

COVID Crises: Pittsburgh Tries To Open

Pittsburgh's long-awaited reopening has begun. Sort of.

June ended with disturbing spikes in the number of known COVID-19 infections and deaths. After an increase of infected young adults, Allegheny County has ordered an end to on-site alcohol consumption at bars and restaurants. The thinking is that such a move will discourage people from breaking the distancing guidelines.

This is certainly not good news for Pittsburgh's nightclubs, which are key to the incomes of countless musicians, singers and bands. They are already under orders to limit capacity. This means that, even with the reopening, few are booking acts.

"It's not as simple as we open at half-capacity," Alex Neal, general manager of the **Thunderbird Café & Music Hall**, recently told WESA-FM's Bill O'Driscoll. "We can't pay the artists half of what they cost. It doesn't really work that way." [Read more by clicking [here](#) - ed.]

"Nobody knows what's going to happen or what's going on," a worried Homewood bartender explained to Alexis Johnson of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, "or how long we are going to be in this situation."

Meanwhile, different parts of the arts & entertainment community are taking different approaches during this chaotic "reopening."

The **Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's** (PCT) stages remain dark. So, the PCT has joined commercial entities like **Row House Cinema** in going virtual, only they appear to be doing so in virtually every way. Not only are films normally screened at the Harris Theater being shown online, but so are jazz concerts, magic shows, book events and even the annual youth summer camps.

All four **Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh** are open, but activities are minimal and patrons must book an arrival time in advance online. **The National Aviary** is opening on July 1 and the **Mattress Factory** on July 9 --- but also only to those who booked timed tickets in advance.

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has started "curbside service" which allows patrons to pick-up reserved material and return others without entering a branch.

Specific rules are being introduced. **The Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center** is welcoming patrons to see the exhibit "Smithsonian's Portraits of Pittsburgh: Works

from the National Portrait Gallery" starting July 1. But the museum is operating at 50% capacity and is requiring everyone to wear face coverings at all times, practice social distancing and having access to stations of hand sanitizer. Additionally, the center's café will be open in a limited capacity, serving snacks and beverages only.

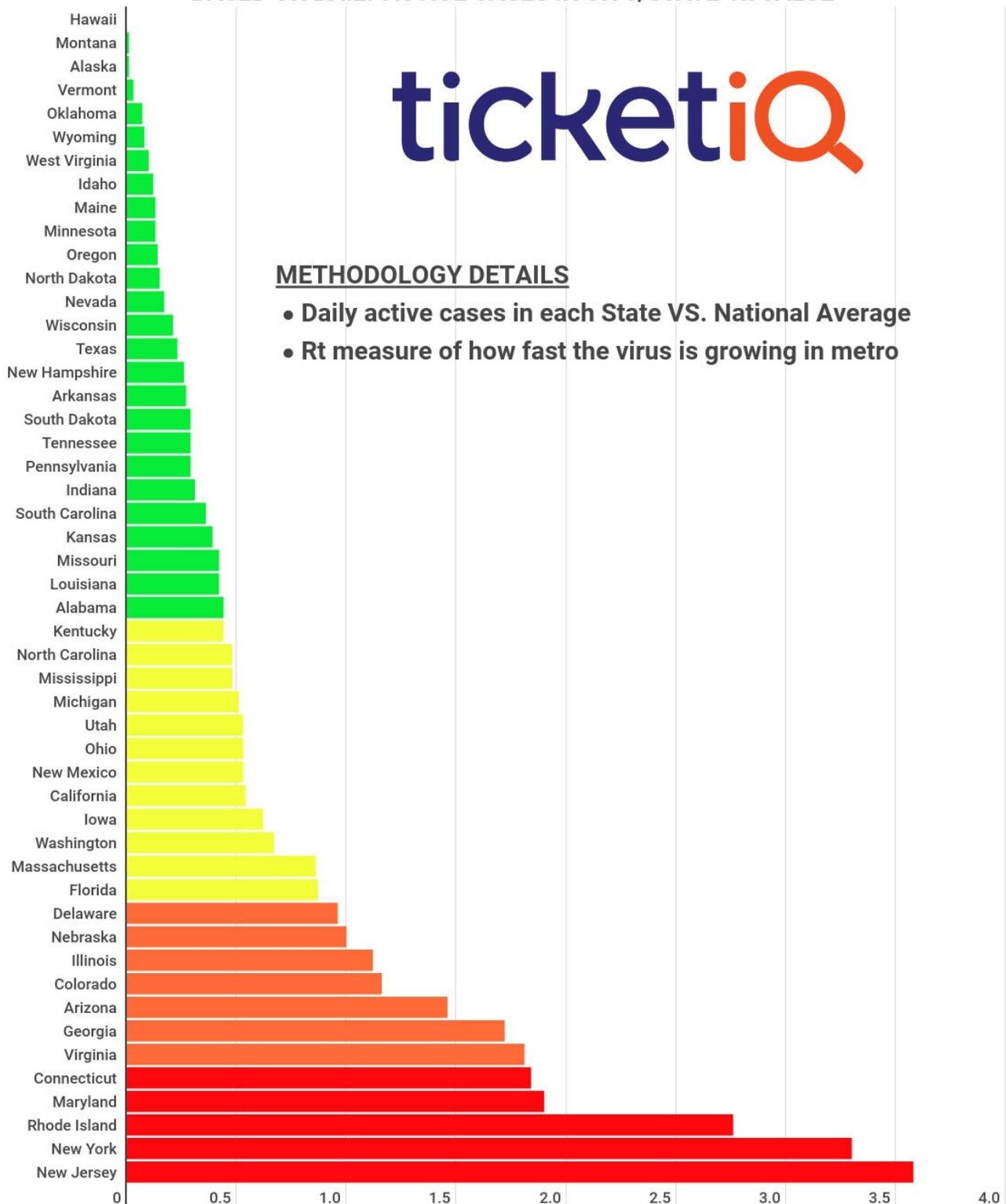
Film and television production is slowly resuming. Dawn Keezer of the **Pittsburgh Film Office** recently told WESA-FM that the region's relatively low number of COVID-19 cases may help the local industry rebound faster than other areas. [Los Angeles County has had over 100,000 cases and 3,000 deaths compared to Allegheny County's 2,800 cases and 180 deaths - ed.]. "We're still in a good spot competitively to get the work," she says. "We just need to figure out a way to safely get everybody back to work." [See "Unions' COVID Rules" on page 4 -ed.]

Pennsylvania has had about 86,000 proven cases of COVID infections with more than 6,000 deaths. The consensus among experts is that every state is under reporting since not everyone infected is getting tested.



COVID-19 SAFETY INDEX BY STATE - 6.7.20

BASED ON DAILY ACTIVE CASES IN CITY/STATE * Rt VALUE



METHODOLOGY DETAILS

- Daily active cases in each State VS. National Average
- Rt measure of how fast the virus is growing in metro



Launched in 2010, the closely-held company **TicketIQ** is an event ticket search engine that provides ticket-buying options from many different sellers. On June 7, the firm issued this assessment of safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was created in partnership with *Billboard* magazine.

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AEA News

Butler native and Tony Award winning actress Michele L. Pawk (Broadway's "Hollywood Arms") is among those elected to **Actors' Equity Association's** (AEA) Eastern Region Council.

The union is comprised of three regions each with its own elected council. The Eastern Region covers 20 states including New York and Pennsylvania. **Carnegie Mellon University** grad Jeffrey Omura (TV's "Limitless") also won a seat.



In other news, the national AEA office has been trying to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on live theater. At the end of May, the union issued four "[Core Principles](#)" that need to be met for a safe work environment.

The union continues to express its concerns over employment during the pandemic. When the Labor Department issued a jobs report on June 5, it contained the surprising news that 2.5 million payrolls were added and the unemployment rate had dropped. But AEA's Mary McCall warns that there remains a "long road to recovery for all of us for in the arts and entertainment industry. While millions of Americans have gone back to work, our members and countless others in the service and hospitality sector are still facing record unemployment."

Pittsburgh has several Equity stages, all of whom were impacted by the virus and the na-

Unions' COVID Rules

Four major entertainment unions -- the **Directors Guild of America** (DGA), **International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees** (IATSE), **International Brotherhood of Teamsters** (IBT) and the **Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists** (SAG-AFTRA) --- have developed and released a set of COVID-19 safety guidelines called *The Safe Way Forward*.



Various epidemiologists and other experts were consulted when drafting these guidelines. They are built around a system of three "zones" designed for the safety of cast and crew. These zones are identified as:

tional shut down. On June 29 came the announcement from the **Broadway League** that the klieg lights of their 41 stages will remain dark until at least January 3.

AEA responded almost immediately with a call for more federal help.

"Countless regional theaters have made the exact same decision as Broadway, and are voluntarily

Zone A. This is the actual set where actors are performing in close quarters without any protective gear. Everyone working in this "bubble" must be carefully vetted (i.e., tested for COVID). The working time should be limited and Zone A should be properly distant from Zone B.

Zone B. This is the area outside Zone A where support functions exist. These includes a production office, dressing rooms, truck or anywhere else crew members may be working. Everyone must wear protective equipment and physical distancing while in Zone B.

Zone C. This is where people involved in the production go when not working (home, hotel room, etc.)

No one is to be allowed access to Zone A or Zone B for the first time unless a test conducted within the last 24 hours shows them cleared of the virus. Zone A people are to be tested no less than three times a week.

A pdf of the 37-page *The Safeway Forward* can be downloaded by clicking [here](#).

postponing their seasons and putting the safety and health of their audiences and workers first. These responsible decisions mean that the industry will need support so that when it is safe to reopen, the arts can go back to work and help the entire economy recover," said the union's Brandon Lorenz in a press release. (At press time, it remained unclear if the extension will include regional stages in Pittsburgh.)

COVID Cans Irish Fest

Another major Pittsburgh event has become a casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On June 8, the executive director of the **Pittsburgh Irish Festival** announced that the 2020 event has been cancelled. Instead, planning will move forward on staging it again in 2021.



"The Irish are nothing if not resilient," explains a press release, having survived "rain, bogs, floods, and now they face the difficulties of navigating the COVID-19 Global Pandemic."

COVID-19 saw the cancellations of Pride events, the Three Rivers Arts Festival, Kennywood's autumn programming and a host of other annual celebrations. Fall events like Light-Up Night, the Reel Q film festival and WPXI-TV's parade on Thanksgiving weekend may be among the next, although no announcements have been made.

In the interim, the organization will continue to stream live performances by local Irish music artists.

GPAC's COVID Grants

As the COVID-19 crises continues, the **Pittsburgh Foundation** has provided \$50,000 to the

GREATER PITTSBURGH
ARTS COUNCIL



Arts loud and clear

Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council (GPAC) to supports artist of color during the pandemic.

GPAC formally made the announcement in a June 29 email: "Artists of all disciplines living in Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland counties in Southwestern Pennsylvania are eligible to request up to \$500 in financial assistance. While there are no deadlines to apply, applications fitting the criteria and demographics will be funded on a first-come, first-served basis.

"This financial assistance is unrestricted and can be used for rent, bills, groceries, childcare, etc. If you are a previous recipient of this fund, you are not eligible to reapply."

Learn more by [here](#).

New Deal Announced

The national board of **SAG-AFTRA** met via videoconferencing on June 29 and tentatively approved a new agreement with the **Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers**.

SAG-AFTRA

More than 2/3 of the board approved of what a SAG-AFTRA press release describes as "the most lucrative deal the union has ever achieved."

Valued at \$318 million over three years, the same release explains that the deal "represents the needs and interests of our members as they shared them with us during our national Wages and Working Conditions meetings held across the country. First and foremost, we achieved a 26% increase in streaming residuals. In addition, we achieved a terrific wage package and an outsized increase in SAG-AFTRA Health Plan contributions. We are confident that this future-focused agreement is the strong foundation we need to evolve with the significant changes in our industry and our employers' business models."

The agreement now goes to the membership for ratification.

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Controversy Again At Post-Gazette

It seems that turmoil and controversy have become almost routine at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.



This scenario seems to date to 2018 when parent company **Block Communications** consolidated the *Post-Gazette* editorial department with that of the *Toledo Blade* under the latter's chief editor Keith Burris. Burris is a well-known supporter of Donald Trump. Later that same year the paper under Burris fired Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist Rob Rogers, presumably because he refused to draw pro-Trump cartoon.

In June 2019 at least four staffers reported seeing publisher John Robinson Block drunk and "going berserk." There have also been issues with the union and concerns over the increasingly conservative editorial page. This includes a 2018 editorial that seemed to justify blatant racism.

The most recent situation revolves around African-American journalist Alexis Johnson. On May 31 she tweeted out a joke involving several pictures of a trash-strewn parking lot with the comment: "Horrible scenes and aftermath from selfish LOOTERS who don't care about this city!!!! oh wait sorry. No, these are pictures from a Kenny Chesney concert tailgate. Whoops."

She was then prohibited by the paper's editors to cover the jailed protesters. Johnson has since filed a lawsuit charging racial discrimination and illegal retaliation. Another Black staffer, photographer Michael M. Santiago says that he was given similar restrictions but has opted for a settlement and left the paper. Some insiders claim that these are just the latest example of racial discrimination at the paper.

"This is a national embarrassment to a newspaper that in 2019 received the Pulitzer prize," Michael Fuoco, president of the

Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh, recently told WESA-FM's Lucy Perkins. "*The Post-Gazette* is on the wrong side of history. We're on the right side of history. We have a responsibility to fight for our members, we need to fight for non-discrimination, equality and journalistic ethics."

Burris did post an online apology, but the fallout remains considerable: local grocery **chain Giant Eagle** (possibly the paper's most important seller of the print edition) will no longer sell copies of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

CLP Book Thieves May Get Stiffer Sentences

The Associated Press (AP) is reporting that prosecutors want stiffer sentences for the two men involved in pilfering valuable tomes from the **Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh** (CLP).

For decades, while he was the CLP's rare books manager, Gregory Priore, stole material from the holdings. He then gave these items to John Schulman, the owner of **Caliban Book Shop** to be sold to collectors. [See [Pittsburgh Applause February 2020](#) -ed.] In early June, the court Schulman to four years of home

confinement and Priore to three years home confinement. These are to be followed up with 12 years of probation. Common Pleas Judge Alexander Bicket opted for home imprisonment rather than prison because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On June 26, Deputy District Attorney Brian Catanzarite expressed a desire for these sentences made even more restrictive. "The history of our nation was stolen and resold merely to feed the defendants' avarice," he wrote.

No decision had been made at press time.



Museum Workers May Unionize

A unionization effort is underway at the **Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh**, Marylynne Pitz and Lauren Rosenblatt report for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.



Hundreds of employees "met" on June 29 at a virtual rally to discuss the matter.

"Many of us struggle to make ends meet while the organization relies on our dedication, long hours and other sacrifices," Gabi DiDonna, an assistant registrar of loans at the Carnegie Museum of Art, told the journalists. "Museum and cultural workers deserve a sustainable way to make a living."

The employees are calling themselves the **United Museum Workers** and is seeking representation by the **United Steelworkers of America**. Read more by clicking [here](#).

PSO's New Violinist

South Korean musician Yeokyung Kim has been selected by the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** (PSO) as the new section second violin.

According to a press release,

"Yeokyung Kim began violin study at the age of three, and at the age of 12 played as soloist with the Seoul



Philharmonic Orchestra. She studied at the Yewon Arts School and Seoul Arts High School, and while there won numerous national solo competitions. Kim received Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Seoul National University, and completed an Artist Diploma at the Colburn School in Los Angeles in May 2020."

Ms. Kim officially began her new position on June 8.

New Film Head

Announced at press time, Emma Watts has been named president of the Paramount Pictures Motion Picture Group.



Paramount is a division of **ViacomCBS**, which owns two Pittsburgh television stations.

The Hollywood Reporter's Pamela McClintock reports that the "veteran executive will oversee the studio's film operations from development to release, including Paramount Pictures and Paramount Players production labels, as well as managing the creative and development group and supervising casting, physical production, post production and music."

Watts begins her new role on July 20.



Wilson To Be On Walk

Pittsburgh's beloved Pulitzer Prize winning playwright August Wilson (1945-2005) is getting another honor: a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

The famous walk began in 1953 and now has more than 2,600 stars embedded in sidewalks of Los Angeles' Hollywood neighborhood.

WTAE-TV reports that other stage luminaries getting stars are Sarah Brightman and Luciano Pavarotti.

No date has been set for the ceremony; the COVID 19 pandemic has postponed all 2020 ceremonies and 2021 dates are expected to be affected.

Will Michael Keaton Be Back As Batman?

It looks like Pittsburgh son Michael Keaton will be wearing the famous Batman cowl for the third time.

Keaton portrayed the superhero and his billionaire alter-ego in "Batman" (1989) and "Batman Returns" (1992). He may reprise the role for a planned movie centered around another comic book icon, The Flash.

In an exclusive report for TheWrap.com, journalist Umberto Gonzalez writes that talks "are in the very early stages, it is far from a sure thing, and can go either way. No details are currently available about how big or small Keaton's role is."

Read Gonzalez's full story by clicking [here](#).



Images



Pittsburgh playwright August Wilson is to be honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.



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Opera Adds Board Members

Two new professionals have joined the board of the **Pittsburgh Opera**.

PITTSBURGH OPERA

One is **Jones Day** attorney Tarek Abdalla and the other is **Highmark** executive Sri Palanisamy.

International law firm Jones Day was formed in 1893 by Cleveland attorneys Edwin J. Blandin and William Lowe Rice. It went through several changes in name and ownership over the next nine decades before assuming its current moniker. The firm's high-profile clients include roughly

have of Fortune magazine's famous list of 500.

Working out of the firm's Pittsburgh office, attorney Tarek Abdalla represents clients in major public and private projects in the energy and construction industries including power plants, pipelines and other energy infrastructure. He has been involved in arbitrations across the globe, from London to Abu Dhabi.

The Pittsburgh-based Highmark was created in 1977 and is one of the nation's largest nonprofit healthcare organizations with several commercial subsidiaries. Sri Palanisamy leads Highmark's large enterprise-wide strategic initiatives and planning. He also has arts experience having co-founded a theater company.



Channel
Pittsburgh

Affiliation Agreement Reached

An new affiliation agreement has been reached between **Sinclair Broadcast Group** (SBG) and **ViacomCBS'** flagship network, reports *Broadcasting+Cable* magazine's Jon Lafayette.



Both companies own television stations in Pittsburgh, although the deal does not involve them. The agreement covers eight SBG stations that reach some three million households.

“We are pleased to extend our affiliations for these stations with ViacomCBS,” Lafayette quotes Sinclair's Barry Faber. “The CBS Network’s extremely popular sports, entertainment and news programming, together with the high-quality local news and other programming provided by Sinclair, positions these stations to continue to serve as an important marketing platform for advertisers, as well as to generate a growing distribution revenue stream.”

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Opportunities

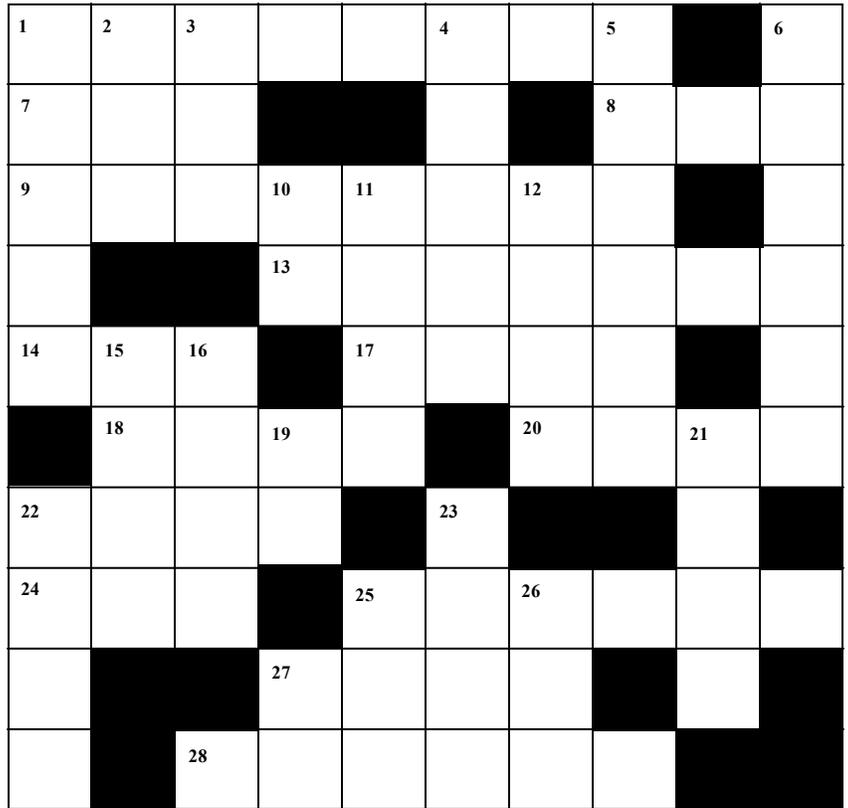
Artists of color who have been impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic can now apply for relief from the Emergency Fund for Artists. Operated by the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, qualifying applicants can receive up to \$500. Details available at http://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/programs/artist-services/emergency-fund?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Emergency%20Fund%20for%20Artists%20is%20now%20accepting%20applications%20specifically%20to%20support%20artists%20of%20color&utm_campaign=EFFA%20poc

Vincent Lighting Systems is looking for a shop manager to work out of their Pittsburgh location. The position calls for scheduling crews, maintaining records, etc. A theater degree (BA/BFA) is preferred but not required. Learn more at https://workforcenow.adp.com/mascsr/default/mdf/recruitment/recruitment.html?cid=1945c406-ef09-4094-8944-d6e55612ab76&ccId=19000101_000001&type=MP&lang=en_US



Across

1. Famous Mae West line (part 1 of 6)
7. Famous Mae West line (part 2 of 6)
8. Pub beverage
9. Common
13. Famous Mae West line (part 3 of 6)
14. Wee one
17. Viewed
18. Eat
20. Up in years
22. Famous Mae West line (part 4 of 6)
24. Mined stuff
25. Famous Mae West line (part 5 of 6)
27. Sonny and Gregg's ex
28. Famous Mae West line (part 6 of 6)



Down

1. Casper or Beetlejuice
2. Boat propellant
3. "Star Trek" shape-shifter
4. Make very happy
5. Common comment
6. Pleaded
10. Entry word
11. Human honker (LOL)
12. Carla of "Cheers"
15. Smell
16. Rip or ebb
19. Negative word
21. Send out
22. Hammer or wrench
23. Level
25. New York musical landmark Café ____
26. Cycle or pod intro
27. "Nashville" actor Pittsburgh native, initially

Last Month's Solution

F	I	F	T	E	E	N		S	
W	A	R	H	O	L		A	K	A
	M	Y		S	O	N	N	Y	
	S		M	I	N	U	T	E	S
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	S	O	D		S	B			E
M	U	S	E	E	T		A	N	D
E	M	E	R		A		N	E	E
M	O	O	N		R	A	D	O	N
O	F	F	A	M	E		Y		