



Gifford Park's Pride

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

February 2002

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Furniture Store Is Newest Addition To 33rd & California Business District

Come visit the new store on the block: The \$49 Dollar Used Furniture and Fiesta Musical, Movie Rental, Music and Hispanic Imports Store. The shop is located at the northeast corner of 33rd and California (3228 California St.) Owner **Lupe Sanchez** has scheduled a grand opening for the public on **Saturday, February 16th** from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. There will be live music and Hispanic snacks will be served. Mrs. Sanchez was active in the Leavenworth Neighborhood Association and started English classes at her Leavenworth location along with teacher volunteer Mrs. Lori Ecklebe. Mrs. Sanchez and Pastor Montenegro of Mount Sinai Church are planning on bringing evangelistic services to the area this summer; she has already started talking to the young people in the area and has received a positive response. She also plans to start English classes at this location in the future. If you would like more information, stop by and talk to Lupe at the store. Welcome to the neighborhood, Lupe!

Olympic Torch Passes Through Gifford Park Neighborhood

On January 10, a large crowd lined Dodge Street around Mutual Of Omaha to watch a relay of runners carry the Olympic Flame through the city on its way to the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City. Many Gifford Park neighborhood residents like Ron, Vicki, and Erik Frey, pictured below, braved the chilly weather and greeted the entourage with flags and banners to celebrate the historic event.



Next Meeting

Thursday, February 7
7:00 P.M.

Guest Speakers:

Stacy Williams
Omaha Police Department
Crime-Free Multi-Housing

Jim Vokal
City Council Representative
Lead Superfund Issue

St. Joseph's Hospital
Becic Dining Room

Vokal To Address Lead Issues

District 3 City Council Representative **Jim Vokal** is scheduled to address the GPNA February general meeting for approximately 15 minutes. Mr. Vokal's presence has been requested in order to provide information and answer questions concerning the lead issue and its effect on the Gifford Park neighborhood. Because Mr. Vokal will only be able to spend about 15 minutes at the meeting, he will limit his remarks to the lead issue only.

In order to protect children from the adverse effects of high lead levels in the soil, Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns has agreed to include a large portion of east Omaha (including the Gifford Park neighborhood) on the list of the country's most environmentally hazardous areas, which would allow the Environmental Protection Agency to use federal money from its Superfund to clean up lead-contaminated yards. A Superfund designation, however, can cause property values to temporarily decline, which could cause a negative economic impact in the area.

GPNA OFFICERS**PRESIDENT**

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VICE PRESIDENT

Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

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TOOL LENDING

Chris Foster 342-6006

WATCH GROUP

Mike Wilwerding 341-8224

WEEDS & BUDS

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

WELCOMING

Vicki Frey 344-0757

The (Vice) President's Column

Since Peter Cihunka was out of town for most of January, I was asked to write the monthly column. Since this is usually the least active time of year for the GPNA, it is perhaps worthwhile to review the past year. In 2001, I think that there were more activities than in any previous year. Cleanups, the Easter egg hunt, tennis program, Gifford Park day, bike safety day and many more, in addition to the ongoing activities like neighborhood watch and monthly meetings, were all part of GPNA 2001. I am familiar with a number of other neighborhood organizations, and I don't think any of the others come close to ours in the number of programs and activities that we offer.

Some would ask if this level of activity is really worth it. I have lived in this neighborhood for my whole life, and I think that these efforts really make a difference. They make the neighborhood cleaner, safer, and overall a better place to live. I think that this is reflected in the families and businesses that are locating here.

As with most organizations, these activities occur because of a small committed core of individuals, and I must say that we are very lucky to have such a quality group. But these people cannot do it all, and it is a continual struggle to recruit help. In response, the GPNA board has decided that we will be more active in asking people to share in these activities, instead of merely asking for volunteers. Our goal is that all members be involved in at least one activity.

I think that I have been involved in nearly every function that we have. Although I don't always look forward to them, I nearly always find that I meet new people, renew old acquaintances, and have a worthwhile sense of accomplishment when they are finished. I would hope that you will respond positively if we call you, and I guarantee that you will find it to be a good experience.

by Terry Wilwerding

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.

Reduction Of Library Hours Topic Of Meeting

The Benson Neighborhood Association in partnership with the Maple Crest Care Center is hosting a meeting with Mayor Fahey to address the reduction of hours at the library branches east of 72nd Street. All library board members as well as the city council representatives from the area have been invited. The meeting will be held at the **Maple Crest Care Center, 2824 North 66th Avenue, on Thursday, February 28th, at 7 p.m.** According to Peggy Gilmore, president of the Benson Neighborhood Association, of the 128 hours that were cut from branch locations, the libraries east of 72nd Street incurred over 60% of the impact. This leaves library hour availability of about 51 weekly hours for the West Omaha branches and about 39 hours for those east of 72nd Street. (This analysis does not include the downtown Main Library, as its hours were not changed.) Rather than using parity to make cuts in library hours for the branches, the decision was made to cut hours based on raw circulation data. Since the smaller neighborhood libraries have less materials and circulation, their hours were affected the most. If you have an interest in this important issue, please plan on attending this meeting.

City Finds More Impound Space

A junk vehicle in someone's yard can quickly turn a neighborhood from homey to homely. With that thought in mind, Omaha city leaders have come up with a solution to a problem that will allow the towing of junk vehicles to resume. In December, the impound lot accepted junk cars on just nine days during the month. There simply wasn't space and the Omaha Police Department was told to quit towing junk vehicles. This month the lot has been open once for junk vehicles. "When the tow trucks start rolling, it motivates people to clean up their problems and that's what we're all about," said **Omaha Police Officer Brian Craig of the Omaha Nuisance Unit**. "We'd much rather have people comply with the law and take care of their own vehicles than have us tow them." Police typically have good success in talking to the owner. Fifty percent of the time, the owners will take care of the problem themselves in 10 days and no tow is needed. "You can find the exact same problems in east Omaha as you would in west Omaha. It's everywhere," said Officer Craig.

To solve the space dilemma, the city came up with a plan to lease property from American Dock and Storage. Five acres at a cost of \$100,000 a year will provide space for another 300 vehicles. The money to lease the land will come out of a bond that was issued for renovating the impound lot. The original plan was to buy some other parcels of land, but according to administrative services, the various landowners wanted more than the assessed values.

The mayor's office also requested an ordinance change for abandoned vehicles, like the ones being made available for auction. Right now, unclaimed vehicles are held for 30 days. The proposal would allow some vehicles to be disposed of within six days. It's a move that could make the collection of junk vehicles off our streets more efficient.

13th Annual GPNA Easter Egg Hunt



Saturday, March 30
Noon (Sharp!)
Rain or Shine
at Gifford Park
Children Ages 12 &
Under

Free Tax Help Is Here Again

For The Eighth Year In A Row!



The site for the annual free tax assistance program has been moved this year to **Yates Alternative School, 3260 Davenport St.** The hours have been expanded to **EVERY MONDAY from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.** through the end of the tax season (**April 15**). Everyone is welcome! IRS representatives will provide free tax help for our neighborhood. Processing of basic tax returns and electronic filing will be available again this year. Walk-in appointments are welcome, but priority will be given to those who call to schedule an appointment. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, call **551-3629**.

Boys Town Withdraws Proposal For New Parking Lot

Recently Boys Town National Research Hospital had applied for rezoning of property it owns just west of 30th Street from Cass to Cottage Grove Avenue for the purpose of constructing a 60 stall parking lot. Boys Town was seeking to use the parking lot for its staff because the hospital plans to add a building on its campus in the south parking lot. An administrator for the hospital said that the building would consume some of the present staff parking, thus requiring replacement of those spaces.

Concerned neighbors who opposed the proposal said that a parking lot would be destructive to the neighborhood, is not in accordance with the Omaha Master Plan, would increase traffic, make it more dangerous for children playing outside, result in the loss of more "green space", and make it less desirable for people to want to stay in the neighborhood.

The GPNA met with Boys Town and the concerned neighbors on this issue to gather and share as much information as possible before the proposed zoning change was to go before the Planning Board for a vote at the February 6th meeting. However, on January 31st, Boys Town informed the GPNA that it had decided to withdraw its application for rezoning of the property. Also, the Planning Department's recommendation was for denial of the rezoning proposal. In its report, filed January 26, the Planning Department stated that the proposed change was not consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the Omaha Master Plan and would have an adverse affect on the neighborhood.

If anyone is interested in finding out more about this matter, call **553-3736** or **342-6006**.

What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . .

The proposed assisted living facility in the Foxley Building at 37th and California is on the agenda for the **February 12** City Council meeting. The GPNA voted in support of the project last spring. Those interested in voicing opinions should plan to attend this meeting, which begins at **2 p.m.** in the Legislative Chambers of the **Omaha/Douglas County Civic Center, 1819 Farnam St.**

The **Community Resource Center** is having a meeting called "Neighborhoods United" in each Precinct with the purpose of strengthening neighborhoods and starting a network between Neighborhood Watch Groups and Neighborhood Associations. The meetings will be about 45 minutes long with refreshments and a lot of pick-up information regarding neighborhoods. **February 12 at 7 p.m.** is the date for the **Northeast Precinct** meeting at **30th & Taylor.**

The third annual "Growing for Market" seminar series, sponsored by **City Sprouts** and many other organizations, started January 26 with the topic "Planning Options for your Garden Enterprise". The next topic, "Growing for Market Techniques", will be held **Saturday March 2, 9 a.m. to noon** at the **Urban League of Nebraska Family Resource Center, 3040 Lake St.** The cost is only \$5 per session. For more information, call **Nancy at 451-7054** or **Paul at 869-2333.**

A big congratulations to GPNA treasurer **Dana Carlton-Flint** and husband **Rodney** on the birth of their son **Curtis Rodney.** Curtis arrived on Jan. 5th weighing in at 7 lbs 15 oz. The new member of the Flint family is doing great!

Thanks to **Wendall Stanley** and **Marcy Harrington** who have volunteered to attend the sixth annual **Neighborhood Builders Leadership Sessions** each Saturday in February at St. Joseph's Hospital. The goal of this program is to help build stronger, healthier neighborhoods by assisting in developing positive leadership. On a related note, we will miss **JoAnne Singleton** and her great work with Neighborhood Builders, Weed & Seed and other neighborhood building activities - JoAnne is moving to Alaska.



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)

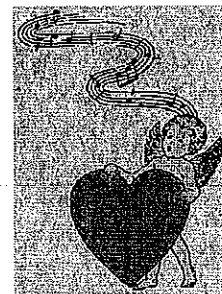
Telephone Number: _____
 (Home) (Work)

E-mail Address: _____

Can we contact you for help on any of the following items? (please circle areas of interest).

- | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Cleanup/Beautification | Tennis Program | Block Captain | Tool Lending |
| Membership | Youth Activities | History | Newsletter |
| Neighborhood Walks | Park | Merchants | Newsletter Distribution |
| Social Activities | Tree Planting | Watch Group | Meeting Program |
| Landlord/Tenant Issues | Calling Committee | Public Relations | School Liaison |

**HAPPY
 VALENTINE'S
 DAY!**



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