



Gifford Park's Pride

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

June 2005

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Neighborhood Scan Seminar Scheduled For June 18

Maybe you have a concern about housing quality in our neighborhood. Have you observed properties that have significantly contributed to the decline of our neighborhood? Do you want to learn about available resources to help low income or elderly with housing issues? Or are you curious as to what constitutes a code violation? Then join us for the **Gifford Park Neighborhood Scan Seminar on Saturday, June 18, 8:30 am to 10:30 am at Creighton University Medical Center, Dining Room D.**

Dr. Russ Smith from the **University of Nebraska at Omaha** will lead the session. He will demonstrate the use of the "pocket PC" and will train us on how to evaluate our housing stock, based on the housing code. We would like to form teams who could then help in a scanning project for the entire Gifford Park Neighborhood.

This scan will help us understand the quality of our neighborhood housing stock, provide tools for education and grant opportunities, and will give us a basis to communicate back to neighborhood property owners on our findings. You must RSVP to **Ron Frey 344-0757**, or **Chris Foster 342-0757** by **June 11**. Dr. Smith needs the names of the participants in order to program the PC's and prepare for the session. Hope to see you there!

Summer's Here . . . And So Is Music, Fun, and Entertainment In Gifford Park!



Music In the Park - Friday, June 10
7 to 8 p.m.

Show Wagon - Tuesday, June 21
Gravy Dippers Concert: 6 to 7 p.m.
Youth Talent Competition: 7:30 p.m.

Next Meeting
Thursday, June 2
7:00 P.M.

Guest Speakers:
Representatives from the
Northeast Precinct

Ice Cream Social

Election of 2005-2006 Officers

Creighton University
Medical Center
Morrison Seminar Room

[Note: No July Meeting!]

Will Walk For Chips & Salsa

The next neighborhood walk of the season will be held **Friday, June 3, at 7 p.m.**; meet at **33rd & California** in front of **California Tacos**. After the walk **Brad Bogard** is offering **FREE** chips & salsa and soft drink for all who participate. We will provide gloves and bags for anyone interested in picking up litter along the walk. This is a great opportunity to meet new neighbors, get some exercise, and show your support for our neighborhood. We usually walk about 45 minutes to an hour.

We had about 18 people participate in the first Neighborhood Walk Friday night, May 6. Northeast Precinct Lt **Rich Gonzalez** joined us as we walked through Gifford Park to the Community Garden through the business district (including an interesting tour of the **Shelterbelt Theater**) and back to the park. For more information, call 342-6006.

GPNA OFFICERS**PRESIDENT**

Ron Frey 344-0757

VICE PRESIDENT

Cynthia Shuck 556-2090

RECORDING SECRETARY

Kate O'Brien 496-8419

TREASURER

Vicki Frey 344-0757

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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

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PARKING VIOLATIONS

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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

From The President . . .

Downtown redevelopment is increasing the housing pressure in the downtown area. Gallup built a new headquarters at the riverfront. First National increased their profile with a new tower. Union Pacific consolidated employees into a new headquarters. Creighton University is aggressively working on its master plan. While the Qwest Center and the new Holland Performing Arts Center won't be large centers of employment, they serve to increase attention to the downtown area.

With housing needs come solutions. A recent article in the World-Herald detailed all the building renovations happening downtown. In addition to the Brandeis building and the Paxton, there are also new condo developments emerging on Leavenworth, near the Durham Western Heritage Museum. One only hopes that someone will rescue the old Union Pacific building and find a quality use for it.

In this climate we received news from our neighbor to the south, Mutual of Omaha. They plan a 90 million dollar investment in condominiums and shops on the southeast corner of 33rd & Dodge. That is right at our front door and can bring a number of new residents and customers to our area.

This dovetails with our desire, as a neighborhood, to help people rediscover living in the city. But how can we ride the coat tails? What can we do to see our housing stock improve, to have a healthy real estate market and a thriving neighborhood?

Our short-term goals are very simple. We have been seeking funding to implement gateway features at 30th & California and 33rd & Dodge, to introduce our neighborhood to those outside. Mutual of Omaha is very interested in seeing a Gifford Park gateway at 33rd & Dodge to complement their development. We also will be embarking on a street tree-planting project over the next two years to beautify our streets.

But to have real change is going to take vision, vigilance, and investment. Vision asks, what are the possibilities? When we look at the variety of homes, we have to see potential even in the tiny shotgun house. We have to market that vision to everyone: realtors, bankers, employers, landlords, and potential homeowners. We have to convince them that these properties are worth significant investment.

Vigilance was the motivation that initially created this neighborhood association. Public safety, nuisance enforcement, and code issues are the proverbial holes in the dike that we need to plug with as many fingers as possible. I've had some who expressed concern about our desire to scan the entire neighborhood. But we have to consider the cost of not taking action against significant code violation. A neighborhood isn't static; it is a living organism. If serious disease isn't addressed it can endanger its viability.

Investment. What more can I say? It is unpredictable and unwieldy. It doesn't come when you want it and it is hard to control when it comes. Quality investment never comes when there is no vision and no vigilance. If we don't promote a clear picture of what could be and don't take care of our back yard, then we won't capture the quality investment we seek. If the perceptions of our neighborhood don't change and money flows to other neighborhoods besides our own, we will have no one to blame but ourselves. Blame is passive and we can't afford, at this stage, to be passive. We have to be the ones to take ownership of our future.

I'm nearing the end of my term of office. Some could argue that nothing is different than before, we're no better off. Maybe that's the case as I'm only

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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.

Report From The State Capitol

My first legislative session is rapidly coming to a close so I wanted to update you on what has been going on in your Legislature.

The end of the session has been very busy with late nights as we try to get as many bills heard before adjournment after 90 days. The end of the session has been dominated by consideration of the 2005-07 Biennial State Budget which totals \$6.1 billion. This includes a 9% increase in state aid to education. We got good economic news this year with revenues running better than previously projected.

We are currently working on a methamphetamine bill that would restrict access to over-the-counter cold medications that are used to make methamphetamine. The use of this very addictive drug is a growing problem in Nebraska. The Legislature spent many hours working on a couple of economic incentive bills to create more jobs in Nebraska. One priority of mine is that businesses that receive these tax breaks provide affordable health insurance for these new jobs. I support the provisions of this legislation that provides more transparency for the public about where these state incentives are going and what kind of jobs are being created.

Another economic incentive bill that has been of interest to me is LB 500, the Entertainment and Tourism Development Act. This bill has been mentioned as a possible tool for the construction of a downtown baseball stadium for the Omaha Royals. I offered an amendment that prohibits any entity using this tax break from charging for parking. I feel strongly that taxpayers should not have to pay more money to park in a facility they helped pay for; it is just a matter of fairness.

Finally, I want to thank all of the students that sent art work to be displayed in my office in the State Capitol during this semester. I heard many wonderful compliments about the quality of the work. The schools that provided art work were Dundee, Washington, J.P. Lord, UNO Child Care and Central High School. I am looking forward to more art work next session.

by Senator Gwen Howard

New Officers To Be Elected

The GPNA Nominating Committee will place the following slate of candidates in nomination for election as officers for 2005-2006:

President - Cynthia Shuck
Vice-President - Dan Bodmann
Recording Secretary - Diane Kaye
Treasurer - Kate O'Brien

The election will be held at the general meeting on **June 2**. Only current members are eligible to vote.

The GPNA would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to the 2004-2005 officers for their dedication and hard work on behalf of the neighborhood: **Ron & Vicki Frey, Cynthia Shuck, and Kate O'Brien.**

For City Services, Information, or Complaints

Call:

Mayor's Action Office

444-5555

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

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

Beginning June 13 - August 4

Cost: Free!

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!**



**Happy
Father's
Day!**



**Fly The Flag Proudly On
Flag Day - June 14**



Community Garden 2005 Season Kickoff A "Blooming" Event

A brief shower was the only thing interrupting activities at our **Community Garden Season Opening Event** held Saturday, May 7th, at 35th & Cass St. Hands-on activities for everyone included: birdhouse building lead by **Bob Hutton**, music which included **Ivy Dow** playing flute and **Christine Pane** playing violin, face-painting (and painting rocks and birdhouses) with help from **Dana Carlton-Flint**, **Tyffaney Slayden** and **Gwen Howard**, "Ask the Master Gardener" performed by **Kate O'Brien**, plant & seed giveaway, and refreshments. Also **Kate (496-8419)** took registrations for the Youth Garden program (see more information on page 6). Thanks also to everyone who brought refreshments, including **Great Harvest Bread**. For more information on the community garden project, call **Chris 342-6006**, **Cynthia 556-2090**, or **Annemarie 342-1340**.

by *Chris Foster*



A few raindrops did little to dampen the spirit of this young gardener. Lucia Carlson, daughter of Steve and Rose Carlson, gets ready to do some serious shoveling with her trusty dump truck.

Volunteers Build 60 Raised Garden Beds

On Saturday, April 30, about a dozen volunteers built 60 raised garden beds measuring 2 ½ ft x 2 ½ ft by 6 in. Many thanks to **Micklin Lumber** for giving the GPNA a great deal on cedar boards, brackets and screws – and they cut the lumber to the size we needed. The beds are already being used in the Community Garden Youth Program. Also thanks to **Mary Liberty** who painted and stamped our garden plot signs - nice job! The GPNA thanks **Indian Creek Nursery** for a great deal on a large amount of planting soil for additional gardening where we recently removed part of the driveway. And we also want to thank **Mulhall's Nursery** for donating seven flats of annuals for the garden.

by *Chris Foster*

Thank You, Mr. President

As Gifford Park newsletter editor, it seems like I've been through about the same number of "presidents" as Bob Hope had entertained in the White House. All of the presidents I have "served" under have been excellent to work with - and our current outgoing president is no exception.

I feel that **Ron Frey** has done a great job as president for the last two years. Being a leader of an organization like the GPNA is a tremendous responsibility that requires a huge investment of time and effort, and is often a thankless job since you can't make everybody happy all of the time. Ron accepted the challenge and worked very hard toward the goal of making our neighborhood a better place to live, work, and play. During his term he was instrumental in getting a number of grants for the GPNA, attended dozens of meetings with city officials, police personnel, and business leaders, organized and participated in nearly all of the GPNA's activities, contributed articles to the newsletter, and lined up speakers for the general meetings. He "got the ball rolling" with Destination Midtown and was a key player in the development of the strategic planning for beautifying the neighborhood. (Not to be overlooked is the contribution of the GPNA's "first lady", Ron's wife, **Vicki**. She has also worked hard on a variety of projects, such as the Holiday Banquet, Caroling Party, T-shirt sales, and hospitality committees.)

Thanks for all you have done for the neighborhood, Ron. The Gifford Park neighborhood *is* a better place because of you.

by *Sue Wilwerding*



Volunteers help prepare the raised beds for the Community Garden Youth Program by filling the frames with dirt. Each participant will have his or her own bed for growing vegetables and will be responsible for taking care of it.

What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . .

Congratulations to 2005 Marian High School graduate **Kendra Zardetto-Smith**, who was awarded the \$5000 **Paul V. Shirley Jr. Hitchcock Carrier Scholarship** from the **Omaha World-Herald**. Kendra has been a World-Herald carrier in the Gifford Park area for several years. Kendra's parents are **Andrea Zardetto-Smith** and **Robert Smith**.

The **New York International Fringe Festival** has chosen **ANKHST**, a play by Gifford Park resident, playwright **Clarinda Karpov**, to be included in this year's curated Festival. The Festival will take place in New York City from August 12 – 28, 2005.

The **Field Club Homeowners League** is sponsoring a Home Tour on **June 18th** from **11 a.m. to 5 p.m.** There will be eight homes on the tour; the **Westminster Presbyterian Church** and the **Ford Conservation Center** will also have two or three gardens open. Food will also be available for purchase on the church grounds during the event. Participants can either walk from one house to another or ride **Ollie the Trolley**. The price is **\$8.00** per person; anyone between ages 12 and 18 should be accompanied by an adult – no children under 12. Tickets can be purchased only at each home; funds raised by this event will be used for historic lighting in the neighborhood. For more information, call **Val Himes** at **578-7230**.

Wanted: People who love perennial flowers and who love Gifford Park. Gifford Park has a park sign on 33rd Street with an overgrown bed, just waiting for some tender loving care. Could you be someone who could help brainstorm as to the best low maintenance solution that will provide beauty, enjoyment, and pride to our park sign? Would you be willing to "get sweaty" to bring something beautiful to life? If so, please call **Ron** at **344-0757** or **Chris** at **342-6006**.

Needed: We are looking for several large planters to place on the corners of **33rd & California St.** We would like to plant some flowers and do a small beautification project in the business district. Call **342-6006** if you have ideas.

Don't forget - no GPNA general or executive board meeting in July!

Some Observations . . .

Well, the May GPNA newsletter article from the president asked what would the neighborhood be like if there was no neighborhood association, followed by some interesting subject matter. Now I just happen to wonder if some members of the Association are content to wonder what happened, when it happened, or even why it happened. Let's see, I wonder, **who** made it happen?

I find it discouraging to have an event planned, such as a short walk or a meeting, and have such a small turnout. Yes I do find it encouraging at our cleanups to see people helping in whatever way they might and some are not even members of our group but willing to help in some small way that makes it all happen.

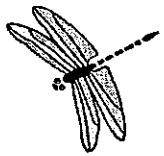
I have heard some general comments on our efforts to better our Association, neighborhood, and business district. My statement is in general, why not attend our meetings and present your concerns to the group? If there is concern about the general meeting subject, express your ideas or feelings at the meeting where we as a group can address the issues.

Yes, I was very happy to see the turnout at the garden on Saturday, May 7; a good time was had by all. Who would have thought 21 new birdhouses are in the area now! Thanks to all of you helpers - I believe it was a success!

by Bob Hutton

Nebraska Homestead Exemption

Are you interested in getting a reduction in your property taxes? If you are 65 years or older and are permanently disabled, or a widow(er) of certain veterans, you could be eligible for a reduction in your property taxes. For individuals 65 and older, your income must be less than \$27,351 if you are single or less than \$32,251 if married to qualify. **Destination Midtown, United Way of the Midlands, UNO's School of Social Work and Volunteers Intervening for Equity (VIE)** are partnering to provide free assistance on the Homestead Exemption applications in June. Free assistance will be available from **6 to 8 p.m.** on the first three **Thursdays in June**. The sites are: **First Central Congregational Church** at **421 So. 36th St.** on **June 2**; **St. Cecilia's Grade School Library** at **3869 Webster St.** on **June 9**; and **First Presbyterian Church** at **216 So. 34th St.** on **June 16**. Please bring any un-reimbursed medical expenses including insurance premiums, your 2004 tax return, 1099 forms, and a completed Nebraska Homestead Exemption Application (call **444-7185** for an application). For further information, contact **Pam Roberts** at **444-6617**.



Gifford Park Neighborhood Youth Garden Program Schedule



FREE!

When: June 11 & 25

July 9 & 23

August 6 & 20

Time: 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

**Where: Gifford Park Community Garden
35th and Cass St.**

We will be gardening and learning together!

From The President . . .

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human and I have flaws and shortcomings as anyone else has. But I don't feel that we've been static. Every action that you have contributed as a member of our organization during my term and throughout the course of our history has had a profound impact on our quality of life.

I'm proud to offer our 2005 candidates to you, knowing the contributions they have made. Cynthia, Kate and Dan have been integral to the success of the community garden and I am excited that they are taking the mantle of responsibility for the future. I will continue to work on implementing the grants we have received.

Our actions as a neighborhood association have created a sense of neighborhood that had been lost or obscured before GPNA existed. I believe that bond is getting stronger. We have to believe in ourselves before we can convince anyone else that our neighborhood is worth building into. Won't you get involved to help bring the future to the present?

by Ron Frey



Join The GPNA Today! Membership Year Begins June 1



GIFFORD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION P.O.Box 31462 Omaha, NE 68131-0462 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 |



TOOL LENDING HOTLINE

Chris 342-6006

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

