

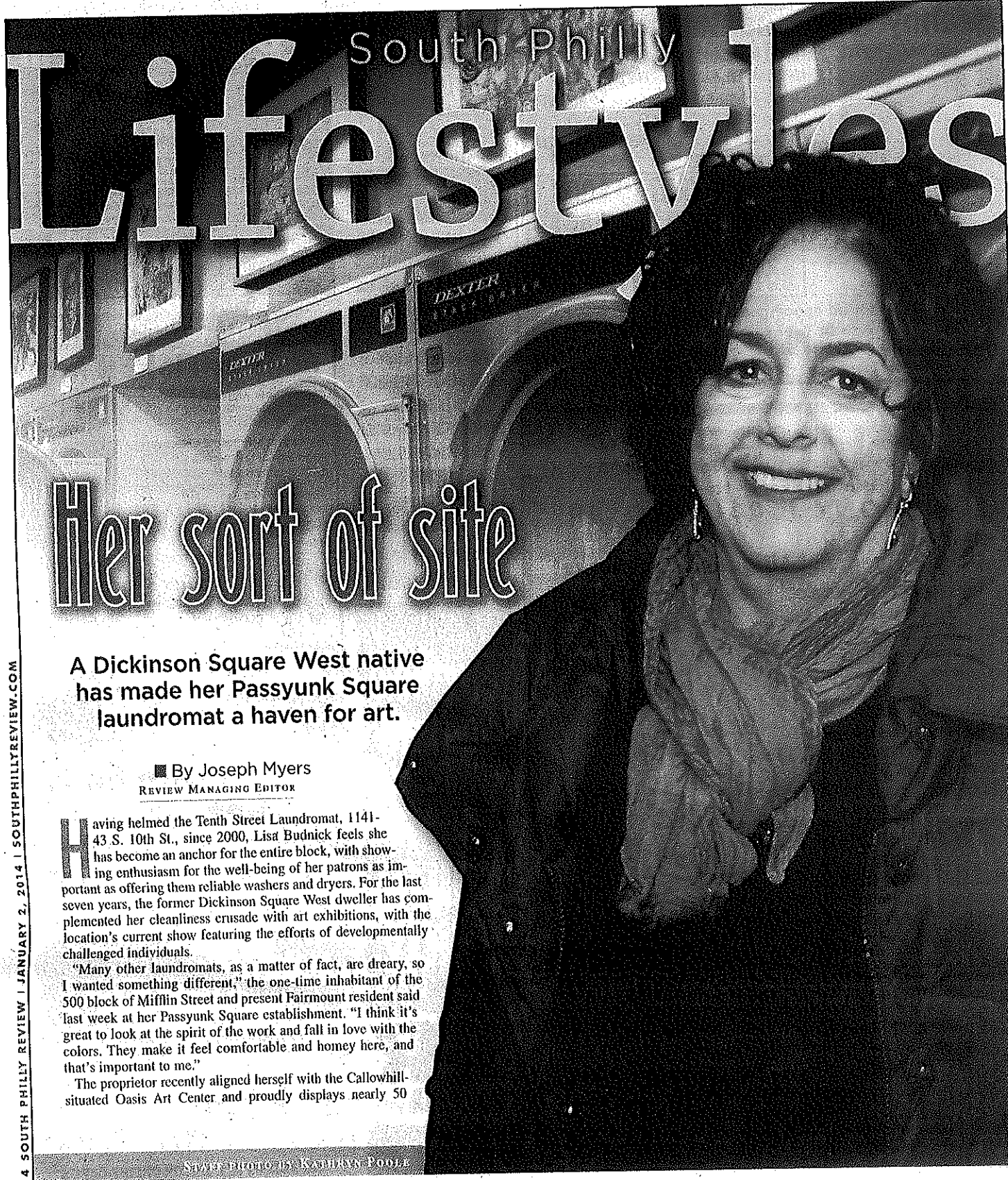
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South Philly Lifestyles

Her sort of site

A Dickinson Square West native has made her Passyunk Square laundromat a haven for art.

By Joseph Myers
REVIEW MANAGING EDITOR

Having helmed the Tenth Street Laundromat, 1141-43 S. 10th St., since 2000, Lisa Budnick feels she has become an anchor for the entire block, with showing enthusiasm for the well-being of her patrons as important as offering them reliable washers and dryers. For the last seven years, the former Dickinson Square West dweller has complemented her cleanliness crusade with art exhibitions, with the location's current show featuring the efforts of developmentally challenged individuals.

"Many other laundromats, as a matter of fact, are dreary, so I wanted something different," the one-time inhabitant of the 500 block of Mifflin Street and present Fairmount resident said last week at her Passyunk Square establishment. "I think it's great to look at the spirit of the work and fall in love with the colors. They make it feel comfortable and homey here, and that's important to me."

The proprietor recently aligned herself with the Callowhill-situated Oasis Art Center and proudly displays nearly 50

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pieces from its participants. Through Jan. 31, inspecting the works will serve as an alternative to fiddling with phones while one waits for cycles to finish, with Budnick thrilled to showcase the contributors' vibrant creativity and encourage artistic altruism.

"I contend that these exhibitions build morale," the enthusiast, who finds most compelling creations that are beautiful, colorful and peaceful, said. "I want for them to improve the community vibe and help people out of whatever doldrums they're experiencing."

In seeking to scour negativity from the environs, Budnick has looked to make many connections, with the Oasis bond coming through her sister. She mixes permanent and temporary compositions, with the latter enlightening customers for as many as 60 days. Having regularly hosted quarterly shows through which the honored artists devise their themes, she has started to decrease the number of displays of budding practitioners but never wishes to suppress the positive spin they generate.

"We're too invested in being a voice for their talent to back away," Budnick, who shares ownership duties with husband Jim, said of her outreach, which includes

having sponsored an art class for pupils at George W. Nebinger School, 601 Carpenter St., to make up for funding cuts within the School District of Philadelphia. "To many people, what we're doing might seem like nothing, but we're proud to be a location for inspiration to get noticed."

THE 55-YEAR-OLD PROMOTER of hygiene and high art had long felt a desire for communal integration before she and her mate purchased their cleanliness destination 14 years ago. Having briefly lived in South Philly then for a longer stretch in the Northeast, she has established roots in Fairmount, but no matter which turf she has called home, she has treasured chances to participate in combing through its amenities, including those of her adopted Passyunk Square neighborhood.

"I was an indoor person but was meant to be the outdoor type," Budnick said of her early professional existence, which found her handling mid-level management jobs. "I knew I had to make some sort of change."

Believing an escape from the corporate world would freshen her perspective, she struggled to determine what would set her free until 1999, when she said a light bulb

went off and provided clarity.

"We were riding our bikes down from Fairmount, and I saw this place, immediately thinking it would be neat to own it," Budnick said. "Forty-five days later, it was ours."

A year into their roles as proprietors, she and her beau acquired the entire building, a move that yielded constant contact with many artistically-inclined tenants. A short time later, Budnick obtained her real estate license, giving her literal and figurative interests in elevation.

"Some of my employees have had artistic talent, and many residents have, too, so it just evolved from there," Budnick said. "I see taking pride in our role as citizens as being at the heart of what we're doing here."

The lively figure, who maintains her agility through hot yoga sessions that let her touch her toes "better than any 25-year-old can," loves encouraging extending senses of citizenry by contributing to the Passyunk Square Civic Association's Trash and Recycling Committee. Hopeful that other business owners will be likewise mindful of their sites' exteriors, Budnick further makes her enthusiasm evident with a self-fashioned tile display,

the inspiration for which came courtesy of a class with Isaiah Zagar of Philadelphia's Magic Gardens, 1020-22 South St. The creation marks her most engrossing artistic attempt yet will likely not serve as her last.

"My journey hasn't really involved many ventures into art, but little by little, I foresee being a bit more active," Budnick said.

Regardless of how much novelty flows from her hands, plenty of praise will emanate from her eyes beginning March 8, when she will finally sate her interest in promoting Latino art when a Mexican artist will present assorted works.

"I'm very happy to see this all take off," Budnick said. "I could have just tried to make this a regular laundromat, but I thought everyone deserved a bit more, something with spunk. I'm looking forward to meeting even more creative folks." **SPR**

For more information, e-mail budnick52@gmail.com, or call 215-779-0302.

Contact Managing Editor Joseph Myers at jmyers@southphillyreview.com or ext. 124. Comment at southphillyreview.com/news/lifestyles.

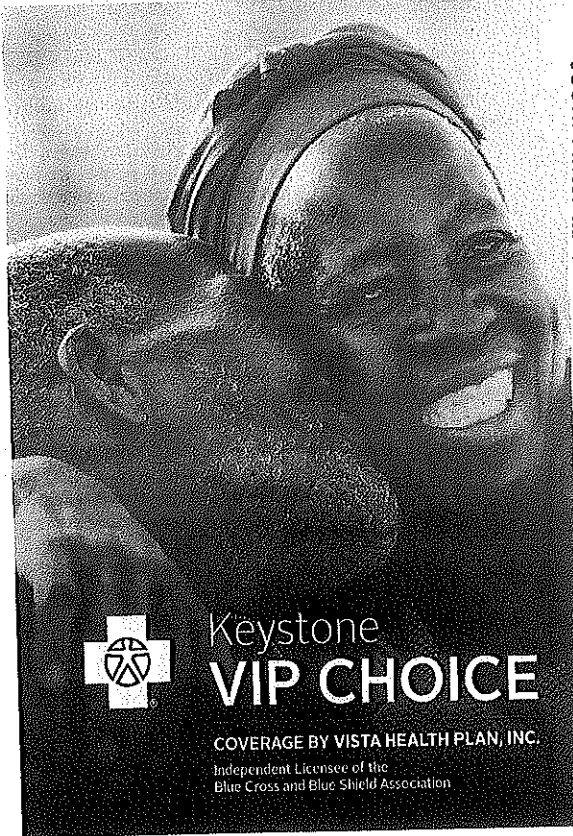
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