



Gifford Park's Pride

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

June 2004

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Gifford Park To Host Three "Music In The Park" Events This Summer

Mark your calendars for "Music in the Park" coming to our neighborhood. The GPNA wishes to thank the **Omaha Musicians Union** and the **City of Omaha** for the great opportunity to host this event on **June 11, July 9, and August 13** – these are all **Friday nights** from **7 – 8 p.m.** in **Gifford Park**. At the time of this newsletter we do not know exactly which bands will be performing, but you can bet they will be good. We plan to have refreshments on hand to add to the festivities. Bring your blankets and chairs and enjoy the shows!

Destination Midtown Final Document Announced

The final document for the **Destination Midtown (DM)** master plan was announced to the public at a press conference May 12. The final document is very comprehensive in its content and will serve as the "blueprint" for how our midtown neighborhoods develop and function into the next 20 years and beyond. There are some specific short-term projects identified to take action on immediately, as well as long-term projects that will need significant planning and resources. If you would like a copy of the plan (printed or CD), please contact **Chris 342-6006** or **Ron 344-0757**. Next, this document will go before the Planning Board in July for adoption into the City's Master Plan. The DM Steering Committee is currently working closely with the Omaha Chamber of Commerce in developing a solid implementation strategy - please stay tuned!

Next Meeting

Thursday, June 3
7:00 P.M.

Ice Cream Social

Guest Speakers:
Julie Stavneak

J Development Company
and

A Representative From Security
National Bank

Topic: Home Renovation And
Business Development Opportu-
nities

Election of 2004-2005 Officers

Creighton University
Medical Center

Morrison Seminar Room

[Note: No July Meeting!]



Happy
Father's
Day!



Fly The Flag Proudly on
Flag Day - June 14



Show Wagon Is Coming June 16

Gifford Park will again be a host site for the **Show Wagon Youth Talent Competition**. This year's date is **Wednesday evening, June 16** (rain date June 17) at **7:30 p.m.** (we plan to have other musical entertainment at **6 p.m.** before the Show Wagon competition starts - for details on the pre-show entertainment, pick up a flyer at **J'N'J Grocery** or **California Tacos**).

The Show Wagon program is a competition for youth ages 1-18 to show off their talents on

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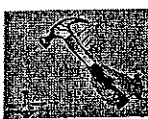
Jerry Wilwerding 342-2795

WEEDS & LITTER

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

WELCOMING

Vicki Frey 344-0757

TOOL LENDING HOTLINE**Mike 933-7506****Chris 342-6006****Mowers - \$5****Rent for most tools - \$3****From The President . . .**

As I was listening to this individual talking, my blood ran cold. He was in the neighborhood, talking about the residents and visitors of a problem property. He said, "Back in my day, the way we solved these problems was to get a few of us together and go over and pound 'em. But now they carry knives and guns, so ya' never know what you'll run into. What we need to do is take one and hang 'em up on that light pole. That'll get their attention!"

I hope that you are horrified by what you read! I certainly was, and I told him that I didn't appreciate that kind of talk. That kind of attitude is ignorant, prejudiced and racist. The conversation has bothered me ever since. When we talk about our neighborhood problems, how often do these attitudes seep into the conversation? Does our frustration lead to broad sweeping generalizations about ethnic groups and economic levels? Do we complain about "the poor" or "Section 8" housing?

I had another interesting conversation with a property owner who manages both upscale and lower income properties downtown. This person told me that the Section 8 tenants took better care of their apartments than the upscale! They had many more problems with upscale tenants trashing the place when they left. The key to the Section 8 success was the screening process. If your tenant history is bad, it informs the future when it comes to renting. So the problem isn't poor people, or a certain ethnic group. The problem is people who break the law, and the absentee rental property owners who shield them and allow them to operate without consequences.

That makes me think of two books my son read for English, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Animal Farm*. The stories are about the common people of France and Russia throwing off the oppression of the old aristocratic system. But in the act of "liberation" they overreacted and become tyrants themselves! They became no different than those they deposed.

Normally I try to be a cheerleader and have an encouraging column because I see much potential in our neighborhood. But I guess what I am saying is that we have to be careful not to lower ourselves to the level of those we are fighting against, who bring our neighborhood down by their illegal activities and intimidation.

On a neighborhood walk once, years ago, I got into a heated discussion with a neighbor who is no longer in the neighborhood. He, and someone else, were confronting a young black man who was on the corner about the clothes he was wearing. I told him that could be considered racist and that was not what our neighborhood was all about. Well, needless to say, he was not happy with me and defended it by saying, "You don't know what it is like to have "these people" saying horrible things to your wife!"

I do know what it is like, and I'm telling you, that kind of reaction is still not what this neighborhood is all about. We don't want to drop ourselves down to the lowest common denominator. We've talked before about how perception affects our neighborhood, but it can be skewed. I have to be careful about my perceptions as well. They can be formulated by prejudice. I'm a white male, who is reasonably trying to judge all things as fairly as possible. But why do I feel differently when I see two groups of teenagers? One group of white kids on skateboards in Dundee, I do not feel threatened by - they're "just kids." But when I see a gathering of black teenagers on 33rd & California, am I justified in

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Show Wagon . . . *continued from page 1*

stage, whether it be singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, juggling, magic tricks or any other talent you wish to perform. There are 5 different age divisions and participants can come from anywhere. For information and entry forms, contact **Karin Moyer**, Show Wagon Director, by phone at 444-5164 or by E-mail: kmoyer@ci.omaha.ne.us

Mark your calendars and come out to enjoy an evening of music, dance and other talents at Gifford Park. Bring your blankets and chairs and enjoy the show!

What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . .

Justin Evertson with the **Nebraska Statewide Arboretum** will host a "tree walk" in our neighborhood on **Saturday June 26, 9 to 11 a.m.** Anyone, both interested adults and children should meet at the **Gifford Park Community Garden (35th & Cass St.)** at 9 a.m. Justin will then lead us on a walk through Gifford Park and other parts of our neighborhood discussing trees.

The **Woodmen of the World** recently presented **Chris Foster** with its **Conservation Award** for his efforts on behalf of the **GPNA**. In his address to the audience, he expressed his gratefulness to his friends in the **GPNA** and stated that he would proudly share the award with them. Chris was nominated by **Cindy Smiley** with **Keep Omaha Beautiful** and he wished to thank both her and **Woodmen of the World** for recognizing all of the **GPNA** members' efforts with cleanups, community garden, and other beautification projects.

Habitat for Humanity, in partnership with **Mutual of Omaha** and **St. Cecilia's Cathedral** is building a home at **708 N. 33rd St.** on a lot that is currently vacant. A vast network of volunteers and donations keep **Habitat** building affordable homes in the community. **Habitat** was willing to arrive at a design for the house that would be compatible with the neighborhood, such as making it a one and a half story structure and including a porch with columns. **Mutual of Omaha** is a corporate sponsor through the volunteer efforts of its associates and its financial support of the organization, and has made a significant monetary contribution toward the construction of this house. Plans are to have the house ready to occupy by **September**.



The Gifford Park Community Garden season opening event was held Saturday, May 1. Activities included a visit from the "Ask the Master Gardener" County Extension Office representative, garden & plant information, youth garden program registration, a visit from Dear Heart Clown (Judy Quest), free plants, seeds, & refreshments, and music provided by Clarinda Karpov. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped make the event a fun and educational experience. Although the Community Garden youth program has already started, there may be a few spots still available - call Kate at 496-8419 for details. The Community Garden is located at 35th & Cass St. For more information on the community garden project, call Chris 342-6006, Cynthia 556-2090, or Annemarie 342-1340.

City of Omaha Parks & Recreation Sun Dawg Summer Fun Youth Program

Monday - Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Beginning June 14 - August 6
\$10 per person fee or \$1 per day drop-in
ages 6 - 15 - activities include:

**Fun, sports, games, reading, arts
and crafts, field trips,
camp programs, swimming and
more.**

**The Gifford
Park Sun
Dawg Shack
is the "cool"
place to be
this summer!**



Cathedral Offers Free Arts Events

St. Cecilia's Cathedral is offering a variety of free cultural events this summer. Two organ concerts will be held at the church, located at 40th & Webster St.: **Kimberly Marshall** from Arizona State University will perform on **Sunday, June 20** and **Kevin Vogt** and the **Palladium Brass** will perform on **Sunday, July 18**. Both concerts will be held at 3:00 p.m. A Spanish Colonial Art Collection is located in the ambulatory behind the altar; it is open between Sunday services and by appointment. The Cathedral Cultural Center located just east of the Cathedral will feature the art exhibit "**Two Omaha Masters: Robert F. Gilder and J. Laurie Wallace**" - thirty works by Omaha's leading artists of the early 20th century - from **June 6 to July 25**. Two lectures relating to these artists will also be presented: "**Robert F. Gilder: His Life and Work**" is scheduled for **Sunday, June 6** from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., and "**J. Laurie Wallace and the Development of Art in Omaha**" will be held on **Sunday, July 18th**, from 1:15 to 2:30 p.m. In addition to the art gallery, the Center features exhibits on the building of the Cathedral, including a section on nationally noted architect **Thomas Kimball**, who also designed Omaha's 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition and many other city landmarks. Hours are **Tuesday through Friday: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.**, and the **3rd Sunday monthly: 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** In addition to the free events, two antique appraisal sessions have been scheduled at the Center: **Saturday, June 19**, and **Saturday, July 24**, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Verbal appraisals will cost \$6 for one item and \$10 for 2 items (limit 2). Written insurance appraisals will cost an additional \$15 per item. For more information on any of these events, call 551-4888.

From The President . . .

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assuming that nothing but trouble is happening? That is prejudicial thinking on my part, and something I have to guard against. I would encourage you also to not jump to conclusions.

Our neighborhood has always been diverse—ethnically and economically - I've said this before. Rose Blumpkin's family lived in this neighborhood as Russian Jewish immigrants. Our housing stock has both large and small homes. We've always had both poor and working class/middle class. Diversity can be uncomfortable, but it has the opportunity to break down barriers. This is what we have that they don't have in the monochromatic, cookie cutter, suburban, west Omaha.

I would like our business district and park to bustle with people of all ethnic groups: white, Asian, black, Latino. It already does to a certain extent, because people of all ethnic groups and all economic brackets already live here. It's okay to feel uncomfortable, because cross-cultural contact is always outside our comfort zone. My life has been enriched by the multi-cultural relationships I've developed. I challenge you to not stay where you are, but to hold your breath, jump in, and hold on for an exciting ride to the future!

by Ron Frey

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

The GPNA Nominating Committee will place the following slate of candidates in nomination for election as officers for 2004-2005: **President: Ron Frey**
Vice-President: Cynthia Shuck **Recording Secretary: Kate O'Brien**
Treasurer: Vicki Frey. The election will be held at the general meeting on **June 3rd**. Only current members are eligible to vote.



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 |