

ON THE SCENE

CHARM CITY CHATTER

Firsthand accounts of what's happening in Baltimore.

EDITED BY EVAN SERPICK

Hons Gone Wild

AT MOST PAGEANTS,

the awarding of the winner's sash is a pretty routine affair. Not so for the Bawlmer's Best Hon competition at the 15th annual HonFest in Hampden. To begin with, Charlene Osbourne, who beat out nine semifinalists, including an American flag-themed Hon, a knitting-needle Hon, and a gold lamé Hon, is almost six feet tall. Add two feet of blonde beehive and you have a genuine logistical dilemma.

The 2008 winner, Agnes "Punkin" Hurley, sporting hair curlers and a housedress, officially presented the prize, after describing her reign as "the best time I've had in my 77 years, toolin' all 'round Bawlmer." But alas, at little more than five feet tall, Hurley was helpless in getting the hot pink sash over Osbourne's mountain of hair and Aquanet.

Ultimately, Café Hon owner and HonFest creator Denise Whiting was able to secure the sash, which matched Osbourne's elbow-length gloves and the flamingo printed on her skirt. She also presented the winner with tickets for a cruise, a case of Pompeian olive "ool," and a vintage suitcase with a "B'lieve, Hon" bumper sticker.

After the presentation, the house band resumed playing local standards like "I Fell in



Love with a Baltimore Hon," and attention turned to Pompeian's duckpin bowling tent and the further devouring of the Guinness-certified "World's Biggest Crabcake," being doled out in sandwich-sized portions for \$5.50 a pop by servers in multi-clawed crab hats.

Soon, all eyes turned to the dunking booth where Whiting, having changed into an old-fashioned lime green bathing suit covered with sequins, was ready to get wet to raise money for Maryland Special Olympics. Her cat-eye glasses, needless to say, stayed on the entire time.

Green House Effect

A GAGGLE OF

smiley, hyper school children cut a contrast with gray skies and a sea of red brick houses as Mayor Sheila Dixon joins local residents and leaders of Bridge Private Lending to cut the ribbon on the first of many affordable, eco-friendly houses the company plans to build in the downtown area in the coming months.

The kids clamor for cookies while adults squeeze under a tent set up in front of the property to avoid the rain, as Bridge

Private Lending founder David Borinsky explains that by using inexpensive techniques to make homes "green," they can be sold at affordable prices and will continue to save residents money on energy bills and maintenance costs, while also helping the planet. City officials hope first-time home buyers, attracted by affordable units like these, will help pull the city out of the housing crisis, which has hit the Baltimore market particularly hard.

Once the mayor cuts the ribbon, the crowd rushes into the house, built in 1914, to see the techniques used to renovate it.

The house was renovated with repurposed materials from torn-down walls, uses solar venting and a cool white roof to reduce heating costs, and is equipped with energy-efficient appliances. The shredded newspapers on the table, which will be treated with fire-retardant materials and used for insulation, led one visitor to cynically suggest that the troubled *Sun* had found a new calling.

On their way out of the house, those inspired to turn over a green leaf in their own homes were given energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs at the door.

—Jamie McCoy



* IF YOU HAVE AN EVENT OR IDEA THAT YOU THINK WOULD BE GOOD FOR CHARM CITY CHATTER, E-MAIL US AT SEVAN@BALTIMOREMAGAZINE.NET.