



# Gifford Park's Pride

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

August 2002

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

## Neighborhood Block Party To Celebrate National Night Out August 6

On Tuesday, August 6th, the 19th annual National Night Out will be held all across the nation. Citizens and law enforcement will be working together to heighten crime and drug prevention awareness, generate support for, and participation in, local anti-crime programs, strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships, and send a message to criminals, letting them know that neighborhoods are organized and fighting back.

The theme again this year is "Dusk 'til Dawn, Leave Your Lights On!" This theme serves as a reminder that maintaining a well-lit neighborhood by leaving outdoor lights on all night is one of the simplest, yet most effective, crime deterrents at our disposal, and it's not expensive.

The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association is planning to celebrate National Night Out on Tuesday, August 6th from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at 33rd and California with a block party. 33rd Street will be blocked off from California to Cass for the event. EVERYONE is welcome to participate and have a good time. It's a great opportunity to get together and show your support for our neighborhood in a big way.

Planned activities include food, ice cream, refreshments, jazz music, a parade through Gifford Park lead by the Condors Marching Band (decorate your bikes, kids!), a firetruck, classic cars, face painting, chalk painting, arts & crafts, a rock climbing wall, moonwalk, hoop-it-up 3 on 3 basketball, information booths (safety, Project Impact, cultural, neighborhood), and more. Detailed information will be available when a flyer comes out soon. For more information, or if you would like to help, call 342-6006. See you August 6th!

**DUSK TIL DAWN**  
**LEAVE YOUR LIGHTS ON**

## Next Meeting

**Thursday, August 1  
7:00 P.M.**

**Guest Speaker:  
Ron Frey**

**Topic: Improving Neighbor-  
hoods Without Spending A Lot  
Of Money**

**Creighton University  
Medical Center  
( St. Joseph's Hospital)  
Dining Rooms A,B, and C**

## Friend And Neighbor Officer Mike Paul Passes Away July 4

The Gifford Park neighborhood lost a great friend and neighbor in Officer Mike Paul on July 4, when he lost his battle with cancer at age 47. Mike lived near 38<sup>th</sup> & Cass. He was selected as GPNA "Neighbor of the Year" in 1997 because of his hard work and commitment to making our neighborhood safer when we were lucky to have him work our beat. Mike was responsible for getting several key criminals off our streets and always knew the "pulse" and "order" around 33<sup>rd</sup> & California. He was known and well respected by residents, business owners, property owners, and even criminals. Mike kept the GPNA updated so we knew what was going on.

Besides being a police officer since 1996, Mike Paul served for 20 years in the Air Force and was an avid biker. He graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in Council Bluffs and earned a Master's degree in Mathematics at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is

*continued on page 3*

**GPNA OFFICERS****PRESIDENT**

Peter Cihunka 341-7293

**VICE PRESIDENT**

Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

**RECORDING SECRETARY**

Ron Frey 344-0757

**TREASURER**

Dana Carlton-Flint 346-4575

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS****ADVERTISING**

Dar Sweazy 345-0125

**CLEAN-UP**

Mike Wilwerding 341-8224

**COMMUNITY GARDEN**

Chris Foster 342-6006

**COMPLIANCE**

Leo Wilwerding 345-1433

**HISTORIAN**

Eva Swanson 345-1707

**KELLOM SCHOOL LIAISON**

Jean Peck 344-0722

**MEMBERSHIP**

Chris Foster 342-6006

**NEWSLETTER**

Sue Wilwerding 342-2795

**NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION**

Eve Randone 345-1777

**NEWSLETTER MAILING**

Mike Bacome 933-7506

**PARK**

Roger Freeman 557-2914

**PARKING VIOLATIONS**

Leo Wilwerding 345-1433

**PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Cynthia Shuck 556-2090

**TOOL LENDING**

Chris Foster 342-6006

**WATCH GROUP**

Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

**WEEDS & LITTER**

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

**WELCOMING**

Vicki Frey 344-0757

**The President's Column**

**What makes a great neighborhood?** Since Peter Cihunka asked me to write the President's column this month, I've been thinking about that question. If you ask a dozen people, you might get a dozen answers. The answer is complex because there are so many intangibles that play into making a great neighborhood.

When Vicki & I moved into the Gifford Park area 7 years ago, we left a southwest Omaha neighborhood. If you looked at how quickly homes sold in our old neighborhood, you might think that we left a great neighborhood. Everyone was trying to get in. But if you looked again, you saw a starter-home community that was simply a holding tank until it was time to move up to a bigger house in a "better" neighborhood. Only one of our old neighbors is still living on that block.

People thought we were crazy for moving to the "dangerous" part of town. Often we heard people say, "I'd never live east of 42<sup>nd</sup> (or 72<sup>nd</sup>, or 90<sup>th</sup>, or 120<sup>th</sup>, depending on who we talked to)." Of course, nobody thought we left a dangerous part of town, even though we witnessed racially motivated incidents and an assault in Millard. They didn't think about the meth lab two blocks away from our previous house; or the murder on Hwy 50 at the interstate bridge, bordering our previous neighborhood. The media didn't do a story on the beleaguered Southwest Omaha neighborhood trying to overcome its crime rap.

From all the negative comments, I was initially frightened moving here. I wasn't used to the sounds of an old house adjusting to the change of seasons. Each creak or pop woke me as I imagined someone trying to break in. Maybe you have felt the same way. We were told, "Never go down to the corner of 33<sup>rd</sup> & California." That advice, we never followed.

I am not frightened anymore. I am determined—determined to patronize those businesses that struggle along with the rest of us daily on the issues which face that corner. Maybe shared challenges are part of the formula to build great neighborhoods.

What makes a great neighborhood? We found out when we moved here. It's people who make a neighborhood feel like a community. We sensed it as soon as we moved in. People came to welcome us. They invited us over. We got to know them. They got us involved in community activities. We talk over the fence, or across the driveway, or as we walk by. We read articles of our neighborhood's history in the newsletter.

Gifford Park is a community of determined people. People who are determined to turn these grand old houses (large or small) into homes. People who laugh over who has the longest "Old House Project" list, or who has seen the most episodes of "This Old House." People who are astonished every spring and fall at how much junk gets thrown away at the neighborhood cleanups. People who are determined to prevent the slide of a great neighborhood. Are you determined? This Thursday evening, at the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association meeting, I invite you to join us. I will share a great presentation from the NUSA convention in Houston, entitled: "Place-making On A Budget: Improving Neighborhoods Without Spending A Lot Of Money." Also, I managed to get some historic pictures of some places in our neighborhood you might be interested in seeing. If you also have some historic photos to share, please bring them so we all can see.

"Place-making" is a concept that identifies the Tangible, Intangible and Invisible aspects of making neighborhoods special. Also, it tries to identify the inherent resources that can make a unique contribution to a neighborhood. Obviously, most people think of money (or oil wells, gems or precious metals), but resources entail much more. Why, you might be the missing gem- the resource that could make a huge difference to your neighborhood! I hope to see you at the meeting!

by Ron Frey



**TOOL  
LENDING  
HOTLINE**



Mike 933-7506  
Chris 342-6006

Mowers - \$5  
Rent for most tools - \$3



## Officer Mike Paul . . . *continued from page 1*

survived by his sister Jennifer McMenamy and husband Jim; brothers, Matthew and James and wife Jenny; and step-mother, Doris Paul.

There is one more thing about Mike that I want to share that says a lot about his commitment to our neighborhood. Just 2 weeks before he died, I was talking to him about our regular Friday night neighborhood walk and that we were going to meet in Gifford Park. He was having some trouble breathing and was taking oxygen to help. Yet he still was planning to attend the walk if he could rig up a way to have the oxygen with him. He wasn't able to make that walk, but he was there in spirit and will continue to be with us in spirit. We miss you Mike.

*by Chris Foster*

## What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . .

Our neighborhood was again treated to a great evening in Gifford Park on July 10 for the Show Wagon Regional Finals. The **Gravy Dippers** started things off by playing fine jazz and classic rock music. **Hiland-Roberts Dairy** donated ice cream treats for everyone. GPNA volunteers **Brian Kokensparger, Jan Franks** and **Mary Theresa Green** helped judge the acts. Special thanks to Show Wagon organizer **Karin Madden** and sound man **Rick Weiner** for doing an outstanding job in handling the two shows in Gifford Park and the other show locations. The GPNA truly appreciates the **City Parks & Recreation Department's** support of hosting Show Wagon in our neighborhood. By the way, a big congratulations go to the **Barfield sisters** who live next to the park at 34<sup>th</sup> & Cass – they won again and will compete in the finals!

Supervisors **Chris Thoms, Nate Ruffino,** and **Kim Knauf** did a great job again this year at the Sun Dawg Shack! Many thanks also to **Tom McGinn, Peg Watkins** and **Tom Lebeda** with City Parks & Recreation for running the program citywide. J'N'J owner **Loren Johnson** donated hot dogs for a recent picnic at Elmwood Park. And the GPNA thanks the Sun Dawg kids who painted signs for our community garden – there is talent there – see for yourself!

The **Omaha Chamber of Commerce** and many of the larger businesses in the area including **Mutual of Omaha, Peter Kiewit & Sons, UNMC, NHS,** and **Creighton,** along with community leaders, smaller businesses, and residents are looking into the feasibility of commissioning a master plan study to develop the midtown area. The targeted area is Saddle Creek on the west, Cumming on the north, 24th on the east, and Center Street on the South. Neighborhood associations represented in the meetings included Gifford Park, Joslyn Castle, Leavenworth and others. Since it is very early in the process, there is not much to report at this time. Call 342-6006 for more information.

The **Leavenworth Neighborhood Association** has extended an invitation to GPNA members to attend "**Leavenworth Summer Jam**" on **August 18th** from **5:00 - 8:00 p.m.** This free event will be held in **Turner Park,** which is on Turner Blvd. between Dodge and Farnam. The groups that will be providing intertainment are **Deep Sky** and **Miles Edison.** Both groups play jazz and classic rock, but also do original music. Hot dogs, chips, and a refreshment will be served. Bring a lawn chair or blanket and the family and get to know our neighbors from other nearby associations. For more information on this fun night out, call **Steve Cross** at 342-3549.

## Duchesne Reveals Expansion Plan

At a meeting on July 2 for neighbors and other interested parties, **Sheila Haggas,** Head of School at **Duchesne Academy,** announced plans for a building expansion involving the north side of the campus. An addition is to be added that will connect the main building with the northwest wing, providing needed classroom space (much of the upper floors of the main building are unusable for classrooms as they had been divided into many small dorm rooms). The historical integrity of the building will not be compromised, as the addition will be built to look as much like the existing structure as possible. After this project is completed, the school's long-term plans include remodeling the existing infrastructure of the main building. The project will begin in September and is expected to take about 12 months to complete.

## Neighborhood Walk Schedule For August

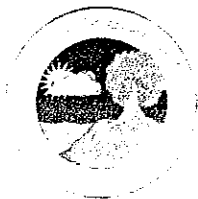
Join us as we tour our neighborhood on these beautiful summer evenings. The walks will begin at **8 p.m.** at the locations listed below:

**August 2: Gifford Park: Ball Diamond**  
Walk & Mini-cleanup (please bring trash bags and gloves) (Note: change in location from May's newsletter information)

**August 16: 36th & Davenport**

**August 30: Gifford Park**

If you have any questions, please call **Peter** at 341-7293



# 9th Annual Gifford Park Free Tennis Program

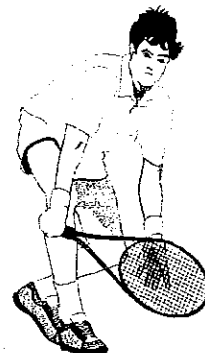


**For:** Youth (all ages)

**Dates:** August 7, 14, 21, 28  
(each Wednesday in August)

**Time:** 6 - 7 p.m.

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



The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association is offering **FREE Tennis Lessons** and will provide tennis racquets, balls and instructors for each lesson. Parents and others are welcome to help.

**To be enrolled, YOU MUST complete the form shown below and bring with you to the tennis lessons.** Special prize for those who attend every lesson. There is limited space available so call the phone number listed below for information.

**Call 342-6006**

-----  
**Registration/Permission Form** - Bring this form (completely filled out) with you to the tennis lessons 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:** \_\_\_\_\_