



Gifford Park's Pride

Gifford Park Neighborhood: A Great Place to Live, Work, Learn and Play
www.giffordparkomaha.org

December 2007

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Holiday Activities Abound In Gifford Park Neighborhood

The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association will once again sponsor a holiday tree for the whole neighborhood to share. The tree will be anchored in the **Gifford Park Community Garden** at **35th & Cass Streets** and strung with lights. The GPNA desperately needs your help with the rest of the tree trimmings! You are encouraged to stop by the Community Garden anytime to visit our Tannenbaum and place an ornament or two on the tree. These adornments could be old, new, borrowed, or homemade. Consider donating an old decoration your family no longer wants or buying a new one just for Gifford Park. Write your name and "Holiday 2007" on it, and we will remember where it came from year after year. Handmade ornaments are an excellent addition, as well as edible treats for hungry winter birds. The tree will be ceremoniously dedicated at the **Holiday Caroling & Tree Lighting Event** on **December 13th** at **5 PM**. The tree will proudly stand through the first of the year; ornaments will be saved and returned for the 2008 holiday season.

Event participants are asked to park and meet at **Via Christe Assisted Living Community, 36th & California Sts.**, at **4:45 PM**. Everyone will then proceed to the Community Garden for the festive lighting ceremony and caroling with a choir accompaniment at **5:00 PM**. At **5:30PM**, the group will reconvene at Via Christie for hot apple cider, holiday treats, and more caroling for the residents! Donations of holiday goodies (cookies, candies, breads, desserts, etc.) are needed for the post-caroling warm-up - please drop them off at Via Christie before 5:00 PM. For more information, call **Chris (342-6006)** or **Dana (850-9611)**. Bring your holiday spirit and join in the fun!

Also, don't forget to start preparing for the annual **Gifford Park Neighborhood Holiday Lighting Contest**. Spruce up your home with seasonal décor! Judging will take place on the evening of **Thursday, December 20th**. Any residential location within the GPNA boundaries is eligible to win prizes. Winners will be notified and posted in the January newsletter.



**"Branching Out"
19th Annual
Holiday Banquet
For GPNA Members
(Reservations Required)**

Thursday, December 6

Note: Earlier Time This Year

6:00 PM - Reception

6:30 PM - Dinner

Location: Betic Dining Room

**Hosted by:
Creighton University
Medical Center**

**Please bring a canned food
donation to support the Food Bank**

**Note: No December Executive
Meeting
No January General Meeting**

Legislative Update

According to **State Senator Gwen Howard**, the Nebraska Legislature will convene again the first week of January for a 60-day session. She has requested that neighborhood residents contact her with comments or suggestions for possible legislation. She can be reached at **471-2723, P.O. Box 94604 State Capitol, Lincoln, NE 68509**, or at ghoward@leg.ne.gov

Also included in her communication to neighborhood associations were the results of her annual district survey. These have been forwarded for posting on the GPNA website and should be available for viewing soon. She expressed her gratitude to those who took the time to complete the survey, and she wishes everyone a happy holiday season.

GPNA OFFICERS

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Open

VICE PRESIDENT

Stuart Shell 216-1235

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Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

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Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

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Dana Freeman 850-9611

Improve Comfort and Green Your Home

This time of year cold winds instinctively make us put on warmer clothes and button up our coats. But we often forget to button up our homes too. Hidden air leaks cause some of the largest heat losses in older homes. In the average home, small openings in the outer shell of a house account for almost 30% of total heat lost.

A green home uses less energy. Buttoning up your home helps you use energy more efficiently, which results in burning fewer tons of coal and therms of natural gas. This in turn reduces the amount of outdoor air pollution generated at the power facility and also reduces the amount of greenhouse gas emissions which contribute to global climate change.

A typical older home can save over \$100 each year just by eliminating some of the major sources of air leakage. With a small investment of time and money, you can do your part to protect our environment, be more comfortable all winter long, and save a significant amount on your heating bills.

Two major sources of air leakage in older homes are from fireplaces and attic access.

Fireplaces

Fireplaces are designed to let hot air out of your home whether you are using it or not. When not in use, they act as an "open window" letting heat escape and drafts in.

Step 1. Close the damper when not in use. Most dampers will not create a very tight seal, but will reduce the size of that "open window".

Step 2. Minimize the remaining air leakage around a leaky damper.

Option 1. If the fireplace is never or rarely used, consider installing an easily removable fireplace draftstopper. Available on-line or available to order through some Ace Hardware stores.

Cost: \$60

Savings: \$20-\$75 each year (depending on how leaky your fireplace damper is to begin with)

Option 2. If you regularly use the fireplace consider installing tight fitting glass doors and seal the edges of the new installation with high-temperature caulk.

Cost: over \$200

Savings: \$10-\$65 each year

Step 3. Enjoy improved comfort and increased savings.

Attic Access

Attic access panels need to be treated the same way you would treat doors to the outside. For attic hatches, insulate the top of the board with at least R-30 of rigid foam insulation, then seal it with weather-stripping. This applies whether you have an access panel in your ceiling or in a finished second story dormer with attic access through the kneewall. Each access point to the attic needs to be well insulated and made as air-tight as possible.

Step 1. Identify all access areas to the attic.

Step 2. Weatherstrip and insulate each panel. Remember to put weatherstripping along the bottom edge of the door or panel.

Cost: Less than \$20 per access point

Savings: \$10-\$40 each year

Button Up Your Home Some More...

1. Install foam gaskets behind all light switch, outlet and cable wall plates on *both* exterior and interior walls.
2. Caulk around all window, door, and baseboard molding—where the trim meets the wall and/or floor.

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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 mailed to P.O. Box 31462 Omaha, NE 68131; please include your name and phone number. Contact Sue Wilwerding (342-2795) or Chris Foster (342-6006) for information regarding the newsletter.

What's New, Pussycat?



The holidays are here! A special time of year brings special treats and decorations into our homes. But many of these are poisonous to our cats and dogs.

Chocolate must NEVER be shared with cats and dogs; it can derange their nervous system and is easily fatal.

For dangerous fruits and flowers, I quote Anitra Frazier's superb "The New Natural Cat," 1990. (Thanks, Sandy Jones, for the recommendation!)

"A staggering number of plants are poisonous [to cats].

Poinsettias head the list, with azaleas and dieffenbachia running a close second. Here is a list of some others: philodendron, ivy, chrysanthemums, mistletoe berries, rhubarb leaves, cherry, (fruit, bark, stones, and leaves), iris leaves and roots, most bulbs (such as daffodil, jonquil, narcissus, and Star of Bethlehem), poison ivy, privet, oak (acorns, shoots, and leaves), mushrooms, oleander, sumac, sweet pea, and rosary pea (seeds and pods), [lily of the valley,] uncooked potatoes (eye and sprouts), and apricot and peach pits."

Remember to "weed out" these plants at florists, when shopping for homes with cats!

Please note that onions, seeded grapes (seedless are okay), and avocado stones are also poisonous to dogs.

Aspirin is fine for dogs, but poisonous to cats.

In addition to poinsettias, ivy, mistletoe, etc., Frazier discusses other dangers of the season. "Angel hair cuts and can be lethal if swallowed or if a tiny piece is inhaled into the cat's lungs. Tinsel is just as dangerous as any string or rubber band. But most dangerous of all is the water that the Christmas tree stands in. The piney fragrance may invite your cats to drink, but if they do they could die from it. So be sure to cover the Christmas tree stand in such a way that even the most determined pussycats could never get their tongues into the water."

Tiny or breakable ornaments—anything that can be swallowed—are hazards. Cats should never play unsupervised with string, shoelaces, rubber bands, ribbon, yarn, twist ties, tin-foil, corks, cellophane, etc., all dangerous if swallowed.

As always antifreeze should be cleaned up and stored away from animals and children, as it is attractively sweet and a tiny amount will be lethal—as is phenol, contained in bathroom cleansers and deodorizers like Lysol and PineSol.

Look for safe holiday treats specially made for dogs and cats, or offer them their favorite safe snacks. (When in doubt about safe treats, ask a vet.)

Rescue an animal or adopt one from a shelter—but don't give pets as gifts without involving the recipients and getting a commitment to care for the creature; and remind them that cute baby animals grow up into adults. (Being given as unwanted or neglected gifts, is the way many animals end up in shelters in the first place.)

Want to make holidays bright for stray and feral cats? Food, water, and a dog-house type shelter (or wind-break of hay) will help them through the winter. Safe and happy holidays to all!

The Pet Safety and Protection Act would make it illegal for laboratories to buy dogs and cats from Class B dealers who broker household pets stolen, or obtained from "free to good home" ads, by "bunchers". Contact your senators (S.714) or congressperson (H.R. 1280).

by Clarinda Karpov 553-3736

Green Home . . . continued from page 2

3. Seal any plumbing penetration through the wall such as drains under sinks and water supply lines under sinks.
4. Seal around the plumbing stack where it passes through an insulated ceiling.

For more information:

Search for "Southface Factsheets" on the internet and browse through the "Building Envelope" factsheets.

by Daniel Lawse

Another Spook-tacular Event!



The 13th Annual PKA Fraternity/GPNA Haunted House was held on Friday, October 26. Thanks to GPNA Volunteers **Jan Franks, Bob & Virginia Hutton, Chris & Sallie Foster, Christine Pane,** and **Clarinda Karpov** (pictured above) for helping out at the event. Thanks also to the volunteers who made goodies. **Stuart Shell** and **Dana Freeman** did a great job calling volunteers to donate treats and help with crowd control. Once again, the weather was great that evening, although the turnout was lower than in previous years. And finally, a big thank you to **Creighton University's PKA Fraternity** for hosting the event. Great job, guys!

What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . .

There's huge energy at the bike shop lately. As it's getting colder, kids continue to stop in during open hours to work on their bikes and help out at the shop. We've weatherized the building for winter and are scheduling events for next year. We're increasing our Earn-A-Bike program, developing a rental bike fleet, re-branding the shop, and building a workshop series for cyclists. If you're interested in helping to develop programs for next year please call **216-1235** or email omahabike@gmail.com. Or bring down your bicycle for a tune-up. We're open Saturdays, 12-4pm. The Community Bicycle Shop Omaha is a non-profit, volunteer organization with the mission: to provide a safe, positive environment for learning the basics of bicycle mechanics, repairing and distributing bicycles, building community, and promoting cycling. Visit our website at www.omahabike.org

Our sincere condolences go out to GPNA members **Justin & Sandy Brown** and daughter **Logon** for the recent loss of Justin's mother, **She M. Brown**. She lived a very active life, loved animals, and spent a lot of time volunteering at 4 PAWS Animal Shelter in Harlan, IA. Justin and Sandy have been active volunteers in events including the community garden, neighborhood cleanups, hanging Christmas lights in the business district, newsletter delivery, block parties and others.

Trenton Erickson from the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension is hosting a landscaping workshop on **Sunday, December 9, from 2 to 5 PM** at **Creighton U. Med Center, 601 North 30th St., in the Morrison Seminar Room**. The purpose of the workshop is to share new ideas in landscaping practices, along with information on stormwater retention and dealing with lead in the soil. Trenton is providing refreshments and even prizes, including a rain barrel and a salad garden growing bed. RSVP to **Stuart** at **216-1235** or sshell@rdgusa.com by **December 3rd**.

Neighborhood Builders Scheduled For February 2008

Neighborhood Builders is a joint community effort led by the **Neighborhood Center for Greater Omaha, the University of Nebraska at Omaha**, and various neighborhood associations, businesses, and private citizens. The goal of Neighborhood Builders is to help build stronger, healthier neighborhoods in Douglas, Sarpy, and Pottawattamie counties by assisting in developing positive leadership. Participants are persons interested in making neighborhoods safe places in which to live, work, and raise families.

Neighborhood Builders 2008 will meet at the **Douglas/Sarpy County Extension, 8015 West Center Road** on the following **Saturdays** starting at **8:00 a.m.:** **February 2, 9, 16, & 23.**

Community leaders, local educators, business persons, and others will facilitate the session blocks. Topic Blocks will include: Assets in Your Neighborhood, Planning Your Passion & Funding the Way, Social Advocacy, and Meeting Matters & Meeting Manners. Sessions include a continental breakfast and lunch.

If you are interested in this program and would like a registration form, or have further questions, please call **Mark Simmons** at **561-7575**. The deadline for application is **Friday, January 18, 2008**. Class size is limited and registration is on a first come, first served basis.



Gifford Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA)

P.O. Box 91462, Omaha, NE 68131-0462



Membership Application

*Note: The GPNA membership year runs from June 1 through May 31

Today's Date: _____

Type of Membership: Single (\$10.00) Family (\$15.00) Business (\$25.00)

If Business, Name of Business: _____

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES I am interested in helping out with... (Circle Interests):

Chairperson	Newsletter Delivery	Community Garden	Easter Egg Hunt
Membership	Book Club	Youth Garden	Boiling Cleanup
Social Activities	History	Tree Planting	Tall Cleanup
School Liaison	Wash Group	Youth Activities	Neighborhood Walks
Tool Lending	Cal. Committee	Lawn Program	Holiday Banquet

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