



Gifford Park's Pride

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

April 2001

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association



Celebrate, Celebrate Dance To The Music.....

May 5th, 2001 has been chosen for **Gifford Park Day**. This day has been chosen for the people of our neighborhood to come together and celebrate. We have many activities planned for the day including: park dedication, kid's parade, raffle, horse patrol, health screening, face painting, kid's fingerprinting, and much, much more. However, we do need volunteers to help coordinate the afternoon activities. If you are interested in helping, please call **Chris** at 342-6006 or **Peter** at 341-7293. Admission is FREE and hot dogs are only a quarter! We will have live music and plenty of room to CELEBRATE, CELEBRATE DANCE TO THE MUSIC!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Please come to the next meeting to hear more about Gifford Park Day.

Next Meeting

Thursday, April 5
7:00 P.M.

Guest Speakers:
City of Omaha and Creighton
University Representatives

Topic: The Impact Of Proposed
Development on Traffic Flow in
the Burt/Cuming Street Area

St. Joseph Hospital
Becic Dining Room

12th Annual GPNA Easter Egg Hunt



Saturday, April 14th
Noon (Sharp!)
Rain or Shine
at Gifford Park
Children Ages 12 & Under

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

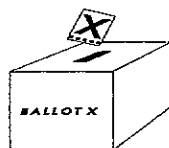
Joint Meeting To Explore Future Traffic Issues

Changes have been proposed to the traffic flow on Cuming and Burt streets. At our April Gifford Park Neighborhood Association meeting we will explore the following:

- The proposed closing of Burt Street
- Changing Cuming Street to 2-way traffic
- Creighton University's Master Plan
- Proposed changes to I-480, US 75 interchange

Representatives from Creighton University and the City of Omaha will present information on these issues and answer questions. Bringing all of these officials together has been the result of collaboration with our surrounding neighborhood associations. They will be joining us to listen and participate in the discussion.

Don't Forget To VOTE!
Mayoral and City Council
Primary Election
Tuesday, April 3, 2001



GPNA OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Chris Foster 342-6006

VICE PRESIDENT

Peter Cihunka 341-7293

RECORDING SECRETARY

Vicki Frey 344-0767

TREASURER

Dana Carlton 346-4575

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

ADVERTISING

Dan Sweazy 345-0125

CLEAN-UP

Mike Wilwerding 341-8224

COMPLIANCE

Jojo Wilwerding 345-1483

WELCOMING

Vicki Frey 344-0767

HISTORIAN

Eva Swanson 345-1707

MEMBERSHIP

Chris Foster 342-6006

NEWSLETTER

Sue Wilwerding 342-2795

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

Mike Bacone 913-7506

PARK

Roger Breeman 557-2914

PARKING VIOLATIONS

Jerry Wilwerding 342-2795

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Jojo Wilwerding 345-1483

TOOL LENDING

Chris Foster 342-6006

WATCH GROUP

Mike Wilwerding 341-8224

WEEDS & LITTER

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

NELSON SCHOOL LIAISON

Dana Carlton 346-4575

The President's Column

If you take a look at the "Calendar of Events" list in this newsletter, you will see we have many activities coming up in April, May and June – and these are just the activities we know about at this time. GPNA Vice President **Peter Cihunka** mentioned in his "Volunteers Needed" article a few ways for you to be involved with improving our neighborhood. I strongly echo his words and sincerely hope everyone, particularly the GPNA membership, will take on an active role in supporting these and other events – I promise that you will be glad you did! Most of these events don't even require a lot of time but we do need your help and ideas. Coming up in April we have the Easter Egg Hunt, headed up again by **Shelly Rose**, on the 14th and PKA Fraternity Youth Baseball Clinic on the 22nd. In May, we have Gifford Park Day on the 5th, led by **Peter Cihunka**, and the Tennis Blitz and St. Joseph's Bike Rodeo on the 19th. And in June, **Mike Wilwerding** heads up the neighborhood cleanup on the 16th, and again this summer Gifford Park will host the Show Wagon Talent Competition and Sun Dawgs Youth Program. Most of these are events that the whole family can either participate in and/or help with – call myself at **342-6006** or Peter at **341-7293** for more information.

We have a good program lined up for our April 5th General meeting. We will discuss Gifford Park Day details during the first 30 minutes then have an informational discussion regarding the potential changes to Burt St., Cuming St., I-480 and Creighton University. We have invited a few surrounding neighborhood associations to attend our meeting. Many thanks to **Ron Frey** for organizing this portion of the meeting. It's important to become informed about how traffic and street changes may affect our neighborhood.

Regarding public safety, we continue to communicate with the police on a regular basis. Chief **Don Carey** spoke at our March meeting. We also sent to law enforcement officials a letter along with photos of individuals who have been banned and barred from J-N-J Grocery. In mid-March several of us met with a video surveillance/webcam expert to get information about equipment, costs, and benefits if this type of operation were done around 33rd & California. Residents, police, city traffic department, schools, and businesses could potentially benefit. If video surveillance seems worthwhile, the next step would be to apply for a grant. At this point we are merely exploring the possibilities using today's technology.

I'd like to finish up by talking about the current GPNA leadership and what's ahead. First of all, the experience and support I have received from the current leadership of officers, committee chairpersons and the membership, has been unbelievable. At times I have asked a lot from our volunteers and you have responded without hesitation. I realize time is very scarce these days; that is why I especially appreciate your patience when meetings go long - there have been a number of issues requiring added discussion. As you probably know GPNA Officer elections occur at the June general meeting. We have formed a Nominating Committee that selects candidates for President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer. We also have a number of committees that could use help. I challenge everyone who is not involved with the neighborhood to become active in some way, and for those who have been active to train and develop new people to ensure the health of our neighborhood. I personally feel very excited about the future of this organization because of our number one asset: our people.

by Chris Foster

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.

What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . .

Congratulations to **Mike Wilwerding** and **Officer Steve Misoraz** for being recognized at this year's sixth annual OCCP (Omaha Coalition of Citizen Patrols) Banquet held March 22 at Westside Community Education Center. Mike received the award for Citizen Patroller of the Year for the GPNA Watch Group and Steve received the award for Officer of the Year for our area. Officer Misoraz is currently assigned to the nuisance unit and ticketing junk vehicles in our neighborhood. **Mayor Hal Daub** and **Police Chief Don Carey** participated in the award presentations. The GPNA truly appreciates the many hours the Watch Group volunteers put in on Friday and Saturday nights – their efforts really make a difference.

Just a reminder - the **GPNA Spring Cleanup** (which is usually held in April) is scheduled for **Saturday, June 16**. This later-than-usual date is due to a new method of scheduling instituted by the City. Keep the cleanup in mind when doing your spring yard and house cleaning. Volunteers will be needed to help make pick-ups and fill the dumpsters. Look for more details about the cleanup in the May and June editions of the newsletter. At least one thing is certain about this year's date - it shouldn't snow! On a related note, don't forget that the City will be resuming curb-side yard waste pickup starting the week of **April 2**.

We want to thank our guest speaker **Omaha Police Chief Don Carey** for appearing at our March general meeting. Chief Carey talked about how new technology and the Internet will allow for better communication and tracking of information between police and the public. He also answered questions regarding the police helicopter unit, graffiti, traffic and crime on 33rd & California. Chief Carey has spoken before our neighborhood association each of the last three years. Thanks also to all of the candidates for City Council in District 3 who came to the meeting for a "mini-forum". This was a great way to meet and evaluate the candidates before the primary on April 3.

Congratulations to the **Omaha Police Department** for receiving national accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. The accreditation involved a thorough review of the Department's policies and procedures to make sure that they complied with over 400 standards. This accreditation process should help to make the Department more efficient and result in improved programs and procedures.

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



The site for the annual free tax assistance program has been moved to the **American Labor Force** building on the **northeast corner of 33rd & California St.** The new location will offer much more room and offer a better setup than the GPNA Office. The G.O.C.A sites in north and south Omaha, which had provided free tax help in the past, are not available this year. This makes our site even more important this year. The GPNA thanks the American Labor Force for their generosity.

The hours have been expanded to **EVERY MONDAY** from **1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.** through the end of the tax season (**April 16**). Everyone is welcome! IRS representatives are providing free tax help for our neighborhood. Processing of basic tax returns and electronic filing are available again this year. To date, over 100 returns have been completed already at this site, with most of these being filed electronically. Walk-in appointments are welcome, or you can schedule an appointment. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, call **551-3629**.

What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . . *continued*

Congratulations also go out to our very own GPNA treasurer **Dana Carlton**. Dana has been named as the ASID Chairman for the Omaha Symphony-ASID (American Society for Interior Designers)-MOBA (Metro Omaha Builders' Association) Designer Showhouse. This year's showhouse will be located at 93rd and Farnam and will open September 22. Dana said that HGTV and several national decorating and remodeling publications will run features on this project. According to Dana, who is also in charge of the GPNA- Kellom School Pen Pal Program, the latest Pen Pal letters will be available at the April general meeting. Because of the approaching Easter weekend, she would like the return letters delivered to her house at 152 North 35th St. by **Sunday, April 8th**.

The last couple of months we have mentioned **Brad Bogard's** "little" renovation project of the building adjacent to the current California Tacos. The project is nearly complete with a beautiful new oak wood floor along with the original brick walls. It won't be long before the new addition is ready for operation.

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Editorial Corner

Observations on the Proposed Assisted Living Facility

Thank you to Sheila Haggas, Head of School at Duchesne Academy, for an informative meeting on March 28th explaining Duchesne's recent decision to sell the Foxley Building to developers for an assisted living facility. This decision is a demonstration of responsible stewardship and is consistent with Duchesne's mission and values. Support from both the GPNA and Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association leadership and members remains strong.

Based on a recent conversation with Karen Wirka, Executive Director at the St. Joseph Tower Assisted Living Apartments at 10th and Dorcas (the facility was developed and is owned by the same company that is buying the Foxley Building), the neighborhood response to their presence has been overwhelmingly positive. Capacity is 100, and since December 2000, they have admitted approximately 33 residents. Just this past week they had 5 admissions. In addition, neighborhood residents make up about half of the employed staff. Currently they have one RN and one LPN on days and a medication aide and certified nursing assistant are on all three shifts. In addition, there is a nurse available 24 hours a day. Plans are to increase staff as the census increases. Karen anticipates admissions to increase rapidly now that the weather has improved allowing interested elderly to get out safely to tour the facility. Karen also reported Medicaid Waiver staff are in the facility three times a month to monitor the quality of care and resident satisfaction, and to audit charts to ensure policies and procedures are being followed.

While I was disheartened by the fear and angry behaviors voiced by some neighbors at the Duchesne meeting, I believe the majority of these behaviors are related to a lack of understanding of what an assisted living facility would bring to our neighborhood. I believe the elderly who would come to live here would be quiet, responsible, dignified persons who just need a protective environment and some minimal assistance which may include medication supervision, bathing, dressing, and meals so they can continue to function as independently as possible for as long as possible. By supporting this project, we have an opportunity to give back to our elderly who want to stay in our neighborhood

Also, there seems to be a fear that the developers can change their mind and not honor the rules and regulations governing assisted living facilities. It does not make sense to me from a business standpoint that they would invest \$3.5 million and not abide by the regulations. Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services is required by the Legislature to ensure that the "Regulations and Standards for Residential Care Facilities" are being followed on a regular basis. This is accomplished through unannounced state surveyor visits to all assisted living facilities licensed in Nebraska.

One day we will all be elderly and may need an assisted living environment as an alternative to living in our own home. Ask yourself, "If I could choose, would I want to live in the neighborhood I have loved all my life or move to some strange place?" I know my answer - what is yours?

by Kathleen Wilwerding

What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . .

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Indian Creek Nursery will soon complete the Gifford Park planting project started last fall. Again many thanks to the **Nebraska State Arboretum** and the **Omaha World Herald Branching Out Program** for providing the grant funds to the GPNA for the project. **Pat Slaven**, City Park Planner, has been instrumental in developing the park master plan which got the ball rolling.

For the past seven and a half years, the **Shelterbelt Theatre** has operated out of the 3225 1/2 building on California St, one storefront down from California Tacos. Recently, the Shelterbelt Theatre, SNAP! Productions, and Spot Theatre committed to forging a cooperative relationship in which all organizations would share the use of the current Shelterbelt space. To accommodate all three groups, the theatre has begun extensive renovation which includes adding new plumbing and electrical, seat and stage rearrangement, the addition of a new lobby, and box office and renovations of the lower level of the building for use as rehearsal space and actor commons area. In late March, Spot Theatre began showing an improvised play called "No Promises". Call 880-8002 for information.

Landmarks, Inc. is sponsoring two afternoon spring tours of historic Omaha churches on **Sunday, April 22** and **Sunday, May 20**. The first tour in April will begin at **Kountze Memorial**

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PKA-GPNA Free Baseball-Softball Clinic and Park Cleanup



For: Youth ages 8 to 16

Date: Sunday, April 22

Time: Cleanup: 11:30 a.m. - noon
Baseball-Softball: noon - 2 p.m.

Where: Gifford Park (33rd & Cass St.)



The Pi Kappa Alpha (PKA) Creighton Fraternity and the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) are offering a **FREE Baseball-Softball Clinic** and will provide bats, balls, instructors and some gloves. Parents are welcome to help. **BRING YOUR OWN GLOVES!**

To be enrolled, YOU MUST complete the form shown below and bring with you to the softball clinic. There may be limited space available so priority will go to those who help with the PARK CLEANUP.

Hitting Throwing Pitching Catching Games

For more information call:

Jason 932-6284 Ron 344-0757 Chris 342-6006

Registration/Permission Form - Bring this form (completely filled out) with you to the softball clinic to be enrolled.

Youth's Name: _____ Parent's Name: _____

Street: _____ Street: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Age: _____ Parent/Guardian Phone: home: _____ work: _____

As the parent or legal guardian of the child named above, I hereby give my full consent and approval for my child to participate as a member of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association Youth Program.

I understand that there are certain risks of injury inherent in the practice and play of this sport, as well as related activities incidental to my child's participation, and I am willing to assume these risks on behalf of my child. I hereby certify that my child is fully capable of participating in this sport and that my child is healthy and has no physical or mental disabilities or infirmities that would restrict full participation in these activities, except as listed below.

I hereby waive, release and hold harmless the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association Youth Program, and the City of Omaha, Nebraska, its Officers, coaches, sponsors, supervisors and representatives for any injury that may be suffered by my child in the normal course of participation in this sport and the activities incidental thereto, whether the result of negligence or any other cause. Furthermore, I give consent to any necessary medical treatment in case of emergency.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

