Sculptural masks hang on every wall, some monstrous and others elegant, next to traditional textiles; hand-carved drums are stacked up everywhere. By selling these items, Alan hopes

to help some of the people "back home" in West African communities. But Alan's first trip to Africa was not easy. The trip was disorganized, he didn't know who to trust at the airport with luggage or driving, or where exactly he was supposed to go. Finally arriving at the compound, "It was really hot, sticky. I was thinking, what the hell did I just do. Then my girlfriend said, 'oh look at the moon.' And we are both looking at it, and this little short man appeared next to me. Famoudou Konaté – the master – saying yes, the moon is beautiful. And from there, things got better."

"People from all over the world were there. It was unbelievable. I never thought I could be on African soil with this master, drumming, having fun, playing. We would have drum classes, or drum and dance. Or learn xylophone, balaphone. Everyone who meets this guy, they fall in love with him, he has a special way about him. As a student you feel like he is only there for you."

Alan now runs trips to Africa, and he brings Famoudou regularly to Boston for a week of workshops so that the community here can learn from him. Alan and Famoudou have forged a special bond that spans oceans and continents – connected by their love of music, teaching and community.

"Now, I am the embodiment of what Africa has shown me – it has given me a purpose to live. Once I was cautious about teaching everything I knew. Now I know that it is best to share."



TOM VAKALFOTIS

OLYMPIC PIZZA

173 Mass Avenue

Olympic Pizza has been on the corner of Cleveland Street and Massachusetts Avenue for 47 years, owned by three successive Greek families. Tom Vakalfotis purchased it in 1996, and has been running the tiny restaurant for the past 20 years. Businesses have come and gone but Olympic Pizza is still here, and Tom is still using the pizza recipe that was passed down by the previous owners. This makes his faithful customers happy. Some of them have been coming for 2 or 3 generations themselves; "they like this pizza, so I keep it the same" Tom reports with pride. Although the décor inside is sparse – since delivery and take-out are a large part of their business – the feeling is quite the opposite. The atmosphere is warm and enticing as aromas of fresh baked dough and melted cheese waft through your olfactory senses.

Tom came from Thessaloniki, a city in Greece. What bought him here? The need to be successful? Well, perhaps. Tom saw hard times coming for his country despite investment from the newly joined European Union. "The crisis they have [in Greece] today started 45 years ago. [If] I give you eggs to grow chickens, and you use them to make omelets, do you have any chicks? That's what they do... They go for the easy life."

But mostly it was love that drew him. His wife Anastasia – who goes by Sue at Olympic – was born in the same town but

left Greece for America at age 7 with her family. During a vacation back home, she and Tom met. He followed her back to the U.S. and they have been happily married for more than 30 years.

Tom has worked hard to establish himself in a new country, starting with learning the language. Growing up in Greece, Tom's father urged him to study English but "I made fun of the class," Tom explains; he never guessed his life path would take him to the U.S. Years later, on the plane taking him to his new home, the flight attendant asked if he wanted cream and sugar in his coffee. Not understanding, Tom said "no." And got served black coffee, which he hates. "Always, I drink sweet my coffee, but I didn't know" he exclaims in his thick Greek accent, laughing at his younger self. Drinking bitter coffee that day was the price for not having taken his father's advice, not having taken education seriously. "I never forgot that," Tom says, "You learn from your own experiences, your own life."

Starting out as a dishwasher, Tom learned to cook, working in various locations in Watertown and Cambridge. It was a hard life, working 14-hour days. He opened a pizza parlor in Lawrence, MA, but the town was too riddled with gun violence and other issues. He did not want to raise his children in that environment. When he had an opportunity to

buy Olympic and become part of the Capitol Square neighborhood he didn't hesitate. In fact, he bought the whole building, and security along with it. He now rents spaces to Barismo, 13Forest Gallery, Something Sweet without Wheat, a laundromat and a barbershop. The recipe for his success? "You need to respect everybody. If you respect the people, they will come here. Safe neighborhood, trusting. Everyone can come here and everyone will be treated equal."

Tom's son Costa – who studied criminal justice – adds his perspective on the store's safe atmosphere: "Here, everyone's OK. Even if someone comes in here and let's say they have a criminal record, and they see a policeman eating here. Doesn't matter. There's no problem. Everyone is treated equal."

When charging \$8.05 for an order, Olympic Pizza will sometimes waive the five cents. It's a small yet meaningful gesture. They won't be haggling over a few pennies with the neighborhood folks. Some have been 'regulars' for decades. Many have become friends, sending Christmas cards and giving gifts to Tom's kids to celebrate college graduation.

Tom's children grew up around the pizza shop, watched over by their mother and grandmother. When they were young, his two sons would play soccer outside.

Everyone in the neighborhood knew them. They were expected to pitch in and help sustain the family business. "Once we could see over the counter we would pick up the phone, help with the register... we were happy to help" explains Costa. But Tom made sure they did their schoolwork too, and headed for college. "If you came in 9 years ago, you would see this table full of books, my daughter was studying for Bentley. Now she has a masters!" Tom says with pride. Tom's father had made sure that Tom had gotten an education back in Greece, and Tom was determined to give his kids the same here. As he says: "I want to give something to them that they never lose – education. They never lose that... you have a degree, you have opportunity."

Tom compares running his business to raising a child, and describes the special challenge of a restaurant: "You have to learn to cook good, fast, and clean... and you have to do it SMILING!" Tom's life has been defined by his hard work, by his love of family and his belief in respect. As an immigrant, he is proud of where he has landed. Although he loves the business of feeding others at Olympic Pizza, once home the tables are turned. With a smile on his face, he says adamantly, "If I go to my house I never even touch one egg!"

"You need to respect everybody. If you respect the people, they will come here. Everyone can come here and everyone will be treated equal."



MARC GURTON

13FOREST GALLERY

167A Mass Avenue

Enter this bright storefront and discover a tiny gallery – 500 square feet – that has been painted white and cleverly customized to yield the maximum space for displaying artwork. It is full to bursting, but does not look cluttered. Feast your eyes upon hundreds of works of art arranged on long shelves or hanging from moveable walls: beautiful prints, paintings, collages, drawings, small-scale sculptures, ceramics, jewelry. Some are vibrant with color, others are somber; some are intricate and delicate, others bold and graphic. You feel uplifted and transported to another reality the minute you walk in.

You are at 13FOREST Gallery, an art gallery created by Marc Gurton, raised in New York and now living in West Medford, and his husband, Jim Kiely. Marc is gregarious and charming, as a gallery owner must be. He is able to speak the language of art to the artists he shows; the language of retail to the seasoned customers he cultivates; and the language of art appreciation to those who are not sure what they are looking at. It's a juggling act.

“We want people to experience variety and see what goes into the making of these art pieces.”

Where does the name come from? 13 Forest Street was the original address of the gallery when it was started in Medford Square by a friend of Marc's a decade ago. In Marc's former professional life he was an accountant, although his mother and grandmother were always art enthusiasts and he grew up going to museums. Originally, he connected with the gallery to help his friend with the bookkeeping; drawn to the art, he also started helping with some of the exhibitions. Eventually, he took it over and eight years ago moved to East Arlington. This fall, 13FOREST opened the season with an exhibit called TENFOLD, which celebrated their 10 years of business by showcasing artists from the time the gallery was founded as well as other regulars that have been with them over the years and newcomers whom they are showing for the first time. It's a call-out to the past, present, and future.

The majority of the artists shown at 13FOREST live in New England, and mostly in and around Boston. “We do a lot of scouting. We go to a lot of openings and shows,” Marc explains, “we are very proud to be part of Arlington but we reach out to other areas of the city, too. It's a tight-knit art scene in Boston. Our customers are also from around here and New England...We are very lucky there is a lot of great art being made in Boston. We have these amazing institutions – MassArt and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, some of our artists are also teaching. Boston is an educational town.”

Marc himself came up to Boston to attend college; he vividly remembers an inspiring art history class taught by “seven different professors. Each one taught their specialization. You learned about history, religion, the culture of the time. I loved that.” Growing up in Queens, he remembers trips to NYC museums with his mom and also being inspired by her as an art educator. “She taught art while she was carrying me!”

13FOREST rotates its exhibits every 6-8 weeks. This means that, in addition to a series of walls that feature a



continuous display of some of the gallery's regular artists, there is also space for changing curated exhibitions on a variety of themes or media. A fun part of the job is discovering new talent to show. Along with the exhibitions, 13FOREST offers opening receptions, talks, and other events to get the word out and to educate the public about the talent in the gallery that is waiting to be unleashed.

He reminds me: “Art is not something that people buy every day. Selling art is a different animal.” Marc is always ready to talk about art; an important part of his role is to help his clients gain insight into the mindset of the artist. “We really try and break the mystique around the art.” He often writes short essays on the artist's creative process to help potential buyers get more comfortable with the art-work – to explore the inspiration behind those bold strokes of paint or those subdued lines of graphite pencil. The price is also attached to each piece, so that there is nothing hidden from customers as they browse the gallery walls.

13FOREST works to make art affordable by offering a great program combining Marc's background in accounting with his passion and dedication to art: the gallery offers

a payment plan for any piece of art. So rather than one big chunk of money that might be daunting for an individual, they will arrange a 3-6 month installment alternative. “We offer our customers an opportunity to put art into their budget in a way they might not have been able to otherwise.”

When someone walks into his gallery, Marc will not accost them with too much information at the get-go – that's not his style. But he will remind them that he and the gallery director, Jillian Wertheim, are there to answer their questions, and will definitely point out that the artists they are looking at are locally sourced. Some people will come in with preconceived notions of what they want or what art is, and are often surprised themselves at what they walk out having purchased. “We tell them to trust themselves. We really try to get them to be comfortable with their own knowledge and taste. And that is why we have all these events, openings, talks. We want people to experience variety and see what goes into the making of these art pieces.”

LAWRENCE MAIDA

MAIDA PHARMACY

121 Mass Avenue



“I look at the whole picture, I ask lots of questions; I listen, I care. What brings me the most joy and satisfaction, is being an active participant in my customers' health. That is what is the most fulfilling.”

Mortar and pestles. Precision weighing scales. Empty capsules and bottles to fill. Sheets of prescription orders. This is not your regular trip to the chain-store pharmacy. Here, prescriptions are painstakingly created for your individual use by Larry Maida, the third-generation pharmacist and proprietor of Maida Pharmacy in East Arlington.

Out in front there are shelves lined with different pill bottles. Towards the back is a glass window that says “Compounding Lab.” Looking through this inner window, you can see a very clean, organized lab with digital equipment and machines, mixing containers and spoons, and precise measuring devices for creating the unique compounds needed to alleviate various ailments. Larry Maida is neatly outfitted in a button down shirt, slacks, and tie with a white lab coat that says “Maida Pharmacy.”

Larry's grandfather, Carmelo “Charlie” Maida, started the pharmacy in the 1930s. It was the neighborhood drugstore then and everybody went there to get help with their health needs. His grandfather would compound the medications for all his clients. That was the way they did it in the days before the large pharmaceutical companies began mass-producing pills. Each customer had one-on-one service, and their prescriptions were filled very carefully by hand, not by a machine.

Under Larry's father, Larry Sr., Maida was more than a drugstore. “This was a very social place. It was a different environment. We had a soda fountain here along with the pharmacy...Sodas, sandwiches, root beer floats, ice cream. And think about it – today, you couldn't have that. It took all the family to run it.” Neighborhood folk would come in to socialize, gossip and exchange news, as well as pick up whatever items they needed for their families. There was even a phone booth for making private calls, when you didn't want your whole family listening in.

All three Maida men graduated from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy where they studied pharmacy and the art and science of compounding. Currently, Larry's son – representing the 4th generation of this family – is enrolled there. To succeed in this profession you have to be meticulous about measurements and the relationships between the ingredients. When filling up these tiny capsules or creating creams or solutions you must be precise. You have to love compounding.

Although times have changed, Maida Pharmacy continues to offer personalized care. Larry has focused Maida's services entirely on compounding and wellness services: “It is a bold move. What I am doing here is a specialty service, an alternative to dispensing the mass produced commercial products. There's

only a handful of us doing this.” Larry not only deals with pharmaceutical remedies, he has studied and is well-versed in nutraceutical, herbal, and homeopathic treatments and also makes these alternative treatments available to customers.

Larry explains that there is a triad of relationships between the patient, pharmacist, and physician. The physician gives his or her diagnosis and recommended solutions, the pharmacist then comes up with the preparation that best fits that patient. Much of Larry's time is spent in the lab mixing ingredients, but the rest is spent with customers, asking questions. Does the customer have allergies that rule out certain ingredients? Do they have difficulty swallowing pills – Larry will prepare a liquid alternative, or a lozenge. Are they concerned about the effect of a drug on their liver or kidneys? Then putting the medication in a topical cream or gel may be the way to go.

Business depends on listening attentively to the patient's needs and pain issues and then assessing how best to come up with the compound that works based on the physician's diagnosis. “I use the active chemical powders, pure, to make the dosage formula, using just one or combining multiple medications as necessary, and dispensing in a form that works for you. Let's say you don't eat meat – I'll use a vegetable capsule. Lactose intolerant?

We'll remove dairy ingredients common in commercial preparations. Need a custom hormone treatment? I can do that! These problems come up in my line of work every day. Everybody's happy!”

Maida Pharmacy has patients coming in who are looking for the kind of care he offers – full body health. He doesn't just focus on one area of pain or problem, but considers how everything is going to interact together in your system and what impact that will have in the long term. Maida is looking at the whole person. Larry explains: “I look at the whole picture, I ask lots of questions; I listen, I care. What brings me the most joy and satisfaction, is being an active participant in my customers' health. That is what is the most fulfilling.”

It's gone full circle for this historic drugstore turned specialized compounding pharmacy. Their determined longevity and willingness to keep up with the times has allowed them to be part of the East Arlington neighborhood at 121 Mass Ave for the past century. What Larry is doing is resisting the tide of mass-produced conventional solutions. He has a vision for a healthier future that is rooted in the past: developing one-on-one relationships with customers combined with up-to-date technology and scientific solutions.



JEFF BROADMAN & FABIOLA WHEELLOCK

ZA RESTAURANT

138 Mass Avenue

“It’s a small menu but well done.”

Za Restaurant is a shining beacon of culinary delight at 138 Mass Ave in East Arlington. The interior is inviting, well-designed and comfortable. Tall windows frame the front of the restaurant. A row of high tables and chairs runs along the windows so diners can look out and watch the streetscape. Further inside are dark wood booths and tables that can be flexibly arranged to accommodate two friends or large parties. Closer to the entrance is an L-shaped seating area for those waiting for their turn to bite into the delicious one-of-a-kind pizza that is Za’s trademark.

You are likely to be greeted at the door by Jeff Broadman, who started as the General Manager in 2009. Jeff is a tall, spectacled, friendly presence. His style is open and comfortable and makes you feel at ease and at home. He works closely with owners Peter and Colleen McCarthy to keep to the Za vision, to make sure there is smooth sailing on the floor and in the kitchen.

Like many people, Jeff first came to Boston to work in hi-tech: “I had a job at a start-up. Corporate sales and marketing. When it was bootstrapping I loved the energy and culture of it; as it became more grown up, I left. I had friends who started a restaurant, so they asked me to work there. I never looked back – started as a host, then server, now general manager.” Jeff is happier out of an office environment, and finds the challenges and fast pace engaging and satisfying. “I like the problem solving, and the physical movement of restaurant work,” he explains. “Being on my feet versus sitting at a computer.”



“Food is a way we take care of ourselves and others; when we make a meal...or invite people into a restaurant, we are expressing love.”

But there is another aspect that motivates Jeff, and helps explain why Za offers such a welcoming environment: “I love food and taking care of people. Food is a way we take care of ourselves and others; when we make a meal for family or friends, or invite people into a restaurant, we are expressing love.”

Jeff shares the story of how Za was created. Peter McCarthy is a James Beard award-winning chef. He and his wife Colleen started a successful upscale farm-to-table restaurant in Cambridge called EVOO in 1998. When the opportunity arose 12 years ago for them to start a second restaurant in their own neighborhood, they seized it. They were inspired by memories of a place they loved to go when they were kids living on the South Shore, which served individual-size pizzas. At Za, 10” pies would be served along with salads – a specific menu – but with a focus on sourcing the best local ingredients from farms such as Kimball, Verrill, and Drumlin. And the pizzas – all Peter’s creations – would be innovative, even daring. Don’t be surprised if you see a rhubarb and asparagus pie with caramelized onions! My own fall favorite is a sweet corn and smokehouse bacon white pie with scallions and parmesan. The salads at Za are fun, unique creations – an arugula and ricotta salad can be sweetened with tiny bits of melon, or a tower of compacted

beets unravels to expose goat cheese and toasted hazelnuts.

Key to the vision for Za was to offer a casual dining experience for all ages – young families, groups of friends, older folk – the residents living within and around this eclectic community. I ask Jeff who his customers are. “We have a lot of regulars. We see Arlington people. Also those coming from the surrounding neighborhoods –Cambridge, Somerville, Medford, Winchester, Watertown. We obviously get a lot of young families. We are flexible and family-friendly; it is who we are around here.”

Fabiola Wheelock, one of the servers, agrees: “We know our customers. The attitude of the owners and the General Manager is that the customer is first. When you go out to eat...firstly, you don’t want to cook...secondly, you want to try something you don’t eat at home.”

Fabiola came to Boston from Nicaragua when she was a teenager. It was a complex situation with political alliances being shifted constantly. “In the 80s, we had the Sandinista revolution. In the beginning it was, ah yes, revolution, everyone being equal. But then, you know, you want to control people. All the good doctors, professors, professionals were leaving the country. I was going to school but nobody was coming to teach. There wasn’t even chalk to use on the blackboard. We were blockaded by the USA, only helped by communist countries. I did not want to be a soldier. I was in high school. I didn’t finish. I had an opportunity and I decided it was time to leave.”

With the support of some of family friends, Fabiola left on a student visa and attended a university in the Greater Boston area. But school wasn’t really her thing, she didn’t enjoy it. Like Jeff, she also was drawn to the restaurant business, with its strong customer service orientation.



Fabiola is gregarious and warm. When we sat down to chat, we laughed most of the way through the interview. She cracked jokes and erupted in laughter herself as she described the life path that brought her to Za. She worked for many years at a bakery called Panini; it was across the street from Peter and Colleen’s first restaurant, and Colleen often came in for coffee. When Fabiola heard that they were planning a new restaurant, she walked across the street to apply and she has been with Za ever since. “I was numero uno, number one,” She says with pride. “I was the first employee here.”

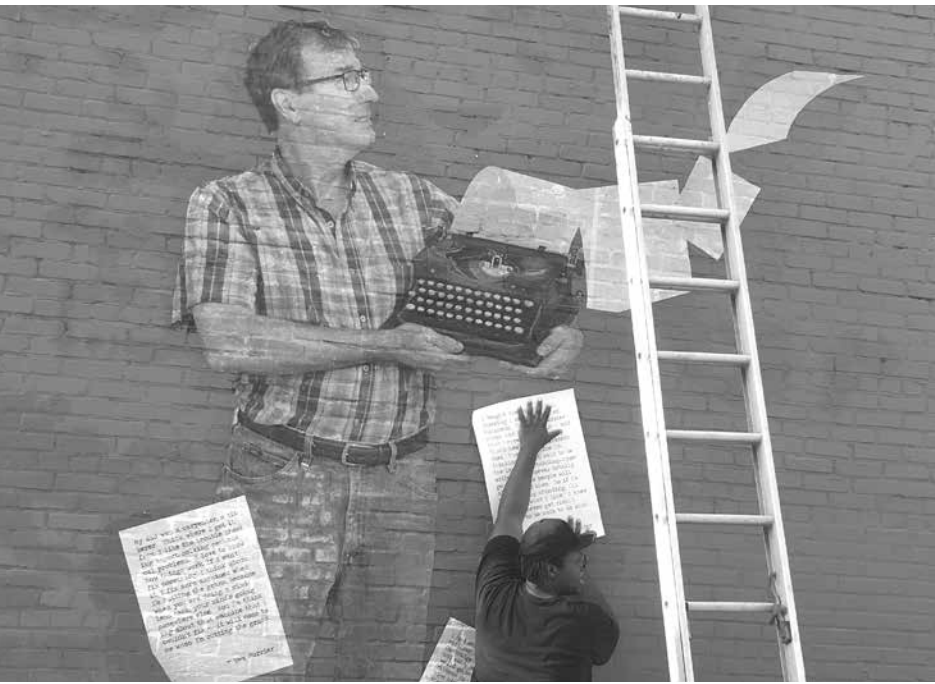
Jeff tells me more about the Za philosophy. Za is one of the few dining places in Arlington that composts. They source green products whenever possible; take-out trays are compostable and pizza boxes use a special alternative material. Za invests in the community by recruiting high school kids to work as hosts, or, once they are of legal age, as servers. They have dedicated staff that have started out young and stayed with them for years. Working with the Town government is important to them. After the Mass Avenue reconstruction project was completed, Town planners approached Za to see if they would enliven the sidewalk outside their place by creating outdoor seating. So they invested in planters, café tables and chairs, and got a liquor license to serve alcohol outside.

The opportunity for al fresco dining has been a hit with customers. On a warm summer night, tables are full of people laughing and talking, enjoying fine food and conversation. Za has brought a hint of the Parisian boulevard spirit to East Arlington’s newly redesigned stretch of Massachusetts Avenue.

TOM FURRIER

CAMBRIDGE TYPEWRITER

102 Mass Avenue



As you enter Arlington from Cambridge on Mass Ave, you may notice a small white storefront called Cambridge Typewriter. At first glance, all you see are a few unique 100-year old typewriters and vintage metal ribbon cases in the window display. Peering in, you are surprised to see many more beautiful old typewriters occupying every possible square inch – their colorful keys gleaming, their black or silver bodies glistening in the warm sunlight. You are entranced.

Tom Furrier, the very personable owner of this store, greeted us as we walked in a few weeks ago. He has been attached to this store since 1980 – first apprenticing and working there for 10 years with the original owner, his neighbor and mentor Ed Vanderwalle, and then buying it and running it himself for the past 26 years.

His love of all things typewriter is evident.

Tom has machines dating from the 1920’s through 1970’s that include classic brands such as Royal, Corona, Olivetti, Underwood and Remington. He knows each one of them as a parent would know a child–when they were first released, how they function technically, how they can be repaired if needed, and what typing technology was used in each of them. We learn about the history of each model we look at – be it a 1973 IBM Selectric that types at 120 words a minute or an 1880s “blind” typewriter where you can’t actually see the letters being printed on the paper – he can tell you exactly what they are all about.

We talk about the social impact of different technologies, ranging from the radio to TV to computer. He says with little fanfare but much gravitas: “The typewriter gets the shout out for changing everything. Around 1910. It got women out of the house to work. They started attending typing school and working.”

Although the original focus of the business was dealing with office typewriters in the 70s/80s, there are changes in terms of who is coming into the store nowadays. Today, customers are the younger crowd. Those who have grown up in the digital age come in to try out vintage analogue technology. Teenagers tell Tom that his old machines offer them respite from information overload: “it knocks them out – almost to a T they all say it – ‘I can type without distractions!’ Because every device they use is a multi-tasking device, they don’t know what it’s like to use a single purpose device. And when there’s no distractions, your focus is like a laser...it’s almost like a natural high, a zen-like activity.”

Young people may use these old machines to keep diaries or to be in mail correspondence with their friends – or perhaps to get inspired to write like their favorite authors. The best part of the day for Tom is when he sells

“Around 1990, most of the other repair shops had closed, and I just figured that if I held on long enough and believed in it, I would be fine. I wanted to be able to do what I love and make a living out of it.”

a typewriter to one of these kids, always flipping open the cover and showing them how to fix simple mechanical problems themselves. It is gratifying for him to see their youthful excitement and to pass on his love for these machines to a new generation.

At the other end of the spectrum, Tom has customers who are professionals: “Lots of famous writers come in – my favorite is David McCullough, a history biographer right here in Boston. I still geek out every time I see him, because he’s so big – he’s won two Pulitzers – but he’s also so nice! Everything he’s written for the last 40 years has been on a typewriter – the SAME typewriter. He put me in the acknowledgements for his latest book because I take care of his machine...I was blown away!”

Today, Tom’s is one of the only typewriter repair shops left in New England, and he has a backlog of 4-6 weeks for repairs. “Around 1990, most of the other repair shops had closed, and I just figured that if I held on long enough and believed in it, I would be fine. I wanted to be able to do what I love and make a living out of it.” As he speaks, he is opening and closing different typewriters – showing us how they print, talking about the beautiful type keys associated with these models, and narrating the history of their evolution. He is a walking encyclopedia of all things typewriter.

He enjoys being part of the old-style walkable streetscape of this neighborhood – with lots of independent stores along Mass Ave. “I like Arlington, East Arlington. I think people nowadays miss that neighborhood connection – they are really eager to reach out to start a conversation. There are changes are going on here, I think they are for the better. We can’t go backwards, we have to go forward.”

Tom loves listening to stories of the customers who come in – be it famous or aspiring writers, artists, designers, or others: “People always tell me how much they appreciate what I do. It never sunk in till I had this one customer, a retired minister. He lived in a house in Cambridge. He was handicapped – needed a wheelchair and cane. He typed everything. I would go over four times a year and change all the ribbons on his typewriter and service his machine. We would talk then. One year I did not get my regular call from him – he had died. His kids did call me and told me (as they got tears in their eyes) – how his typewriters were his right hand, his correspondence to the whole world outside. He appreciated what I did for him so much. The tears started coming down my face, too. I get it now. What one does for someone else, you don’t know how it can affect them at that personal level. I want to do this [job] for as long as I can.”



NOMINATIONS

Arlington Bait & Tackle

As the owner of Arlington Bait & Tackle, my story is about my customers’ stories – be it about the “one that got away” or just spending time with family and friends

– Rodney Zukowski, Owner

Arlington Diner

My 91 year-old mother-in-law and I have been meeting there for many, many years! They know us there!

–Anonymous

Artbeat

Artbeat has seen my kids grown up. Our household is filled with the items my kids have made over the years, from the first sand art my older daughter made when she was four and the rubbings my younger one made when she was three. Since then, our house has gradually acquired votive candle holders, sun catchers, decoupage candle sticks, decoupage napkin rings, painted boxes, jewels bowls, mixed media wooden frog wall art and more. What could be better than a walk-in art studio? The idea became so central to our family, we created one in our house!

–Anonymous

Artwear

In early November of 2015 my mom lost her husband of 72 years. A few months later I took her to Artwear. It was a risky venture. Even in the best of times, my mom's not a big shopper and although at 92 she still has a great figure, she's often critical of how things look on her. I knew that Gerry and her staff are always honest and will tell you if something doesn't look quite right, so when they raved about how things looked on my Mom, I believed them and so did she. We walked out of the store with two terrific new outfits (much hipper than my mom usually buys!) and for the first time since my father's death I knew that my Mom still had an appetite for life and that she would be all right.

– Leslie Lawrence, Cambridge

Barismo

I love Barismo. Love their coffees but also the relaxed atmosphere there and the people I meet. I always stop there to get a coffee of some type and take it up to Spy Pond and sit and sip and chill with my dog Izzy. I nominate them!!!

– Laurinda Bedingfield, Somerville

B&R Glass

I've lived in Arlington in a two family house since 1984. The house has over 40 windows! So, that is a lot of screens, sashes, and glass to deal with. The guys at B and R Glass are great - one of the last of this kind of business, they repair and make screens for the very specific architecture of East Arlington. I've also had them cut glass or plexi for my frames over the years. An old shop, not renovated, nothing fancy about it, the guys who work there are always nice and accommodating. I believe that it is a family business. Often when I go in, there are a group of older men, probably neighborhood friends, who like to congregate and chat with the owner. It's kind of nice that I can just walk or drive five minutes and have them take care of my window problems. So much nicer than having to go to a big box store. This is one of the many reasons I love East Arlington. B and R.

– Anonymous

Clay Dreams

Last year I couldn't figure out what to give my partner for Valentine's Day. Then I poked my head into ClayDreams – what a magical place, filled with all kinds of functional and whimsical pottery painted by people of all ages. I decided to paint a plate for him, and chose one just the right size for his standard lunch: peanutbutter sandwich. I came up with a design with with snakes and hearts – because he's a musician and his band is called the Revolutionary Snake Ensemble, and, well, hearts are for love, of course! But then I waited until the last minute to pick it up, and then got caught in traffic; called the owner to see if she would stay open late on Valentine's Day so I could pick it up in time. I could tell she wanted to go home after a long day, but she agreed, so that I wouldn't have to go to dinner empty-handed. I'm betting this is just one of the countless kind things she has done for customers over the years.

– Cecily Miller

Capitol Theatre

I had never set foot in the Capitol Theatre in East Arlington until I was given the position of General Manager. Even though I was going in blind, coming to work here is the best thing I have ever done. It has changed my life completely. It was at the Capitol that I got to meet the kids of Arlington, as they were hired, grew up, and left for bigger and better things. It was here that I got to meet the families of Arlington, as they came to baby matinees and then to birthday parties. It was at the Capitol that I first met my husband. (He had worked there when he was in high school, and had come by to visit old friends.) It was at the Capiitol that my husband proposed to me. It happened late at night, after we had closed. I said “Yes!” at the corner of the concession stand – the place where we had first met. It was at the Capitol that we gathered our family and friends for our wedding. It was because of the Capitol that we bought our home in Arlington. It is at the Capitol that I plan to raise my own kids someday. The Capitol Theatre will always have a special place in my heart, and in East Arlington!

– Jamie Mattchen, Arlington

Christo's Fruit Market

How to enjoy the delicacies of the Mediterranean from 4 blocks away in East Arlington? Christo's Fruit Market is that piece of Greece only 4 blocks from my house. OK, I've shopped at Christo's for all the years I've lived in Arlington – fresh produce, canned dolmades, fresh feta and spanakopita. But it was the day I discovered their Greek yogurt that was my real Day of Discovery. Not sweet, not crammed with icky sweet things, Christo's bulk yogurt is simply thick, creamy, slightly tart. Alone it's yummy, but mash into it a ripe banana, a few blueberries and maybe a handful of uncooked oatmeal, it's exquisite! Long has this mixture been a breakfast favorite. Enjoying the foods of Greece – brought to me by Chris, Georgia and Jim – from my East Arlington perch.

– Emily, Arlington

Clip Joint

My dog is very picky about who he'll let pet him or groom him. He loved Julie, the groomer from day one! She is amazing, loving and so talented with her grooming. Wouldn't take my pet anywhere else!

– Jeffrey

Continentale Hair Salon

The owner of the salon is a super kind and talented man who opened his business in the same East Arlington location it is still in today when he was less than 20 years old! There was nothing else on the block except Quebrada Bakery which was selling only wholesale at the time. He has built a successful business over many years and has clients who drive from other states to get their hair done because they have known him from the beginning. I have met some of these people several times and now I too understand how they feel. He has even been a successful matchmaker! When I asked my librarian friends where I might take my mother to have her hair done, they all answered, “take her to Joey, of course!” He has been so sweet to her and done such a great job, that she won't consider going anywhere else and we both look forward to our visits.

–Anonymous

Derby Farms

Derby Farms in the Capitiol Theatre Building in East Arlington always has an artful display of unique, colorful, quirky, elegant and attractive items that never fails to fascinate passerby!

–Ed Gordon, Arlington

Fox Library – Little Fox Resale Shop

Because we had a baby and were looking around for affordable things – clothes, toys – and we are fine with second hand. Seemed like I was coming every week while I was pregnant! The shop had everything we needed, in great condition.

–Anonymous



Fashion at the Fox (once a thrift store, now an occasional clothing sale at the Fox Library)

I wanted to nominate Mary Ellen DeNatale and Judy Hoer for the inspiration they provided, as well as the ongoing support they provide for the Friends of the Fox. The two of them were two of the three key founders of a thrift shop they started in the basement of the Fox Library which benefited the public schools. They were extremely successful for many years and greatly loved by the community. When they decided to close the shop, they suggested that another shop could use the space to raise funds for the library. Though the Little Fox Shop ended up upstairs, the inspiration, client base, and advice Mary Ellen and Judy provided was a big help. Then the two of them decided that since the shop upstairs was only for kids' items, they would have women's clothing, accessory, and houseware sales a few times a year in the basement. *Fashion at the Fox* sales were created and their customers were thrilled to have them back, lining up down the street before each sale happens. It is a much loved Arlington community event (though people come from all over for the beautiful items at amazing prices!) Mary Ellen and Judy continue to be very important friends of the Fox. They have worked very hard and have raised a lot of money to support the mission of the Friends of the Fox. Arlington is very lucky to have them!

–Anonymous

Luv and Other Gifts

Luv is an amazing and very special store to me. The artistic owner, Diane Buxton, is so thoughtful and talented in her selection of merchandise and in sponsoring of community events. Whether it be finding a housewarming gift for a new neighbor, a piece of beautiful jewelry for my niece (year in and year out), a vase & other hand-made art objects for my own home, along with sponsoring a band at the neighborhood Porch Fest – Luv is the place to go. Luv now has dog gear – toys, treats and more – so my four legged dogs also are well taken care of. Tonight I purchased a beautiful gift card along with an artistic gift for friends. Luv makes East Arlington more vibrant in terms of both shopping options and community outreach. Thanks Luv, Nigel (the store mascot) and Diane. I will be shopping here all fall and this holiday season 2016 for treasured gift giving. So join me in shopping and enjoying the community events sponsored at Luv!

–Liz McKersie, Arlington

Maxima Gift Center

Each and every time I enter Maxima, I am greeted by the wonderful owners Brian and Jelena, who are also married and parents of Arlington school-age kids. They juggle their lives between their store, family, and love of community. Brian is from the greater Boston area, Jelena came from Serbia. They started Maxima Art Center 19 years ago and have survived ups and downs in this Capitol Square neighborhood. No matter how busy they are, they will always take time out to talk and check in with me about how I am doing, and actually make an effort to engage and converse with my daughter. I have noticed that they do this with each and every person that enters that store. These special moments of getting to know and determining why a customer is in the shop and what they are looking for - makes the experience of stepping into this store personable and familiar. There are necklaces, teacups, socks, stuffed toys, cards, scarves, books, soaps, and much, much more - each store item meticulously chosen by the owners to complement the needs of the evolving community. It is a go-to place for me to not only buy a stylish gift for a close friend or work colleague, but also toys for newborns or gifts for young kids. In this day of megastores and anonymity, it is the opposite - the quintessential experience of a community boutique tucked into this brightly painted red and green exterior storefront.

–Anonymous

Menotomy Beer and Wine

Every Friday and Saturday evenings, neighbors from all over E Arlington meet here to taste beers and wines, and to make friends, play with the dogs, see how babies and children have grown, tell the week's stories. Everyone is welcomed by Mary, Neil, Wally, Jean, Mike. We learn about what we are tasting, but mostly we have fun, compare notes on beer, wine, spirits and life. Conversations that started during the tastings continue as friendships are made. It is a weekly event we don't miss when we are home and are always happy to return to after travel. Recently, a member of this community died. It was wonderful to see the people who work there and buy there gather as a community of friends to honor and celebrate him. Menotomy B&W is an E Arlington treasure.

–Bonnie Payne, Arlington

We invited the community to nominate a favorite local businesses by sharing stories of memorable experiences. These are a few of the inspiring responses we received. A huge thank you to everyone who participated by sending us their stories!

Que Brada Bakery

Deb has worked at Quebrada for as long as I remember. She is the friendliest person – kind, warm. She makes a coffee and that shop special - whether I'm running in for a coffee, or my two kids are being made to feel special when Deb hands them a muffin. She is a special person who anyone who visits Quebrada could tell you a nice story about.

–Anonymous

Sugo's

Sugo's had just opened. It was a hot day and we walked in for a drink. What drink do my kids want most on a hot day – lemonade! It wasn't even on the menu yet, but the owner said he could make one for us anyway. He proceeded to create a special blend of lemons and sugar water swirled in a tumbler like mixed drink. What came out was the best lemonade we had ever had. My daughter's have told all their friends, and they have told their friends, and so on...

–Anonymous

Thailand Cafe

Andy, cook and waiter, will personalize your order. Always friendly, he remembers you and your preferences. If you tell him “no green peppers,” he will gladly substitute broccoli, if you ask. Fresh veggies, delicious food.

–Carol

Za Pizza & Salad

On a cold December night 2 years ago I went to Za with my brother, who is a middle-aged man with Down Syndrome and my teenaged daughter. We got a table in the middle of the restaurant and in the path between front windows and kitchen. Frances and I shed our heavy coats and put them on the backs of our chairs. For my brother the process was harder because his disability requires him to take time with multi-step tasks. Robert sat down,pushed his chair back 2 feet and took off his hat and gloves. As he stuffed them into his jacket pocket, Jeff, the Za manager, approached our table from behind Robert. He couldn't pass through to the kitchen to send in food and drink orders because my brother's chair blocked the path. Jeff's options, as I saw them, were to zigzag around our table or ask Robert to move his chair. Instead Jeff stood behind my brother with a calm smile that told us there was no place he'd rather be. He stayed there while Robert and I removed and stashed his coat, vest and sweatshirt. Jeff helped Robert push in his chair and said “Enjoy your evening.” Then he proceeded to the kitchen. I've never passed Za without remembering how Jeff's patience gave us a dignity that's not often there for disabled people and their families as we navigate public places.

–Anonymous

Zhu Vegan Fuels a First Date

I was on my first date a year after a long-term relationship broke up. We'd had a nice walk on the bike path, were having a great conversation so I suggested lunch. We got in my car and I said, “How about Pizza” and he said, “Hmmmm” meaning “I'm not really a pizza eater” and I said, “Well, I think this pizza place probably has vegan and gluten-free pizza” So we headed for Za, but I could tell he wasn't happy. I pulled into a spot a block away, on the corner of Mass Ave and Edgerton and before we got out of the car I said, “Well, if you could have ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING what would you want to eat?” and he said “Wow – something vegan, maybe Asian.” I got out of the car walked to the first window – and there was a menu for Zhu – Asian Vegan. “You mean like this?” I said. “YES!” he said. We had a great lunch and since then Zhu has become my go-to place for healthy comfort-food, celebration meals and take-out. Did we have another date? No, but I've been back to Zhu a LOT! My favorites? Seitan Spare Ribs and Eggplant Green Beans.

–Deborah Henson-Conant, Arlington

4 locals with outdoor seating!

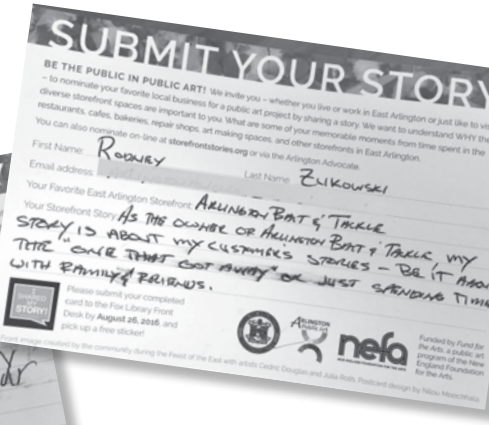
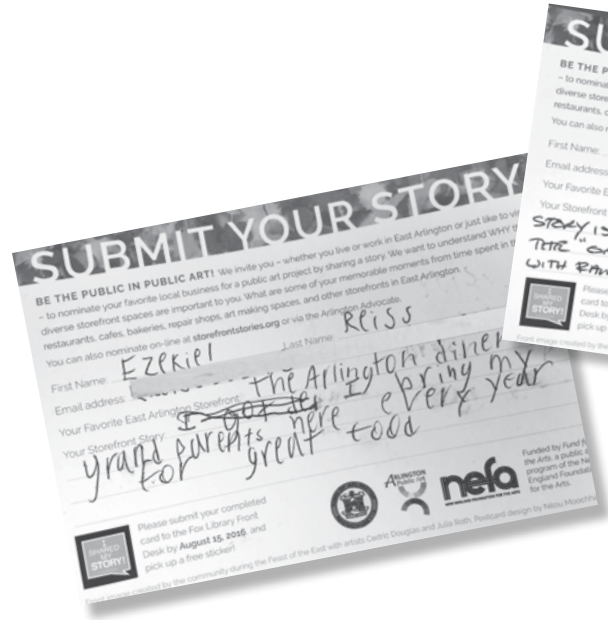
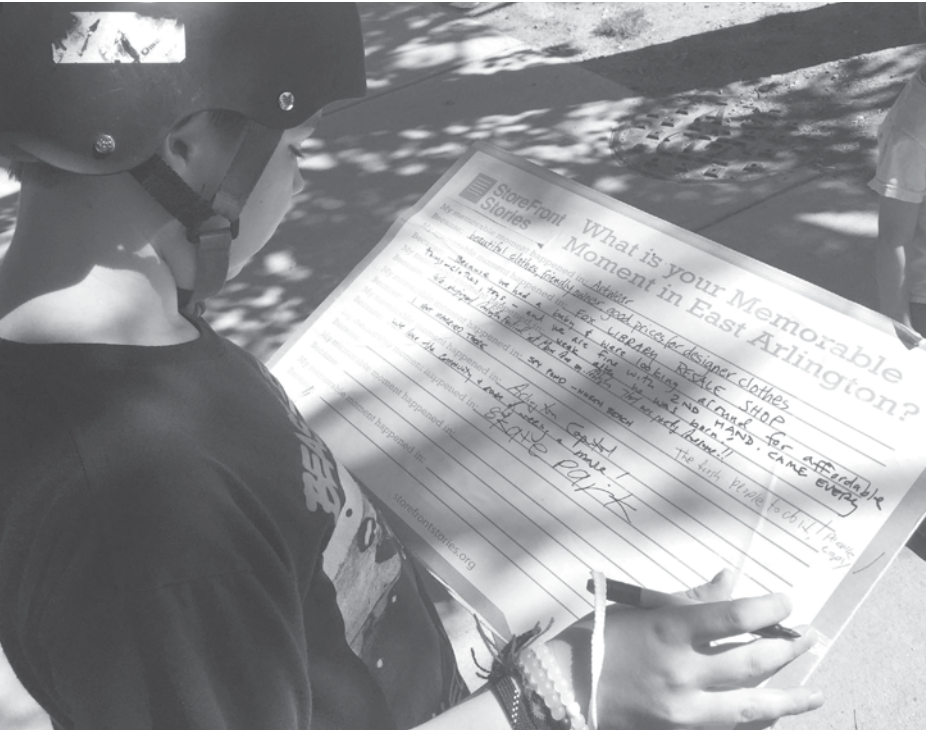
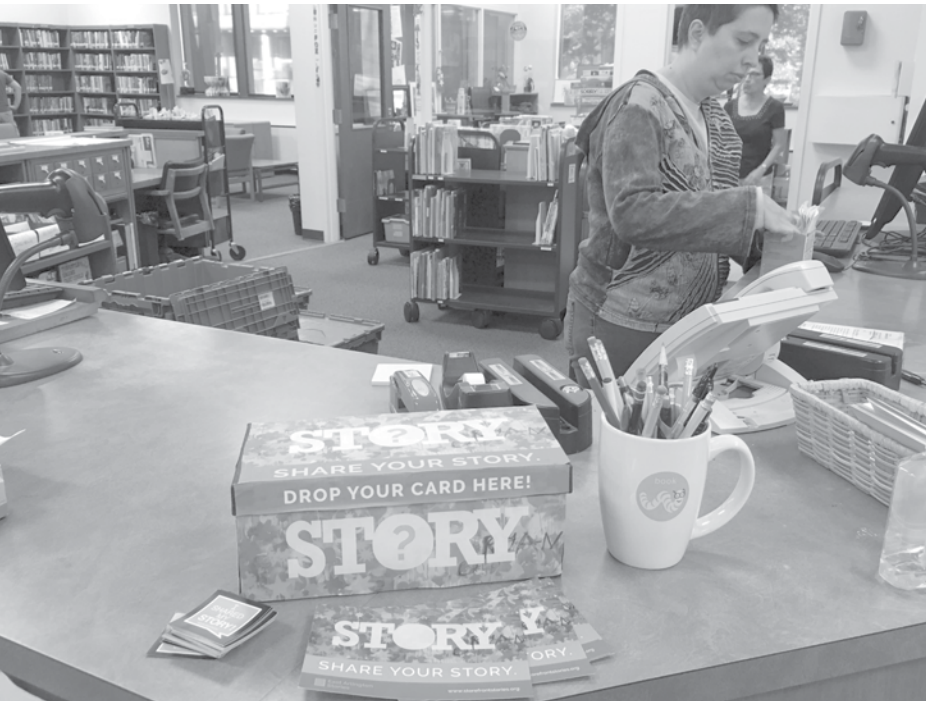
Barismo Coffee, Za's, Olivio's and the Capitol Creamery – I nominate a quartet of businesses that have helped to enliven Mass Ave with outdoor seating and dining options. The simple act of placing a few chairs and tables onto the sidewalk increases community interaction and makes for a more-interesting and urbane environment along East Arlington's “main street”. This is a far cry from pre-2015 when speeding traffic and cars were far more dominant than today. Kudos to these businesses and let's hope more of the eating establishments along Mass Ave will follow suit!

–Phillip Goff, Arlington

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The catalyst for **Storefront Stories** was the redesign of Massachusetts Avenue in East Arlington. The Town of Arlington and Arlington Public Art planned to celebrate its completion with public art, and brought Cecily Miller on board in the fall of 2015 to design a project that would respond to the character of the neighborhood and the interests of residents. Cecily organized several pop-up public art events and a series of public meetings, community conversations, and interactive True Story Theater performances. Through this process we identified neighborhood strengths that we would explore and celebrate through our project: diversity, family life, and a sense of community. We also heard that people would like public art that unfolded over

time, that could be explored with their kids, and would landmark the Capitol Square area as a business and cultural district. After hearing from the community, Cecily invited Cedric Douglas, Nilou Moochhala and Julia Roth to develop a street art project and publication that would tell the stories of East Arlington business owners. We asked the public to nominate their favorites by sharing memories of time spent in local storefronts. From the nominations and knocking on doors at stores along Massachusetts Avenue, we selected 14 stories to represent the diversity of Capitol Square and inspire artistic designs. It was difficult to choose, and there are many more wonderful storefront stories yet to be told!



Be the public in public art!

Speak Up

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AND IDEAS

Join Arlington Public Art and take part in shaping the public art project in East Arlington. The process of deciding what to commission can be a powerful catalyst for conversation about where we live, raise families, and work.

WEDNESDAY November 4 7 PM Robbins Library Community Room
TUESDAY December 8 7 PM Fox Library Community Room

Arlington-based True Story Theater will be on hand to make this a lively and creative experience!

If you can't make either meeting, feel free to visit with Cecily Miller, our public art manager for this project, at the Fox Library between 11 am and 2 pm on Thursday, November 5 or Thursday, December 10.

I SHARED MY STORY!

storefrontstories.org

THANKS

We, the East Arlington Story Project team – artists Cedric Douglas, Nilou Moochhala and Julia Roth, and curator Cecily Miller – wish to extend our grateful thanks to all the businesses who agreed to participate in our project and generously shared their stories with us. We believe the art of our project lay as much in the wonderful and inspiring conversations we had with all kinds of people along the way as in the final products!

We thank our outstanding Arlington Public Art Steering Committee, artist/activists Adria Arch, Lorri Berenberg, and Jill Manca; who have generously contributed much time

and expertise to making Storefront Stories a success! Thanks also to our great installation volunteers: Kevin Duffy, Leila Habib, Grey Held, Kaitlin Longmire, Stephanie Marlin-Curiel, Debbie Paige, Gerry Swislow, Molly Tibbetts; and to Nitya Rao for photography. A warm thanks to Christopher, Anne and everyone at True Story Theater for help with our community input process, and thanks to AIR Graphics of Quincy for top notch printing!

Many people and organizations supported our project with contributions and collaboration. We give a special shout-out to: Town Manager Adam Chapdelaine and

Administrative Assistant Kristen DeFrancisco; Library Director Andrea Nicolay, Branch Librarian Emily Canniff and Circulation staffer Laura Faunce; Hilary Rappaport and the Friends of the Fox; Sara Glidden at the Massachusetts Cultural Council and Sarah Hutt at the Fund for the Arts/NEFA; the folks at the Arlington Cultural Council; Bob Sprague of *Your Arlington*; Jan Whitted & the Capitol Square Business Association; Richard Fraiman of the Capitol Theatre; James Sanna and Bram Berkowitz of *Wicked Local/The Arlington Advocate*.

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Erica Licea-Kane
Cecily Miller & Ken Field
Clarissa Rowe

ARTISTS BIOS

Cedric Douglas is a Boston-based public artist, designer, street artist and social interventionist who has created work in the community for over 20 years. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in graphic design. As an artist, Cedric combines the use of street art ideology and raw creativity to connect, inspire and interact with the community. By understanding the transformative power of street art culture, Cedric has learned that what the general public once viewed as vandalism has become a form of advertising and social awareness that inspires communities to make change all over the world. Cedric is the co-founder/director of The UPTruck, a mobile art lab, and founder/artistic director of UPWalls, a new street art initiative; he recently concluded a residency at Northeastern University and is currently an artist-in-residence to the neighborhood of Upham's Corner in Dorchester, MA.

Julia Roth is influenced by the process of creation and the power for story. Her work is born out of the connection of art and healing. Julia received her BA in visual arts and psychology from Burlington College. She went on to receive her MA in expressive arts therapy from Lesley University. Julia co-founded the UP Truck, a mobile art lab, where she continues to work as a creative collaborator. She is a Boston based mixed media artist who combines multiple modalities including spray paint, acrylic, wheat paste and found objects to illuminate stories of the human experience.

Nilou Moochhala, the principal of Nymdesign, was born and raised in Mumbai. Her independent innovative studio (Nymdesign) focuses on digital and print work since 2000. She has worked with a variety of cultural, corporate, educational and non-profit organizations such as Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), Microsoft, Harvard & Yale Universities, and Amnesty International, among others. Moochhala received her Masters of Fine Arts in Graphic Design from the Yale University School of Art and her Bachelor's in Studio Art from Mount Holyoke College. Her past work experience has included Sotheby's in New York and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. She is a design critic for AIGA Boston's Student Portfolio Review. Moochhala was awarded a 2015 Arlington Cultural Council grant for her public design project "I Am Arlington".

www.nymdesign.com

Cecily Miller is a curator and arts manager with a specialty in cultural programs that explore and celebrate the distinctive qualities of communities and places. Currently, she is guiding a public art initiative for the Town of Arlington, is an advisor the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, and a member of the Organizing Committee for the annual HONK! Festival of activist street bands. Previously, Miller was the first Executive Director of the Somerville Arts Council, where her work received a Commonwealth Award from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and the Executive Director of the Forest Hills Educational Trust, where she launched an innovative program of site-responsive art in the grounds of historic Forest Hills Cemetery.

www.cecilymiller.com



Left to Right: Adria Arch, Cedric Douglas, Julia Roth, Gerry Menz, Nilou Moochhala, volunteer Kaitlin Longmire, and Cecily Miller.

WHO DID WHAT ON OUR PROJECT This project was a collaboration with each artist taking responsibility for a specific aspect. All portrait photography and design work for the wheat-pasted murals was done by Cedric Douglas (with the exception of portrait photos of Jan Whitted/Artbeat and Stephanie Murphy/Little Fox Shop taken by Lisa Cordner). Production and installation of murals was managed by Julia Roth. Interviewing was done by Nilou Moochhala, Cedric Douglas and Cecily Miller. All portraits were written by Nilou Moochhala (with the exception of Friends of the Fox Library, by Cecily Miller). Written portraits edited by Lorri Berrenberg and Cecily Miller. Design of this publication and other project printed materials by Nilou Moochhala. Photos contributed by: Jelena Babic, Lorri Berenberg, Cedric Douglas, Ellen Feldman, Stephanie Marlin-Curiel, Cecily Miller, & Nilou Moochhala.

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