

Zombies Ravage City in Bloomfield Writer's Novel

By Carolyn Ristau *The Bulletin*

Bloomfield – Bloomfield resident Lucy Leitner's first novel, *Working Stiffs*, was published in June by Necro Publications as part of the Fresh Flesh series featuring new authors of modern horror. This novel, in which zombies take over Pittsburgh's South Side, finds the humor in a zombie apocalypse amid tributes to all things Pittsburgh.

"As a kid, I wanted to be the first woman to play major-league baseball," Leitner said. However, after taking a writing course her first year at the University of Pittsburgh, she decided to become a writer instead. Since then she has tried most forms of writing, from creative non-fiction and journalism to technical writing and marketing copy. She also wrote and sold a couple of horror screenplays. Now she blogs on Hollyburgh, which discusses Pittsburgh's contributions to film, including movies filmed in the city, and *The Daily Ghoul*, a new site documenting the world after the zombie apocalypse.

In *Working Stiffs*, the zombies who work the production line at Pro-Well Pharmaceuticals get loose. They feast

on or convert most of the office workers in the company and everyone on the South Side. A small band of misfit employees manages to avoid being eaten or converted by barricading themselves in a conference room. However they are determined to get out of the office alive before the end of the workday.

Leitner held an office job in 2007, which inspired much of *Working Stiffs*. Almost all the characters in the novel are based on people she knew. Two purely fictional characters are Hank, the disgruntled employee who hates everyone and everything, and Marshall Owens, a former meth dealer and owner of Pro-Well. The company and production plant were inspired by a Ukrainian pharmaceutical company that hired Leitner's father as president.

Though Leitner originally considered setting the story in Flagstaff, Ariz., it soon became clear that it could not be set anywhere but Pittsburgh. "Because I live in Pittsburgh, it would be defecting to set the novel anywhere else," Leitner explained. "This is a very horror-oriented city. And they say 'write what

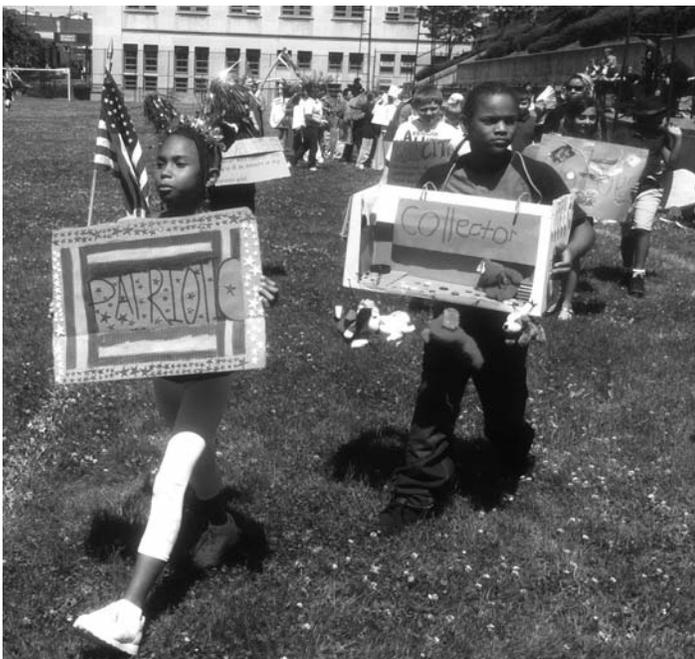
you know,' and I know Pittsburgh."

Leitner first fell in love with Pittsburgh when she came to the University of Pittsburgh as an undergraduate in 2001. The neighborhoods and character of the city attracted her and convinced her to stay. She has lived in Oakland and the South Side, and last year bought a house in Bloomfield. She says she loves her new location because of its affordability and convenience to all the East End neighborhoods, Lawrenceville and the Strip.

Working Stiffs is currently available online at Amazon.com and through the publisher, but will be arriving in bookstores soon. Leitner is now working on two more novels – a dystopian story and a darker novel about a serial killer. ♦



Parading Their Literacy Skills



ABOVE: Arlene Sheffey and Jaquawndai Montel display their decorated vocabulary words in the Third Annual Vocabulary Parade at Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5. Students chose robust vocabulary words and made costumes to represent the meanings, then paraded through the community. The parade was the culmination of Literacy Week, May 14-18, when students celebrated their year-long work toward improved literacy. Throughout the week, the students and staff participated in Penny Battles, a collaborative fundraising effort with nearby Allegheny Center Alliance Church, to benefit the building and development of the Karen Library in Kenya, Africa, which is the homeland of many Pittsburgh Arsenal students. Photo by Judith Flaherty



PERSONAL CARE IN A HOME-LIKE ENVIRONMENT

Canterbury Place, a UPMC Senior Community, located in historic Lawrenceville offers seniors exceptional care, warm surroundings, and affordability. At Canterbury Place, you have the comfort of knowing that your loved ones are in a secure, welcoming, and worry-free environment, with amenities that include:

- Spacious, comfortable apartments • Full schedule of stimulating daily activities
- Delicious meals • Access to on-site, scheduled, physician appointments, and much more

For more information or to schedule a tour, call 412-622-9083. To take a virtual tour of the facility, please visit UPMCSeniorCommunities.com.

Call to learn how you can get a \$2,000 move-in credit!

UPMC Senior Communities

Affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, UPMC is ranked among the nation's best hospitals by U.S. News & World Report.