

VOTE

? Where, When & How?  
See page 4

# Riverwest Currents



Easter April 12

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Vol 19 Issue 4 April 2020



## The Dark Cloud

I saw it out my window  
to the west  
The Dark Cloud  
Thought it might be here  
soon  
And blow over

A message from  
the Thunderbird  
A warning

But it came slowly  
Finally it covered the sky  
For forty days and forty nights  
It was over our heads  
Ominous  
Slowly destroying hope  
and instilling fear  
What was this Dark Cloud?

A pestilence crossed the land  
And we sheltered inside  
Wondering when it would pass  
Only the birds in the forest  
continued to sing  
Holidays and Holy Days  
came and went  
But we stayed inside

Where were the helpers?  
The brave continued to bring us food  
The braver helped the sick

The lost cried out  
The children did their best to play  
The elders looked in the mirror  
and sighed  
When will this end?  
And some died  
And some lived on

Finally there was a sliver of sunlight  
in the east  
And soon the bands played again  
And the meeting places opened  
The chefs prepared a feast  
We toasted life  
We began to build again  
We remembered the helpers  
Who got us through  
And praised the message  
That life is about caring  
And life is about community  
And life is about love

Eudemom



A young male deer, with developing antlers covered with velvet, peers from the green of a late spring along the river in Riverwest a few springs ago.

## Bloom

by Adam Krueger

The world is coming back alive as we recede into its folds and sanctuaries. As life slows and provides the opportunity to pause and reflect on everything around us, we can be given a mirror to see not only what we are but what we can be.

Outside the streets have a strange and eerie tranquility. Along smaller neighborhood avenues joggers and dog walkers are often the only ones that can be seen. The air is often fresher with decreased pollution from cars. The connections between us only become clearer when so few are out walking. There is a clarity in these moments often left undiscovered in the bustle and business of bigger cities. Like jazz it is the notes not played that speaks the loudest of a change that looms above like storms clouds.

Going down by the river brings with it its own revelations of spring and rebirth. The birds are returning. There one can see common mergansers floating down the Milwaukee River unencumbered and calm. Meanwhile, inside our homes families everywhere are uniting in love and forgiveness as the petty disagreements that often drive us apart are revealed to be so much smaller than the sum of our parts when we come together.

Elsewhere, the songs of the red winged blackbirds play out like a sympathy of chirps and chatters as they hang on leafless branches of a budding spring. Friends and neighbors are reaching out to each other

through the virtual spaces and capabilities that have become an integral part of our lives. Musicians are serenading us online to offer peace and inspiration. Robins are singing, eating worms and crab apples still on trees.

Visual artists try to capture a portrait of the soul of a world immersed in solitude waiting to be born again. And every day the sunsets on a world knowing not what tomorrow will bring but still gives all of us a glimpse of everything that is beautiful and right on a planet that needs our sacrifices like all we have plundered from every fresh body of water and giving tree in the past.

Animals are emerging where they once could not, hoping they can live in cities with more room for them. Storytellers are spinning their yarns of prose and plots in ways only solitude and meditation can allow. The narratives they tell can build bridges to better understanding as well as brave new worlds. Rather the opposite of the dystopian Jungle-Land my old boss warned me about, the poets of the here and now refuse to stand back and let everything be. They use words as tools to help each of us transform into something more. Downy woodpeckers are rapping and digging holes in trees for the new families they cry out for. We are just like them.

Everything is illuminated in the stillness. This virus we fear also reveals the truth that everyone is connected in deeper ways we ever knew. Outside flowers are starting to bloom. Inside so are we.



“Heaven knows,  
what keeps mankind  
alive”  
Home - David Bynre,  
Brian Eno

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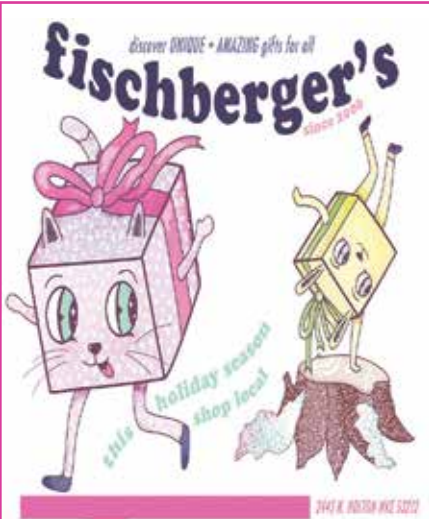
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Pet of the Month: Mocha the dog

This month's pet picture was sent to the Currents via good old snail mail, along with a handwritten note, from "Dan McCubbin + Mocha". Dan wrote, "I'm enclosing photo of my Great Dog Mocha. I hope she will be considered for Pet of the Month. Mocha loves walks, towels, eating, playing poker and watching the news. She's a great friend." Thanks for the fun mail.



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Riverwest Currents is dedicated to keeping readers informed about issues and events important to those who live, work, and play in and around our neighborhood. We believe Riverwest and Milwaukee are good places to make a home or set up a shop. We want to help promote safe and affordable neighborhoods, embrace urban aesthetics, respect diversity, and help make Riverwest residents aware of opportunities available to them.

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Balance

By Tree Moore

In March our earth arrived for a moment when day and night were everywhere of equal length. That moment is labeled the Equinox.

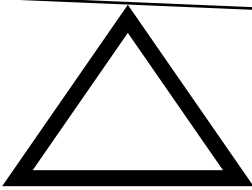
In my musing regarding the Equinox as a metaphor, my thoughts have gone to the concepts of balance, as well as moderation, middle, norm, center, neutral, edge, and extremes.

“Everything in moderation.” Hmmm. That saying bothers me. I distrust it as somehow oppressive, limiting. The word implies just the right amount of feeling or activity. Neither too hot nor too cold, as if we had such control.

What about a generous brush of beauty that sends us into a state of ecstasy? What about moods? Intense feelings? Would we want our anger over children being separated from their parents at the Mexican border to be neutral or moderate? What about those synchronistic happenings that bring us a huge surge of gratefulness? I'm not so sure that moderation is ever interested in surprise or the unexpected. To me it suggests a level of passivity. No need to change or try anything new. I'm okay where I am. When does adventure fit in? Or longing for vibrant freshness? Although there are certainly times to occupy a neutral position, one might get stuck there. Such a life could perhaps be safe, but probably dull and boring.

Moving out from an old, familiar way of being might come at the risk of becoming unbalanced. It might be wise to take your sweet time when considering a significant change. No rush. In a favorite book of mine, *Consolations, The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words*, by David Whyte, there is an essay on procrastination.

The usual sense of the word is negative. A procrastinator is guilty of stalling, unable to commit, even lazy. David considers procrastination to be more of a ripening, one in which we struggle with the complex realities of change. It could involve failure. It honors



our self-doubt, along with our initial enthusiasm. It listens to our reluctance, which may reveal a quality we had been ignoring. These qualities need to be considered if we are to reach success.

It's spring, a time of new life. A time to push ourselves up out of the dirt, take on a new shape. A new boyfriend, a new job. The complacent, safe slumber of winter may have numbed us to new possibilities. Oh, I know we are not exactly plants, but we have a lot in common – a need to be nourished, to flourish, and to be noticed.

If we attempt to blend in with what seems acceptable or “normal” (whatever that ambiguous word means), what happens to individual differences? As we move out from what is considered “cool,” we are met with a myriad of choices. When my mother, in the 1920s had her lovely long hair cut, as well as starting to smoke cigarettes, many an eyebrow was raised. Whispers – “The hussy! She had been such a nice girl!” My father obviously was drawn to that daring young woman.

What happens to our spirit that needs to explore and experiment when we are filled with the anxiety of being different? Honoring our individuality – which might be quirky, or, worse yet, weird, takes determination, courage and support. Is it okay to color my hair? Or, at my age, what would folks think if I wear a short skirt with tights and boots? My legs are still in pretty good shape, even if the rest of me is sagging. Where is my place on the teeter-totter of choices? Where is it appropriate for me, even if it isn't for other elders I know?

So this may be a time to wander, stumble or bumble to an edge. In permaculture, edges – for example, where the forest meets the meadow – are considered exceptional spaces of diversity and adaptation. Once you find your edge, it's time to push some

Balance

limits of behavior. Expand boundaries. Even fail occasionally.

It's possible to ignore those discouraging messages, “Oh, you're too old to do that.” Or, “I don't know if I'm capable.” I'm sadly aware of how many very young folks are plagued by the anxious fear of making a mistake, doing it wrong. I personally carried that fear far too long in my life, allowing my culture to dictate how and what I could do.

As a teenager, I saw the movie, *The Red Shoes*. I dreamt for years of being a dancer. No dance teacher in my small, northern woods town, but, as a freshman at the University of Michigan, I enrolled in a modern dance class. As an inexperienced country girl, I compared myself to the other students. They all seemed the epitome of grace next to my awkwardness.

My magical expectations were fragile, and they quickly shattered. I attended one class, and never went back.

Besides, my mother thought my dreamy ambition to dance was far too impractical. Women should be useful, she said. The accepted roles of the day for women were teachers, secretaries, nurses and social workers.


I listened to my mother.

And now, along comes the sun, inviting us out of our winter cocoons, discovering some nascent stirring within us. Perhaps something scary – daring – yet exciting. Perhaps we need to take baby steps, moving out into unknown territory, from familiar to strange. We can't know ahead of time what we're getting into. It takes courage. You could make a fool of yourself – god forbid!

However challenging, it's most important to listen to ourselves, and also the world around us, being true both. Go for it!

**NOTE: The coronavirus burst into the scene when I was in the midst of working on this article. In considering the dynamics in our chaotic, confusing world right now, balance seems more necessary than ever. As important as it is to practice “social distancing,” it's also vital that we find ways to stay connected – sharing facts, fears and consolations. Both the telephone and the computer allow for contact. Like the Italians, we could get out on our porches and balconies and serenade the neighborhood. Invent funny ways to gather while keeping a distance. Spread hope rather than hysteria. Happy Spring!**

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April 2020  
Calendar of Events

In consideration for the safety and health of all Riverwest Elders, their families and friends, we have made the decision to cancel, until further notice, all monthly events.

As a Community of Elders, we will each find ways to support each other, sharing news, listening to worries, remaining social.

We encourage each of you to notice with kindness the elders you may encounter while at the store or an office, during the day. Remember those who live nearby, staying safe, alone and at home.

If you can offer a wave, a note, a phone call, whatever is comfortable. It's important to feel recognized and included in the community.



Your Vote is Your Voice

by Lorraine Jacobs

Next Election: Tuesday, April 7, 2020 (Note: Request a ballot at: myvote.wi.gov to receive a mail in ballot. The election could be delayed and in person voting my not happen on April 7)

Non-Partisan (no parties listed) General Election and Presidential Primary; Milwaukee Public Schools Referendum

NOTE: Earlier this year, we may have thought that the debates, elections and politics couldn't get any more "unique" but now we have COVID19! I'm submitting my article knowing that unexpected changes are still to be "expected". Because of safety concerns and everyone's health, the State of Wisconsin is examining options to adjust the date/times of the Primary Election April 7th. All Election workers will be trained to maintain the stations, materials, as well as keep personal contact space as safe and healthy as possible. Only vote in-person if you feel well.

I urge you to vote, it's an important election and voting is one way we maintain our Democracy. I know this information seems convoluted -- full of dates, deadlines and details. Give yourself time, take a deep breath, help each other. YOU can do it. Repeat, the information below will help you

vote during these troubled times. Web sites to memorize or save: MYVote.WI.Gov VOTE411 City.milwaukee.gov/election

Be a savvy voter! Here are some suggestions:

First: Vote in person at the Polls on April 7. If there is still the option to come to the polls to vote on April 7, be sure to have time to wait in line, receive your ballot, mark your choices and turn it in at the machine. Allow for questions. Currently, polls are scheduled to be open from 7 am to 8 pm on the day of voting.

Note the vote early option is not available now due to lack of staffing due to the virus.

Second: Vote Early/In Person if you HAVE NO TIME on April 7? Vote Early/In Person at one of 3 locations: Zeidler Municipal Building, 841 N Broadway Ave., MidTowne Center, 5700 W. Capitol Dr., Zablocki Library, 3501 N Oklahoma Ave. . PS: You can become registered voter if necessary, at Early Voting sites. Locations, hours & dates may change as COVID19 cautions are accommodated.

Third: Vote with an Absentee Ballot (this is a "mostly by mail" option). If you are registered to vote you can request an Absentee Ballot. The current deadline for requests is 5pm on April 2. Requests can

Riverwest Elders Action Network (REAN)

Our Guiding Vision: "We are a diverse group of Riverwest and nearby neighbors, over 50 years old.

We come together to share wisdom, live to our full potential and give back to the community."

be made online, by email or by mail with a form from the Election Commission web site. Follow directions for providing a copy of your Photo ID. To return your Absentee ballot it must be marked with black pen, enclosed in the envelop, signed by voter and a witness and returned, by mail or in person, before 8 pm, April 7, to the Milwaukee City Hall (or your local municipal building if not a Milwaukee County voter).

Fourth: Be prepared with your Wisconsin ID & other documentation and always bring this with you when involved in voting. Everyone needs: 1) Photo ID (Wis. Driver License, Wis. Photo ID, Passport, currently enrolled students have other options, ask at your campus). The Photo ID is just for the picture, but it must be a Wisconsin license. It's good if your current address is also on the Photo ID, but if not, 2) bring (paper or online) Proof of Current Residence: copy of utility bill, phone bill, bank statement, (must include your name, current address and account #), current lease that lists you as one of the tenants and signed by all parties.

Learn more and form your voting decision on the MPS Referendum by checking mpsreferendum.com

Optimal Health

by Juliana Ksicsinski

The World Health organization has identified six dynamic components of optimal health: physical, social, cognitive, emotional, cultural, and spiritual. An event in one influences the other five.

Physical As elders in addition to following a healthy diet, having an exercise plan, and taking time for rest, we have other challenges. Many of us are over 60 and under medical care. We need to keep doctor appointments and take medications as ordered. It helps to have knowledge of our condition as well as the benefits and side effects of medications.

Social Social wellness involves interacting and communicating with others. Studies show that an active social life can strengthen the immune system and reduce the risk of stroke and Alzheimer's Disease. Attending a Riverwest Elders activity can meet the need for socialization as well as fun.

Cognitive Cognitive health refers to the brain's ability to solve problems. An active social life as described above is good for brain health. Other ways to improve your cognitive function may include learning a new language, doing crossword puzzles, learning to play a musical instrument or signing up for a course through Osher.

At Riverwest Elder wisdom gatherings, we hear guest speakers present new information on a variety of topics that sometimes challenged us to look at our comfortable belief systems. We are fortunate to have members who use their cognitive powers to create art and poetry which in turn

gives the rest of us the opportunity to use our cognitive powers to enjoy them.

Emotional Health An emotional healthy lifestyle helps us cope with the demands of daily life. We must learn to be comfortable and honest with ourselves, recognizing our strengths and weaknesses along with acknowledging our need for help when necessary.

As seniors we learn to face and accept loss. This is the time in life when we begin to experience and grieve the passing of loved ones. There are also physical and mental changes we may notice in ourselves. We walk and think more slowly. We may need glasses for driving and reading and it may take longer to do everyday activities. Riverwest Elders offers opportunities for support during this time in life which can enable us to grow in wisdom and find new friends.

Cultural Cultural health refers to a specific demographic which gives everyone the opportunity to lead a healthy lifestyle. The culture we live in influences our attitude and wellness. River West Elders helps to create a culture in which everyone has an opportunity to thrive.

Spiritual For a healthy mind and body, we need to create a healthy spiritual life style. This does not always involve joining a religious organization of following a set of rules. It means forming a philosophy or belief system that can help in dealing with life's situations. Enriching our lives with friends, taking quiet time for reading or meditation, and exploring opportunities for growth can enable all of us to develop a healthy spirituality.

We are more than our bodies, thoughts

and beliefs. Each one of us is an unique person wrapped in hopes and fears, desires and dreams, goals and ambitions.

APRIL CALENDAR

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# NEIGHBOR SPOTLIGHT: BOB BRUCH

## Former Communist and NYC Chess Champ Finds Religion in Milwaukee



"The reader will find the word G-d written with a dash to avoid defacement.

By Joshua Becker

In chess a pawn mostly moves one step at a time; only when a pawn reaches the other side can it be swapped—and transformed—to a higher level. In communism, on the other hand, the pawn has a different meaning. It's a peon that is forced to serve the king, the bosses and government that pit workers against each other.

Bob Bruch is intimately familiar with both uses of the word. He's the son of Bronx communists (of Prussian/Polish origin) who became the 1962 NYC city-wide chess champ at age 17. For Bruch's parents, communism checkmated all other ideologies—including religion. "Fehl," (ick!) one might say in Yiddish, a Jewish language his parents spoke almost exclusively but simultaneously denounced Judaism. "So I grew up with a very strange identity," Bruch noted.

"Religion, Judaism, was the opium of the people. Religion separates people so they can't unite to fight the oppressors." Still, over time, Bruch yearned for something more—a connection to something beyond. "It's hard to explain, but I was always a spiritual person. I wanted to treat people nicely. I never wanted to hurt anything." It stirred a lifelong pursuit for meaning, subtle step-by-step moves like a pawn piece, from communism to the very religion his parents decried.

In high school, an aptitude test projected that he'd do well as a minister. Even though his parents were anti-religious, they heartily chuckled: "What kind of job is that for a Jewish kid!" Bruch reflected, "They didn't get the point that I had a spiritual side." Bruch felt tremendously cheated because he could only associate with other communists—not even with Jews who attended socialist summer camps.

Communism was prevalent but not always center stage. "It's been said that most communists were so busy trying to change the world that they didn't do much with their own children." This was only slightly

true of Bruch's father who would eat alone but accompany Bruch to the Bronx Zoo. Bruch's mother played cards with him and both parents were kind to their three children. Extended relatives were also a big part of his life, watching them play chess until Bruch realized as a child that he could beat them.

Yet politicking led to discontent. Heated verbal clashes broke out amongst extended family members about who was the better communist, Stalin, Lenin or Trotsky. Paranoia set in because Bruch's father was employed by the post office during the era of McCarthyism. The family feared losing that job if its beliefs were discovered. Bruch's mom would dispose of communist books into different garbage cans around town so they couldn't be traced.

Up until Bruch's early twenties his beliefs matched that of his father, save for one—his father's admiration for Stalin even after mass murders were discovered. Bruch challenged his father on it. This may have contributed to his father's depression and ultimately—suicide. Bruch was 26, father 66. Bruch blames himself for contesting his father.

The suicide forever haunts Bruch but also created an opening for spiritual growth. After the death, as an escape, Bruch traveled to Europe. "I was somehow drawn to Jewish sites," including the house of Anne Frank, a teenage writer that perished in the Holocaust. His overseas travels were cut short; news came that his mother was dying. "My father's death killed my mother, too. She lived 14 months after he died."

Bruch wanted a new start and decided to head West. He stopped in Milwaukee to visit a friend and liked the city. Eventually Bruch returned to Milwaukee and met his future wife, Bonnie. He found a kindred spirit who was also on a journey towards more meaning. "I grew up Catholic," Bonnie said, "but at age 16, I had fallen away. I went to the confessionals to challenge the priest, but I have always had a strong sense of G-d." They were married in 1973 at a Unitarian church on Ogden Street in Milwaukee and afterwards moved to New

York for five years.

Three years later Bonnie became pregnant. Bonnie wanted to raise children with a religious foundation, but which religion? "I asked Bob about Judaism but he didn't know anything." Bonnie began studying and converted, even though at first Bruch tried to dissuade her: "Who needs all those rules?!"

Still, Bonnie's conversion impacted Bruch. He was concurrently attending classes for social work at a Jewish college, Yeshiva University; "It was a subconscious desire to be closer to my roots," he later recollected. It was his entrée into Judaism. "For the first time in my life I was around Jews, especially religious Jews. They seemed to be like myself, gentle, a little passive, and kind, even though they may have been different politically and religiously." Here he learned Jewish holidays, and Bruch and Bonnie were married again with a Jewish ceremony.

They returned to Milwaukee where Bruch's earliest jobs lead to more spiritual growth. He facilitated programming for older adults at the Jewish Community Center (JCC) and at the Beth-Am Center for Seniors. At Beth Am, he met a beloved local rabbi, Bernard Reichman, thanks to whom Bruch had a Bar-Mitzvah at age 37 (a rite of passage typically in early adolescence). Bruch and his wife also transferred their children from a public school to Hillel Academy, a traditional Jewish school.

Bruch led a Shabbos (Sabbath) program with seniors at the JCC, where another cherished rabbi, Yosef Samuels, would tell stories. Rabbi Samuels would become

friends of the Bruchs for close to 30 years and counting. "Rabbi Samuels was the right man for me," Bruch explained, "because he has a more mystical, spiritual reason for everything, which was good for me because I would have rebelled if it was just rules."

Rabbi Samuels led Bruch and Bonnie to Israel in 2003. They visited Rabbi Akiva's gravesite, a sage who passed in 136 CE. The rabbi told a story about Akiva that would penetrate Bonnie deeply, a mirror image of Bonnie and Bruch's journey together: Akiva fell in love with a woman, Rachael. She wanted a husband that would learn Torah (the foundational text of Judaism) but at age 40, Akiva didn't even know the basics. They observed how drips of water formed a hole in a rock. Rachael thereby convinced Akiva that he too can form into a learner, gradually

(pawn-piece by pawn-piece). They wed, Akiva left home to study, and they weren't reunited for another 24 years.

"When I'm finished telling them the story," Rabbi Samuels' eyes enlarge, "Bonnie cries uncontrollably." Bonnie imagined that every Shabbos, Rabbi Akiva's wife would look across the table at an empty seat. Upon return, some religious leaders in Milwaukee questioned whether Bonnie was a reincarnation of Rachael. The good news is that for more than 40 years, Bruch is across the table every Shabbos.

Bruch's steady presence reached beyond his family. For 25 years he served as a social worker mostly at Milwaukee's VA Hospital, the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center. He spent the last decade in outpatient mental health. Retirement has given pause for reflection. "A few weeks ago," Bruch said, at age 75, "I was thinking about whether I had a happy life, and I really can't say that because my father's suicide was terribly devastating. I feel good about what I've done in life. I did the essential things, a good marriage, raise a family, have a spiritual life, have good friendships. I feel a close relationship to Judaism and to G-d."

What stirred as a child is now revealed: "I lived life on my own terms, and I think I've reached the point that I feel in harmony in the world."

Joshua Becker is a freelance writer/editor and a teacher for the Shorewood School District. His website is: [www.joshuabecker-writer.com](http://www.joshuabecker-writer.com).





# Hasbrook Galleries – An Online Gallery

by Vince Bushell

**How timely!** An online gallery when we are all stuck inside. I was contacted by John Giesa. In coordination with his sister Katharine Giesa, the siblings found common ground and a common passion to promote upcoming artists. They are from Milwaukee with connections to UW Madison artists. There is a lot of art online by specific artists and other galleries that have brick and mortar locations as well.

But why not start out with online gallery shows with a theme. The Giesa concept is to tell a story with the show of varied artists. This is their third show online and its focus will be on contemporary surrealism.

Why Hasbrook? It is named after their Grandmother (maiden name) as a testament to matriarchy as well as Grandma Hasbrook's passion and strength.

I dropped some bait to John with a question: Is contemporary surrealism a valid form of expression in 2020? How do young artists view the art world today?

John Giesa answered: "I don't necessarily believe there is a form of invalid expression. However, I do think contemporary surrealism is incredibly relevant in 2020. In



"gate left open" - artist Casey Bolding

fact, thinking of the word validity itself lends an insight to why surrealism is so prevalent and important today. Facts and logic seem increasingly malleable while the dichotomy between reality and illusion is fleeting. We are exploring this with the upcoming show as we note the viewer to be conscious of the web page as a space, as one moves through the gallery, the sense of reality becomes looser and the signs to ground one in actuality are pushed.

While young artists are far from a monolith, one common theme I notice is a sense of disillusionment, hence the name for the show, *Optical Disillusion: Contemporary Surrealities*. I think it is really hard for young artists to grapple with where we are as a global society and how we got here. The psychology of artists often leans to a place of awareness and their expression comes from internal and external experience. So, many artists seem hyper aware of the problems we face and the uncertainty of our future, giving them this sense of disillusionment after growing up with the idea that 'the future will be better' and a harder time grounding in reality.

John Giesa is not calling anyplace home right now but spends a lot of time in Milwaukee. His sister, Katharine Giesa is at Carnegie Mellon University. I believe that is in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. An interesting



"Venus In The Woods" - artist Jim Picco

town, home of Andy Warhol, and a drop into surreal immersion, *The Mattress Factory*.

Here are a couple of works from the show. On paper, if only lowly newsprint.

Check it out online:  
**HasbrookGalleries.com**

## COHOUSING: A New Old-fashioned Neighborhood Comes to Riverwest

The team at Milwaukee Area Cohousing is excited!

After more than two years of exploring the Riverwest area, we have found what we believe is an ideal location for the first true cohousing community in Milwaukee. The site lies on the border between Riverwest and the East Side. It's convenient to Downtown and the near West Side. Abundant opportunities exist for shopping and entertainment. Easy access to the Beerline nature trail and the Adventure Rock climbing gym make outdoor and indoor recreation inviting. Public transportation provides access to other parts of the city. What more could a person ask for?

If anyone has not yet figured it out, the site is the vacant land west of the UWM dorm on North Avenue. We are calling it River Trail Commons. We envision this as a site of about 40 individual households (like townhouses or condos) surrounding a common house. Extensive green space will remain, along with easy public access to the river trail for hiking, biking, cross country skiing and other activities. We

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For more info:  
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[cohousing@crosslawfirm.com](mailto:cohousing@crosslawfirm.com)

plan to utilize environmentally favorable construction and operate our community with ecological sustainability in mind. The site makes solar energy installation feasible and it will likely be part of our plan.

For those not familiar with the concept of cohousing, it is a lifestyle based on intentional cooperation and participation in the management and maintenance of the property. Cohousers are committed to supporting each other and

sharing our time and space, while still maintaining our private homes and personal incomes. Sharing tools, like snowblowers and lawnmowers, and possibly a shared e-vehicle, make for a lighter carbon foot-print. Activities like community meals, movie nights and other events will bring residents together in a relaxed atmosphere. No one will need to live in isolation with so many kindred spirits around. For younger people, it sounds like the neighborhood your grandparents used to live in; for older people, it sounds like the neighborhood you grew up in, right?

So what's the next step? The land is owned by the City. A Request for Proposals has been released and we are working on our Proposal for its development. The Proposal is due to the City by May 15th. We need to demonstrate community support and people who are committed to buying homes in the complex. While design work has begun based on existing cohousing communities (there are about 170 in the US alone), many aspects of the project will

be determined based on input from future residents. We are anticipating a variety of home sizes, from small efficiencies to larger family units. Prices will vary depending on home size. We are committed to diversity and hope to build a group that includes singles, families and seniors from all walks of life. River Trail Commons will provide a great opportunity for first time buyers to make the leap from renting to building wealth through home ownership. Sound appealing? We invite anyone and everyone to learn more about cohousing and the benefits it offers. The Cohousing Association of the United States ([www.cohousing.org](http://www.cohousing.org)) provides a wealth of information about cohousing. If you like the Riverwest area and the concept of cohousing, MAC would like to connect with you. We can share our preliminary data on River Trail Commons. On Facebook, you can find us at Milwaukee Area Cohousing-MAC, or the link is <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Milwaukee-Area-Cohousing-MAC-100314328034393/>. You can also contact us at [cohousing@crosslawfirm.com](mailto:cohousing@crosslawfirm.com)

## What got missed in this issue.

Due to the coronavirus causing havoc in our community and nation, several stories will be delayed as well as some events.

**Spaces and Traces** will not be held as scheduled, see photo page7. This spring and summer a local artist group had planned Art Build projects that inspire people, young and old, to get together and create issue inspired protest art. Think of Climate Change marches and the like.

I spoke at length with local artist Josie Osborne about the Art Build concept. This will be covered in our May or June issue.


The **ArtBuildWorkers.com** have been working not only in Milwaukee and Wisconsin but have been hired to do numerous projects in other states including Minnesota, Illinois and California.

Watch for this story coming up. Usually are **calendar** takes up many pages in the *Currents*. As you know, most things have been cancelled and we look for that to continue in April. Online the *Currents* will note when things begin to open up and we can breathe again.




Youth Climate Strike Art Build, Photo by Dave Brusky





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Amy Schmutte,  
OWL Program  
Manager

**APRIL 2020**


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**www.riverwestart.org**

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**Wednesday, April 1**  
Overcoming the Effects of Anxiety and Stress with **Dr. Anthony Piparo**

**Thursday, April 2**  
Artist Spotlight on Snail's-Crossing Park with **Park Steward and Artist Marina Lee**

**Wednesday, April 8**  
Trail of the Monarch Butterfly with **Jeanie Dean**

**Thursday, April 9**  
Unfolding the Patterns in Your Childhood Dreams (continued) with **Ro Hanus**

**Wednesday, April 15**  
The Iditarod, a Sled-dog Trail Race with **Mary Beth Peterson**

**Thursday, April 16**  
The Hidden Gifts of Conscience Aging, Wrap-up, Overview, Info on Breathwork with **Mari Lynn Young**

**Wednesday, April 22**  
Organic Landscaping with **Barbara Aho**

**Thursday, April 23**  
Supporting the Immune System with Herbs with **Kyle Denton of Tippecanoe Herbs**

**Wednesday, April 29**  
'White-Rice' Reunion! Acoustic Progressive Folk Music (Arranged and Pre-recorded solely for this OWL Program) with **Josh Whitemarsh and (Amy's nephew) Jake Reiske!**



Next Month learn about Spaces And Traces in the Harambee and Riverwest Neighborhoods. Find out what a couple of home owners have done with their places and why they like where they live.

Also we should know more about the when and how Spaces and Traces will be rescheduled.

Above is Dominique Samari at her new home that is in the middle of extensive remodeling in the Harambee neighborhood. With her is her trusted contractor David Davila Jr. of Blue Ladder Homes.

# An Epistle of Hope, Tales of Wonder, and a Time-Traveling School Bus

By Janice Christensen

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said, "Oh! To be a time-traveling space pirate, sojourning the great American continent in my converted Skoolie time machine, helping hungry plague survivors create nourishing organic food gardens!"

Wilhelm Fehlhaber has traveled far through the magical realism landscapes of contemporary America since he left the friendly shores of Riverwest last September. He was lured out to the cowboys and Indians world of Cortez, Colorado by the promise of a 1976 International Harvester 33-foot school bus rescued by Dr Dave and Rev Jan from the high desert near Mancos, where it had lurked in the red sands for twelve years. It took some effort and a bit of cash to get the partially-refurbished beauty moved – but with one new innertube and a honking big tow truck, the deed was done.

A friend in Cortez, Yale Fyler, owns a bookstore called Books and a blacksmith/metalworking shop called the Art Forge. He graciously allowed the bus to be parked behind the shop.

When Wilhelm arrived, he began to learn the art of blacksmithing from master metal worker Yale, and applied his talents for welding, carpentry, electrical work, engine repair, astrology, and time travel astrophysics to refurbishing and upgrading the Skoolie into a welcoming home on wheels with really good vibes. He soon discovered the treasure troves hidden in Cortez's junkyards and pawn shops – rich sources of his favorite building material, "obtainium." With reclaimed and repurposed materials,



he transformed the old school bus into a space traveling time machine.

Emily Breffle arrived with Wilhelm and added her own magic. Hand-sewn curtains soon covered the windows, and her tiny-house building skills made the work move along at an amazing pace. Throughout the winter, friends from Riverwest and elsewhere showed up to lend a hand just as help was needed.

The bus now boasts a comfortable bedroom, a custom-built wood stove, a functioning kitchen, a converted LP gas engine, space thrusters, and a time travel flux capacitor (or some such). The time is fast approaching when Wilhelm is ready to blast off on a maiden voyage.

Several trial runs are planned, with a major project coming up in the fall. The bus project is part of the Cortez Community Garden Farm School, an outreach



program of the Community Garden School – Riverwest started by David Schemberger and Jan Christensen. They have been invited to bring the bus to serve as an anchor for a project at the Ta'neezahni Family Farm on the Dine (Navajo) Reservation, helping create upgrades on a fifth-generation-owned farm in Red Valley, Arizona. The farm is operated by LaVonna George, who learned to farm with her father, a WWII code-talker, and her grandfather, a Dine medicine man.

The project will include the creation of a pond beneath a permaculture berm created by LaVonna's grandfather, restoration of an apricot orchard, construction of two greenhouses, and a series of microclimate garden beds for native medicinal plants. Plans are in the works for this project to be underwritten by and featured on a reality television show called "The Fixers," presented

by BYUtv from Brigham Young University. Filming is planned for early fall for the 2021 season.

It seems that the time has come to exercise the talents we have been cultivating for so long – growing food, building gardens, nourishing the magic that happens when beautiful souls come together to redeem humanity – lighting that candle in the darkness – letting our spirits shine.

**Learn More:**  
byutv.org/thefixers  
Looking for something really uplifting to watch during the lockdown? Watch Season 1 of the Fixers for free.

Want to give us a hand? Visit our GoFundMe page: [gofundme.com/f/mobile-classroom-amp-kitchen](https://gofundme.com/f/mobile-classroom-amp-kitchen)



# RESTAURANT REVIEW

## ROCKET BABY BAKERY

**Rocket Baby Bakery**  
6822 W. North Ave.  
414-502-7323 Call to see in carryout is available  
Hours: Monday-Saturday 6:30-5:00  
Sunday 7:00-2:00  
rocketbabybakery.com  
by Cari Taylor-Carlson

People familiar with Rocket Baby know it as a bakery of artisan bread and gorgeous pastries, a place where lingering at the counter display is almost de rigueur. It has the look and charm of a typical Parisian café, casual with fire engine red chairs, a high ceiling, and a black and white floor. When sunshine floods the room from large windows that front North Avenue and 69th Street, you can relax with a cup of their strong coffee and pretend you are lingering in a neighborhood café in Paris.

You can't find anything at Rocket Baby short of utterly delicious. Here are a few of my favorites: all the macarons, especially lemon, vanilla, and pistachio; the monkey bread, bundles of croissant dough enhanced by lots of cinnamon sugar, packed together, baked, and finished with frosting,

a yummy, sticky mess; the bacon cheddar croissant; the impossibly buttery chocolate chip cookie, especially when it's teamed with Kopps vanilla ice cream; and the decadent carrot cake with layers of cream cheese frosting, enough to satisfy even the most demanding carrot cake aficionado.

You might not think of Rocket Baby as a lunch destination, I didn't, until after several visits to try out some of their lunch choices. Now it's a satisfying go-to place on the west side for a quick meal and a cookie.

I should have read the menu description more carefully before I ordered Grilled Cheese. There was no issue with the cheese, a mix of Carr Valley cheddar, Swiss, and goat cheese melted together into a gooey blend, but instead of grilling it, they served it in a crusty baguette. I don't know why. The French don't put cheese in a baguette and call it "Grilled." The next time I ordered



it on pan de mie, problem solved. A cup of Tomato Soup tasted like a garden tomato with both acid and sweetness in the mouth, the classic companion to a cheese sandwich.

My companion, however, couldn't stop raving about her BLT with its house mayo, the more than generous portion of thick-sliced, slightly crisp bacon, and the toasted pan de mie. Like all the sandwiches, it came with kettle chips or a side salad. The salad, dressed with a light vinaigrette, tasted as if they just picked the lettuce from a garden outside the back door.

For more bacon, you can add it to the Breakfast Sandwich, Yuppie Hill scrambled eggs and melting cheese on a ciabatta roll, for an anytime satisfying meal.

Like the Grilled Cheese, for the Ham and Cheese sandwich, they stuffed Berkshire ham, Swiss and arugula, inside a crusty baguette. Because the bacon aioli

had settled to the bottom of the baguette, it made an unexpected appearance when it unfortunately squirted at my face and drizzled down my chin. It would have been even more delicious on the sandwich instead of my nose.

Apple Salad, according to my companion, made a satisfying, albeit light lunch. The combination of crisp Granny Smith apples played well with the almonds and goat cheese, a generous portion of each, tossed with more of those lovely fresh greens. An apple cider vinaigrette bonded tart, crunchy, creamy, and crisp.

**As I write this, due to the current restaurant closings, takeout orders must be called in (414-502-7323) as the owners explore online ordering and delivery. This could change.**

## Co-ops serve a collective ... Information on services at this time of crisis

by Josie Columbus

...**That's the idea** behind a cooperative organization: that the co-op exists not just to serve its own needs, but also the needs of its community. Though a co-op needs to operate in a sustainable manner, its primary goal is not profit -- it is the benefit of the community they serve.

For a long time, that benefit came by expanding the choices. It was once difficult to access vegan, gluten-free, and otherwise "specialty" diet options at corporate grocery stores. A co-op allows its member community to decide what they see on the shelves, to ensure that everyone has access to the food they need to thrive.

The early success of the Riverwest Co-op is owed to the fact that at the beginning (in 2001), vegan and vegetarian options were hard to come by in Milwaukee, so the Riverwest community came together to advocate for themselves. In a time when food that satisfied the needs of those with dietary restrictions was hard less available, the Riverwest Co-op provided its community with much-needed support. In that way, the interests of the organization were the interests of its community, allowing it to become what the Riverwest community needed.

Since then, it has become far easier to obtain specialty food items, but the Co-op persists in its mission to benefit the Riverwest community. Its members receive a

discount on items in the store and have a say in how the Co-op operates through our General Membership meetings and Board Elections. Volunteers receive an additional discount and a chance to work directly within the store or its ancillary committees.

But the Co-op isn't just about its member or volunteer communities. The Riverwest Co-op is dedicated to its neighborhood, to serving Riverwest as a whole. Cooperatives promote togetherness and cooperation while also reflecting the values of the communities that create and support them. The Riverwest Co-op's mission is to support Riverwest as a whole -- not just our member and volunteer communities. The Co-op Values program is meant to both support Riverwest, as well as make it easier for Riverwesters to support their Co-op.

**From the Co-op Staff and Board**  
We at the Co-op deeply appreciate that support, especially in these trying times, and we hope to use it to make more changes in the future that will have a positive effect on the neighborhood. In light of the current COVID-19 ("Coronavirus") situation, we are doing everything in our capabilities to maximize health and safety at the Riverwest Co-op. Please know that we are closely monitoring COVID-19 and staying informed with the most up-to-date information from the CDC, World Health Organization, Wisconsin Department of Health, and City of Milwaukee Health Department.

We have decided to take more actions to help protect and maintain the highest level of safety and sanitation in both the store and the café:

We have closed the café for in-house dining and carry-out services for the time being. Our café staff will continue to stock the Grab n' Go section of the store, as well as our vegan bakery and granola.

**We have adjusted our hours of operation. We will be open from 9am to 7pm until otherwise indicated.**

We've increased the frequency and extent of our cleaning procedures, taking special care to frequently and thoroughly wipe down all door handles and knobs, pin pads, phones, broom handles, tables, chairs, counters, bulk bins, pens, menus, bathroom surfaces, and the café doorbell used by volunteers and staff.

We are reinforcing and increasing the frequency of hand-washing for all of our employees and volunteers.

We have eliminated 90% of our regular volunteer staffing to encourage social distancing in our small space.

We have stocked up on plenty of hand soap in the bathroom, for our employees, volunteers, members and customers. We are providing sanitizing wipes for employees, volunteers, and customers.

We have gloves available for use when folks are working, volunteering, or shopping at the Co-op.

We are ensuring that our employees and volunteers stay informed of the situation, and we

continue to provide them the support they need to stay healthy.

Some suggestions we have for our volunteers, members, and customers:

Avoiding contact with individuals who are sick, practicing frequent hand washing, and avoiding large gatherings remain the best ways to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Please continue to use caution to minimize exposure for yourselves and loved ones by social distancing. When greeting one another, replace a handshake with a hand wave, elbow bump, foot tap, head nod, bow, curtsy, Spock hands...

**Use a debit/credit card instead of cash.**

**Stay home if you are sick** or are in a high risk population. Ask someone you trust to assist you with purchasing and bringing you necessary supplies.

If possible, help the Co-op stay financially stable during this time by purchasing gift certificates now that you can use later *or gift to someone who may have reduced hours of work due to shutdowns.*

*Our hours of operation (for both the store and café) have changed. We will be open from 9am to 7pm until otherwise indicated. We will communicate any changes to our hours or services offered by email, Facebook, and on the front door to the store. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or needs: (414) 264-7933.*

*Stay safe and please take care of yourself and your community,*  
*The Riverwest Cooperative Grocery and Café*

**Online community resources:**  
*Free meals for MPS students during school shutdown: <https://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/News/For-Immediate-Release---Coronavirus-Update.htm>*



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March 15, 2020

Dear friends, members, artists, and patrons,

In the interests of public health and the mitigation of the COVID-19 virus spread, our community arts center is **canceled all events (Tuesday jazz jams, OWL, concerts, et al) effective immediately.** We plan to reopen Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, or as conditions allow.

Our facility is also used for small meetings. These community groups with no alternative locations and attendance limited to 15 people (well under the 250-person threshold recommended by the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services) should contact us via website request forms at [www.riverwestart.org](http://www.riverwestart.org).

Cleanliness is especially critical in these times. A regular cleaning routine using recommended protocols and sanitizing materials is in place at the JGCA. We also practice and promote rigorous public health practices (frequent 20-second handwashing, avoiding person-to-person contact, social distancing, cough and sneeze etiquette).

Self-quarantine challenges us to find new and creative ways for our community to share. Currently, we at the Riverwest Artists Association are working on **possible Riverwest Radio (104.1 FM) programming** to share directly into our community's homes. Stay tuned for developments!

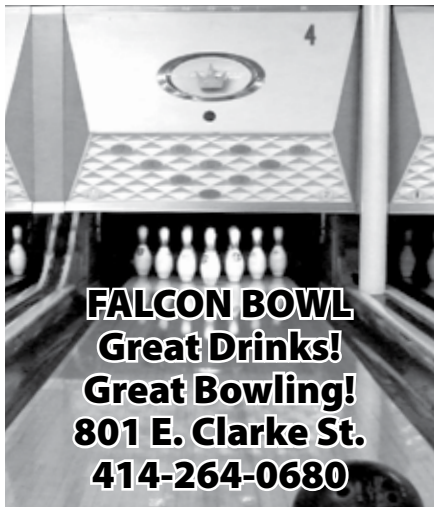
Many of our artists and community members are particularly hard hit by the current wave of cancellations. Please support them by attending performances when resumed and sharing arts on other platforms.

Be safe and be well,



Mark Lawson  
RAA President  
on behalf of the RAA Executive and Events/Music Committees

Riverwest Artists Association / Jazz Gallery Center for the Arts  
926 E. Center Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53212  
[www.riverwestart.org](http://www.riverwestart.org)



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**COMPOUND**

Pecan      Locust      Ash



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(Confessions at 3:30 pm)

**SUNDAY MASS - 10:00 AM**

St. Casimir Church - (Bremen & Clarke)

**Parish Office**  
414-264-0049  
1716 N. Humboldt Ave.

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When You See How Quickly Abundance Returns

Only months ago there was only brown  
and the ground touching your feet  
with only a few sticks between  
Now I cannot easily find  
a grassy spot to sit myself in these hills  
for everything is flowers & thick multi-textured green  
abundance  
Life Abundance Quickly Changes  
the cyclical turn of the sun  
dance of the earth  
Life Abundance Slowly Changes  
All winter I wait  
& forget, wait & don't believe  
in the long season of blazing white  
of grey & brown shadow darkness  
But now, insects upon me  
and faced with, surrounded by, sitting upon  
a three-dimensional tapestry of shade & color  
patterns like someone has spent  
a long time working all this out  
form scattered about  
or criss-crossing with form  
an infinity of shape, texture  
all green. All greens  
punctuated with flowers white  
flowers purple, flowers yellow  
and the mossy greenness of those feathery  
leaves, little feather leaves of the dwarf  
trees intertwined with green gold ivy  
Now I believe  
for the lushness is lusciously far  
from the stark imaginings of winter  
I remember  
Abundance comes quickly  
I remember  
& greet as if new  
until I forget.

ECWarren  
6/22/98



Contagion

& The State of the Film dustry

by Mitchell Horner

We are living in strange times, though I'm certain you don't need me to tell you that. I write this now from the comfort of my home, and I assume you are reading it likewise. I will spare you grand societal mantras; I'm sure you've been paying attention enough to not need a recap here. Instead, I'll talk now about movies, and try and distract you momentarily from the rocking of the ship.

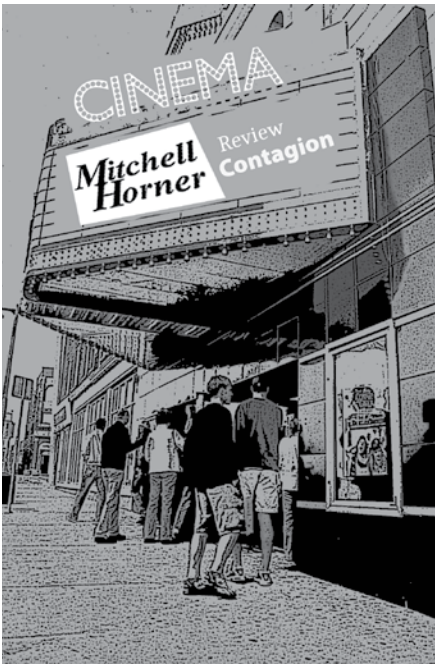
Movies, like everything, have not been spared from the tumult; It started, really, with the postponement of the latest James Bond picture, which had already been delayed twice prior.

Heartbreaking, of course, but only the beginning. After that, things escalated quickly. More and more movies have experienced a delayed-release as the situation became increasingly dire, theaters, now with nothing to exhibit, shut down, and people stayed home. The clear benefactor of all this confusion, though, is Steven Soderbergh's 2011 thriller *Contagion*, which as of writing sits at 2nd on iTunes and 3rd on Google Play in rentals and purchases combined.

Although, perhaps I misspoke when I called *Contagion* a thriller. It is, in no uncertain terms, a ripped-from-the-headlines horror story, a work which preceded collapse, a movie almost prophetic in its predictions. Perhaps we should make sure that Soderbergh made no trips to Wuhan in the waning hours of 2019.

In short, the film details a disease which spreads catastrophically out of China, wreaking havoc on the world at large, and the lives of those it impacts across the globe. The ensemble cast which features, among others, Jude Law and Marion Cotillard, delivers impressive performances across the board. The color palette of the film is sickly, with colors appearing almost acid-dipped in their vibrancy, heightening the already oppressive, toxic atmosphere the film cultivates.

The film is a case study in a viral pandemic and the societal fear which accompanies such a thing.



We know now, unfortunately, that Soderbergh could not likely portray more accurately the effects of a pandemic. It is indeed eerie the prescience of the subject matter; from a Chinese outbreak tied to pigs and bats in a wet market to the political glad-handing which seems to favor economic stability to human lives, Soderbergh predicted with frightening accuracy the events in which we now find ourselves. Soderbergh is a filmmaker obsessed with detail and nuance, more so than most of his contemporaries. For proof, one need look no further than *Oceans II*. It's often said that heist movies are metaphors for the craft of filmmaking, and if so, *Oceans II* is a masterful deconstruction of the process. It is this same attention to detail that makes *Contagion* such a compelling film; the scientific efforts to curb the spread of the virus in the film are engaging to the scientific dullard such as myself, yet were praised by the scientific community for their realism.

'Times like these are, frankly, scary. I could look for levity in this situation, but out of respect for you as a reader and the situation we find ourselves in currently, I will avoid doing so. I will instead leave you with this: Be safe. Tell those close to that you love them. Just make sure you stay 6 feet away when doing so.

*Contagion*, Dir. Steven Soderbergh, Runtime 1 Hr. 46 minutes. Available for rent or purchase on iTunes & Google Play

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**Spring Fling**

Metaphysical & Arts Fair

Thurman's 15 1731 N Arlington Pl  
April 25, 2020, Saturday 12pm- 6pm

Paul's Place will be having a small Wellness & Arts Fair hosted by Thurman's 15. Paul's Place will be showing metaphysical products and arts. The following vendors will be present: Sept Rain Designs, Megan's Photos, Tres Ojos, Botanical Baubles, Riverspritecreative, and more. There will also be a variety of music at Thurman's 15! - Special Guest Salem Psychic Medium Reader **Steve Polifka**.

**For info contact:**  
**Paul Zasadny 414-223-5570**

The event **Spring Fling** may be cancelled. Paul Z. will let me know and I will keep you informed on the Currents web site. RiverwestCurrents.org

As we all know, our local bars and restaurants are closed and only carry out is available at those establishments that offer this service. Please support our businesses as best you can during this hard time. And visit them as much as you can when this is over.

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The Dodo

Andrew Megow

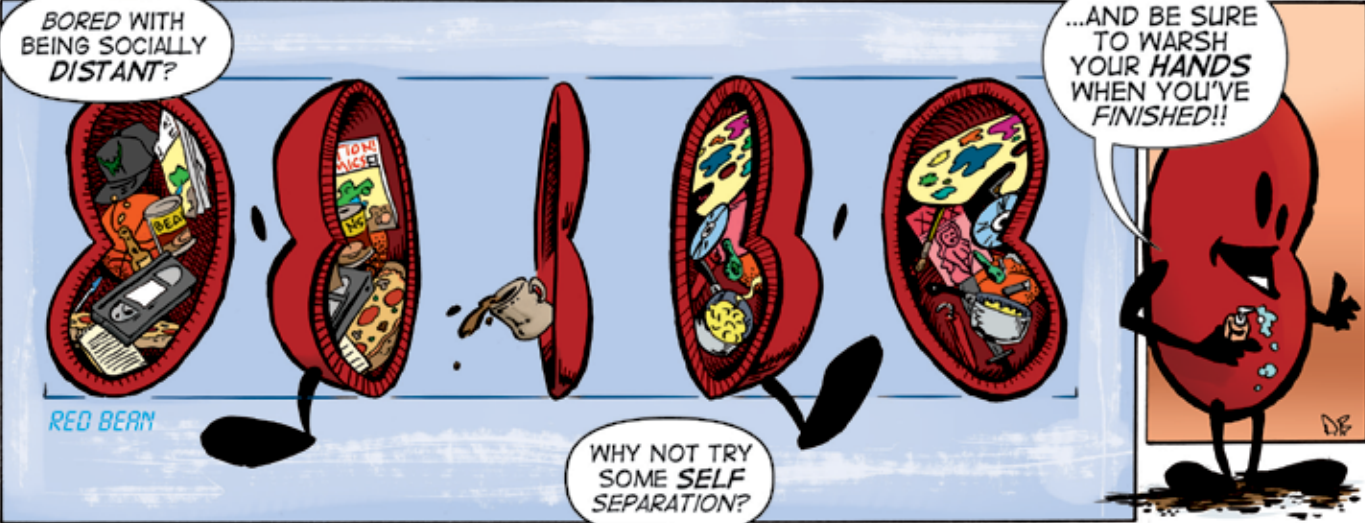


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