

“We’re the ones on the frontlines with the students”

An Interview with YSU-ACE Union President Connie Frisby

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Youngstown State University’s administration and the labor unions representing the majority of non-administration employees just can’t seem to get along.

The vitriolic negotiations between the YSU administration and the YSU-Ohio Educator’s Association labor union — which lasted over 10 months — was only one of three major union contract negotiations facing the university.

The current negotiations between the administration and the YSU-Association of Classified Employees labor union — which began over a year ago — have proven to be just as rocky. The YSU Board of Trustees recently imposed the terms of a contract that was rejected by members of ACE on May 6.

For Connie Frisby, president of YSU-ACE, the contract negotiations are much more than business discussions.

“There has been a general lack of respect, period,” Frisby said. “[The Board of Trustees] imposed the terms of the contract ... that we overwhelmingly rejected.”

According to the Board of Trustees’ resolution announcing the implementation of the contract, the administration was forced to move on the contract due to early July deadlines for any changes made to health care plans, paid time off accruals and cash payouts and reductions to starting salaries.

The language of the resolution states that the union negotiations have been in good faith. Frisby disagrees.

“ACE members’ number one priority was job security, and that basically was ignored in the current contract,” she said.

While job security is the primary concern for ACE members who worry about losing their jobs to subcontractors — a possibility under the new contract — their distaste for the new contract does not stop there.

ACE members who have worked at YSU for over 25 years generally accrue six weeks of vacation time. These employees will be losing a week of their vacation time.

“They’re getting punished for being loyal employees. That just seems really backwards. The people who’ve already hit their 25 year mark should at least be grandfathered into their

original benefits,” Frisby said.

Under the new contract, the number of hours YSU administration is willing to pay out for sick time is dropping by over half. This has resulted in many union members choosing to retire rather than continue working under the new contract.

“The retirement payouts are changing on sick leave. They used to pay out up to 575 total hours of sick time. They’ve now dropped it to 240. People are leaving,” Frisby said.

She believes encouraging veteran union members to pack up may be intentional.

“The attorney they’ve brought in comes from a union busting law firm. I feel very strongly what they’re trying to do is erode [YSU-ACE] completely,” she said.

At the core of Frisby’s criticisms of the negotiations is a feeling that the administration has a legitimate disdain for her union.

“At one point during negotiations we were told ‘the intelligent, degreed professional people on this campus were not going to pay’ for the likes of [YSU-ACE union members]. That was a response to us trying to get a better health care deal for our lower earning members,” she said.

Frisby hopes that the union and the administration can move past the animosity and get back to the negotiating table for continued contract revision.

“Ultimately we want to go back to the negotiating table. If that doesn’t happen, our crisis team will meet, and we’ll determine a plan of action from there. That decision will ultimately be



PHOTO BY GRAIG GRAZIOSI/THE JAMBAR.

up to the membership,” Frisby said. “[A failure to reach an agreement] will ultimately hurt the services our students get

“Car Bombs and Cookie Tables:” The Best and Worst of Life in Youngstown

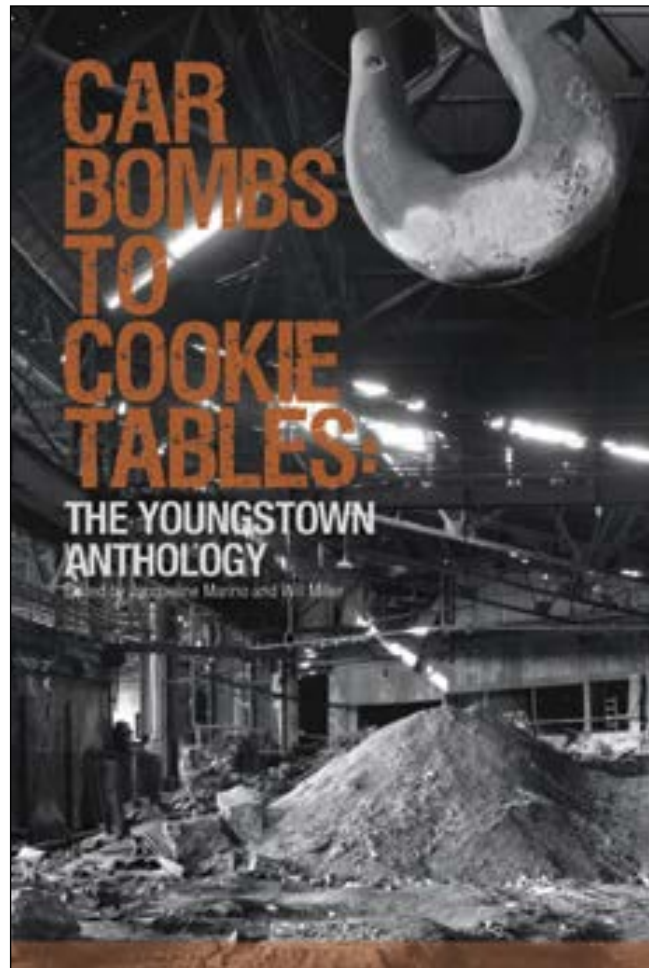


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author, and poet Rochelle Hurt will be reading from their contributions.

Jacqueline Marino, co-editor of the anthology, said the event will be a party for Youngstown.

“It’s a celebration of the literature of Youngstown,” Marino said.

She said the anthology she and her co-editor have put together is honest and confrontational.

“Hopefully, it will help people see Youngstown in new ways,” Marino said.

Phil Kidd, owner of Youngstown Nation and associate director at Youngstown Cityscape, said the book is not a cheerleader piece.

“With many of these pieces, they are true accounts of struggle and how difficult it can be to live here,” Kidd said. “What you read in these anthologies is a real true account — no holds barred, no filter — of the good, the bad and the ugly of what it’s like to live in Youngstown.”

He said he thinks the book will appeal to everyone, not just those who want the positive side of things or those who are frustrated with the city.

“This is the whole spectrum, so I think because of that it’s a very credible publication, and I think it will be well-received by the community,” Kidd said.

Belt Magazine has previously published similar anthologies on Cleveland, Detroit and Cincinnati. The previous volumes have been successful. Marino and her co-editor Will Miller have ties to the Youngstown area

and brought the idea of a Youngstown anthology to Belt.

“Youngstown seems like it had to happen,” Marino said. “There are so many stories that haven’t been told.”

She said they put out a notice for contributors on social media, and the response was overwhelming. They reached out to certain people they wanted included but left submissions open to increase diversity.

“We didn’t want to make it a book just for established writers. We wanted anybody that had something to say,” Marino said.

The anthology format also allows for the diversity of expression to be captured as well.

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University Names Candidates to New Student Affairs Positions

Gary Swegan, associate vice president of enrollment planning and management, chaired the search committee for the student experience position.

“He [Howard] came through the process with a great deal of support from every group that he saw. I think he was viewed as very dynamic and he’s had a really broad array of different experiences,” Swegan said.

He noted that Howard has worked with commuter populations in the past. The administration has stated one of their goals with this position is to get commuting students more involved in on-campus activities.

“He’s accustomed to working with the kind of student we tend to have at YSU,” Swegan said.

Fahey said he can’t wait for Howard to get here.

“I think he’s going to do a great job with our students. Everyone reacted very, very positively to him,” Fahey said.

Reagle held positions at Howard Payne University, California Baptist University, and California State University Fresno. He served as dean of students for Howard Payne University, associate dean of students for California Baptist University and Resident Director for California State University Fresno.

Reagle was initially considered for the associate vice president for student experience before being added as a candidate for the associate vice president for student success.

“Michael Reagle is an outstanding candidate, and, in fact, that is ultimately what interested the committee that ran the other search. He just did such an outstanding job,”

Youngstown State University has named candidates for its new student affairs positions.

Eddie Howard, previously vice president for student affairs at Augusta Technical College in Georgia, was appointed associate vice president for student experience on May 11. He will begin his tenure next Monday.

Michael Reagle, previously associate vice president for student life at Eastern Kentucky University, is being recommended to the YSU Board of Trustees to be appointed as associate vice president for student success tomorrow.

Jack Fahey, vice president for student affairs at YSU, said he thought the searches went well.

“We had quality candidates. We had a lot of people attend open forum sessions and ask good questions and send good comments. We were very, very pleased with the campus interest in the positions as well as the quality of folks that applied,” Fahey said.

Howard also held positions in student affairs offices at Augusta State University, Georgia College and State University and the University of Louisville. He served as acting assistant vice president for student life and director of student activities for Augusta State University, director for student activities at Georgia College and State University and assistant director of services and greek adviser for the University of Louisville.

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NEWS BRIEFS

YSU Students awarded Gilman Scholarship

Ashley Orr, a senior mathematics major, and Carmen Moradian, a senior biology pre-med major, have been awarded the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship to study abroad this summer. Over a thousand undergraduate students from 332 colleges and universities have received this scholarship. Orr will be studying at the London School of Economics and Political Science in the United Kingdom and Moradian will be studying at the University of Nicosia in Cyprus.

First Class of new School Psychology Program Graduates

Last week, the first group of students with the Educational Specialist degree in School Psychology graduated from Youngstown State University. The EdS in School Psychology is an additional year of coursework to the Master's of Education in Intervention Services degree, requiring 251 hours of practical field experience and a 1,400-hour supervised internship at an Ohio school district. The program current has 33 graduate candidates and is one of only nine school psychology programs in the state of Ohio.

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Generation Gap Grads: Mother and Daughter Graduate From YSU Together

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Mothers can generally be found attending the graduation ceremonies of their children.

Anthea Mickens went one step further and graduated alongside her daughter, Carinda.

The pair graduated at the spring commencement ceremony after taking very different paths during their college careers.

"I spent three years of my college experience living in Kilcawley House as a resident assistant ... Working in housing contributed a huge amount to my personal and professional growth. Meanwhile, my mom was off-campus caring for my siblings and working full time," Carinda Mickens said.

Anthea Mickens, who worked as the director of nursing for the Youngstown City

Health Department, went to school as a mother and full-time employee.

"It has been a struggle going to college, working full time, caring for four children and an eight-month-old grandchild. Being a nontraditional student made it difficult ... through prayer, perseverance, dedication and family support I endured," Anthea Mickens said.

While their experiences during school were worlds apart, their selected majors reflect their shared desire to serve people.

"My major is social work ... I believe that my heart was purposed for social work. My interests, gifts and skills allow me to be an advocate for all peoples," Carinda Mickens said. "I've been interning at The Boys & Girls Club of Youngstown all year. Later in life I'd love to direct an orphanage or adoption agency."

Her mother, working as a nursing director, naturally obtained a masters' degree in nursing.

"I want to further my knowledge in nursing to be better equipped to serve and educate people in my community," Anthea Mickens said. "I'm praying for direction and expecting good things."

Education is highly valued by the Mick-

ens women.

"My parents never really gave me a choice about whether or not I would attend college. It was a must," Carinda Mickens said. "My mom was a good role model by obtaining her bachelor's degree while my two sisters and I were just toddlers. She was my inspiration."

Anthea Mickens feels the same about her daughter.

"Becoming a single parent inspired me to further my education, so I could continue to care for my four children. In addition, I wanted to be an example to my kids," she said.

While some students — even at college age — are embarrassed by their parents, Carinda Mickens says she enjoyed sharing her commencement moment with her mother.

"I was really excited about graduating with my mom. We both worked hard to graduate as soon as we could. We've been through some of our toughest times in school together," Carinda said.

Anthea agrees.

"Well, we were already close prior to college," Anthea said. "It's a blessing to be graduating with my daughter."

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"You can have non-fiction, next to a profile, next to a poem, next to a photograph," Marino said.

Bill Lawson, executive director of the Mahoning Valley Historical Society, said they frequently rely on first person

accounts — such as those collected in the anthology — in their work.

"First person accounts are very important to understanding the context of a community's history, and it's what gives life to future research projects

in terms of understanding the people and the events that were going on in a community at any given time," Lawson said.

Kidd said he contributed a piece about his time in Youngstown because he believes in Belt Magazine.

"[Just] the fact that they're a new rust belt exclusive publishing company, and I think their content is extremely good — both their online long form stuff that they do daily and their anthology books," Kidd said.

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Swegan said.

Fahey said Reagle was very impressed with the university and when he learned he was not going to be appointed to the student experience position, he became interested in serving as associate vice president for student success.

"We were very interested in his

skills and his abilities, and we were happy when he did submit his application because we feel like he had a lot to offer, and he was very, very impressive when he was here, although just got eked out by [Howard]," Fahey said.

Swegan said the search committee for the student success position

decided to add him to the list of candidates after he interviewed for, and failed to obtain, the student experience position.

"The committee wanted to go back in after interviewing several candidates for the position that they didn't feel were quite the right fit," Swegan said.

"Reagle was invited back to campus to interview for this second position and knocked it dead," Swegan was also pleased with the results of the search.

"I think we have two tremendous, tremendous candidates, and I'm thrilled that we ended up getting them both," Swegan said.

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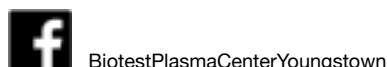
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EDITORIAL

A Major Media Outlet Wrote About Youngstown — And it was Flattering!

Youngstown usually doesn't fare very well when it gets mentioned in articles.

Some of the articles are legitimate criticisms of our region, like the "Top 10 Fastest Shrinking American Cities" article by 24/7 Wall Street last year. They weren't passing judgment, just stating fact.

Then there are the articles — like Buzzfeed's 2013 article which listed Youngstown among the bleakest cities in the world, comparing us with places like the feces covered beach slum of West Point, Monrovia and the literal radioactive wasteland of Pripyat, Ukraine — which do little beyond taking cheap, uneducated shots at a battered city trying to rebound.

Tuesday, the trend took a turn.

Rather than a list article comparing us to slums in India suffering from a massive chemical spill, The New York Times — a little more clout there than Buzzfeed —

has given a supportive nod to the efforts that the city and its entrepreneurs have taken to turn things around in Youngstown.

The article — published on The New York Times' real estate column "Square Feet" — doesn't say anything that should be particularly surprising if you're marginally aware of the players behind downtown's recent revival. NYO Property Group's Dominic Marchionda was featured in the article and a basic timeline detailing the re-emergence of downtown living and entertainment options was presented.

While telling the story of how downtown got its groove back, the author mentioned Youngstown State University's role in helping the revitalization several times. While it was made clear that YSU wasn't the only factor, the college was credited as being a large contributor to Youngstown's new breath of life.

The reasoning makes sense.

YSU helps funnel young people from all around the region to Youngstown's downtown corridor. The college works with job providers downtown — America Makes, the Youngstown Business Incubator, et cetera — to train workers and provide interns, who in turn end up living in or at least close to their work downtown. A residential downtown means more opportunities for tangential business growth, such as the DoubleTree Hotel moving into the Stambaugh Building and the need for a grocery store for downtown dwellers.

YSU's impact on downtown isn't a coincidental one. Michael McGiffin, the city of Youngstown's downtown events coordinator, is a YSU alumnus and was instrumental in the Federal Frenzy event that took place on Federal Street in April. Youngstown Design Works, a YSU-based graphic and web design group comprised of current

students, has hosted pop-up design workshops both in Warren and at the Oak Hill Collaborative to help connect business owners with quality design work. Both of the TEDx Youngstown events were held at YSU and featured current YSU professors on the speaker lists.

While there are myriad examples of the symbiotic relationship between downtown and YSU, the important takeaway here is that the storms YSU is currently trying to weather — such as vitriolic contract negotiations, financial woes and a startling exodus of faculty leaders — if handled improperly can have a crippling effect on the regrowth of the region as a whole.

Scott Scarborough, University of Akron president, questioned whether or not many of the higher education institutions of Northeast Ohio would still be in existence in fifty years. His concerns centered on the increase in competition

among colleges and the decrease in state funding that helps keep the doors open. YSU was among the list of the state universities he believed may not exist in the future if we do not become "great".

Alma mater pride aside, that is a troubling statement. Not only because losing YSU would be a loss of a historic Youngstown institution, but because the loss of YSU could mean the loss of a real city revival.

Our region needs downtown to thrive, and downtown needs YSU to attract young people to the city. YSU needs students to be concerned about how their money is being spent and how the school is being run. If we care at all about the future of the region, we all need to be a little more involved in making sure we leave this place better than we found it.

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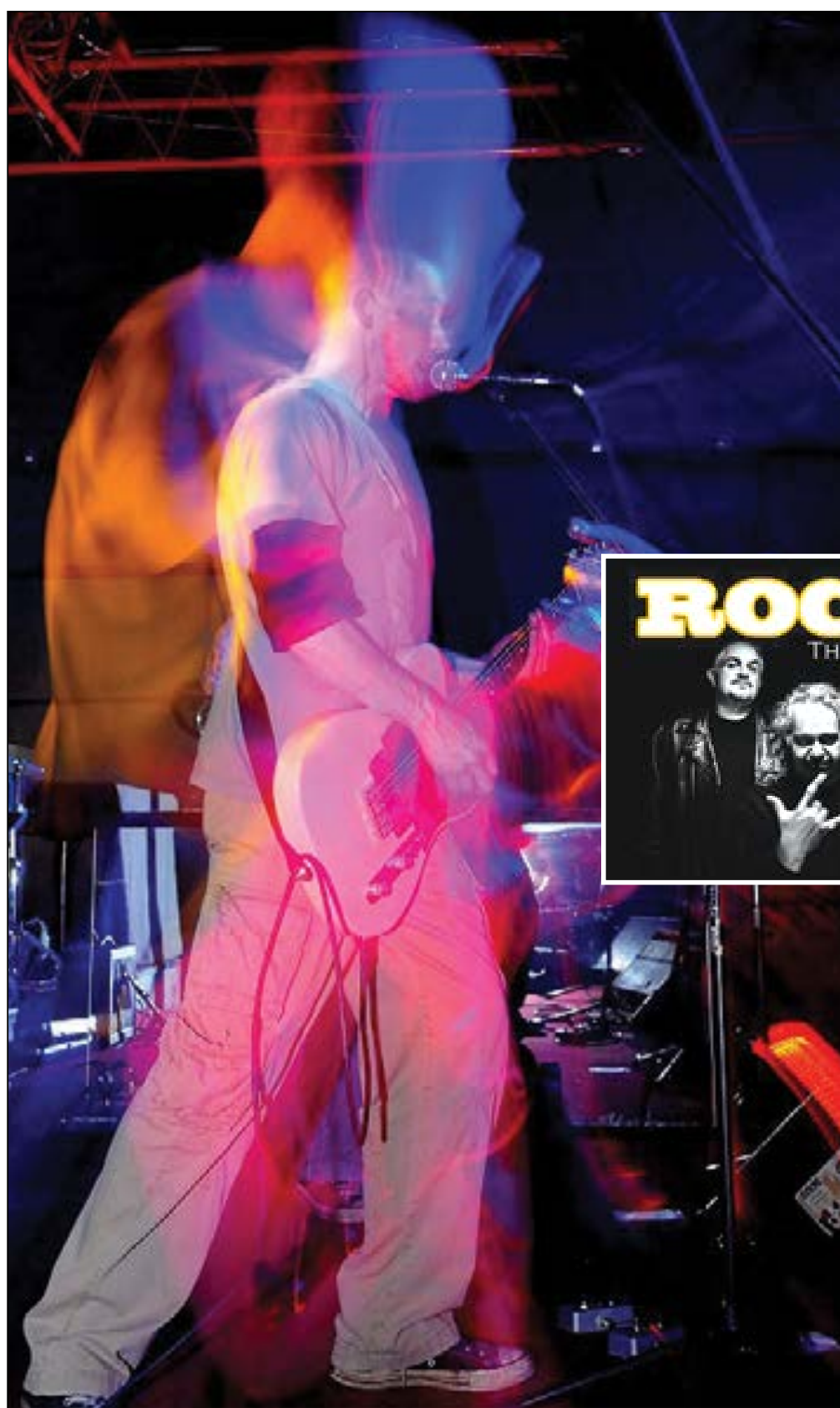
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“Rock Gods:” Celebrates National Rock n’ Roll Locally



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On May 29 at 6:30 p.m., the Tyler Mahoning Valley History Center will be opening its doors to the history of rock n’ roll art and photography.

“Rock Gods” consists of black and white photographs of popular musicians by photographer, Janet Macoska that have been colored by cartoonist and neo-pop painter, Chris Yambar.

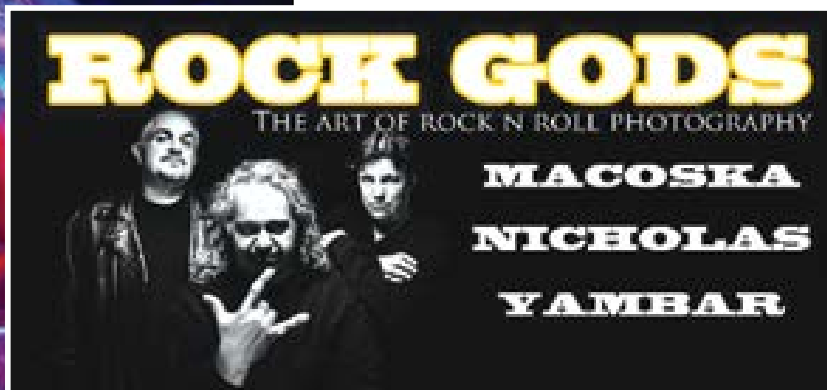
Around 200 photographs were colored by Yambar in a four month period using a reverse-painted glass technique that Yambar calls “a secular stained-glass homage to the rock gods themselves.”

Alongside the artwork will be live entertainment from The Pickups and The Tribe of Eos.

“Rock Gods” is a partnership between The Mahoning Valley Historical Society and Artists of the Rustbelt, an organization that promotes and organizes regional artist markets. Artists of the Rustbelt is currently in the process of molding the group into a non-profit arts incubator.

The show focuses on the talents of the three artists running the show: Macoska, Yambar, and Tony Nicholas.

Macoska’s photographs have been published in the likes of Rolling Stone, Vogue and The New York Times, as well as been used in various rock n’ roll documentaries. Her work is displayed permanently in The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and has been used by many national rock acts as album artwork.



Nicholas, a Youngstown native, studied studio art and photography at Youngstown State University. He was adjunct faculty at YSU and has been president of the organization Artists of the Rustbelt for the past three years. Nicholas is known for his concert photography and has had his work used on many regional band CDs and promotional material.

Yambar is a well-known artist, comic book creator, indie publisher and children’s book author. He is most recognized for his work with “The Simpsons” and his own comic, “Mr. Beat”.

Macoska requested that Yambar color her black and white photographs for the exhibit, saying “Chris Yambar is a madman.”

“His use of color never fails to amaze,” Macoska continued. “It adds a whole new dimension to my photographs, one that collectors like a lot.”

Yambar said he is excited about showing the rock collaboration to the public, especially at the Tyler History Center.

“I was raised on classic rock music. Queen, KISS, Beatles, Sex Pistols, Elton John, Cheap Trick, Alice Cooper. Next to coffee, these performers were my creative drugs of choice ... I can’t imagine painting without their influence blaring in the studio,” Yambar said. “The leadership [at the Tyler] is very smart and they have a beautiful building. The Historical Society and the Artists of the Rustbelt built a huge bridge to connect the artists and the public. They use it to bring the public into the new Tyler building. It’s grabbing attention ... and using it to make history.”

Only 300 tickets are available for “Rock Gods.” Tickets are \$10 a piece and include a limited edition signed poster and a drink voucher. They can be purchased through the Mahoning Valley Historical Society by calling 330-743-2589.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TONY NICHOLAS.

Cityscape: “Promoting the change that makes things happen”

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Youngstown Cityscape is bringing the downtown to life for the 18th year in a row with Streetscape 2015 — “Bloom or Bust.”

Each year, the foundation recruits volunteers the Saturday after Memorial Day to plant flowers, install flowerbeds, pick weeds and re-paint murals in downtown Youngstown and its surrounding areas.

This year’s Streetscape is being held May 30 and is expecting an upwards of 500 volunteers.

Sharon Letson, executive director of Cityscape, said that this year’s volunteers are going to be working on sprucing up over 150 pots and about 40 different designated areas in the immediate downtown, including certain bridges, walkways and staircases.

Cityscape partners with outside neighborhoods to get them involved as well, making Streetscape a multi-community event.



Local businesses team up with Cityscape to provide support and raise awareness for the cause. Businesses also help by supplying a luncheon for all of the volunteers who come out and work on the city.

Thomas Smith, member of the board of directors of Friends of the Mahoning River, said that his organization supports Streetscape and the work that the group does to better Youngstown by making the city more beautiful.

“The Friends of the Mahoning River have been helping out with Streetscape for the past three years. We have worked on the John Young Memorial each year, as it is near the B&O Station and the Mahoning River,” Smith said. “We are going to be additionally working on installing a new flowerbed around the B&O Station sign this year. We like to see the whole city revitalized with fresh flowers and are happy to help out ... the folks at Cityscape.”

While working on the city’s flowerbeds and monuments is tough work, Letson said that it’s rewarding because Cityscape is no longer beautifying downtown alone.

“Eighteen years ago, nobody was doing anything like this. We made the city look pretty, paid attention to the details. We were planting, painting over graffiti, mulching, all of those kinds of things. I guess my point is that the city might not be where it is today if nobody was doing this 18 years ago. The exciting part of us as an organization is that we aren’t out there alone anymore,” Letson said. “There are neighborhood groups that are working, the city is working — everybody has a piece of this. We all have to be partners and be a part of this, promoting the change that makes things happen.”

Streetscape is still accepting volunteers and will be up until the day of the event. If interested in either volunteering for the event or donating to the cause, visit the Youngstown Cityscape’s Facebook page and click on their event, Youngstown Streetscape 2015. PHOTO COURTESY OF YOUNGSTOWN CITYSCAPE.

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