

## The Lowline

New York City developers look to create a park in an abandoned trolley terminal

D6



# LIFE

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Altoona Mirror

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Mirror photos by Amanda Gabeletto

Tom Jandora, who was stricken with polio as a child, works as a dispatcher and manager at R.J. Glass, Inc.

## Musician Berkner passing it along

BY MARK KENNEDY

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — This fall, Laurie Berkner has been on a mission that likely will make children and parents happy: making more Laurie Berkners.

The singer-songwriter, who Time magazine dubbed “the queen of children’s music,” has been training teachers to use her songs in a new music program for kids up to 4 years old.

The classes, called “The Music in Me,” are like having a Berkner in the room. “I’m trying to bottle it and pass it on to someone else,” the musician and educator said.



Berkner

While still in its infancy — a pilot program is being used at four Manhattan locations — Berkner hopes it can one day go national, spreading her songs and philosophy.

She got the idea after so many people told her they were happily using her songs like “Victor Vita” and “Rocketship Run” in classrooms, libraries and day cares.

That got Berkner curious: “If everyone’s using them, does anyone actually use them the way I was hoping they would be used? Maybe I should start teaching some people how to do that,” she said.

The education program comes at a time of flowering for all things Berkner: Her new musical “The Amazing Adventures of Harvey and the Princess” is playing at New York City Children’s Theater, she has two CDs — one of lullabies and a second hits compilation — and she’s got the animated musical preschool series “Sing It, Laurie!” on Sprout.

But the training program is the thing closest to her heart as she tries to put into words all that she’s learned at preschools, YMCAs and private music classes.

See **Berkner**/Page D3

# Working man

## Local man doesn’t allow paralysis to hold him back

Tom Jandora celebrating 45 years at R.J. Glass Inc.

BY AMANDA GABELETTO  
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DUNCANSVILLE — Tom Jandora has worked for the Duncansville-based trucking company R.J. Glass Inc. for 45 years.

That in itself is an accomplishment, but even more so considering Jandora, a dispatcher and manager, has done so as a paraplegic.

But he was influenced to pick doing over feeling sorry for himself at a young age.

When Jandora, 64, was about to turn 10 years old in February 1960, he was stricken with polio, which according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a crippling and potentially fatal infectious disease that can invade the brain and spinal cord and cause paralysis.

“Every time I laid down at night, I felt like I had a knife sticking in my chest,” he said on a recent snowy afternoon in his Duncansville home, once his family home-



Tom Jandora poses with his wife, Mary, in their Duncansville home.

stead, with his wife, Mary, sitting beside him. “During the day I could sleep a little bit, so every night I tried to go to bed. For a

whole week, I did that. It was getting close to Valentine’s Day ... I got valentines all ready for school. Sunday night, I went to bed. I slept all night. Monday morning, I woke up and ... I made about four steps, my legs just went out. That was it.”

Another child at the Catholic school he attended in Newry had died from the disease about a year before, and when Jandora’s parents, Kathryn and Andrew, told him he had polio, he saw it as a death sentence, he said.

Jandora, who was one of six children, spent six months in Altoona’s Mercy Hospital where he “was in isolation for a month. I wasn’t allowed to see my parents, and anybody that came in was all garbed up.”

After that, he went home for about a week and was then sent to the Home for Crippled Children in Pittsburgh where he spent another six months, he said.

Jandora suffered burn marks from the heat packs applied to help loosen up his stiffened body, but thankfully never had to endure a tank respirator, better known as the iron lung, like others with polio.

See **Jandora**/Page D3

# Ground Pine’s ‘loopy charm’ helps celebrate Christmas

There is nothing more festive than a wreath made of Ground Pine. It has a certain loopy charm — like a lopsided grin.

“Ferns of Northeastern and Central North America” says Ground Pine was once overly collected for use as Christmas decorations. For a few years, my neighbors and I were guilty of enthusiastic over-collecting, but now, thankfully, the Ground Pine in our collection area is making a steady comeback.

You might know it by other names, like Christmas Green, Running Cedar or Robin Hood’s Hatband. It thrives in dry, shaded woods and grows happily under a blanket of leaves. It spreads by



Teresa Futrick  
Garden Notes

rhizomes and has long stems that peek out of the leaf cover with fan or cedar shaped evergreen leaves. It sometimes forms a little green colony; providing shelter for field mice and other small creatures. (Read ticks.)

It is hardy to USDA Zone 3, which means it can survive temperatures as low as minus 40 degrees. Although it does OK in below-zero temperatures, it doesn’t grow at all in cultivated areas. Urban sprawl has contributed to its decline.

There’s a great demand for

Ground Pine because the spores are used for a variety of herbal medicines. It is considered to be “exploitably vulnerable” in New York state, and in some countries, it is on the endangered species list.

It’s part of the clubmoss family, although Ground Pine is more closely related to ferns. Botanists consider it a “fern ally.” The “clubs” look like miniature shillelachs growing up from the basal plant.

Lycopodium clavatum is the proper name for Ground Pine, and with a little imagination, and close examination of the “clubs,” you can see a resemblance to a wolf’s paw. The “clubs” hold the moss spores high for the wind to

catch and scatter to a new location.

Club moss spores are minuscule — almost invisible. They’re like tiny ball bearings formed as a water-proof seal to protect their high oil content. Because of that oil, they’re very volatile.

Lycopodium powder is explosive if present in high densities, and it was used by early photographers as a flash powder. The spores ignited for just an instant and were used for photographs and to create the special effects needed for theatrical and magic performances.

In the early days of the pharmaceutical industry, spores were used as a coating to keep pills from sticking together. They were

used as a baby powder because of their ability to absorb moisture.

The Canadian Takulli Indians believed putting club moss spores up their nose would cause a nose bleed and thus relieve a headache. During the Middle Ages people believed ferns (and their allies) had invisible seeds which would bestow invisibility on anyone who carried them.

Today, we have aspirin to take care of headaches, the only invisible man is Santa Claus and a Ground Pine wreath hanging on a front door is probably plastic.

But, in a loopy sort of way, it still says “Happy Holidays!”

Contact Teresa Futrick at [esroyllk@hotmail.com](mailto:esroyllk@hotmail.com)

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- Actress Diane Ladd, 79
- Comedian Garry Shandling, 65
- Director Joel Coen, 60
- Actor-comedian Howie Mandel, 59
- Actor Tom Sizemore, 53
- Actor Andrew McCarthy, 52
- Actor Don Cheadle, 50
- Singer Jonathan Knight of New Kids on the Block, 46
- Actress Gena Lee Nolin, 43
- Actor Brian Baumgartner (“The Office”), 42
- Actress Anna Faris (“Scary Movie”), 38
- Actor-comedian John Milhiser (“Saturday Night Live”), 33

### CELEBRITY SNIPPET

Netflix has picked up two seasons of a new sitcom from Tina Fey.

Titled “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,” it focuses on a woman who escapes from a doomsday cult and starts life over in New York. It was co-created by Fey and Robert Carlock, who collaborated on “30 Rock.”

It stars Ellie Kemper of “The Office.” Fey isn’t scheduled to appear in the series.

Netflix says the 13-episode first season will premiere in March. The series had originally been bound for NBC, but that network passed. Universal Television, NBC’s corporate sibling, will remain the show’s producer.



Fey

### ODDS AND ENDS

Treat yourself to a fragrant gift with the new Vetiver Lemongrass Bergamot or Gardenia Soy Candles from Clairvoyant Beauty. Designed with natural, renewable ingredients, including biodegradable soy wax and lead-free cotton wicks, they are available at clairvoyantbeauty.com for \$30.



### WORD OF THE DAY

**curule** (adj) \ˈkyūr-ūl\ — privileged to sit in a seat reserved in ancient Rome for the use of the highest dignitaries

Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary

### TOP TV SHOWS

1. **NFL Football: various teams,** CBS
2. **NFL Football: Dallas at N.Y. Giants,** NBC
3. **“NCIS,”** CBS
4. **“60 Minutes,”** CBS
5. **“NCIS: New Orleans,”** CBS

# Bob Baker, legendary puppeteer, dies

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Bob Baker, the founder of one of America's oldest puppet theaters, died Friday at his home in Los Angeles. He was 90.

The cause of death was kidney failure, his biographer, Gregory Williams, said.

The Bob Baker Marionette Theater captivated children and adults with its ornate wooden puppets and props. The theater was a vestige of the days when marionettes were widely used

on stage and television and playhouses dotted the streets of downtown Los Angeles.

"He really contributed to the continuation of puppetry as an art," Williams told The Associated Press on Friday. "With the digital age, it's going in a different direction. But people still come to it because it's an introduction to theater for young people. It's real-life 3D."

Baker discovered puppetry as a

child and described being immediately transformed. "He couldn't talk about anything else when he came home to his mother and he knew what he wanted to do," Williams said.

At an early age, he began constructing his own puppets and performed. He worked in animation for Walt Disney and others before starting his own theater company with his partner, Alton Wood.

# BERKNER: 'The music will tell you what to do'

(Continued from Page D1)

Her attempt to make a curriculum from songs is part of a trend that includes Dan Zanes and Music Together.

Since starting in the mid-1990s, Berkner has written about 140 songs and has been experimenting with lesson plans to highlight them. Her program offers suggestions on when and how to introduce them, and in what sequence, always mixing slow songs and activity tunes up to keep things interesting.

"If you don't follow that natural heartbeat-walking-talking human rhythm, then you're not giving a 3-year-old what they need to be doing at that moment," she said "They'll just do something else."

Jaclyn Dima, a music and movement teacher who has been following Berkner's program, marvels at the way the lyrics and melody stick with kids. "The words will tell you what to do. The

music will tell you what to do," she said. "It just comes naturally."

That natural skill was hard-won: Berkner was in a rock band that played downtown and an all-female cover band when she applied to be a music teacher at Rockefeller University's Child and Family Center.

"I didn't know what to do with them," she said. Berkner learned a lot of folk songs, but "Old MacDonald" just wasn't cutting it.

"They would run around the room. I couldn't control them," she said.

So she asked the kids what they liked, got them to stand up, march around, roar and the song "We Are The Dinosaurs," her first real children's song, was born.

Her philosophy hasn't changed much since then. "A lot of it is about following them, but also using the music to let them follow it," she said.

# Ex-studio boss Yablans passes away at age 79

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Frank Yablans, a former president of Paramount Pictures in the 1970s who oversaw the release of several groundbreaking pictures, has died.

Yablans died of natural causes Thursday morning at his home in Los Angeles, his son Eddy Yablans said. He was 79.

Yablans was president at Paramount when the studio

reeled out such well-known hits as "The Godfather," "Chinatown," and "Murder on the Orient Express."

He later went on to work as chief operating officer at MGM/United Artists and co-wrote the screenplay for "Mommie Dearest."

Yablans, a native of New York, is survived by his three children, four grandchildren and his companion, Nadia Pandolfo.

# Shakespeare folio discovered in France

The Associated Press

PARIS — An accidental discovery in a northern French library of an original first folio of William Shakespeare's plays — one of the rarest books in the world — has sent a jolt of excitement around the world of scholars.

The 900-page tome was authenticated by a U.S.-based scholar.

The find brings the total

of known first folios in the world to 233. It is significant as each first folio is a unique copy that can contain variations that can shed new light on Shakespeare's intentions.

"I was delighted. It's a treasure," said Remy Cordonnier, a Saint-Omer library director who discovered the book. The folio belonged to a Jesuit evangelist.

# JANDORA: 'Most dedicated employee'

(Continued from Page D1)

"It seemed so barbaric back then, but that's just how they had to do it," he said.

Once home, Jandora, who spent most of his life on crutches and in braces, adjusted to his new life.

"My parents wanted me to be just like everybody else as much as possible," he said. "They hired a big, husky bus driver, and I'd get out to the bus stop, he'd come out, lift me up on the bus, make sure I was seated, and I'd go to school. And he did the same thing (to get) me back off the bus."



Mirror photos by Amanda Gabeletto

**Tom Jandora exits his van at his home in Duncansville. Below, he shows a photo of his old rock band.**



was giving up."

Jandora, who has a "dirt" wheelchair he uses for work, still loves his job.

"He's just very dedicated. Working for R.J.'s always comes first; that's always important to him. I mean, he could have chosen the lower road and not done anything with his life. We've done it all. He's helped paint. We hung dry-wall," Mary said of their home. "We just do things a little differently."

Jandora recently celebrated his 45 years with the company with a party at the Creekside Inn Restaurant, East Freedom. The gesture touched Jandora, who says he is soft-hearted.

Glass is hoping Jandora "works another 20 years," he said.

"The most dedicated employee I think we ever had," Glass said. "He goes above and beyond. He works long hours. He's helped us achieve a lot of the goals that we've made here because of all his efforts, and we're grateful. He's pretty much like family."

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ally making more playing music at the time, he said.

When it came time to head off to disc jockey school, Jandora put it off as his relationship with Glass, who treated him like a son, grew.

The family relationship has continued with Scott Glass, a third-generation owner, who said Jandora worked his way up in the business and is a "does-it-all" employee.

Jandora and Mary, have been married for 38 years and have two adult children, Tom II and Colleen; and six grandchildren: Caleb, 12; Luke, 9; Riley, 8; Isaac, 6; Amina, 3; and Andrew, 3.

After several surgeries on his shoulders, Jandora began using a wheelchair in 2001.

The decision took some time for the self-proclaimed "bull-headed" Jandora, he said. "I figured if they put me in a wheelchair then I

## Spread the Light of Hope this Holiday Season

In Honor of Jane Doe

This Holiday Season, pay tribute to those who are fighting cancer or remember those who have lost their battle by placing their name in the

### Altoona Mirror Tree of Courage

To be published on Christmas Day.

To reserve your ornament in memory or honor of a loved one, complete the information below and mail the coupon or drop off your reservation to the Altoona Mirror by 5:00pm, Tuesday, December 16th.

**For any questions, please contact Valerie Walls (814) 949-7104. vwalls@altoonamirror.com**

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