

Post-Gazette Owner Buys City Paper

Even as it grapples with a strike at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*,

Block Commu-
nications started

the year with a surprise announcement --- the company is

buying *Pittsburgh City Paper*.



Block Communications, Inc.

Launched in 1990, *City Paper* is Pittsburgh's last remaining alternative newsweekly and winner of multiple journalism awards. Economic challenges led long-time owner **Steel City Media** to sell the liberal-leading urban tabloid in 2016 to the conservative, rural-based **Eagle Media Corp.** "Since that time, we have invested \$3.5 million in *City Paper*," Eagle Media president Ron Vodenichar told Next Pittsburgh's Andrew Conte. "And they haven't been able to pay their own bills for even one week."

Conflict over coverage of the newspaper strike was among the reasons for Lisa Cunningham to resign as *City Paper* editor last year. Primarily, that Eagle Media had been contracted to produce the print editions of the *Post-Gazette*.

City Paper is being acquired by Block through a subsidiary called Cars Holding, Inc. No layoffs are being planned. Company CEO Paul Block insists in a press release that they committed to "independent journalism" by supporting "this well-established entertainment and alternative news publication." Cunningham described the Block deal as "a worst-case scenario" to Conte. **The Newspaper Guild**, which represents the striking staff, is asking the Justice Department's

anti-trust division to investigate according to MediaPost.com's Ray Schultz.

The weekly is not unionized. Some speculate that the purchase gives the *Post-Gazette*, among other resources, access to a non-striking news room.

"We wish [Block Communications] would bargain in good faith with us, rather than buying different outlets around town," union leader Zack Tanner told WESA-FM's Oliver Morrison. "But as far as whether the strike had anything to do with this sale or not, I have no idea."

The guild has been striking the *Post-Gazette* since October. Sarah Scire of the Neiman Foundation for Journalism (part of **Harvard University**) describes the

walkout as "the first newspaper strike of the digital age."

As January drew to a close, Schultz reported that an administrative law judge with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) "ordered the *Post-Gazette* to resume bargaining within 15 days of a union request to do so, "adding that "the newspaper had bargained in bad faith since 2017, and ordered it to rescind unilateral working conditions it had imposed in 2020 and to restore the Guild's 2014-17 contract." Block Communications is certain to appeal to the full NLRB.

Read Andrew Conte's [detailed article](#) and Sarah Scire's [in-depth report](#) to learn more.

Downtown's Crime Crises

Eriq Collington, age 18, has been arrested regarding a fatal shooting near the Benedum Center on January 19. The victim has been identified as 23-year-old Eugene Mance.

"The shooting occurred shortly after 2 p.m. at Liberty Avenue and Seventh Street" reports Eric Heyl for Patch Pittsburgh.

"According to Pittsburgh public safety officials, the victim suffered multiple gunshot wounds and died in the hospital."

The brazen shooting incident is just one of many violent acts that have been plaguing Downtown and especially the Pittsburgh Cultural District.

On November 15, a woman was shot near the corner of Smithfield Street and Fourth Avenue (on the

other side of Downtown, not far from the Pittsburgh Playhouse). An unconscious man was found November 29 just steps away from the District with shrapnel from a BB gun found in his body. The man eventually died in the hospital. A teenager was arrested in the same alley on unrelated assault allegations.

It has reached the point that "county Executive Rich Fitzgerald has offered to provide a contingent of county police officers to supplement the work being done by city police," reports Mark Belko for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

A town hall meeting has been scheduled for February 9 at the Union Trust Building where Mayor Ed Gainey is expected to address the situation.



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Amazon OKs PGH Series

A new comedy series called “The Pradeeps of Pittsburgh” has been given the green-light, according to *The Hollywood Reporter’s* Rick Porter.



“The Pradeeps of Pittsburgh” is the story of an immigrant Indian family trying to make a new life in Pittsburgh.

Eight episodes have been ordered for the streaming service Freevee. The series is a co-production of **Sony** and **Amazon**. “Pradeeps” is created by “Black-ish” alumnus Vijal Patel, who is also the show-runner.

Learn more by reading [Porter’s article](#).

Concert Venue Approved

The City Planning Commission has, somewhat reluctantly, approved a proposal to build a new music venue and parking garage. Mark Belko of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reports that the structure will be on the site of the former Civic Arena.

Estimated at about \$110 million, the project’s design has left many unhappy as being unimaginative.

“[Additional] concerns were raised after squabbles erupted over several issues,” writes Belko, “including the level of minority

Mayor’s Reordered Committees

Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey has announced the members to his newly divided arts councils [See [Pittsburgh Applause January 2023 page 2](#) – ed], reports Julia Zenkevich for WESA-FM.

Civic Design Committee appointees include Lisa Carver of the architecture firm **Perfido Weiskopf Wagstaff & Goettel** while appointees for the Public Art Committee include noted artist Tom Mosser. [Zenkevich has more information here](#). The city council must approve the appointments.

and women’s business participation at the site and the scheduling of a **Hill Community Development Corporation** meeting with the [**Pittsburgh Penguins**] to review the music venue plans.”

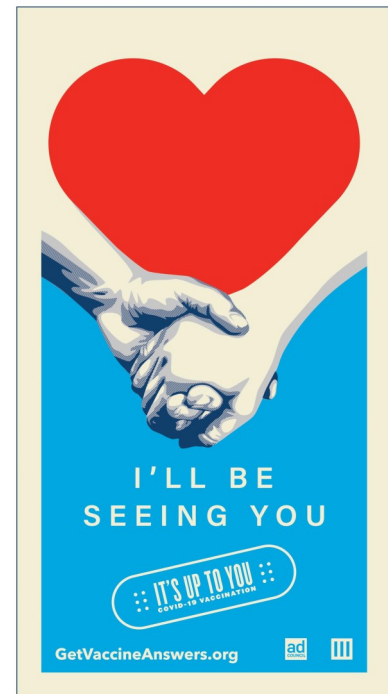
Read [Belko’s article](#) to learn more.

City’s New Film Office

The city has created a new Office of Film & Event Management (OFEM), reports KDKA-TV.

OFEM will ensure film industry standards, safety regulations and city policies are met and followed. The office will also be responsible for vetting applications for film productions and events.

It is to be part of the Department of Parks and Recreation/



Music Fest Lawsuit

A dispute over a 2022 music festival at Hartwood Acres is at the center of complex legal action, reports Bill O'Driscoll for WESA-FM.

The festival was a joined effort by Cleveland event company **Elevation Festivals LLC** and the local record label **Mable House Records LLC**.

"The event was widely considered a success," writes O'Driscoll, "But in its lawsuit, filed Dec. 7 [2022] in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Maple House alleged Elevation has wrongfully held on to [\$500,000 in] revenue, mostly from ticket sales and fees."

O'Driscoll goes into considerable detail which can be read by [clicking here](#).

Ballet's New AD

Adam W. McKinney has been named the new artistic director of the **Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre**.

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre

The company made the announcement on January 18. Its statement describes him: "McKinney has a diverse and accomplished background in arts leadership across the globe, having served as an arts organization director, tenured professor, choreographer, dancer, educator, and activist. He is a gifted teacher of classical ballet whose expertise lies in creating environments that support the training and development of artists."

McKinney assumes his post this coming March. You can learn more about him by reading the [official statement](#).

Silver Eye's New ED

Photography professor Leo Hsu has been named the next executive director of the **Silver Eye Center for Photography**.

Mr. Hsu has been serving as interim leader since last year when executive director David Oresick left for a position at the **Mattress Factory** [[See Pittsburgh Applause, May 2022 - ed.](#)]

A press release describes Hsu's background as "a managing editor at *Fraction Magazine*, and an instructor of photography at **Carnegie Mellon University**. He has written extensively about photography for national publications and is a talented photographer in his own right, producing work that examines the often-shifting experience of place, the power of identifying patterns in everyday life, and spaces where the private and public intersect."



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Patron Buys Tech Firm

The parent company of Pittsburgh-based ShowClix, **Patron Technology**, has announced the acquisition of Fan Interactive Marketing.



Fan Interactive is described as “a marketing services company focused on helping clients fully activate their data for strategic efforts. Their team of experts handles the day-to-day administrative tasks associated with CRM, email marketing, and digital advertising while bringing forth best-in-class strategies and initiatives.”

Patron believes that Fan Interactive’s capabilities will enhance the ability of clients to better engage audiences.

“To further our goal of providing a complete event technology solution, we saw incredible value in acquiring the most successful marketing company in the live event space,” Patron’s Marc Jenkins explained in a press release.

Specific terms of the purchase have not been disclosed.

Mental Health First Aid

With mental health a rising concern --- especially since the COVID-19 pandemic --- the **International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE)** has established a training program for its members.

An IATSE statement explains that “bullying, harassment and intimidation is a common workplace stressor throughout all sectors of the entertainment industry. These behaviors create a physically and psychologically unsafe workplace for everyone.”

The program is to teach union members “how to identify, understand and respond to signs of distress in your colleagues and help make our workplaces healthier and safer spaces for all.” Those who successfully complete the program become a certified Mental Health First Aider.

IATSE Members and those working under IATSE agreements may be eligible for Training Trust Fund reimbursement for the \$125 fee upon proof of successful completion of the course.

Details on what is involved and how to register is available by [clicking here](#).

SAGAFTRA Offices

With offices reopening full-time in Pittsburgh and across the nation, **SAG-AFTRA** has announced some post-pandemic policies.



During the height of the COVID-19 crisis, only staff members considered essential were expected to be in each local’s office. “As additional staff now return to offices,” according to an online posting, “we are maintaining our efforts to keep them safe by ensuring SAG-AFTRA’s vaccination and masking policy remains in place.”

Members who still wish to attend meetings remotely may continue to do so. However, those participating in-person must confirm their vaccination status. [For further information, read the complete posting.](#)



Film Academy



KDKA-AM Honored

KDKA-AM is the recipient of the 2023 World Radio Day Award.

World Radio Day was created in 2011 by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization** (UNESCO) to encourage stations in developed countries to assist those in the developing world. The award in the U.S. is presented by the **Academy of Radio Arts and Sciences of America**. (ARASA). The radio station is owned by **Audacy**.



An ARASA press release says that “War and Peace” is this year’s theme, inspired by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. “Radio can indeed fuel conflict,” the release adds, “but in reality . . . relevant

programs and independent news reporting provide the foundation for sustainable democracy and good governance.” The award recognizes a station that demonstrates ideals that includes localism and community service.

“This distinguished honor underscores not only KDKA’s unwavering commitment to delivering premier news coverage to the Pittsburgh communities, but the individuals who work tirelessly each and every day to make it happen,” said Michael Spacciapoli of Audacy Pittsburgh in a separate release. “We’re proud to join the list of iconic heritage brands that represent the very best the radio industry has to offer.”

World Radio Day falls on February 13.

Research Team Being Sought

Nominations are being sought by the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council** (GPAC) for the committee that will guide the design, analysis and reporting of GPAC’s upcoming racial equity in arts funding research.



The primary goal is to assess racial equity in grant amounts and grant dollars distributed to arts organizations. This 12+ month project begins in the summer. A stipend will be available for some members.

Nominations are being accepted through February 28. [Click here for details.](#)

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Local Students Make Roku Mini Doc

A short documentary by a Pittsburgh student is among those being featured on the Roku Channel, reports Rebecca Sun for the *Hollywood Reporter*.

Nearly a year ago, streaming media firm **Roku Inc.** partnered with non-profit youth organization **Fresh Films** for a program

to train some 250 high schoolers from 23 cities nationwide in video making. Pittsburgh was among the cities chosen.

“We’re proud to have cultivated an environment that empowered a diverse group of young people from across the country to courageously share their stories,” Sun quotes from a statement by Roku’s Brian Tannenbaum.

The six-minute video takes a look at **Phase 4 Learning Center**, a non-profit organization that helps at-risk and disadvantaged people earn their high school diploma and successfully move on to more education or joining the workforce. You can watch the video by



New “Dead” Audio Series

George Romero’s groundbreaking 1968 Pittsburgh film “Night of the Living Dead” is alive and coming to podcasting, reports Peter White for Deadline.

The forthcoming audio series “The Dead” is being produced by a division of **Cinedigm Corp.** in partnership with the **George A. Romero Foundation**.

White explains that “writers will be chosen to pen the stories following an application process” with the Romero Foundation selecting the most promising. A production team from the Cinedigm division Bloody Distinguishing will then fashion the stories into 24 full episodes.

Read White’s full article by [clicking here](#).



Images



This month, the Pittsburgh Glass Center showcases work created by contestants from Netflix’s hit show “Blown Away.”

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Opportunities

A seminar is being offered this month by the Bayer Center at **Robert Morris University** about performance management. [Click here.](#)

Two dates in March have been designated by the **Pittsburgh Opera** for the next round of auditions. Three horn positions are available with the opera's orchestra. [Click here.](#)

Programs being offered by the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council** include the [Access Microfund](#) grant, a [Disabled Artists Creative Cohort](#) virtual conference and a [Financial Planning](#) video conference for artists.

A regular networking event called "Music of Pittsburgh" is being held at **Forge Urban Winery**. [Click here.](#)

Dates have been set aside by the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** for auditions. The orchestra is seeking a second horn and a principal trombone. [Click here.](#)

A free seminar is being offered by the **Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh** on writing grant proposals for foundations. [Click here.](#)

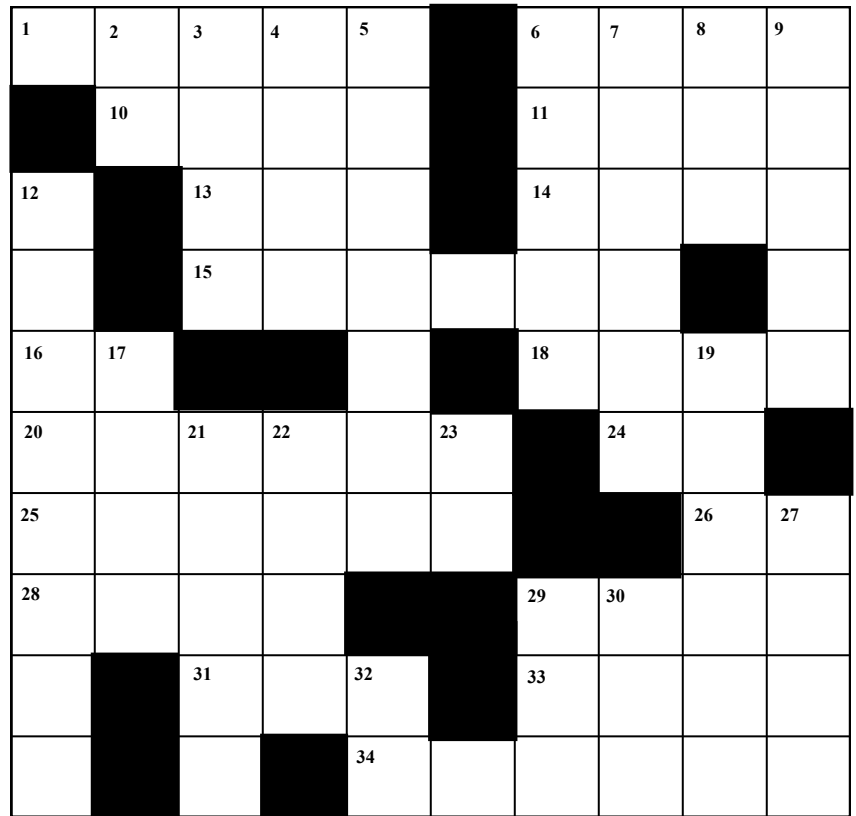
Manuscripts are being accepted by **Autumn House Press**. [Click here.](#)

Positions available at **Paramount Global's** KDKA-TV include [a news producer](#) (full-time), [a sports producer](#) (full-time) and [a news assignment editor](#) (full-time).



Across

1. Dr. King's most famous speech
(with 15-Across)
6. A-List actor or actress
10. Basic particle
11. Biblical pronoun
13. Chest bone
14. Long, long times
15. See 1-Across
16. Neighbor west of WI
18. Catholic service, commonly
20. Sting's band (with "The")
24. Chemical symbol for tin
25. Closeted cop who spied on Dr. King
26. Morning letters
28. South American empire
29. Dog food brand often promoted by
Ed McMahon
31. 1966 Dave Berry and the Cruisers song
33. Location
34. Location of 5-Down



Down

2. Half a laugh
3. Gillette razor brand
4. Empty space
5. Sculpture unveiled in 2023 honoring
Dr. and Mrs. King (with "The")
6. Lead-in bath or room
7. Artist who created 5-Down
8. Poseidon's son
9. Goes bad, like metal
12. Where we lost Dr. King
17. Mid-day
19. "Attention!"
21. Not far nor foreign
22. Common Slavic name
23. Title of a 1980's George Clooney
sitcom or a 1990's George
Clooney drama
27. Major faucet maker
29. Donkey, by another name
30. Not dim
32. Atlantic province, initially

Last Month's Solution

F	R	E	D	R	O	G	E	R	S
O			I	A		E	C	O	N
R	O	B	B	E	D		O		A
R	E	O	S		R		B	I	G
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S	T	O			G		M	P	
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