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**New schedule, location
for Discover Tyler Street**

BY BRAD JOHNSON

They always grow up soooo fast... Four short years after holding its first community celebration in September 2010, the Tyler Street Business Group is preparing to roll out the fifth annual Discover Tyler Street festival.

And, like a toddler learning and experimenting with each step along the way through early childhood, the event and its organizers continue to try new things and different approaches to highlight the diverse businesses, institutions and other resources that comprise their particular section of Pittsfield.

For this year's event, slated for Aug. 28, the changes are more dramatic. Whereas earlier Discover Tyler Street events have been held exclusively on Saturday afternoons (albeit in different months), this year the festival is moving to a Thursday evening, from 5 to 8 p.m.

The first four festivals also involved activities spread out along the length of Tyler Street from its intersection with First Street down to Woodlawn Avenue (near the junction with Dalton Avenue).

This time around, organizers have decided to consolidate all of the attractions and festivities along Woodlawn Avenue and the adjacent parking lot extending down to Kellogg Street.

There, a wide assortment of vendors – both from within and outside the Tyler Street community – will pitch their tents and set up displays, offering everything from assorted ethnic cuisine to deals on products and services to information about community resources.

Also in the mix will be live entertainment, including performances at the city's mobile stage truck, miniature "railroad" rides for all ages along the roadside, a Car Cruise Night display of custom and vintage vehicles, and



This expansive parking lot and the adjacent stretch of Woodlawn Avenue in Pittsfield will be the site of this year's Discover Tyler Street. Hoisting the banner for the event are members of the Tyler Street Business Group, which organizes the annual street fair and other community activities. They are, front row from left – Ron Marcella Jr. and Diane Marcella of DiRon Realty and Marcella Building & Renovation, S. Grace Walter of Performance Automotive, and Ron Marcella III of Marcella Building & Renovation; back row – Adam LaCasse and Heather Mierzejewski of Mezzie's Variety, and John Fiorini of Performance Automotive.

even a "Fun Walk" to kick off the event, which has a "Healthy Living" theme.

"There will be many of the same attractions and activities that we've had at our other events," said Diane Marcella, president of the Tyler Street Business Group and a lead organizer of Discover Tyler Street. "This year, they will be more consolidated in a single area to make it easier for people to enjoy the event and to create a more festive and energetic atmosphere."

Marcella explained that the schedule shift and new location came about through a number of factors. "Saturdays can sometimes be busy for people – especially in summer," she said, noting the challenge of getting people to fit the Tyler Street event into their weekend schedules.

She added that the organization had noticed over the years how well the city's 3rd Thursdays monthly street festival has worked in attracting people downtown for the evening. "So, this year, we thought: 'Why not try it on a weeknight?'" she said.

However, some of the things that help make 3rd Thursdays successful are the more consolidated nature of the activities and the decision in recent years to close a section of North Street off to traffic.

By contrast, the Tyler Street business community is stretched over a longer length of the road. "Things are too spread out and we can't close the street like they do on 3rd Thursdays," Marcella noted.

Not letting this roadblock deter them, the organization ultimately hit upon the idea of holding the festival at the eastern end of Tyler Street where it meets with Woodlawn Avenue. They gained city approval to close

off the stretch of Woodlawn Avenue between Tyler and Kellogg streets for the event, and also to use the large parking lot behind the offices of the Pittsfield Economic Development Authority (PEDA) for festival activities.

"It's a perfect arrangement for us," said Marcella.

No only does it work well logistically, she explained, it also ties in with other changes in the organization. Among these is an expansion of the Tyler Street Business Group's focus and activities to include other sections of the Morningside neighborhood. We've

branched out into all of Morningside," said Marcella, noting that the organization has recently launched the new Shop Morningside, com directory that features information on member businesses throughout the community.

Marcella added that the new location for Discover Tyler Street reflects this broader Morningside emphasis. "Putting it on Woodlawn Avenue brings the whole community into this," she said.

Beyond the once-a-year effort to stage Discover Tyler Street, the Tyler Street Business Group has also been active on a number of other community initiatives. They hold regular meetings and informational forums throughout the year, and advocate for community improvement and safety initiatives.

All of these activities are now taking place under a more formalized organizational structure.

Marcella noted that the Tyler Street Business Group earlier this year incorporated as a nonprofit membership organization, a step that reinforces and facilitates its ongoing mission to beautify Tyler Street and Morningside, bring attention to the businesses in the district, and create a positive image to encourage visitors, new businesses and residents to the neighborhood.

"We decided to become our own nonprofit organization as a way to better support all that we're trying to do here on Tyler Street and throughout Morningside," she said.

Marcella serves as president of the organization's board of directors, along with fellow officers: Karen Barbalunga, Barbalunga Enterprises, vice president; S. Grace Walter, Performance Auto, treasurer; and Frank Engels III, Goodwill Industries of the Berkshires, secretary.

Other board members include: Christine Yon, city liaison; Michael Ortega, Pittsfield Police safety officer; Suzanne Engels, WebArtNTech; Christine Natale, Christine's Home Furnishings; Gerard Natale, Christine's Home Furnishings; Anthony Barnaba, BlueLine Design; Ron Marcella Jr., Marcella Building & Renovation; John Fiorini, Performance Auto; and Pete White, neighborhood watch leader.

For a full slate of attractions and activities for the Aug. 28 Discover Tyler Street, visit www.facebook.com/DiscoverTylerStreet. For information about Tyler Street Business Group and its activities, visit www.TylerStreetPittsfield.com, call Diane Marcella at 413-448-6257 or email tylerstreet01201@gmail.com. ♦

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