



Gifford Park's Pride

Gifford Park Neighborhood: A Great Place to Live, Work, Learn and Play

March 1999

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

OPS Desegregation Plan Includes Changes for Yates Academy

A Commentary by Jim Wilwerding, GPNA president

I first heard of the proposed closing of Yates Academy at the January Board Meeting. At that meeting we discussed the ramifications of the closing on the neighborhood, and decided that the Association should take an active part in attempting to retain the school at its present location.

At the February meeting, we had Mr. Peter Smith from the OPS superintendent's office. Mr. Smith explained the plan for reorganization (hereafter to be referred to as The Plan). I had a conversation with the principal of Yates to see what was expected to happen, and what could be done to affect the outcome. A representative of the Board was present at the PTA Board meeting at Yates Academy in February. Chris Foster prepared and delivered a letter to the members of the Board of Education on February 19, and I attended and addressed the meeting of the Board of Education on February 20th.

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Next Meeting

**Thursday, March 4
7:00 P.M.**

**Discussion of Current
Problems in the Neighborhood**

**St. Joseph Hospital
Dining Rooms A,B, and C**

Historically Speaking... The Salvation Army

Bordering the Gifford Park Neighborhood on the north is The Salvation Army Lied Renaissance Center—five acres of buildings and land devoted to helping people. Longtime residents of the neighborhood know the area as the site of the old Methodist Hospital and Nurses Home—many of us were born there!

For 82 years the Methodist Hospital and later, the Eugene C. Eppley Complex served the Omaha community. In 1989 the Methodist Hospital Board of Trustees made plans to consolidate services and move from their 36th and Cuming facility. The Salvation Army needed space and, through collaboration with Methodist Hospital, the Army was able to buy the property for \$1. They moved in August of 1990 to the building now called the Lied Renaissance Center. "Lied" because of contributions from the Lied Foundation, and "Renaissance" for the new beginnings which take place there.

The Salvation Army has been in existence since the 1860s. It was founded in London, England,

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10th Annual GPNA Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, April 3rd
Noon (Sharp!)
Rain or Shine
at Gifford Park
Children Ages 12 & Under



**Bring Your Easter Baskets
& Be Ready To Hunt!**

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VICE PRESIDENT

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Jean Peck 344-0722

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NEWSLETTER

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NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

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Mike Bacome 344-3233

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Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Anne & Linda Chapman 348-0464

TOOL LENDING

Tom Rose 932-6191

WATCH GROUP

Mike Wilwerding 341-8224

WEEDS & LITTER

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

YATES ACADEMY LIAISON

Dana Carlton 346-4575

Editor's note: If you have something that would be of interest to our neighborhood, we encourage you to submit an article for our monthly newsletter. Editorials must be approved by the GPNA Executive Board. Articles can be left at the GPNA Office; please include your name and phone number. Contact Sue Wilwerding (342-2795) or Chris Foster (342-6006) for information regarding the newsletter.

From the Desk of the President

Well, here it is, March already.

I hope you all successfully survived the February storms. I imagine you have been following the story on the proposed closing of Yates Academy and the transfer of students and staff to Kellom School. There is a separate story starting on page 1 in this newsletter on developments in this area.

A group of landlords in the 33rd and Webster area met along with members of the Association and the Omaha Police Department in late February to address crime problems in that area. As part of the ongoing problems along 33rd street, we have been monitoring the situation, and hope adequate additional effort can be made to solve the problems. As I have often mentioned in the past, crime is a significant factor in whether people will purchase property and move into an area. We are seeing this in that specific area. One property owner has been attempting to sell some rental property, and has experienced no success to date. According to him, each time a prospective purchaser finds out the address, the conversation is over. I have also heard from other people in the Association who attempt to get friends and acquaintances to consider purchasing a house in the area that the major factor in turning down such opportunities is the perceived level of crime. The properties are very nice, the prices are reasonable, we have schools in the area, but no one wants to move into a problem area.

Where does the problem come from? For the most part from unscrupulous or apathetic landlords renting property to people who are causing problems. In the past the Association has contacted landlords when this has been the case, with mixed success. We have addressed the issue in other ways as well, by referring cases to city officials when code or law violations are observed. Primarily we rely on the police to take action when those residents are causing problems. In the plan that Chief Carey released earlier in the year, additional efforts are proposed along 33rd Street, perhaps with foot or bicycle patrols, in order to have a more prominent presence and a quicker response to crime problems in the area. If those plans are carried through, we can expect the crime problem to be a temporary one.

Looking ahead, we have the Easter Egg Hunt planned for April 3. As in the past, we will be conducting a cleanup of the park that morning. We will need volunteers for the cleanup, to scatter the treats and toys, and to monitor children during the hunt. We will be contacting some of the area fraternities and sororities for volunteers, but we also expect volunteers from the Association. We will be talking about this at the meeting March 4.

We also have the spring cleanup coming up. At this point we do not have a specific date but will try to get a date late in April. As the snow melts, and I look in my back yard, I am seeing a few things that need to be disposed of. I expect others have the same experience. I imagine there are few yards in the area that would not benefit from the removal of some extraneous items. As the city is paying for these dumpsters, we don't have concerns about the number of dumpsters, so don't be shy about contributing. As always, we can not accept toxic products, motor oil, trees or brush, etc., but we expect to be recycling tires,

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From the Desk of the President

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appliances, and metal, like always. The city will have a chipper site at 11th and Locust Street, so brush, trees, and branches can be transported to that location.

Also, we will be having elections in June, with candidates nominated at the May meeting. Please consider doing your part in continuing the work of the Association. As my two-year term will be up, I will not be available for reelection, though of course I anticipate continuing to be active in various capacities.

Also on the calendar, we anticipate having Mayor Daub at the scheduled meeting on April 1, 1999. This should be a very good opportunity to find out what the city has planned, and to voice our concerns to the Mayor. Please plan on attending.

Our next meeting will be held March 4, 1999. As I write this we do not yet have a planned speaker. If one is not located before the meeting, I plan on spending the time discussing the Yates situation and soliciting any comments or suggestions you might have. The city is also offering free eight-foot trees, to be planted under contract, but they must be located within 20 feet of the street. A signup sheet will be available at the March meeting.

Hope to see you at the meeting.

by Jim Wilwerding



Happy St. Patrick's Day!



**California Bar & Pkg.
510 No. 33rd St.**

**Serving the Gifford Park
Community since 1937
Wayne and Peggy Hill,
Proprietors**



Charles R. Kilgore Jr. Attorney At Law

4913 Underwood Avenue

558-5000

**Personal Injury Law
Worker's Compensation
Injury
Auto Accidents
Insurance Claims**

Easter Egg Hunt, Spring Clean- up Just Around The Corner

Even though Winter has made its presence known this last week, it won't be long before the snow will be melting and the robins will be chirping - and in Gifford Park, that means a busy time is ahead. The **10th Annual Easter Egg Hunt** will be held on Saturday, April 3rd, at noon. This activity is open to all neighborhood children who are 12 years of age or younger. This year **Shelly Rose** will be in charge of the event, which is always a big hit with the neighborhood kids. Help is needed to clean up the park and "assist" the Easter Bunny in hiding the goodies earlier in the morning, and with crowd supervision before and during the hunt. If you would like to volunteer to help with this fun activity, call Shelly at 932-6191.

Although a specific date has not yet been set, the annual **GPNA Spring Cleanup** will be held on a Saturday in April. According to **Chris Foster**, GPNA vice-president, **Mike Wilwerding** will be in charge of the cleanup this year, and Chris hopes that everyone will show Mike the same kind of support that he has received in past years as chairman of the event. Look for more details about the cleanup in next month's edition of the newsletter.

OPS Desegregation Plan... A Commentary

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So what is the situation? The Plan is referred to as a "neighborhood school" plan. Since forced busing is no longer required (or permissible), OPS will allow students to attend schools in their own "neighborhood". You will see why I parenthesize the word as you read.

How does this impact us, since we actually have a neighborhood school? Allegedly, since we have 400 OPS students in our area, and the capacity of the Yates building is significantly less than this (numbers mentioned vary from a capacity of 225 students to 290 students) the decision was made to designate Kellom School as our "neighborhood" school, and all students in our area would attend Kellom. As the Yates building would then be unused, "special needs" students would be bused into Yates. As originally proposed, the plan implied that no busing would be required of our students, since they would be attending their "neighborhood" school. Subsequent discussions with OPS staff elicited the grudging admission that yes, the distance combined with the geographical situation would require that most, if not all, students would need to be bused. Suggestions that property be acquired and Yates expanded to meet the need for additional capacity fell on deaf ears. Proposals to continue the current program at Yates and bus students unable to be accommodated were unacceptable. Questions about eventually returning to having a real neighborhood school in our area went unanswered.

What happens if The Plan is carried out? OPS will bus 400 students out of our neighborhood to a school in another neighborhood. Our neighborhood school will have 60 students (from another neighborhood) in attendance, not 200. According to an article in the **World Herald** (02/21/99), OPS is planning to spend about 2.5 million dollars to renovate the Yates building to serve these 60 students.

Presumably the effect of uprooting children from their own neighborhood and relocating them to another neighborhood foreign to them was not considered, nor the effect of such a relocation upon the success of the educational program. And the cost of busing, perpetual though it is, comes from another budget, and is not part of The Plan.

At the meeting February 20th, the Board of Education stated and repeated the belief that The Plan will be implemented entirely, or not at all. No changes will be made, at least initially. Suggestions and comments will be accepted, but not acted upon. In spite of being a "neighborhood school" plan, the cost of busing is expected to increase. And as mentioned above, the cost of busing is not included in the proposed 450 million price tag.

Is The Plan good for our neighborhood? Definitely not. I can't imagine that parents living in the area or considering moving into the area will consider the mandatory busing to be desirable. Is it good for the children? Though small classes and caring teachers may well be just as available at Kellom, the social aspect of attending school with neighborhood children is diminished (unless classes are segregated by home location, which is unlikely). Opportunities to organize and participate in neighborhood activities are diminished, if not lost, children are exposed to the hazards of the twice-daily bus ride, and opportunities for school activities before the morning bus ride or after the afternoon bus ride will not exist for most students. If test scores are the sole figure of merit for success, perhaps The Plan will not adversely affect students. I think in most other ways the present system betters the proposed system. Personally, I wonder how the cost of construction compares to the cost of busing. How many years worth of busing would pay for the needed expansion? Certainly, if the association continues to be successful in improving the area, the number of students is unlikely to diminish.

What can be done? The Board of Education has no backup plan. If The Plan is not accepted, or the bond issue required to fund The Plan fails, then the current system will be continued.

California Tacos & More

Homemade Mexican Food

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33rd & California Street

Dine In or Carry Out

Open Every Day
Mon - Thur: 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Fri - Sat: 11 a.m. - 11 p.m.

Sun: Noon - 8 p.m.



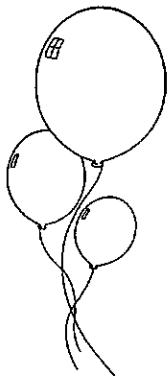
Children's World Learning Centers

Newest Location

126 North 35th Street

Children's World Offers:

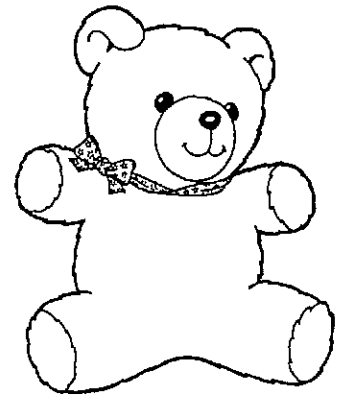
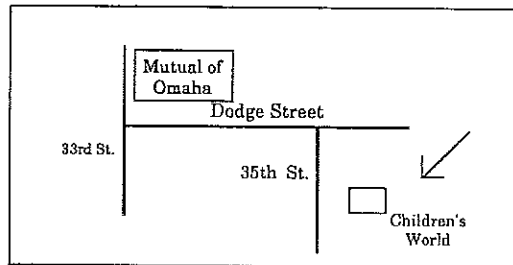
- * Quality childcare for children ages 6 weeks thru 12 yrs.
 - * Developmentally appropriate activities
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Drop in for a visit or call

346-9368

for an appointment.



J'N'J

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WE DELIVER!



7:00 AM - 10:00 PM Monday thru Thursday

7:00 AM - 11:00 PM Friday thru Saturday

8:00 AM - 10:00 PM Sunday

Duchesne Preschool Open

On January 11, Duchesne opened its doors to a new preschool for three, four, and five year old boys and girls. The preschool is a new addition that is housed on campus at Duchesne Academy, 3601 Burt St. It is under the direction of Sara Wachter. This new school is dedicated to the education of young children in a loving, nurturing, enriched environment where the children are introduced to art, foreign language, music, religion, computer education, and physical education through exposure to specialist teachers in all of these areas. Registrations are currently being accepted for the fall 1999 semester. School hours are from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. each day with extended care options available from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Parents may choose a two, three, or five day program. For further information, please call Sara Wachter at the preschool, 558-6250.



Students at the Duchesne Preschool take time out of their busy schedules to pose for a group picture. The students take part in a wide variety of activities designed to stimulate their interest in learning.

GPNA Elections For 1999 - 2000 Coming Soon

Elections for GPNA Officers will be held at the general meeting in June. It is very important to know how the process works if you or someone you know is interested in being an officer or voting. The office positions are President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Recording Secretary. The GPNA encourages anyone interested in becoming an officer to read the following information outlining the nominating process and criteria.

First, a nominating committee of five GPNA members is elected at a regular meeting held at least (60) sixty days prior to the election of officers. The committee elects its own chair. The committee's major role and responsibility is to nominate the best qualified candidates. The committee is required by the Bylaws to present only one nominee for each position to be filled. Nominating committee members are also eligible for nomination of officer positions.

The committee evaluates each person whose name is suggested or known by the committee using the same criteria. The Bylaws of the Association state the following qualifications for nomination, each prospective nominee **must**:

1. Be a member in good standing of the Association;
2. Give prior consent to serve if elected; and
3. Have attended 4 meetings of the Association in the preceding year.

In addition, each nominee **should**:

1. Believe in the Objects, Basic Policies and Purposes of the Association;
2. Be experienced in the work of the Association – other organizational work may be considered;
3. Have knowledge of the Association and its role in the community;
4. Enjoy good health;
5. Be relied upon to give the GPNA a satisfactory level of priority and commitment, even if there are other responsibilities and commitments;
6. Have the ability to maintain good relationships with people; and
7. Have vision and be innovative.

The Nomination Committee report will be presented to the membership at the May meeting. Elections will be held at the Association's general meeting in June, at which time additional nominations for all offices may be made by any member "from the floor". Nominees from the floor must fulfill the same qualifications for nomination listed above.

If you or someone you know is interested, please consider being a candidate for one of the GPNA Officer positions.

Historically Speaking...The Salvation Army

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by William and Catherine Booth and has now spread throughout the world. It is a multi-billion dollar company. "Of the \$1.56 billion the Army spent in 1996, \$1.34 billion went to helping people—that's 86 cents for every dollar. An outstanding ratio when compared with charities like UNICEF (77% of every dollar), the National Easter Seal Society (78%) and the American Cancer Society (69%)." (From *Forbes* magazine, April 20, 1998)

The Renaissance Center is one of the largest Salvation Army social service centers in the world. Most funding for the agency's \$7 million annual budget comes from individual donations, estates, bequests, and grants from corporate and private foundations. The 1998 Tree of Lights bell ringing campaign raised approximately \$1.4 million. The area served by the Omaha Salvation Army includes Nebraska, Western Iowa and South Dakota.

The building is teeming with activity, much of which is not seen by the casual observer. But, if you drive by at about 5:30 p.m. you might see the Winter Night Watch van heading out to bring hot meals to the needy in Omaha, half of whom are children. Over 6,000 meals were served last December. Warm clothing and blankets are also distributed from the large van. Other visible activities are the Salvation Army volunteers who are on hand during fires and police standoffs, as well as floods and other disasters. Within the building are an amazing number of helping activities, most of which serve the real "down and outers" of Omaha. These are people referred to the Army by the police department, the courts, area shelters, and other relief agencies. Names of the services available only hint at the services rendered, but here are a few:

- Family Community Living (residential living quarters)
- CARES Emergency Shelter and Group Homes (teen-age girls)
- Dora Bingel Senior Center (seniors 62 or older)
- Durham Booth Manor Senior Residence (apartments for low income seniors)
- Early Head Start (low income families with children)
- Family Enrichment (families at risk)
- Learning Assistance Program (volunteer tutors)
- Parents and Children Together (skill building child care)
- SAFECARE (children waiting for foster care)
- Stepping Stones Child Development Center (child care 6 weeks to 17 years)
- Temporary Crisis Program (residential care for men and women in mental health crisis)
- Wellspring (counseling for persons escaping prostitution)
- The Visitation Station (non-custodial-parent supervised visitation)

The mission statement of the Army tells why these things are being done: "The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination."

Officers in the Army are trained for two years in the Salvation Army Training School. Most have additional schooling in theology and social services. Many are ordained ministers, both men and women. Married couples serve together, living in homes furnished and supplied by the Army. They are assigned by Army headquarters, wear uniforms, and receive a minimum wage. Soldiers in the Army are like ordinary church members who attend worship services and who support the aims of the organization. They do not wear uniforms.

At the heart of the Renaissance Center is the Huberman-Dietrich Memorial Chapel at 3728 Cuming. Its doors are open to all people on Sundays at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Other programs are announced. For more information call the **Salvation Army at 898-5900.**

The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association salutes the Salvation Army Lied Renaissance Center and wishes them the very best in continuing their important work.

by Eva Swanson

Free Tax Help Is Here Again For the Fifth Year in a Row!



Free tax help will once again be available at the GPNA office located to the south of J-N-J Grocery, 33rd & California St. **Everyone is welcome!** IRS representatives will provide free tax help for our neighborhood. Processing of basic tax returns will be available. Electronic filing may be available this year. Walk-in appointments are welcome, but priority will be given to those who call to schedule an appointment. Free tax help will be available on the following dates:

Saturdays: April 3, 10 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Wednesdays: March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 9 a.m. to noon
April 7, 14 9 a.m. to noon

For more information, or to schedule an appointment, call **551-3629**.

PART TIME JOBS!

Join the A+ team and drive a van or small bus for OPS Transportation. \$9.57 - \$10.31 per hour. Work mornings or afternoons or a split shift. Applicants must be at least 18 years of age, successfully complete background checks, complete all required training, and pass a physical and drug/alcohol screening. If you like to drive and enjoy working with children, apply **Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**, at the **Human Resources Dept., Omaha Public Schools, 3215 Cuming St., Omaha, NE 68131**. An equal opportunity employer.

What's Happening in the Neighborhood . . .

The GPNA would like to thank **Peter Smith** from the superintendent's office of Omaha Public Schools, who addressed the February general meeting. Mr. Smith provided information and answered questions concerning the proposed changes for Yates Academy.

Residents should be on the alert for thieves who have been "working" the neighborhood. One or possibly two young women have been posing as door-to-door cosmetic salespersons and have talked their way into homes, where they have stolen purses and other personal property. Just a reminder - don't let anyone into your house that you don't know, and report any suspicious persons to the police.

Duchesne Academy will present *Antigone* on March 4, 5, and 6 at 7 p.m., and March 7 at 2 p.m. at 3601 Burt St. Cost is \$6 for adults and \$5 for students. For more information, call **558-3800**.

March is **Neighborhood Watch Group Month**. Thanks to the GPNA Watch Group volunteers who are helping to make our neighborhood a safer place to live.



GIFFORD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION 532 N. 33rd Street, Omaha, NE 68131 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION *(Please print clearly)*



Membership year: _____ *(Membership year runs from June 1 through May 31)*

Type of membership: Single (\$5) _____ Family (\$8) _____ Business (\$25) _____

Name of business _____

Name _____ (Last) _____ (First)

Spouse _____ (Last) _____ (First)

Address _____ (Street) _____ (City) _____ (State) _____ (Zip)

Telephone Number: _____ (Home) _____ (Work)

In case of an emergency notify: _____ (Name) _____ (Address) _____ (Phone No.)

May this information be included in the GPNA Neighborhood Directory? Yes _____ No _____

Signature _____ Date _____

**For City Services,
Information, or
Complaints
Call:
Mayor's Action Office
444-5555**