

THINGS TO DO IN PITTSBURGH

By Tory N. Parrish

Bringing the Annual Convention back for its third showing in Pittsburgh made sense for a number of reasons, NSBE officers say. The city also hosted the 20th Annual Convention in 1994 and the 32nd in 2006.

For one, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are as much a part of Pittsburgh's history as are its sports colors, black and yellow. Pennsylvania's second-largest city, it earned the nickname "The Steel City" in the mid-1800s, because of its huge steel manufacturing industry. But over the last 20 years, Pittsburgh has transformed itself, becoming a major center for health care, technology and education. It's also "America's Most Livable City" for the fourth straight year, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, which bases its rankings on factors such as health care, culture, environment, education and personal safety.

"There is always something to do here — always," says Travelius Harris, 26, president of NSBE's Pittsburgh Alumni Extension Chapter. Harris moved to the Pittsburgh area in 2008 to take a job as a senior field service engineer with Westinghouse Electric Co. LLC.

Pittsburgh offers more than enough diverse social and cultural options to make visitors feel right at home. It has the largest history museum in Pennsylvania; a science center with

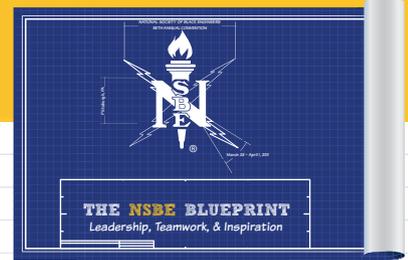
the world's largest permanent robotics exhibition; an exciting cultural district with many national and local shows; and distinct neighborhoods that offer everything from upscale dining on trendy streets to shopping at quirky, inexpensive stores.

And, of course, sports reign. Black and yellow are sported by three major professional sports teams: the Pittsburgh Steelers football, Penguins hockey and Pirates baseball teams.

Famous Pittsburghers include jazz musician George Benson, philanthropist and industrialist Andrew Carnegie, rapper Wiz Khalifa, retired NFL players Joe Montana and Joe Namath, children's TV show host Fred Rogers of "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood," artist Andy Warhol and playwright August Wilson.

Pittsburgh also endeared itself to NSBE in another way in 2006, says "Brother E.D.," NSBE Executive Director Carl B. Mack. The host facility, the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, honored NSBE's request to award the catering contract to a black-owned business, supporting the organization's mission of promoting cultural responsibility, Mack says. Also, Pittsburgh's leaders and media played a strong role in publicizing the event, he adds.

"Pittsburgh did a great job. They were the first city to show us that type of response from the community," Mack says.



For the 8,500 attendees expected to be in Pittsburgh for the convention this spring, below are some suggested ways to turn downtime into good times.

THE STEM SCENE

Located on Pittsburgh's North Side, next to the Steelers' home turf, Heinz Field, the **Carnegie Science Center** attracts more than 700,000 visitors annually. The center includes more than 400 interactive exhibits, laser shows, the Buhl Digital Dome planetarium, and roboworld, the world's largest permanent robotics exhibition.

The science center also features Highmark SportsWorks, where visitors can scale a 25-foot wall, pedal a unicycle on a beam 25 feet above ground and test their fastball in a pitching cage, among the 30 interactive exhibits that demonstrate sports and the laws of science.

Stop by the science center's Buhl observatory on Friday or Saturday evening for the SkyWatch. A 16-inch Meade LX200 Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope provides a detailed view of clusters, nebulas and planets. (One Allegheny Ave., www.carnegiesciencecenter.org)

To learn about the impact that the Pittsburgh area's innovations have made on the world, check out the **Senator John Heinz History Center**, in the city's Strip District. "Pittsburgh: A Tradition of Innovation" — a two-story, 16,000-square-foot exhibit — includes more than 50 hands-on activities and audio-visual displays related to the region's contributions to art, business, education, sports, technology and science. Affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution, the 275,000-square-foot history center is the largest history museum in Pennsylvania. (1212 Smallman St., www.heinzhistorycenter.org)

EATERIES

A city that is the birthplace of Heinz Ketchup, the Clark Bar and the Klondike Bar knows a thing or two about good grub.

To get a taste of Pittsburgh's food history, try world-famous **Primanti Bros.**, known for its sandwiches that include grilled

meat, french fries and cole slaw, between two slices of Italian bread. Founded in the early 1930s, the casual-dining eatery has a Downtown location at 2 Market Square that

is open from 10 a.m. to midnight daily. (www.primantibrothers.com)

Seviche is a mid-priced restaurant that describes its fare as "neuvo" *CONTINUED ON PAGE 44*

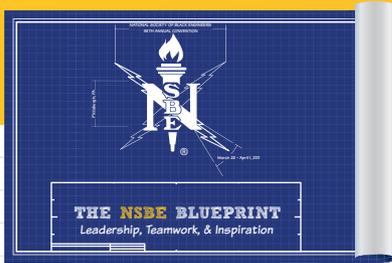
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Latino.” The Downtown restaurant is open from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. Monday through Saturday and is closed Sunday.

“The ambience is nice. The tapas dishes are great,” says Melanie Harrington, chief executive officer of Vibrant Pittsburgh, a nonprofit organization that works to increase the diversity of the city’s work force. (930 Penn Ave., www.seviche.com)

If you’re looking for something upscale, try **Savoy**, in the Strip District. Owned by former Steelers player Charles “Chuck” Sanders, the restaurant became a big draw as soon as it opened in May. Serving contemporary American dishes, the restaurant tends to attract a well-heeled, African-American clientele. Savoy has a second-floor lounge and rooftop deck. (2623 Penn Ave., www.savoypg.com)

The **Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership** has an online database of Downtown restaurants that can be searched by type, price and hours of operation. The website also



has a printable PDF listing restaurants that are open late nights and weekends. (www.downtownpittsburgh.com/dining)

SIGHTS, SHOPPING AND NIGHTLIFE

Station Square is a collection of night clubs, such as Whim and Zen Social Club, as well as restaurants, shops and tourist attractions.

This landmark is near the entrance of two popular sightseeing attractions: Pittsburgh’s only remaining cable-car inclines. The **Duquesne Incline** takes riders up 400 feet to Mt. Washington, while the **Monongahela Incline** takes riders up 368 feet. If you go, take a camera. Mt. Washington provides scenic views of Pittsburgh’s skyline. (125 West Station Square Drive, www.stationsquare.com)

CJ’s, in the Strip District, offers karaoke every Wednesday at 8:30 p.m. This restaurant-club attracts a predominantly African-American, mature clientele: patrons are required to be at least 30 years old. No athletic wear is allowed. (2911 Penn Ave., www.cjsinthestrip.com)

Harris also recommends **Little E’s**, a jazz and blues spot Downtown at 949 Liberty Ave., and the **Shadow Lounge**, at 5972 Baum in

Pittsburgh’s East Liberty neighborhood, as nighttime spots with great live performances. (www.littlesjazz.com, www.shadowlounge.net)

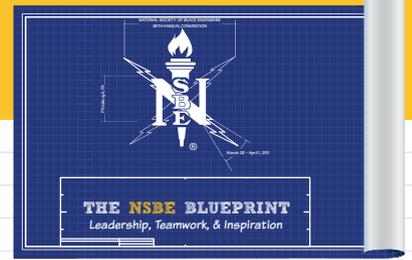
East Carson Street on Pittsburgh’s **South Side** is a hot spot for bar crawling among college students and young professionals. Be forewarned, as the area has reputation for rowdiness at times.

Near that area is **SouthSide Works**, a development with nationally known restaurants and retailers, such as The Cheesecake Factory, H&M, White House | Black Market and SouthSide Works Cinema. (located between 26th and Hot Metal streets, www.southsideworks.com)

Other popular shopping destinations include **The Waterfront**, a retail, restaurant and residential development that sits along the Monongahela River in Homestead. The 22-movie AMC Loews Waterfront and an Improv comedy club are also at The Waterfront. (149 W. Bridge St., www.waterfrontpg.com)

Shadyside is another popular area with upscale stores and homes, but most of the businesses in this trendy neighborhood are independently owned. The majority of Shadyside’s restaurants and retailers are on





Walnut Street, Ellsworth Avenue and South Highland Avenue. (www.thinkshadyside.com)

CULTURAL DRAWS

Need a little culture in your life? Why not start with the **August Wilson Center for African American Culture?** Named after the late Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, the center was finished in 2009. This landmark was built to showcase and promote theatrical performances, dance, music, visual arts, literature and education. A play set in rural Alabama in the 1990s, “Every Tongue Confess,” will be presented at the Wilson Center from March 30 to April 1. It focuses on a series of church burnings that leads “townspeople to question their lives, identities and journeys,” the center says.

The Wilson Center is in the 14-block Cultural District, which includes the convention center, about 90 retail shops, 50 eateries, seven theaters and a dozen art galleries.

To view a schedule of performances in the district, click on “Tickets and Events” on the **Pittsburgh Cultural Trust’s** website, www.trustarts.org.

Photography buffs won’t want to miss the retrospective on Charles “Teenie” Harris at the **Carnegie Museum of Art**. Harris was an African-American photographer whose work chronicled the black community during the Jim Crow era and civil rights movement. He worked for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, which was once the country’s most widely circulated black newspaper.

April 7 is the last day to see “Teenie Harris, Photographer: An American Story” at the museum, which is in Pittsburgh’s Oakland neighborhood. (4400 Forbes Ave., web.cmoa.org)

To search a more comprehensive list of Pittsburgh-area attractions and events, go to Visit Pittsburgh’s website, www.visitpittsburgh.com. ■

Tory N. Parrish is a reporter at the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. She writes about commerce and development.

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