



Gifford Park's Pride

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

July 2003

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Destination Midtown Public Meetings Set For Early July

The recent Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (S.W.O.T.) Analysis Workshops held June 10 & 11 were very well attended with approximately 325 participants at the three sessions (including roughly 125 people at the Duchesne Academy workshop). The Destination Midtown project will hold the next set of public meetings on July 7, 8 and 9. The purpose is to recap the S.W.O.T. Analysis Workshops and to develop vision statements for the three sub-areas and the entire study area. EVERYONE is invited to attend any of the following meetings:

Monday, July 7: 7 – 9 p.m. in St. Bernadette Hall at St. Cecilia's Grade School, 3869 Webster; target area is north of Dodge

Tuesday, July 8: 10 a.m. - noon at First Lutheran Church, 542 S. 31st St.; target area is Dodge to Leavenworth.

Wednesday, July 9: 7 – 9 p.m. in Franey Hall at Mercy High School, 48th & Pine; target area is south of Leavenworth

Beyond these meetings, Lively Omaha will conduct the Place-Making Game in various neighborhood locations based on the results of the S.W.O.T. Analysis and identification of specific issue areas. Also HDR will facilitate important public workshops with the following descriptions and planned timelines:

Workshop #1: Comprehensive/area-wide issues such as mobility, parks, open spaces, etc. (tentatively 4 days the last week in August)

Workshop #2: Neighborhood expo/symposium (code enforcement, crime, rehabilitation, etc.) and discussion of resources that are available to the neighborhoods within the study area (tentatively the end of September)

Workshop #3: Design charrette for the core area (Dodge to Leavenworth, Saddle Creek to 24th St.) focusing on areas and issues derived from Workshops #1 & #2 (tentatively mid-November)

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Reminder: No July Meeting

Next Meeting
Thursday, August 7

Show Wagon Regional Finals, Dennis Strawn Jazz Quartet Coming to Gifford Park July 22

Mark your calendars for Tuesday July 22 (rain date July 23) in Gifford Park for the Regional Finals of the Show Wagon Youth Talent Competition. The Dennis Strawn Jazz Quartet will start the evening's entertainment at 6 p.m. The talent competition will begin at 7:30 p.m. Once again Roberts Dairy will provide free ice cream treats while supplies last, so bring a blanket or chair and enjoy the shows!

Neighborhood Block Party August 5

Help celebrate National Night Out on Tuesday, August 5, from 5 to 8 p.m. at 33rd & California. 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. We plan to have many of the same activities as at last year's event - including food, ice cream, refreshments, jazz music, parade, firetruck, classic cars, face painting, moonwalk, hoop-it-up 3 on 3 basketball, information booths (health, safety, neighborhood), and much more. Detailed information will be available when a flyer comes out later in July. The GPNA is having an event planning meeting Thursday, July 10 at 7 p.m. at California Tacos - anyone can attend; please bring your ideas. For more information or if you would like to help, call Chris 342-6006, Ron 344-0757 or Cynthia 556-2090.

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Cynthia Shuck 556-2090

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Chris Foster 342-6006

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Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

WEEDS & LITTER

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

WELCOMING

Vicki Frey 344-0757

The President's Column

Transitions. We are all faced with them from time to time. Some are happy, some are sad. Some we embrace, some we resist. I recall when we had our baby (my "baby" is now 15 years old, taller than me, and he rolls his eyes when I talk about him like this). It was a time of wonder—about the miracle of life.

There was nothing, however, that could prepare me for the experience of being a parent. That was a transition where I thought I knew what I was getting into. Wasn't I wrong! Instead, I was expected to "grow up" and accept responsibility. I wasn't getting all the attention anymore!

Now that I am the parent of a teenager I am also learning more. I've discovered that transition can happen even when I'm not ready for it and don't do anything about it. Now, the one I used to hold in my arms is towering over me. You learn a lot about how things have changed in spite of you.

Don't neighborhood transitions work the same way? Many of you have lived in Gifford Park Neighborhood for many years—some even 50 years or more. As time went on, you realized that the neighborhood was changing, even if you didn't feel like you were changing.

Several years ago some men and women formed the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association and took courageous action to try to reverse the trends. In my seven years in this neighborhood, I have discovered the most wonderful people. People have worked very hard to make Gifford Park a great place to live.

Now we are in another transition of leadership—but this is positive change. Some neighborhoods seem to elect a "President for Life." Here in Gifford Park, though, we believe that it is important to continually develop new leadership, because new leaders are the future of our neighborhood. As your new president, I am honored to stand in the legacy of those who labored on behalf of Gifford Park residents. I am also excited to be a part of making the future in this neighborhood!

Take a look around the neighborhood. The age of our neighborhood will always beckon decline. The transition happens while you are busy with your life. Maybe you are tired, or hoping someone else will take care of it. Won't someone do something about it? Is that a transition you are willing to let happen?

Suddenly you will notice that something needs attention—your attention. Can you be proactive? Is there something about Gifford Park that you care for, are passionate about? If so, I would like to talk to you, because through dialogue and action we can continue to make Gifford Park neighborhood a great place to live! Isn't that a transition worth working for?

by Ron Frey



**TOOL
LENDING
HOTLINE**

Mike 933-7506

Chris 342-6006

Mowers - \$5

Rent for most tools - \$3



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.

Wolf Recovery Services, Inc.

While working as a substance abuse counselor for the Department of Corrections, I became frustrated by seeing the same men being released and returned to prison time after time, primarily for substance abuse-related issues. There had to be a better way to help these men acquire the skills they needed to keep them out of prison. It was while working in corrections that the idea for Wolf Recovery Services, Inc. was born. It would be a transitional program aimed at providing a more gradual introduction of newly released men back into society that would enable them to develop the skills necessary to resist the trouble that would get them sent back into the system again. I named it for Rebecca Wolf, my grandmother who inspired me to always reach for my dreams.

The Wolf house accepts men that have alcohol, substance abuse, or gambling problems, with the exception of men with a background in violent or sexual crimes. WRS provides men with a needed second chance so they can go home to their families. In a structured transitional living center, Wolf house residents are educated through the process of recovery. Men progress through levels of decreasing structure while developing increasing confidence and responsibility.

At level one, residents are adjusting to the program and need the support of their peers in the house. When off the premises, they must be accompanied by two other men from the house at all times. The only time this is an exception is when they work. After two months, they may proceed to level two, with fewer restrictions, if they have met their financial obligations and have a budget, a 12-step sponsor, and, in a house meeting, his peers believe he is ready.

The average successful program requires a six-month commitment from residents to be at the Wolf house, because it takes time for our men to really hear the message and make it part of their everyday life. All the men must work, not just to support themselves, but because for the most part, that is how the Wolf house stays afloat.

It is very important that as a house, we become an asset to our neighborhood. The men at Wolf house complete ten hours of community service on level one and fifteen hours on level two. They have helped with neighborhood cleanups, the Show Wagon talent show, the Easter egg hunts, and Halloween events.

The Wolf house has been in operation in Omaha for almost four years. In that time we have had eighty-one men graduate from the Omaha house and move

back into many communities across Nebraska as productive members of society. We opened another Wolf house in Lincoln a little over two years ago and we have been very successful there as well.

This year the men and I are planning a fund raiser to raise monies to help the new men coming into the Wolf houses, and to paint the Wolf house in Omaha. A few hearty people from each house along with me, the director, are going to bicycle ride across the state of Nebraska to raise funds to keep this wonderful house up and going. We are hoping to generate interest in the program the Wolf house provides as we pedal across the state while at the same time, we also hope our effort will inspire people to sponsor us with funds by the miles we will travel. It goes back to one of our slogans: "I" does not make a pack, "WE" make a Wolf pack - and that is our commitment to help men from all walks of our society; we can help our neighborhoods, we can educate men in recovery, and send home men that are fathers, sons, brothers, and friends to us all.

by David W. Staenberg

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Show Wagon Draws Large Crowd

After an evening shower threatened to postpone the District Show Wagon competition, the weather turned out to be perfect for the June 17 event. About a dozen acts from Omaha, Bellevue, and Plattsmouth performed their talents including singing, dancing, acting and more. Many thanks to the **Gravy Dippers** band who played great classic rock and other music to begin the evening. We wish to thank **Roberts Dairy** for donating the ice cream and **Brittney Rubek & Brittanie Love** for handing out the treats. We greatly appreciate the **House of Faith Church** (33rd & Cass St.) for opening up their restrooms for event participants. Special thanks go to **Karen Madden** (Florence Community Center Supervisor) who handles the City Show Wagon, and **Rick Weiner** who handles sound. Thanks also to judges **Carol Hodges**, **Mary Theresa Green** and **Brian Kokensparger** – they had a tough job. Thanks to **Darryl Hutton** for doing a little of everything to help the event run smooth. And once again the **Wolf House** guys helped with crowd control with over 250 people attending. See you in Gifford Park on **July 22!**



Local residents 10 year-old Mark Saavedra (left) and 12 year-old Miguel Lupersio (right) display the certificates they received for winning in their age bracket at the Show Wagon district competition held at Gifford Park on June 17. The boys played the drums for their act.

10th Anniversary For Tennis Program

For the tenth consecutive year, the GPNA Youth Tennis Program will be held every Wednesday evening in August - (Aug 6, 13, 20, 27) at the tennis court in Gifford Park. Look for more information in the August edition of the newsletter. Registration forms will be available at **J'N'J Grocery** and **California Tacos** later in July. For more information, or if you would like to help with any or all sessions, call **Chris** at 342-6006.

Destination Midtown . . . continued from page 1

Following these workshops, HDR will prepare the master plan documents, review and revise the documents, and produce final documents by next spring.

As has been communicated all along, everyone's input and participation is vital to this master planning process, and there are many opportunities over the next few months for you to help shape the future of our neighborhoods. For more information about Destination Midtown, contact **356-5000** or visit the website at www.omahachamber.org/destinationmidtown.

"Adopt A Park" Program Needs Volunteers

As mentioned last month, many thanks to the **City of Omaha** and the **Omaha Community Foundation** for providing funding for improvements in Gifford Park. Specifically, the GPNA received \$4,600 from the Mayor's Neighborhood Grant program and \$2,400 from the Omaha Community Foundation for park improvements.

As part of the grant requests, we are asking for your help in maintaining the park in these tough times of the city budget crunch. Since park upkeep is taking a big hit, the GPNA plans to start an "adopt-a-park" commitment which involves **volunteers picking up litter on the 3rd Saturday of each month (July - October) at 9 a.m.** for half an hour to an hour (meet at the baseball diamond). The dates for these volunteer sessions are **July 19, August 15, September 19, and October 17**. Besides litter pickup, we need your help with painting the old playground equipment, painting line games on the old basketball blacktop, painting and extending the tennis backboard, and weeding around trees and shrubs. These tasks can all be readily accomplished and can be a lot of fun – please call **Cynthia 556-2090, Ron 344-0757** or **Chris 342-6006** if you are interested in helping with any of these projects this summer.

Besides GPNA volunteers, there are a few key people who helped make these grants possible and we will continue to work with them: **Pat Slaven** (Park Planner), **Jerry Flood** (Park Maintenance Supt.), and **Connie Spellman** (Lively Omaha). Thank you all!

by Chris Foster

**Para servicios, informacion o quejas
llame a la oficina del alcalde
444-5555**

GOD'S LITTLE CHILDREN'S CHILDCARE II

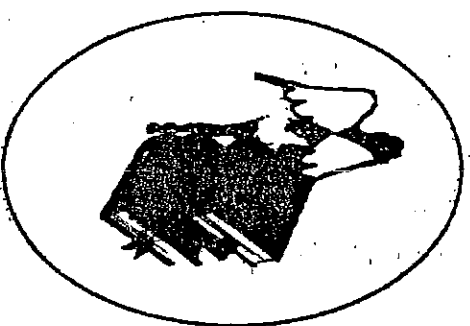
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FOR FUTURE INFORMATION

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Corporate Office

(402) 342-7494

Closed on Sunday

Don't Miss Out!

I read an interesting statistic the other day. It said that 49% of today's adult population volunteers approximately 4.2 hours per week. I immediately wondered, "Do I put in that much time?" Don't get me wrong. It's not like it's a contest. I'm not trying to win *Volunteer of the Year* or anything. And let's be honest, we all have very busy lives nowadays. But I have always believed that giving back to the community is important. I try and make it a priority.

Many organizations struggle to get volunteers to help. The Gifford Park neighborhood is no exception. I believe there are a few reasons why this happens. The first is that people do not realize the long- and short-term benefits of being a volunteer. In the short-term, people can 1) immediately experience the results of their work 2) feel good about helping others, and 3) see how their efforts have contributed to the overall goal or plan. In the long-term, volunteering gives people 1) a chance at leadership and personal development 2) the opportunity to build relationships around a common interest or goal, and 3) a better perspective of the world around them.

Another reason volunteers are hard to come by is that too many organizations decide on projects first and then try to recruit people later. This works some of the time, but not always. People need to have passion in order to get involved. Look around the neighborhood. Try and identify what *you* think it *needs*. Is there litter? Graffiti? Parked cars and weeds? Then think of ways to take care of that unmet need or issue. Ask, "What can I do to help others?" If everyone would see this world as *their* world and work towards helping others, before long, everybody would be helping everybody else and we wouldn't have some of the problems we have now. All it takes is a little imagination and a desire to improve our environment and ourselves.

Volunteering is a chance for people to come together and form new relationships; to work for the benefit of the community in which they live; to get back into society and create a better world. In short, volunteering is the giving of yourself to help others. It can take many forms. No matter how you give back, someone is always the beneficiary. The point is we need to "just do it." We need to make service a common expectation and a common experience.

Sometimes getting people to help is as simple as asking. I would encourage you to give of your time and talents by volunteering a couple of hours a week. If you'd like to help out but don't know where to start just call me at 344-0757. Or, if you prefer, attend the next GPNA meeting **August 7th**. The opportunities for community service are endless. Whatever you do, don't miss out on a chance to meet new people, work for the greater good of our community and, reach out to others. Volunteering means that *you* make the difference!

by Vicki Frey

Meet the 2003-2004 Officers

At the June general meeting, four GPNA members were elected for the positions of president, vice-president, recording secretary, and treasurer for 2003-2004. Let's find out a little bit about them!

Hi! I'm **Ron Frey**, the new president. I'm originally from Lincoln, where I met my wife, Vicki. We ended up in Omaha after spending a few years in Southern California going to school. I have been in the insurance industry for over 12 years. Currently, I'm an employee benefits administrator at Woodmen of the World. I play the piano, and I enjoy classical music, ancient history and archaeology. What I like about Gifford Park is that it has interesting homes and down-to-earth people.

Hi! I'm **Vicki Frey**, Ron's wife and the new treasurer. We moved into the neighborhood in August of 1995. We have one son, Erik, who will be a sophomore next fall at Central High School. I have experience in bookkeeping in a family-owned business, but I left that job to become a domestic engineer. I have planned the last two GPNA holiday banquets and I enjoy entertaining at home. The thing that I like most about Gifford Park is how friendly the people are.

Hi everyone! My name is **Eve Randone** and I am the new recording secretary for the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association. I am very excited about my new position. My family and I moved here three years ago from the state of Washington where my husband was stationed in the Navy. He was from Omaha so we decided to come here when his enlistment was up so we could be close to family. I am originally from the north side of the city of Chicago and I also grew up in Haifa, Israel. My husband and I really believe in this neighborhood! We were amazed the first time we saw our house and we knew it was for us. I hope that in the next few years as this Midtown Plan comes into being we see even more great changes in our area. This is a very exciting time to be living in Gifford Park - get involved and be a part of the change going on!

Hello! I am **Cynthia Shuck**, and I'll be filling the vice-presidential spot this year. I'm one of several new faces in the neighborhood who has recently retired their video rental card in

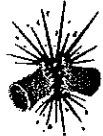
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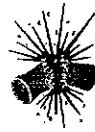
exchange for a 1927 bungalow (in desperate need of good renovation). I grew up in the midwest, attended Kansas State University for a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture and decided on a quick stint living and working in the ever-urbane New York City. The City couldn't offer much of a relationship with nature, and sunlit rooms were an unaffordable luxury, so I decided to move back to Nebraska, where the space is wide, the air clean, and sunlight is free. I am honored to be a part of this year's Board. We have a promising year ahead of us where opportunities abound.

The GPNA thanks Ron, Vicki, Eve, and Cynthia for accepting these positions and being willing to donate their time and talent for the betterment of this neighborhood. Let's support their efforts by volunteering to help with the various projects that keep this neighborhood association the best in town!

Stop by the Gifford Park Community Garden located at 3416 Cass St. and enjoy the efforts of many of our neighborhood residents. If you are interested in being part of this project or if you would like to donate plants, tools, or any garden-related items, please call 342-6006, 342-0213, or 556-2090 for more information.



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

8:00 AM - 10:00 PM Sunday

What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . .

The GPNA is excited to announce that the City and the Omaha Musicians Union have set a date for a "Music In The Park" session to be held in Gifford Park. The date is **Sunday, August 31**, from 7 to 8 p.m., and the band **Bittersweet** will perform classic rock music. The GPNA is thinking of making this day an event including arts & crafts, with the possibility of incorporating a cultural theme. Please let us know if you have ideas and/or would like to help with planning or volunteering for this potential event.

Sun Dawgs supervisor **Chris Thoms** is back for his third year heading up the program at the Gifford Park site. Please consider stopping down at the Sun Dawg shack any weekday between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to help with activities. The GPNA wishes to thank the **City of Omaha** and all the private donors who helped keep the Sun Dawgs program operational this year and for selecting Gifford Park as a full-time site - this means a lot to our neighborhood!

As reported in last month's newsletter, longtime GPNA member **Martha Kelly** passed away in May. She was named "Neighbor of the Month" in March of 1997 and she faithfully attended as many of the GPNA meetings as she could. The GPNA wishes to thank Mrs. Kelly's family for donating \$110 in memorial funds in her name to the GPNA.

The GPNA thanks all dedicated volunteers who deliver this newsletter and other event flyers. Getting information into people's hands is vital to keeping our neighborhood informed on issues and concerns.

Just a reminder - there will be no GPNA board meeting in July.

Weeds...How Tall Is Too Tall?

City of Omaha code states that weeds (or any vegetation) cannot be over 18" tall. The following steps can be taken if this code is violated:

- A complaint can be filed by anyone
- A City Inspector will send the property owner a 10 day notice to cut the weeds
- If the owner does not respond, the address is put on a mowing list
- Property will be mowed and the owner will be charged according to the size of job



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 |
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