

Spirit

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES



WE WILL, WE WILL
ROCK YOU

The secret to longevity? A little bit of old-time rock 'n' roll.

JUNE 2012

69 Power of One

Sometimes all it takes to make a difference is one person, a whole lot of determination—and heart. Here to inspire you with singular acts that impact multitudes are:

- A city councilman-turned-urban farming pioneer
- A teenage eco-innovator
- A baker whose secret ingredient is social justice
- An oral historian on a mission to embrace her roots
- A self-made master gardener who transformed a Carolina community, one tree at a time

84 Crazy Little Thing Called Love

Through the power of one nuttily effusive Minneapolis showman, a community of senior citizens found its (singing) voice again.

94 Your Adventure In Omaha

This Midwest metropolis is far from corny. Let our guide be your gateway to everything from exotic wildlife to artsy workshops.

PLUS, LIFE ADVENTURE Savvy locals chat about life in the Big O.

ON THE COVER / Queen gets a royal makeover (clockwise from left): Alive & Kickin's Linda Rein, Cal Sathre, June Griffin, and Michael Ferrell. **PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER YANG**



Hedge of Glory
Pearl Fryar's towering topiary is the ultimate in green living.

After graduation, he did just that, joining the Jesuit Volunteer Corps to work with developmentally disabled adults and AIDS patients. It wasn't until 1995 that he changed his career path. While working as an outreach coordinator at a home-



Room to Grow
A resident of Riverview Towers buries seedlings at Ohio City Farm.

less shelter, he began attending community meetings and volunteering for friends' political campaigns. In 1997, he ran for City Council and won.

But to fully understand Cimperman's commitment to social justice, you need to know the story of St. Paul's Patch. The 5,000-square-foot plot was a flourishing community garden on a city-owned lot in Ohio City that many families relied upon as their main source of food. In 2006, a group of gardeners asked Cimperman for help protecting the garden, which was in danger of being destroyed by a private developer who intimidated the gardeners by telling them they were breaking the law. They weren't—Cleveland has long allowed people to garden in vacant lots—but they also didn't have any legal tenure to the land.

The only way to save the garden, OSU Extension's Morgan Taggart told Cimperman, was to change the zoning code.

Thus began what Cimperman jokingly refers to as "the education of a councilman." The teachers?

Taggart and her then-colleague at OSU Extension, Julia Barton; Kristen Trolie, then at the Cleveland Botanical Garden; and Marge Misak, of the land trust program at Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Cleveland.

During the housing crisis, thousands of foreclosed homes in Cleveland were demolished. The resulting vacant lots have all fallen into the city's "land bank"—a reserve that now contains 7,400 of the city's 20,000 vacant lots. When selling off land bank lots, city planners typically give preference to homeowners or businesses, who they assume will make "the highest and best use" of the land. What Misak and crew wanted to do was flip that on its head, deeming community gardens and urban farms the highest and best use.

The four women drafted a code

that would require the city to go through the same public process that a private landowner goes through when changing zoning: neighbor notification, public hearings, and approval by the planning commission. Gardeners, then, would get notice of any plan to convert city land bank lots to another use—and have the opportunity to organize against it. The Urban Garden District legislation was adopted by City Council in 2007. "Now people think twice about threatening gardeners," Cimperman says, chuckling.

Suddenly Cleveland was an ideal environment for agri-entrepreneurs like Mansfield Frazier—the man behind the vineyards at Chateau Hough. Visiting him at

"They don't question why we ship bell peppers from California to Cleveland and burn fossil fuels to do it. It's cheaper, yes. But will it employ people? Is it healthier?"

his orderly, three-quarter-acre vineyard on the corner of East 66th Street and Hough Avenue, Frazier says he wouldn't have gone forward with the idea if it hadn't been for Cimperman's 2007 zoning ordinance.

"These are city boys," Frazier says of other city council members. "They don't question why we ship bell peppers from California to Cleveland and burn fossil fuels to do it. It's cheaper, yes. But will

it employ people? Is it healthier? We've got to turn the pyramid on its head. Joe has that vision."

ON A BRISK Saturday morning in early April, I tour Kentucky Gardens, one of the city's oldest and loveliest community gardens, located in Ohio City's Fairview Park. It has been threatened several times over the years, and members have fought fiercely to protect it.

Masud Hasan, a 44-year-old computer programmer, has one of the most impressive plots, especially for this time of year. He peels back the polypropylene fabric that allows rain and sun in while protecting the veggies from frost, to show me his winter harvest: butter crunch lettuce, sweet chard, carrots, spinach, and cilantro.

Phyllis Bambeck, a retired elementary school teacher whose orange-tinted hair is pulled back in a red scarf, tells me that thanks to the garden, she's able to keep her weekly grocery bill under \$10. (It helps that she has six egg-laying hens at home.) Bambeck, who has gardened here for more than 30 years, was garden coordinator in 2002 when Fairview Park advocates proposed reducing the garden's size to make way for a fountain and a dog run.

She met with Cimperman and gave him an earful about the importance of community gardens, particularly organic ones like Kentucky. When the garden zoning legislation passed, Kentucky was one of the first community gardens to take advantage of it.

It's been a decade since Cimperman met Bambeck, but she left a deep impression on him. "She canned food from the garden for sustenance. She had a job, she raised her kids. But she absolutely needed the food she was growing," Cimperman recalls. "This—urban agriculture—is worth preserving."

1 IN CHICAGO



Thanks to Julieanna Richardson, the voices of unsung heroes of black history can now be heard.

As a college student in the '70s, Julieanna Richardson interviewed actress Thelma "Butterfly" McQueen, as well as Harlem Renaissance figures Leigh Whipper and Raoul Abdul, as part of an oral history project. "When I was growing up, I didn't know much about black history," she says. "After that, I felt like I had found a part of myself." But it wasn't until 1999, after a nearly 20-year career in law, television, and theater, that Richardson launched The HistoryMakers, an African-American oral history archive that showcases filmed conversations with black achievers. With a goal of caching 5,000 interviews, Richardson and crew have spoken with everyone from Alonzo Pettie (who after being barred from white rodeos, started one for blacks) to Barack Obama and children's advocate Marian Wright Edelman. "Everyone from DreamWorks Animation to the BBC is accessing the digital archives," Richardson reports. "I want to reawaken people's curiosity about history we haven't known about. There are wonderfully rich stories that show the strength of a people to overcome." —Amanda Gleason