

# The Union Hall Times

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PRICELESS



A slide from Joe's PowerPoint re-enactment of tearing his Achilles tendon

## Lumping time-wasters together: ART CHAT WITH JOE AYOOB

By **ASHLEY ANDRYKOVITCH & JULIET PUSATERI**

*Still attempting to grapple with the existence of art and not entirely satisfied with answers provided from a cosmic perspective, this week we decided to approach someone who might be able to provide answers on a micro level: scientist Joe Ayooob from the University of Pittsburgh. We found out that when Joe is not busy contributing to cancer research in a laboratory where he experiments with a system of fruit flies, you might find him in a workshop creating turned wood sculpture. Joe was kind enough to join us for a quick Q&A with the hopes of solving our ongoing art-existential crisis.*

• • •

**AC: We knew before meeting you that you work with fruit flies, so we made sure to prepare by Googling “fruit flies,” so we learned everything there is to know about them, such as their scientific name: *Drosophila melanogaster*, and they’re sometimes called vinegar flies or gnats.**

JA: OK. Gnats, I think, is a derogatory term for fruit flies. They don’t like being called that.

**AC: Oh! We’re embarrassed. Is there something that you can tell us about fruit flies that might surprise our readers?**

JA: Yes, I hope so. This is

one thing I love about the system, which is really fun! In the fruit fly world, when somebody identifies a new gene, you usually name the gene after the mutant phenotype. The first mutation discovered in fruit flies was a mutation that caused the normal red eye color to be white. So they named that gene white.

In another example, a research group put the flies in this large tube and infused ethanol vapors into it, to get them drunk, essentially. They exhibited the same behaviors that [humans] do. They had this hyper activity phase and then they started passing out. They had a conveyor

belt going under this tube and as they got drunk and passed out they would be collected on this conveyor belt in bunches. So they were mutagenizing these flies to see how the different mutants would respond to ethanol. They essentially had three groups of flies. For the ones that come out earliest, the gene was actually called cheap date. They were followed by another group that was normally affected, and then they had some that stayed in [the tube] for a lot longer -- they called that gene lush.

**AC: So fruit flies really are like humans.**

JA: Yeah, exactly like us.

**AC: Do you think that we are basically just fruit flies flying around on this rotten peach of a planet?**

JA: Hahaha ... that’s one way of looking at it. ... I think, sure ... wow ... I don’t know if I’d be willing to make that claim or go that far. I mean, they don’t work on us. We study them, but they don’t study us.

Fruit flies have behaviors as well, they have preferences.

**AC: Do they have priorities?**

JA: Food, sex.

See **ART**, Page 4

## Good news for cyclists abounds in the Steel City

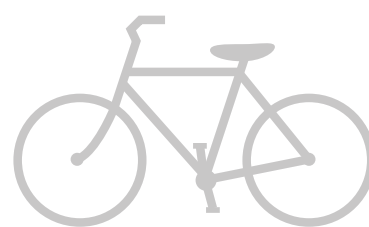
By **SARA COLE**

April really has been the cruelest month this year, teasing us into thinking it’s finally spring and then failing to truly deliver the goods. The months preceding it weren’t much better, though. Despite the continued cold and wet weather, a lot of big bike happenings have occurred over the past month or so, and as more and

more cyclists are starting to hit the streets, what better time to check in on that state of bicycle affairs in the ‘Burgh? Here are some highlights of Pittsburgh bicycle news and happenings over the past couple months -- they should have you looking forward to spring, summer, fall and beyond.

**Peduto’s appearance at the National Biking Summit**

Just a couple months after taking office, Mayor Bill Peduto headed to Washington, D.C., to speak and participate in the National Bike Summit. Peduto highlighted a lot of the progress Pittsburgh has made in the past five years -- 30 miles of on-street infrastructure for cyclists, 500



bike racks around the city -- but also talked about his plans for the future, including more bike lanes

See **BIKES**, Page 3

## ON FILM

REVIEW:

“Red Obsession”

By **AMANDA WALTZ**

The subjects in “Red Obsession” speak of Bordeaux with such reverence, it’s a wonder the wine doesn’t cure cancer. Words such as “magical,” “dreamy,” and “ethereal” are used to describe its awesome properties.

During his interview, filmmaker and vintner Francis Ford Coppola defines its existence as “something closer to a miracle.” Some more appropriate adjectives to consider are rare, prestigious, and expensive, as the coveted, but limited, commodity has become a symbol of power and influence. It’s no wonder that Bordeaux has, in recent years, become yet another sign of the economic power shift from West to East.

Directors David Roach and Warwick Ross examine how Bordeaux, once the darling of European and U.S. connoisseurs, becomes prized by consumers in the booming industrial nation of China, primarily from 2008 to 2010. But as the country’s demand increases and bottles become too expensive to drink -- at one point, prices rose 1,000 percent -- experts begin to question the stability of the market. After three unprecedented years of perfect vintages, the fine wine world waits to see if the much-anticipated 2011 vintage will continue the trend or burst the Bordeaux bubble.

To understand this strange phenomenon, one must first understand the wine and its namesake. Through Russell Crowe’s soothingly masculine narration, the documentary explains the Bordeaux region’s distinguished wine-making heritage -- which has existed since the Romans planted vines there 2,000 years ago -- and the kismet-like mix of fair weather, rocky soil, and loving craftsmanship involved in the production of its most valuable export. The sweeping look

See **FILM**, Page 2





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FILM, From Page 1

serves as both a primer for wine illiterates and as a visual feast for viewers still unable to appreciate the mystique surrounding Bordeaux. At times, the images become a sort of wine porn as tracking shots pore over rows of perfectly arranged wine bottles and long shots bask in the splendor of stately, picturesque chateaux.

With the wine's legacy firmly established, the filmmakers are free to explore how the Chinese nouveau riche became fascinated with the legendary claret. Using footage of the country's

bustling metropolises, they offer an illustration of post-Cultural Revolution capitalism, which is defined by the desire for luxury goods that serve as both investments and as status symbols. The portrayal also introduces a fantastic array of characters,

The film serves as a beautifully shot and edited study on the unpredictable nature of commerce and the world's changing power structure.

many of whom perfectly illustrate the old European-new China culture clash. Whether it's the aspiring winemaker who grows grapes near the Gobi Desert or the wine-collecting industrialist who made his millions manufacturing sex toys, it's clear China's wealthy are no French wine snobs.

While "Red Obsession" focuses on a central narrative, it never feels as though there's much at stake. There's no question that Bordeaux, with its singular taste and respected history, will continue to prosper regardless of the 2011 results. Instead, the film serves as a beautifully shot and edited

study on the unpredictable nature of commerce and the world's changing power structure. It also demonstrates that everything comes with a price, and in this global economy, everyone is buying.

"Red Obsession" will screen at 2 p.m. on May 4 at the Melwood Screening Room, 477 Melwood Ave., Oakland, as part of the 2014 Silk Screen Asian American Film Festival, [www.silkscreenfestival.org](http://www.silkscreenfestival.org).

Amanda Waltz is a Pittsburgh-based film critic and founder of the blog Steel Cinema. Contact her at [steelcinemapgh@gmail.com](mailto:steelcinemapgh@gmail.com), or find her on Twitter at @SteelCinemaPGH.

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# Why is the NFL draft so important?

By **BRAD KELLER**

The NFL Draft is a big deal. Last year, it drew 7.7 million viewers on opening night, versus 2.9 million for the NBA Draft and non-existent numbers for the MLB and NHL drafts. People around the water cooler will be talking about it, the Internet is filthy with Mock Drafts, and sports fans across the US are absolutely sure that this is the year their team will stop taking a bunch of stiffes and actually get it right.

## Why is the draft so important?

The short answer is that sports fans, especially football fans, are crazy. The long answer is that sports fans, especially NFL fans, are crazy-competitive. Back in the day, it was possible to just watch your team play, make judgments based on your observations of their play, and report back to your friends and colleagues, confident that your opinion would be considered and possibly respected. Since the Internet happened, more information is available to those with the interest and downtime to do considerable research. Back in the day, you were a big fan if you caught all the games on TV and read what insight you could glean from newspapers. Now, you're not a true fan unless you've dissected all prospects that will be available to your team within 10 selections of their selection.

This is really the system's fault.

NFL and NBA prospects have already been through (some) college, most of them have experience in pro-style offensive and defensive systems, and they're usually ready to contribute right away. The players that you see selected in this year's draft will be asked to contribute right away, and that goes double for teams that have a lot of holes to fill. Like the Steelers.

## Why is it important to Pittsburghers?

From 1969 through 1976, the Steelers drafted like a boss and chose a number of Pro Bowl, All-Pro, and Hall of Fame players. In 1974, they chose four Hall of Fame players, in what is universally considered to be the greatest draft in the history of the NFL. If you go on the Internet and try to find another draft where a different team brought in such a haul, you'll come up empty. No other team has drafted more than two Hall of Fame players in one class.

The Steelers "do it the right way," building through the draft and nurturing and developing its own players. This has been true since the Dawn of Football Time and will continue to be true.

## How to survive the draft

The important thing to remember is that this is all hearsay. No one, including "draft experts," has any idea how any of these kids will do once

they're faced with learning new systems and schemes at a higher level of competition, to say nothing of the fact that they'll have to deal with sudden fame and "distant cousins" calling them and asking them for money and invitations to exclusive parties.

## Some survival tips and talking points:

Any quarterback that isn't at least 6'3" is short and will never, ever succeed in the NFL. Well, there are some exceptions like Drew Brees and Russell Wilson, but almost no one will argue with you if you call a 6-foot quarterback too short.

No team in the history of ever has been criticized for taking an offensive lineman in the first round. Any offensive lineman will have a two letter abbreviation after their name that starts with an O -- OT or OG or OC. If you see someone take an O-lineman in the first round, you can say that it's a good, safe pick. No one will argue with you.

Pick an analyst that you like and agree with what that analyst has to say. It doesn't matter which one. The ladies might prefer Todd McShay because he's easy on the eyes, some might like Mel Kiper because he invented draft analysis, whereas I gravitate toward Mike Mayock. Whomever you pick, watch them intently when they talk and nod along with whatever they're saying.

People take the draft seriously, but it's also an opportunity to make fun of other teams, coaches, analysts -- except your guy, you gotta support your guy -- and the players in the Green Room and the draft pool.

Feel free to use these jokes:

There's a guy in this draft named Ha Ha Clinton-Dix. That's what she said. (No, seriously, there's a guy in this draft named Ha Ha Clinton-Dix and he's actually pretty good.)

I'm waiting for the day that Mel Kiper's hair becomes self-aware and decides that humans are too weak to survive.

Cleveland has a zillion great picks, but they'll find a way to screw this up. Because the Browns suck, am I right? Who wants a high five? (Note: You can continue to use this even if the Browns eventually, somehow, become good.)

The draft is the Super Bowl of the offseason, so you really only need to be on-point for the Big Event. After the draft is over, some diehards will discuss it, but no one is going to bring it up in casual conversation.

That's all there is to it. Remember, this is supposed to be fun. Booze is usually involved. Trash talking and camaraderie are involved. Ha Ha Clinton-Dix is involved. So have fun with it.

*Brad Keller only wrote this piece so he could bring up Ha Ha Clinton-Dix. Follow him on Twitter @keller168.*

## BIKES, From Page 1

Downtown and improvements to public transportation. He touted the fact that the the Pro Walk Pro Bike Pro Place conference will be held in our fair city from September 8-11, as well, according to Bike Pittsburgh. Peduto capped his speech off by naming Scott Bricker, executive director of Bike Pittsburgh, as one of the three people serving on the 10-county Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, which is responsible for planning and fund allocation for transportation, the first time a bike advocate has been named to such a position in the 'Burgh.

## Pittsburgh's first Women and Biking Forum

Pittsburgh held its first Women

and Biking Forum on March 29, modeled on the forum held in tandem with the National Bike Summit. The forum collected women and trans-identified people from in and around Pittsburgh to find out what they want on two wheels. Workshops were held on a variety of topics, including basic bike maintenance, rules of the road, tips and tricks for riding in the city, riding with families and children, and addressing street harassment while riding. Women came together to create community, share knowledge, and be visible.

## Bike share program

During the forum, one of the members of the Pittsburgh Bike Share committee spoke

about the program that is set to be launched this year ahead of the Pro Walk Pro Bike Pro Place conference. The bike share's website notes the share stations are tentatively slated to be located around different high-traffic spots around the East End, North Side, and South Side and will be housed in solar-powered stations. Their aim is to affordably, greenly, and efficiently get folks from point-to-point around Pittsburgh.

## Green Lane Project and Grant

Another enormous milestone for cyclists in Pittsburgh came a couple weeks ago in the form of PeopleForBikes selecting Pittsburgh as one of six cities to participate in the Green Lane Project and receive a grant for

protected bike lanes. In addition to protected lanes and \$25,000 for general bike infrastructure improvements, the city will receive another \$250,000 to help with engineering, training, and outreach costs for city planners, engineers, and officials, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported. Again, Peduto is hoping to have a protected lane in place for the Pro Walk Pro Bike Pro Place conference in September. The lane will most likely go in on Smithfield Street, though it has yet to be finalized.

## Drive with Care campaign

And just last week, Bike Pittsburgh reached its goal of \$50,000 to support its Drive with Care campaign, which promotes that radical notion

that cyclists are not only people but valuable community members. The funds for the campaign, according to its indiegogo page, will be used fund a mass media campaign of billboards, bus shelter signs, an app, videos, and various other media methods to get out the message that the person on two wheels is a nurse, father, priest, wide-receiver for your beloved football team, and, yes, a person! The aim is to reduce aggression and accidents and promote a feeling of community regardless of what sort of road vehicle you're manning, because at the end of the day, we're all just folks trying to get places.

Finally, don't forget -- May 14 is National Bike to Work Day!

*Sara is an educator and cyclist.*



ART, From Page 1

**AC: Just like us!**

JA: Yeah, pretty much.

**AC: They don't make art, I'm guessing.**

JA: Not on purpose. Consciousness obviously is important there. I don't think they're conscious.

**AC: How can you tell?**

JA: Their behaviors can be predictable. It's hard for them to go against certain instincts. We can genetically make them go against certain instincts but ...

**AC: OK ... in the spectrum of species of various sizes, we are pretty sure that we're the only ones who are making art. The other ones are not really wasting their time on such things. When it comes to making art, do you think that we're just wasting our time the way that fruit flies do, for example? Fruit flies sort of seem to prioritize their time between eating and sex and sleeping ... do fruit flies sleep?**

JA: Yes. Some of the first genetic circadian rhythm studies were done with fruit flies.

Well ... I think we'd be bored. I mean, myself, I like to "waste time" on certain things.

**AC: What are your time-wasters?**

JA: A lot of times it's just the way I organize things or ... I love PowerPoint as a distraction. If I have to put together a lecture or a presentation, I love wasting time with it.

I can send you a particular PowerPoint that I wasted a lot of time with. I tore my Achilles tendon when I was in graduate

school and I did a re-enactment of that in PowerPoint. That was a wonderful time-waster. I was just recovering, so it was more of time-filler in a way.

**AC: Some people might call that art.**

JA: Could be. It was definitely a creative outlet for me that I needed at that time. I was stuck at home; I couldn't do all that much.

**AC: I guess that's a better way to phrase our question -- "Is art just a time-waster?"**

JA: I can see how the way I once may have viewed art can be that ... or creative outlets ... can it be a time-waster for others? "I'm going to just go to the museum today and look at art because I have nothing else better to do." That's a cynical way of looking at it.

Being in one of these "STEM" disciplines -- science, technology, engineering, and math -- it's something we're constantly trying to push because the U.S. has fallen behind, at the high school level especially. And now we're putting the A in this, too, so "STEAM"...

**AC: We're familiar.**

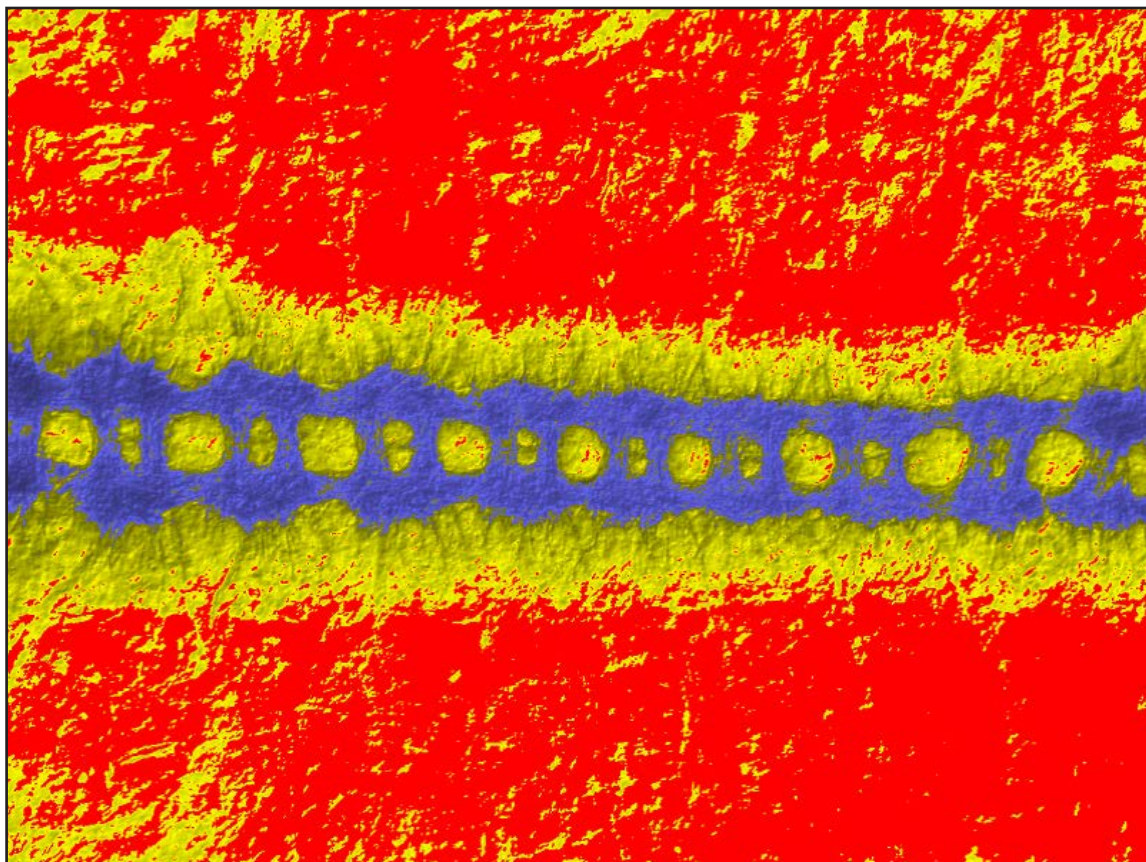
JA: I figured. But I see the links there between STEM and the arts. At times I think it's a bit of stretch to lump it all together, maybe it should be its own properly supported endeavor...

**AC: That's how we feel about the A.**

JA: In general, yeah.

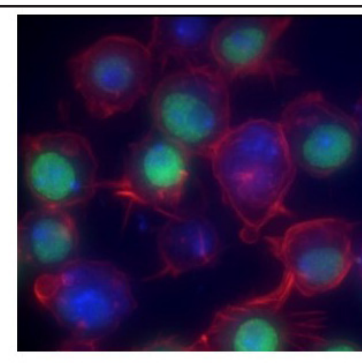
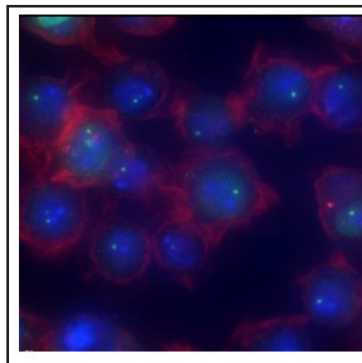
**AC: Maybe we're just lumping together a whole bunch of time-wasters.**

JA: Yeah, the idea of lumping



is as a time-waster, I don't think I buy it or agree with that necessarily. I really think that, in the larger STEM realm of things, that's how a lot of breakthroughs are made. You have to be creative, you have to have an artistic eye for how you see and present things, how you reach other people, how you stir things in other people, but even just the basics -- how you create your ideas and how you present them -- those are two really important things in science.

I'm sure there are studies that show that there is a quantifiable positive effect to thinking artistically or dabbling in art or doing art that is "useful" and beneficial for society as a whole, and thus not a time-waster. Aside from that, there are all of the aesthetic things that it does, it's supposed to reach people and make them



top: One of Joe's PowerPoint slides showing fly cells in culture. These cells were incubated at different temperatures to reveal certain features of the cells. bottom: A PowerPoint slide from one of Joe's presentations. This is a pseudo-colored fillet/open-book preparation of a *Drosophila* embryo that has been prepared to reveal the fly's nerve cord (blue).

happy. And that's not not important. Fruit flies don't really care.

**AC: They seem really apathetic. Like assholes.**

JA: I plead the Fifth.

**AC: Do they have to barf on their food before they can consume it?**

JA: No, what they do -- this

is interesting, too -- they have taste receptors in their rears, the females, in their ovipositors, which lays the eggs, so they'll go around and they'll taste for a good food source ...

**AC: With their butts?!**

JA: With their butts, essentially.

**AC: So that means, in my kitchen, when I see fruit flies, they're not only disrespecting me by eating my food but they're also wiping their butts on it?**

JA: They're laying their prog- on it, yes.

**AC: Those little assholes.**

So there's that saying about art imitating life or life imitating art or whatever ... one of the questions we have is about a notable work of art, a classic of American cinema, in which a young Jeff Goldblum transforms himself into a fly, pretty much accidentally in a laboratory that he's working in. Is this a direction that you see your personal work going into or maybe the work of your colleagues?

JA: I can't really tell you. ... Can we turn this [recorder] off for a second?

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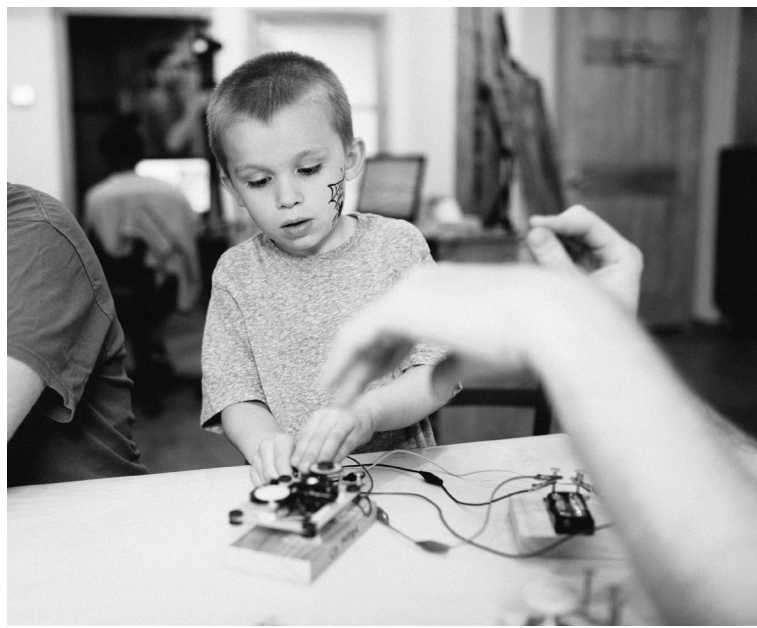
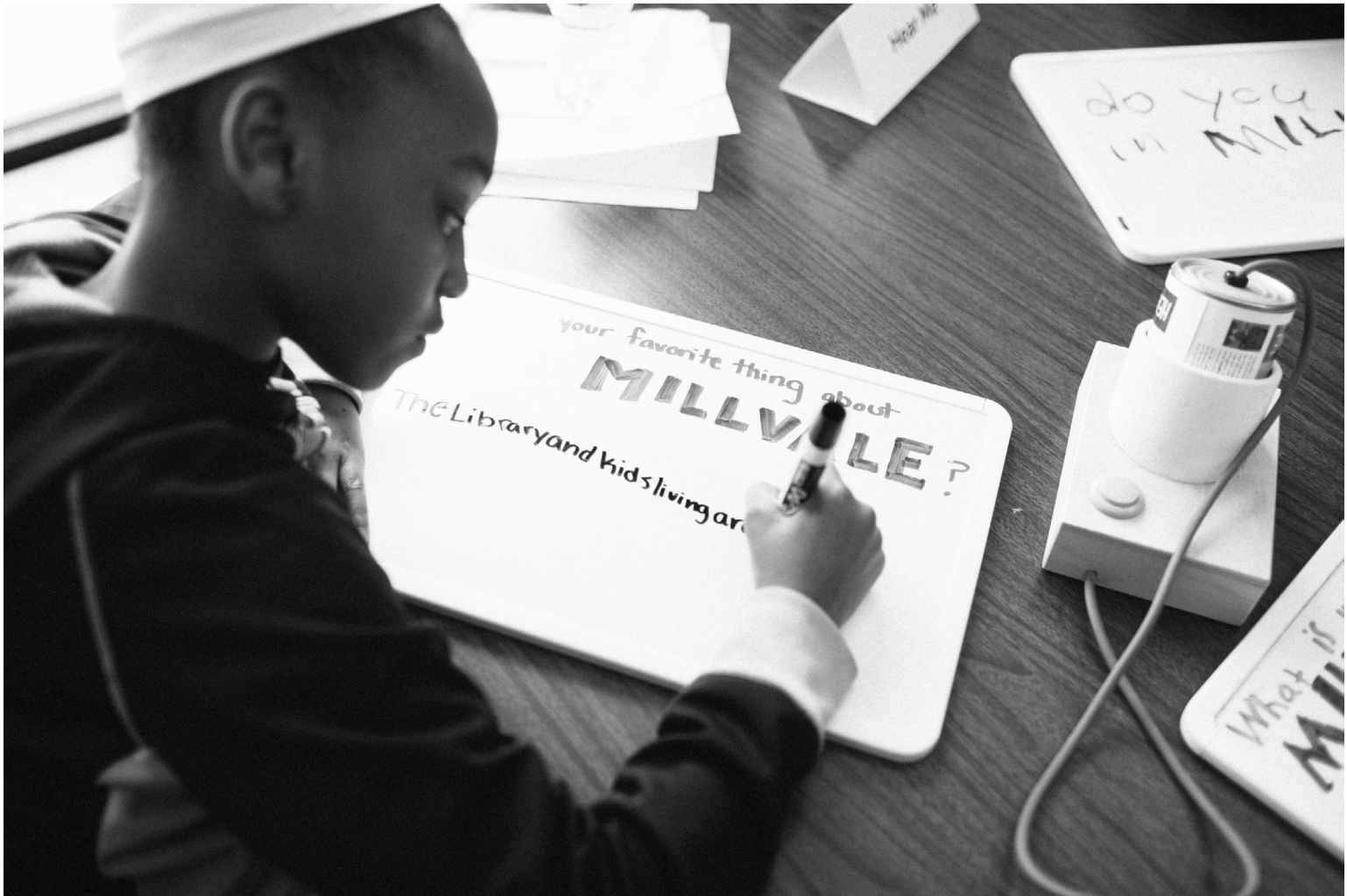
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# MAKING IN MILLVALE

*photos by Ben Filio*

Parents and children came to Millvale Community Library on Saturday for the Millvale Kidsburgh Community Celebration. Organizations such as MakeShop, Digital Learning Corps, the Library and HearMe showed off what they've been doing in Millvale.

