



The 'real' Scranton shines through

Scrantonians almost enjoy the ribbing

By **Natalie Gelb Solfanelli**

On Oct. 20, the *Wall Street Journal*, in a front-page story, ran an article with the headline: "Scranton, Pa. – Not What You Think!"

It's about time! There were color photos showing attractive shots of a "city in a turnaround after decades of decline."

I received numerous e-mails from friends and relatives around the country who were thrilled to share the good news.

As an avowed Scranton promoter, I have been accused of wearing rose-colored glasses when insisting that the area is on the way up.

One friend even confessed to feeling sorry for me the night I signed off an email saying, "I am going to watch Saturday Night Live." It was the night that the Joe Biden portrayer mercilessly made fun of Scranton! But anyone who viewed Sen. Biden's reaction to the skit as Diane Sawyer played it for him a few days later on Good Morning America, (or later on YouTube), could not help but smile at the ability of Scrantonians to take it in good humor.

That is part of our resiliency. Besides, it is a lot easier to laugh when the underlying reality is so much better than the exaggeration. It can't be as bad as they say or it wouldn't be funny! Who knew that Scranton, in this most hotly contested election year, would become *the* place?

A former Scrantonian who has lived in Washington, D.C., for the past 30 years, reported that on the same night as the Scranton/Biden SNL spoof, he had attended a dinner party. When he mentioned that he was from Scranton, his fellow dinner guests peppered him with questions!

"The Office" might have started it, but suddenly Scranton is the quintessential American city, representing the values that define hard-working, middle-class Americans, struggling to provide for their families. People from everywhere are now interested, curious, even fascinated by the Scranton phenomenon.

The *Wall Street Journal* article focuses on young, white-collar professionals who have lived and worked in big cities, but have decided to "Rediscover Scranton" and establish their businesses here.

Some are natives, some arrived from elsewhere and decided to stay. And what a delight to hear them sing the praises of the quality of life, low cost of living and the many and diverse cultural and recreational opportunities that abound.

"Christmas in a Small Town," on Saturday, Dec. 6, when Santa and his friends arrive aboard a special train provided by Steamtown National Historic Site, is exactly

the type of event that makes living here different, special, wonderful!

Now in its eleventh year, the "Christmas in a Small Town" celebration, also known as the Santa Train, draws large crowds of excited families to the restored train stations in the towns of the mid- and upper valley. New this year, the City of Scranton joins in the fun with Santa's arrival at the Electric City Trolley Museum for special holiday festivities.

Small wonder that this is considered a great place to raise a family!

The communities along the way invite families to assemble at the train station to welcome Santa. Each town will have special activities for parents and children. Many station stops offer live entertainment, craft activities, refreshments, and special promotions. In past years, the Valley View marching band has made an appearance at the Archbald and Jessup train stations to greet Santa with holiday music and entertain the crowd!

At each stop, Santa and his friends visit with the children, listening to their lists of special Christmas wishes. The Santa Train activities are free. Train rides for the public are not available at this event.

LHVA is proud to sponsor the Santa Train in partnership with Steamtown National Historic Site, the Delaware and Lackawanna Railroad, Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Rail Authority, Electric City Trolley Museum, with special thanks to the City of Carbondale, the Carbondale Business Association, Archbald Borough, Jessup Borough, Jessup 21st Century, Olyphant, Dickson City, Scranton Tomorrow, and the Lackawanna County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The schedule for the arrival of the Santa Train on Dec. 6, 2008, is as follows:

Carbondale - 10:30 a.m.
Archbald - 11:35 a.m.
Jessup - 12:20 p.m.
Olyphant - 1 p.m.
Dickson City - 1:45 p.m.
Scranton - 3 p.m.

Join the fun as LHVA continues to celebrate this great place where we live!

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