



Tammy Beacham, the mother of triplets, is among an eclectic group of models photographed in Vasilis Stamatakis shoes, none of whom would accept payment for their work. DENNIS KEYES/SUBMITTED PHOTO

# Woman treasures Greek artisan’s work

**By Sandy Marwick**  
Eagle Focus Editor

Never mind if the shoe fits. According to jae Brown, it’s sometimes better to cherish the shoes than to wear them.

Although Brown herself sports a sensible pair of square-toed pumps, a metal utility cabinet in her Emlenton home contains 39 pairs of colorful classics made by Greek shoemaker Vasilis Stamatakis.

The shoes represent a modest sampling of 36 collections made by Stamatakis between 1941 and 1969. And much like Brown uses the cabinet doors to shield the shoes from harm, for much of his life Stamatakis hid his creations in a private workspace adjoining his shoe store in Heraklion, Crete.

The obscure artist is being honored posthumously, as photos of his vibrant platforms are displayed in the Virtual Shoe Museum, curated by Liza Snook of The Netherlands.

“You don’t get your shoes into her museum out of pity. She is very, very, very particular,” said Brown, a writer and founding member of the Allegheny RiverStone Center for the Arts.

### Window shopping

Brown’s many visits to the island of Crete began in 1966 through her second husband, but she did not meet Stamatakis until 1995, when jet lag prompted her to window-shop in the wee hours of the morning.

A lifelong shoe fanatic, Brown was breathless when a few pairs of the unique platforms caught her attention from a storefront otherwise filled with trinkets.

“I knew they weren’t like any shoes I had ever seen,” said Brown, describing a pair of grass green sandals, the top layer of leather carefully cut to reveal white polka-dots beneath.

Brown returned there at 9 a.m. when



jae Brown of Emlenton shows one of the shoes made by Greek designer Vasilis Stamatakis in her collection. Brown has

39 pairs of the shoes. DAVE PRELOSKY/BUTLER EAGLE

the shop opened, and the worker summoned Stamatakis.

Through conversations with the shoemaker that day and over the next two years, Brown learned the souvenir shop had once been his shoe store, where he catered to conservative local tastes for sensible, nondescript footwear.

“Many artists have this incredible creative ability but they do not have shrewd business sense,” Brown said of the store that kept him in business.

“He realized early on as much as he loved his shoes, nobody was going to buy them.”

So Stamatakis created the avant-garde shoes in secret, allowing them to accumulate by the hundreds in the expansive space behind his shop, Brown said.

The designs, according to Brown, refer to the “aura of Rembetika,” music of the Greek Underground that likely originated in hashish dens around the turn of the 20th century.

“I’m so sorry now,” laments Brown, 72, at turning down an invitation to tour the Rembetika night spots with Stamatakis.

“By then I was getting ... too old to be running around in most of those places.”

By that time Stamatakis also had retired — renting out the building but displaying some of his creations there.

“These were things that 15 years ago he would not have dared (to display),” Brown said, explaining the conservative community by then was

infused with sophisticated tourists.

“I was still living in Manhattan when I bought the first batch of them,” Brown said.

“A famous dominatrix did beg for these at the Chelsea Hotel,” she added, holding up some tall red platforms piped in white.

“You could whip these out in Milan right now and stop traffic,” she said of another pair.

Despite the whimsy Stamatakis expressed in shoes, Brown also holds dear his more stately designs.

Of those, she presented some black suede pumps, embellished with subdued black star bursts and patent heels.

“I think these are the most beautiful shoes I ever saw in my whole life,” she said.

### Stepping out

Brown is not the only one captivated by Stamatakis shoes.

She bought the first few pairs in her own size — a 9 — but soon decided to save them as artwork, especially since commonly worn sizes quickly were lost to eager shoppers.

Brown also was not alone in thinking the shoes should be displayed: During

See **Shoes**, Page B2





## POTPOURRI

### Annual breakfast slated at YWCA

The 10th annual Martin Luther King Jr. community breakfast will be held from 8:30 to 10 a.m. Jan. 17 in the Preston Room of the YWCA, 120 W. Cunningham St.

Joy L. Smith, caseworker at Adelphoi Village, will be the speaker and the message will be "African Americans and Single Parenting."

The event is sponsored by the Butler YWCA and the Paul Laurence Dunbar Community Center.

Tickets are \$5 and are on sale at both facilities. For information, call the Dunbar Center at 724-287-5648 or the YWCA at 724-287-5709.

### Marching corps registration open

WORTHINGTON — Registration for the Worthington Lionettes Marching Corps will be held at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 1 in the gymnasium of the Worthington Civics Center, 218 East Main Street.

The group is for girls ages 5 to 16. Boys are welcome to join the Honor Guard. The Worthington Lionettes march to music in parades while using hoops, pom-poms and batons.

There are no registration fees. Participants pay for uniform and shoes and fundraising is required.

To sign up, contact Connie Feeney at 724-297-5131, Julie Totos at 724-859-5385, Brandy Billotte at 724-919-0101 or Shelby Young at 724-445-7730.

### Reunion planned for shipmates

A reunion will be held Aug. 25 to 28 in Branson, Miss., for former shipmates of the U.S.S. Maddox Destroyer Association (DD731, DDD622 and DD168.)

For information, contact Dennis Stokhaug, 571 W. 14562 Hidden Creek Court, Muskego WI 53150, at 262-679-9409 or e-mail mad-dox64@aol.com.



DENNIS KEYES/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Above, Eric Siepkes, a classical pianist from Pittsburgh, shows off his skills with the keyboard and a pair of Vasilis Stamatakis's shoes. The shoes are owned by jae Brown, right, of Emlenton who has 39 pairs of the Greek designer's work. A peek at others in her collection is below right.

## Shoes WITH SOUL

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their conversations, Stamatakis shared his plan to open a shoe museum.

She later learned that Stamatakis died before realizing that dream. A son reportedly sold the building, which likely was razed with shoes left inside.

The shoes did find their way into a museum, however, after Brown met Dennis Keyes, a Butler dentist who exhibited photographs two years ago at the RiverStone Estate in Foxburg.

"When I first saw Vasilis' shoes, I knew they would be great fun to photograph," said Keyes, 64, who lives near Karns City.

"jae's granddaughter happened to be visiting at the time, and I recorded several interesting images of her with the shoes," Keyes said.

"After that, jae and I both found models and locations for what is proving to be a series of exciting shoots," he added, noting some photos were set up spontaneously at musical events in Foxburg.

Along with Brown's granddaughter Magda Jobb, the assortment of models includes Japanese violinist Akiko Kobayashi, Hewlett Packard executive Elizabeth Knight and former Foxburg librarian Jessica Hermler.

A sampling of those portraits along with more technical images of the shoes were accepted in November into Snook's Virtual Shoe Museum.

Launched in 2004, the site features 200-plus designers and draws close to

300,000 visitors per year, Snook said.

"The core of our Virtual Shoe Museum collection focuses on designs that question the very essence of the shoe: 'Is this a shoe? 'Is this wearable?' 'Does it matter? Is it tickling your imagination?'" she said, adding a sense of humor among the criteria for acceptance.

Although the site accepts about half of the 150-plus submissions it receives each year, most designers exhibit by invitation.

"To me, Vasilis Stamatakis (and) his colorful platform shoe designs are a great inspiration for today's fashion designers," Snook said.

Brown said the shoes also are slated to be part of a fashion retrospective tentatively planned for 2012 at the Andy Warhol Museum.

Despite their exposure through photos and shows, the shoes as art command interaction.

"The shoes seem to inspire the wearers. They just light up and somehow know just what to do," Keyes said of the models, none of whom would accept payment for posing in the shoes.

"It's as if the shoes were made for entertainers."

Brown agrees.

"Those shoes were meant to be on glorious legs on special occasions," she said.

For more information on Vasilis Stamatakis and his shoes, go to [www.vasilisshoes.org](http://www.vasilisshoes.org) or [www.virtualshoemuseum.com/vsm/](http://www.virtualshoemuseum.com/vsm/).

To see more photos, go to [www.denniskeyesphotography.com/](http://www.denniskeyesphotography.com/).



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## NEIGHBORS

### Victory Lodge makes donation

**Victory Lodge 694 F&AM** of Butler presented a \$1,000 check to **Good Samaritan Hospice (GSH)**, a mission of Concordia Lutheran Ministries, at the GSH Unit at the Lund Care Center in Cabot.

The donation was made in memory of **Jane Schaffner**, wife of F&AM member **Jim Schaffner**. Mrs. Schaffner died Nov. 8, 2009, in GSH care and her husband has remained involved with the organization since then.

**Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield** awarded a \$19,200 grant to **Lutheran SeniorLife's** fall risk screening and prevention program.

The program aims to decrease seniors' risk of falling while improving their functionality through health screenings.

The program will initially be geared toward those in personal care at Passavant Retirement Community in Zelienople.



**GIVING TO HOSPICE** — From left, Michael Rogers, past master of Victory Lodge 694 F&AM of Butler; Anzie Kelley, executive director, Good Samaritan Hospice; Jim Schaffner, lodge member;

Richard Fair, lodge treasurer; and Diana Meade, R.N., unit manager, Good Samaritan Hospice. The lodge donated \$1,000 to the hospice in memory of Jane Schaffner.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Continuing to serve as trustees are **Janet Rogan, Juanita Eppinger, Tom Forbes, Marietta Reeb** and **Beth Wilson**.

Zelienople Historical Society members re-elected **Margo Hogan** president, **Sharon Wilson Shanks** vice-president and **Ron Goehring** secretary. **Phil Hollerman** is newly elected treasurer.

New trustee is **Jim Hulings**, who joins re-elected trustees **Sue Casker** and **Jack McMichael**.

**Brayden William Isherwood**  
**Nicholas Bradley Motonis**  
**Leo Gaetano Pedicane**  
Addendum, November:  
**Cooper William Carl**  
**Mason Alan Slee**

**Brandon Konieczny** of Butler at Duquesne University, **Nicole Rieger** of West Sunbury at Clarion University; **Joshua Snodgrass** of Butler at Duquesne University; **Robyn Theuer** of Butler at Bloomsburg University; and **Tyler Ung** of Cranberry

**Butler: Tyler Call, Jaimie Daum, Jessie Foertsch, Maura Hunter, Brooke Lyon, Aaron McAfee, Heather Schroeder, Amy Steinheiser, Ashley Thiebaud, Andrew Wirtz**  
See **Dean's List**, Page B3

### DEAN'S LIST

The following students have been named to the dean's lists at their respective colleges and universities:

Township at Messiah College

The following students have been named to the dean's list at Westminster College:

## Heart Ball set for next month

**By Ed Biller**  
Eagle Staff Writer

**CRANBERRY TWP** — A "Love Boat" theme and a celebrity guest will highlight the Beaver Butler Counties Heart Ball on Feb. 12 at the Pittsburgh Marriott North, 100 Cranberry Woods Dr.

Actor **Larry Thomas**, best known as the Soup Nazi on the TV show "Seinfeld," will rub elbows with guests at the black tie optional event. It is slated to begin with a cocktail reception and silent auction at 6 p.m.

Auction items include a 32-inch HDTV, an autographed photograph of Steelers **Troy Polamalu** and an Oakmont golf course package.

Proceeds from the annual ball will go to the American Heart Association and will be used to support heart and stroke research, as well as advances in CPR, pacemaker and heart stent technologies.

"Last year, we raised \$154,000 and had merely 350 guests," said **Karen Colbert**, regional director of communications for the heart association.

"This year, we are expecting about 400 guests, and we have nearly a dozen corporations, signed up at different (donor) levels, that attend."



Butler Health System and Heritage Valley Health System (Beaver County) are the event's primary sponsors for the third year in a row.

"It's great that these two competing forces are coming together here to fight heart disease," she said.

Colbert added, "We do seven heart balls throughout the region, in separate counties."

An invitation-only VIP reception also is planned for high-end donors after the ball.

The ball is open to the public, and individual tickets for \$150 and full-table tickets at a price to be announced may be bought ahead of time by calling 724-453-1004 or visiting [www.heart.org/beaverbutlerpaheartball](http://www.heart.org/beaverbutlerpaheartball).

Donations also may be made on the website.