



Gifford Park's Pride

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

April 2003

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Spring Cleanup Date is April 26

The annual GPNA Spring Cleanup will be held on Saturday, April 26, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Gifford Park. Trash compactors will again be available for this cleanup. We also have recycling, park cleanup, food, and a membership drive at this event. Now that the snow has melted, it's easy to see all the litter and other debris that has accumulated over the winter. The nicer weather makes it easier to clean up yards, alleys and homes in the neighborhood.

The tire collection host site is St. Mark Church parking lot at 3616 Spaulding St. The appliance collection host site is Field Club School parking lot at 3512 Walnut St. Vouchers will be available on cleanup day only for yardwaste items (including tree brush and logs) to be taken to River City Recycling (6404 South 60th St.) We plan to distribute a flyer with more details in the coming weeks.

Volunteers will be needed to help make pick-ups and load compactors. Contact Chris 342-6006, Jim 551-1344, or Terry 342-2795 if you would like to volunteer, need help with hauling, or want more information.

Lively Omaha Place Game Looks At Park

On Monday, March 17, about 20 people participated in a Place Game workshop facilitated by Lively Omaha. Lively Omaha is an initiative of the Omaha Community Foundation and is a resource to promote the design and use of the most attractive, people-friendly and exciting public spaces. The workshop began at California Tacos to learn about how the Place Game works, then we separated into 3 groups and walked to Gifford Park to brainstorm about ideas to improve the park. We then finished by having each group report its ideas as Lively Omaha Director Connie Spellman summarized the information on flip charts so we could all compare notes. GPNA member Julie Kalkowski was also one of the facilitators.

Lively Omaha also created an evaluation results document that is available to anyone interested. Without going into detail, here are some of the results: short term suggestions – more landscaping, more benches, keep park clean, remove baseball field and use space for recreational soccer, line games on basketball blacktop, increase size of tennis backboard, add kiosk/emergency phone, improve/replace drinking fountain on east park, add crosswalk on 35th Street, add picnic tables and grills. Long term suggestions – improve playground equipment and surface

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Next Meeting

Thursday, April 3
7:00 P.M.

Guest Speaker:
Doug Bisson,
HDR Architect

Midtown Community Study

Creighton University
Medical Center
Dining Rooms A, B, and C

Show Wagon Dates Set

Gifford Park will again be a host site this year for two Show Wagon Youth Talent Competitions this summer (Districts - June 17, Regionals - July 22). Now is a great time to think about participating in this event to show off your talent or your children's. Let's try to encourage our local neighborhood talent to participate in this great opportunity. Call Karin Madden (444-5216), Show Wagon Director, if you are interested.

14th Annual GPNA Easter Egg Hunt



Saturday, April 19
Noon (Sharp!)
Rain or Shine
at Gifford Park
Children Ages 12
& Under

Bring Your Easter Baskets
& Be Ready To Hunt!

GPNA OFFICERS**INTERIM PRESIDENT**

Chris Foster 342-6006

VICE PRESIDENT

Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

RECORDING SECRETARY

Ron Frey 344-0757

TREASURER

Dana Carlton-Flint 346-4575

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Chris Foster 342-6006

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Leo Wilwerding 345-1433

HISTORIAN

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KELLOM SCHOOL LIAISON

Jean Peck 344-0722

MEMBERSHIP

Chris Foster 342-6006

NEWSLETTER

Sue Wilwerding 342-2795

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

Eve Randonie 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 Interim President's Column

Spring is here and unfortunately so is the litter. In recent discussions with friends and neighbors about upcoming events and neighborhood improvements, trash and litter has been at the top of the list as far as items that need attention. We all agreed that the litter problem is much bigger than just our neighborhood, it is a society problem. Many of you "older" generation folks probably remember the Keep America Beautiful (you've got to pitch in...) commercial where the Indian has a tear in his eye at the sight of people unconsciously tossing their litter on the ground. It is an image I still remember vividly.

Here's a challenge for EVERYONE within our neighborhood association boundaries (Dodge to Cuming and 28th to 37th Street): let's come up with ideas to keep our neighborhood streets and properties cleaner on a continual basis. Obviously right now with the start of spring, the neighborhood in general has more litter, but I hope you would all agree that our neighborhood can do better. Some things to consider that might make a "litter cleanup" campaign more successful are: make it fun, have scheduled "mini-cleanups" that don't take a lot of time, and keep it simple.

I would like to suggest an idea that has been discussed in the past. Within the GPNA boundaries, we have nearly thirty "square blocks". Many of these blocks have residents who do a good job of keeping things clean and do not need much attention. But for blocks that have a lot of trash, we could organize a group of volunteers to do mini-cleanups along streets and parkways to take care of the obvious litter. We would contact (by phone, e-mail, flyer) block residents and owners to ask them to participate. It seems to me that several square blocks could be cleaned up in an hour or two. These mini-cleanups could take place on a Saturday or Sunday morning, or even during our neighborhood walks on Friday nights. Besides a cleaner neighborhood, the benefits would be a chance to meet new people, an opportunity to see what is happening in other parts of our area, an easy way for others to get involved with improving their own block, and of course good exercise.

The above is just one idea. Leavenworth Neighborhood Association came up with the idea for everyone to pick up trash on their own block on the first Saturday of each month until civil defense sirens sound at 10 a.m. Depending on time, I would like to bring up this topic at our next GPNA meeting and get your input on ideas to help keep our neighborhood clean.

All right, enough trash talkin' (ha, ha!). I wanted to recognize the efforts of **Cynthia Shuck**, our neighborhood liaison with **Creighton University**. Since last year she has kept our neighborhood informed on Creighton's expansion plans. This has involved many meetings, phone calls, e-mails and newsletter articles. The recent Neighborhood Salvage Day required a lot of legwork by Cynthia and Creighton Facilities representatives, and all those who I talked with thoroughly enjoyed this unique opportunity.

Finally, no matter how you feel about the war, please be thinking about our troops and hope for their safe return as soon as possible. Hope to see you at the next GPNA meeting!

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.

GPNA Salvage Day

Involved, actively committed GPNA members were rewarded earlier this month with a one-day opportunity to salvage building materials and plant life from the vacant housing owned by **Creighton University** on California & Webster Streets. This group of homes is currently under an asbestos abatement contract and slated for professional salvage and demolition next month. You may have noticed the gouged rooftops where the Omaha Fire Department was granted use of the properties for training recruits on how to use a fire axe to enter building roofs.

If you regularly attend GPNA meetings you would have known about the event, and may have been among the cast of thirty or so "plucky junkers" who participated. Despite the frigid temperatures, almost everyone managed to find something they couldn't pass up; the price was certainly right for the offering. It was a great day for "reuse and recycle" advocates everywhere. a special thank-you goes to **Lennis Pederson** and **Tom Robinson** at Creighton, **Anderson Excavating**, **John Rapaich** at **A&R Salvage and Recycling** and **Chris Foster** for all their consideration and work making this day possible.

Creighton is apologetic for the mess it is creating, and assures the neighborhood progress on cleanup is moving forward in a deliberate fashion. At this time, most of the houses are contractually assigned to Anderson Excavating for demolition. GPNA members and neighbors are reminded not to enter the properties or remove anything from them, as you will be considered illegally trespassing. If you are interested in further salvaging, contact **John Rapaich**, A&R Salvage and Recycling at **346-4470** to make arrangements.

by Cynthia Shuck

Midtown Community Study

By the time you read this article there will have been a public announcement about an important and exciting project that our neighborhood will soon be involved in. It is called the **Midtown Community Study**. The purpose of this project is to develop a master plan for Midtown Omaha that will help create the blueprints for the future of our neighborhoods. The project area is bounded by Center St. on the south, Cuming St. on the north, Saddle Creek Road on the west, and 24th St. on the east.

This is an unprecedented planning project for this area of the city. HDR, a local and national architectural firm, has been contracted to facilitate the master planning process, which will begin immediately. A steering committee has been meeting since July 2002 to determine and manage the scope of the project. The steering committee is made up of representatives from businesses, corporations, institutions, city government, and neighborhoods. Plan to attend the next GPNA meeting (see details on page 1) on April 3 to hear more about the project timeline and our role in participating in this planning process.

Free Tax Help Available Now

The site for the annual free tax assistance has been moved to the Lay Apostolate Center at **St. Cecilia's Cathedral, 40th & Webster St.** This makes our site even more accessible this year. Tax help will be available every **Monday** through **April 14** from **1 to 4 p.m.** and from **7 to 8:30 p.m.** and on **Saturdays** through **April 12** from **10 - 11:30 a.m.** Everyone is welcome! IRS representatives will provide free tax help for our neighborhood for the 9th year in a row. Processing of basic tax returns and electronic filing will be available again this year. No appointment is necessary; walk-in appointments only. For more information, call **551-3629**.



Note: **Raquel Ayala** has volunteered to translate for Spanish-speaking people who need help with their taxes. If you are interested or know someone who could benefit from this assistance, please call her at **345-6605** for more information.

Lively Omaha . . . continued from page 1

in west park, replace playground equipment in east park, add drinking fountain in west park, add sheltered picnic area or gazebo structure in east park, add lighting, add walking paths to connect the different park areas, consistent and regular cleanup, speed bump on 34th Street (entering park parking lot from Davenport), expand parking, add sculpture, add landscaping (flowers, shrubs), frisbee golf.

From this workshop and other recent meetings with City Park Planner **Pat Slaven** and Park Maintenance Superintendent **Jerry Flood**, the GPNA is tweaking our park master plan to address these ideas and the needs of the community. We are applying for a couple of grants that might help us begin doing some of the possible improvements. The GPNA would appreciate input regarding the park ideas as this is a long term plan and funding is limited at this time. We also ask everyone to participate in keeping the park a clean and safe place to play. Call **342-6006** for more information.

by Chris Foster

**For City Services, Information, or
Complaints**

**Call: Mayor's Action Office
444-5555**

What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . .

Join the **Friends of Joslyn Castle** on **Sunday, April 27**, for an afternoon of soothing jazz provided by the **Bill Ritchie Quartet**. The Bill Ritchie Quartet has been featured at numerous concert venues in the Omaha area such as Joslyn's Bagels & Bach, Thursday Night Live, First Friday Jam, and Jazz on the Green. The afternoon begins at 3:00 p.m. with a tour of the Castle followed by refreshments at 4:00 p.m. The concert begins at 4:30 p.m. with a post-concert reception following at 5:30 p.m. The cost for the afternoon is \$12 for members of the Friends of Joslyn Castle and \$15 for non-members. Make your reservations by calling **Annette Huff** at **551-3023**.

Just a reminder that **Deffenbaugh Disposal Services** will begin yard-waste collection **April 7** at regular garbage pickup. For more information, call the City of Omaha Recycling Hotline: **444-5238**.

Many thanks to last month's GPNA meeting guest speakers **Dan Burkey** and **Lennis Pederson** from **Creighton University**. Dan and Lennis gave an excellent presentation on the campus master plan and plans for the property Creighton owns in our neighborhood west of 30th Street.

Thanks also to GPNA volunteers **Jim Wilwerding**, **Bob Hutton**, **Darrel Hutton** and **Chris Foster** for installing the four video surveillance cameras at 33rd & California in mid-March. The goal of the cameras is to use them as a tool to improve public safety in our business district. The cameras were purchased with Weed & Seed grant funding. Depending on the effectiveness, the GPNA may look to add additional cameras to cover more areas of the business district.

Our second full season of operation for the **Gifford Park Community Garden** is about to begin. We have plans for continuing to develop the garden site at **3416 Cass Street**; feel free to check it out. We rent garden plots for a very reasonable fee. For more information, call **Chris 342-6006**, **Annemarie 342-1340**, or **Cynthia 556-2090**.

If anyone is interested in donating candy for the **GPNA Easter Egg Hunt** to be held on **Saturday, April 19th** (see page 1), or to help with the event, call **Chris 342-6006** or **Jan Franks 345-5765**.



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 |

City Sprouts Workshop

City Sprouts, a community gardening organization, will deliver a container gardening workshop for local residents. The workshop will be at the **Omaha Public Library, Washington Branch, 28th & Ames St.**, on **Saturday, April 26** from **2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.** Each workshop participant will have the opportunity to pot a plant and carry it home. The supplies for the classes will be provided. Nutritionists and other health organization representatives may be present to discuss the health effects of nutritious eating and how to incorporate fresh foods into daily meals. The classes are free and open to the public but space is limited. To register, please contact **Nancy Williams** of City Sprouts at **451-7054** or **John Bernardi**, Washington Branch Library at **444-4849**.