



Gifford Park's Pride

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

April 2016

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

27th Annual Easter Egg Hunt Highlights

Well we were bound to have bad weather one of these years...this was the year! Rainy, cool weather put a damper but did not stop our 27th Annual Easter Egg Hunt, held Saturday, March 26 in Gifford Park. We estimated we still had a little over 100 neighborhood children who participated. This was the eighth year in a row an anonymous dentist donated dental care bags for all the children. Volunteers setup all the market tents which included 5 each 10'x20' and 3 each 10'x10' tents. Unfortunately one of our 10'x10' tents broke while being taken down, but all in all our tents saved the day! Volunteers also picked up litter and in the park before putting out candy, treats, and other prizes in the grass. We had two age groups: 0-4 year olds, and 5-12 year olds. Even with the wet conditions, the children were real troopers and had a great time. There were many volunteers and donors who helped put forth extra effort – once again Darryl Hutton did a great job getting MANY donations from a variety of people and businesses; Jan Franks, her grandchildren Brittany Rubek, and great granddaughter Arianna, organized the candy. The Slayden family (Betty, Tiffaney, Kayleen, and their families) were a huge help as always. Justine Stanley did another tremendous job as our hoppin' Easter bunny giving out treats to youngsters, and she was joined by her sisters Crystal and Witney. In keeping with tradition Senator Sara Howard and her mom Gwen came again and donated cute stuffed bunnies. We also had Police Officers Cody Baines and Ryan Arthur attend to greet children and volunteers. Many thanks to all those who donated time, money, candy, and other items for the event: Fremont Machine, Whelan Law Office, Kilgore Law Office, Discount Laundry,

Spring Cleanup

Saturday April 16

9 am - 2 pm

Neighborhood wide,
Trash Compactors at Gifford Park

(details on page 7)

Urban Village, California Tacos, California Bar, KNJ Grocery, Selenas Market, Ideal Hardware, Paul Mileris, Bob & Virginia Hutton, Jim Kyler, Terry & Sue Wilwerding, Harley Sheldon, Jessyka Sheldon, Milan Kohrell, Adrian Petrescu & Marie Hélène Andre, Isabel Petrescu, Paul Pellerito family, Sean Whelan, Brandon & Melinda Dockum, Bryant & Angie Pasho, Nancy Gaarder, Jackie Foster, Chris Foster, and the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association. Please support the above businesses for their contributions.



more photos on page 11

2016 GPNA Officers

Marie H el ene Andr e, President

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Eric Purcell, Vice President

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847-477-2156 | omaha_beef@hotmail.com

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Andy Wessel, At-Large

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Martin Janousek, Business Rep

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Chris Foster, Landlord Rep

402-290-8187 | foster3413@cox.net

Opportunities – Contacts

GPNA General Meetings

Marie H el ene Andr e 402-769-9183

Community Bike Project

Charles Mitchell 402-309-0777

Community Garden/Youth Garden

Chris Foster 402-290-8187

Adventure Playground

Teal Gardner 402-875-1896

teal.gardner@gmail.com

Teen Market Garden

Cynthia Shuck 402-556-2090

dalilabush@cox.net

Gifford Park Market

Martin Janousek 402-558-4070

Yates Community Center

Susan Mayberger 402-557-2431

susan.mayberger@ops.org

Youth Soccer

Eric Purcell 402-719-5108

Youth Tennis

Chris Foster 402-290-8187

Spring Cleanup

Luther Larson 402-616-9350

From the Heart of Africa to the Heart of Omaha, via the heart of Europe... A journey to Citizenship

By Marie H el ene Andr e

Like Frank Bogard -who built the California Pharmacy, now the California Tacos & More- I come from Belgium, the Heart of Europe, and I am now American.

I was born and raised in Rwanda, the Heart of Africa, where my parents worked as teachers. I grew up there with my two sisters and my brother, in an international and multicultural environment (there were up to 11 different nationalities represented among the 45 tenth-graders at the Belgian School in Kigali, Rwanda!). When I turned 18 and finished high school, I started a new life: I returned to Belgium -my 'home' country I only knew from summer vacations-, I started College... and I discovered winter and snow! I have a MA in English and Dutch as foreign languages, and one in European Studies. I worked in Belgium for a couple of years, first as a language teacher in a middle/high school, and then as an administrative assistant in a hotel-restaurant.

In the summer of 1995, my life took a new turn when I found a teaching job in Brazil. I flew to a new continent to start yet another new life, to discover a new culture, a new language... I loved it! Unfortunately, it was not a stable job, and after a couple of years, I was back in Belgium. Once again, I was looking for a job. I started teaching languages to adults. I later worked for the European Commission organizing leadership workshops and language classes for the staff of the European Institutions (the European equivalent of the U.S. Federal Government, 22 official languages at the time).

The very first time I came to the United States was in 2002, when I visited a friend from fifth grade who then lived and worked in New York... I visited (among others) the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, symbols of the openness the United States has shown over time to accept immigrants from all over the world.

Summer 2007: yet another turn in my life! Before starting a new job as a training manager in a financial institution in Brussels, I came to Austin TX for the wedding of a Brazilian friend of mine with a Texan professor and, at that wedding, I met my future husband. After that first trip to Texas, I came back regularly to visit Adrian. Every time, we traveled to different states and visited various National Parks (from California to Massachusetts, the list is too long for this article :).

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Editor's note: If you have news of interest to the Gifford Park Neighborhood, we encourage you to submit an article for the monthly newsletter. Editorials are subject to approval by the GPNA Executive Board. Please include your contact information. Articles may be submitted by email to brent.lubbert@gmail.com.

Volunteering at Adventure Playground

By: Teal Gardner

Have you been interested in volunteering at the Sallie Foster Adventure Playground? Maybe you've become excited by the movement to help support children's free and open play, and wish to become involved? **We are in need of adults who are interested in taking an active role in supporting free play at our unique playspace through volunteering two hours of their time on Saturdays this summer.**

We are holding two special sessions for new and returning volunteers in April. The first will cover the basics of Playwork or, how to be an effective adult volunteer on the Adventure Playground and anywhere else in life where your goal is to support children's free play. The second session will be a Volunteer Orientation, which will introduce all volunteers to the space and the nitty-gritty on how to staff the Adventure Playground! These sessions will provide new and returning volunteers with important information on how AP will run this summer.

Session 1: Playworker training. April 17, 2016. 2-4 PM, at the Adventure Playground.

Session 2: Volunteer Orientation. April 24, 2016. 2-4 PM, at the Adventure Playground.

If neither of these dates work for you, but you would like to be involved, please get in touch. I will be running orientations and trainings throughout the summer as new volunteers arise.

The Adventure Playground is also always in need of more loose parts materials for play, especially as we prepare to open for a new season of play! Please get in touch with me if you wish to donate any of the following items:

Nails, Small Hammers, Costumes, Tubes, Fabric, Safety Pins, Rope, String, Tape, Markers, Silver Bubble Wrap, Pulleys, Fun Hats, Zip Ties, Spray Bottles, Binoculars, Hay Bales, Tea Set, Acrylic Paint, Paintbrushes & more (use your imagination!)



The Sallie Foster Adventure Playground is located in the Gifford Park Community Garden. The AP will open in May- look for details about our grand opening for the summer! Contact me, Teal Gardner, at teal.gardner@gmail.com with any questions or inquiries.

One additional note on the Adventure Playground: I want to thank Brandon Sperry and Megan Sperry for their incredible contribution of donations to the playground. Last night they invited me over to see some donations they'd gotten together- and I wasn't prepared to find EVERYTHING from the dream list of tools and materials sitting in bags, ready to be taken to the playground. Their decision to make an investment like that in a community resource really speaks to their character as a family. I am beyond impressed, and incredibly excited to start the playground season off right with the boost of new resources! A heartfelt THANK YOU to the Sperrys, and all of the families & individuals who have contributed time, energy, and your resources to the continuing growth of the Adventure Playground.

From the Heart of Africa to the Heart of Omaha, via the heart of Europe... A journey to Citizenship

Continued from page 2

Adrian moved from Texas to Pennsylvania and then to Belgium. In January 2011, he got a job at Bellevue University and moved to Omaha. I came to Omaha for the first time at Easter, and it is at the Spirit of Nebraska Wilderness Park in downtown that we married at the end of the same year. I returned to Belgium and, in December 2011, my immigration journey to the United States started, as the spouse of an American citizen: Adrian filed for my Green Card, which would allow me to come and work legally in the United States. The process is long and expensive. You learn to be patient: you can't enter the United States anymore until you get the Green Card. My file was one inch thick, with official documents and a whole album of pictures of our story, to prove our marriage in good faith.

2012 was a hectic year: while waiting for the approval for my Green Card, I started an MBA online with Bellevue University, I worked full time in Belgium, and I started preparing my international move! After 11 months of waiting, I finally received my visa and I arrived in Omaha in November of 2012, with just two (big!) suitcases and a carry-on. All the other boxes would be sent later, when we would move to the house Adrian had just found in Gifford Park Neighborhood: he had told me it was just a matter of weeks to move in... little did we know it would take another 10 months!

2013 was no less hectic than 2012: I was finally in Omaha with my husband, but we didn't have the house yet, so we moved twice that year! I finished my MBA at Bellevue University, while getting accustomed to the 'American way of life' (stores here are open 24/7?!...) and looking for a job. When we got the key to the house at the very end of August that year, we started working hard in it (it was a 'handyman special!'), and we discovered Gifford Park Neighborhood and its friendly residents.

We had a home, one we made our own with some painting and plumbing work. We soon realized we were in a great neighborhood: from the first days, we got support and advice from great neighbors.

It was time for me to find a job. I started volunteering as an English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL or ESL) teacher for the Literacy Center, but finding a job was hard, even if I have two Masters degrees from Belgium and an MBA from here, and a long and varied professional experience... I started working part time for Metropolitan Community College as an English instructor for adults at the end of the summer of 2014. I was back in an international environment, which I love!

As for the immigration process, after two years of my being in the United States with Adrian, we had to file again for the 'removal of condition': I had been married less than three years when I applied for my Green Card; it was time now to get an 'unconditioned' permanent resident card: another fee to pay, more forms to fill out, more documents to provide, another photo album... the government needs to know and check everything about you!



Community Garden peace pole celebrates our neighborhood's diversity by displaying "may peace prevail on earth" in six different languages.

continued on next page

2015: another year and another milestone in my life: I got a full time job as coordinator of the MCC Express Center, where we organize and offer GED and ESL classes for adult learners. Most importantly, it is time for me to apply for the citizenship! I will become American! Once again, I have to pay a fee, fill out a specific form that asks about my life since I arrived in the United States; I am not allowed to leave the country during this process. Once again, I have to provide documentation (but no pictures) ... this time though, it will be forever!

After sending the documents and having fingerprints and biometrics taken, I finally received the letter inviting me to the interview. The interview consists in questions about the forms and documents provided ('tell us about your story'), and a test about the knowledge of the English language (spoken and written), and the US government, history and civics (When was the Constitution written? What is the "rule of law"? Who signs bills to become laws? Etc.) From the 100 questions and answers, the candidate has to study, up to ten will be asked. As soon as the candidate provides six correct answers, reads one sentence and writes another sentence correctly, the test is over. It is not yet the end though... there is the official ceremony of the Oath. Some people will have to wait a few weeks, or a few months, depending on the date of the interview, or if they request a change of name. Patience is key again... I was lucky: I did not want to change my name and there was a ceremony the same afternoon.

On November 17, 2015, I became American: **I took the Oath of Allegiance** and I received a certificate of naturalization. It is a **once-in-a-lifetime event!** We were about 25 citizens from around the world, each one with their own story and their own path, renouncing allegiance to our original country to take an Oath of Allegiance and become American that day.

I am an American citizen now, with all the rights and responsibilities this implies. I have an American passport and I am allowed leave the country again. Like any other citizen, I have the right to vote and influence some decisions (voting

is a right here, contrary to Belgium, where it is a duty). I can also actively participate in the life of the community: you had elected me President of the GPNA the week before my naturalization!

I am an American citizen! I am a registered voter, and I will fulfill my duties the best I can.

Africa, Belgium, Brazil... Never had I thought I would once live and work in the United States... let alone become American! I am happy to live here with Adrian and Isabel (my 17-year-old stepdaughter who visits us from Detroit MI for vacation). I am very proud to be part of this community and to have the opportunity to help improve our lives, to have a job where I help mostly immigrants improve their English to better understand and integrate into our community, to become better citizens themselves.

It was a journey to get to Gifford Park Neighborhood, a place I now call home, thanks to the warm welcome we received, and to the respect for diversity and the openness to multiple cultures demonstrated here (and in Omaha)!



Get fresh and local vegetables, herbs and fruit every week of the summer from the Loess

Hills Collaborative CSA! We've partnered with Omaha Whole Living to provide a convenient pickup location in the Gifford Park neighborhood so your weekly bag of healthy food is only a short walk away.

For more details on how to join please visit our website

loesshillscsa.com

or pick up a flyer at Omaha Whole Living (521 N. 33rd St). Spring is coming!



Exhibiketon at Community Bike Project

Local artists provided art for fundraising event on Friday, March 18th.



Yates Community Center: A Place for Activity and Meetings

The Yates Building located at 3260 Davenport provides early childhood programming for students and parent involvement programming for migrant and refugee parents. In addition to this programming, Yates is also available to the Gifford Park Neighborhood to use for meetings and other activities. There is a gym and 8 classrooms available. The school has hosted a Financial Literacy Class sponsored by Creighton, community meetings and Citizenship classes on Saturday. If anyone in the Gifford Park Neighborhood is interested in using the space for programming, Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, sporting events, meetings, etc., they can contact Susan Mayberger, Building Administrator, at 402-557-2431 or susan.mayberger@ops.org to request a building permit. The building is open weekdays until 8:00 p.m. and Saturday mornings from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. for activities.

Gifford Park Free Soccer Camp

For: Youth (3 to 11 years old)

Dates: June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 July 6, 13

Where: Gifford Park (33rd & Cass St.)

Time: 6:30-7:30 PM

The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association is offering a FREE summer soccer camp and will provide goals, balls and instructors. Parents and others are welcome to help.

To be enrolled, YOU MUST complete the form shown below and return it to Eric Purcell 3152 Chicago St, Omaha, NE 68131. **Special prize for those who attend every session and demonstrate good sportsmanship.** There is limited space available so please be on time. Call (402) 719-5108 for more information.

SPRING CLEANUP - Saturday, April 16, 9am to 2pm



Neighborhood & Park Cleanup Trash Compactors in Gifford Park Membership & Donation Drive



- * Neighborhood volunteers will monitor the dumpsters (NO commercial hauling!)
- * Items **ACCEPTED**: furniture, bulky items, appliances, metal
- * Items **NOT ACCEPTED**: yardwaste, rocks, concrete, paint, hazardous & toxic material
- * **Toxic materials** (paint, oil, pesticides, chemicals) can be taken to the *Under the Sink* facility near 120th & I Streets
- * **Tree brush** vouchers will be available
- * **Tires** may be dropped off for **FREE** at St. Vincent DePaul (southeast corner 22nd & Leavenworth)
- * **Tires** will be accepted at Gifford Park site at \$1 each
- * **Appliances** containing freon (refrigerators, A.C.) will be accepted at Gifford Park site at \$10 each
- * Gifford Park Neighborhood Association members will get highest priority for hauling items
- * If you can help with our neighborhood cleanup or if you need help hauling, please call:

Luther 402-616-9350 Chris 402-290-8187 Eric 402-719-5108

Gifford Park Cleanup & Trimming with Phi Delta Theta Fraternity

On Saturday April 9th, over 40 members of the Creighton Phi Delta Theta Fraternity helped neighborhood volunteers with cleaning and trimming the park and two nearby alleys, making for a more inviting neighborhood.



Turner Park North Project

By: *Martin Janousek*

After years of conversations, neighborhood meetings, surveying residents, and neighborhood initiated meetings with the City of Omaha, residents were pleasantly surprised a few weeks ago to see work beginning on the bike trail extension along Turner Park North and 30th street. The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association has for years been advocating for a bike trail extension to connect our neighborhood with the city wide trail system. Having a bike trail is only one part of a bigger idea. Besides this new trail, the neighborhood has also been working to get the large pile of dirt moved on the north side of Turner Park North so an open field can be installed (see site plan on page 9). With more green space in the neighborhood, this open field could be a great place for our growing youth soccer program, Frisbee, and many other field activities. The attached drawing shows a before and after view of what this area could look like in the future. The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association Board has been meeting with city and philanthropic organizations and as things develop we'll keep you informed.



Vendor Meeting for Neighborhood Market

If you are a current or prospective vendor of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Market please attend the next informational meeting on Sunday, April 17th; 2-3pm at Omaha Whole Living (521 N 33RD ST). A market planning meeting held last month brought together new and returning vendors to talk about changes in market layout, schedule of the market and best ways to promote the market.

New Play, The Feast, Showing at Shelterbelt Theater

Shelterbelt Theatre, 3225 California Street, is pleased to announce their upcoming production of Celine Song's *The Feast*. The production runs April 15-May 8, 2016. Performances are Thursday/Friday/Saturday at 8pm and Sunday at 6pm (except for the May 8 performance at 2pm.) (\$15 general, \$12 students/seniors/TAG). Tickets are already on sale at www.shelterbelt.org (click box office), or boxoffice@shelterbelt.org or 402.341.2757. The performance on Thursday, April 21 will be a sign interpreted performance.

When all meat mysteriously turns to rot, ours becomes a world populated with reluctant vegetarians. Four hungry dinner guests impatiently await a latecomer to the table. As the hour grows late and stomachs begin to howl, the traces of civilization turn to decay. Sensual as it is grotesque, foul as it is funny, *The Feast* is a biting satire that serves up a heady repast straight from the kitchens of our darkest desires.

EXISTING SITE PLAN



SITE PLAN
TURNER PARK NORTH GREEN SPACE

PROPOSED SITE PLAN



Community Garden Update

By: Chris Foster

This is the 16th year of the Gifford Park Community Garden, located at 35th & Cass, and we are getting ready for the new planting season. Thanks to garden volunteers Maranda Allbritten and Anna Deal for tackling pruning the out-of-control blackberry bushes, and other volunteers for cleaning dead plant matter from several garden beds. The espalier fruit trees (4 each apple and 4 each pear) were recently pruned after some neglect – it was somewhat late in the season to prune but let's hope for the best. At the present time we have a waiting list for new requests for renting garden plots, please contact Mike Caban (402-341-4722, caban3321@cox.net) for more information on plots.

The Gifford Park Youth Garden (GPYG) program will be kicking off its 13th year. This free program teaches youth of all ages how to grow our vegetables, prepare, eat, and share our harvest with others. Plus, we'll be creative with art, music, and poetry; explore our natural environment; and have fun while working together and getting our hands dirty. On March 19 some of our GPYG volunteers met at Yates Community Center to begin planning for this year's program.

Mark your calendars for a couple upcoming events at the community garden. On Saturday April 23, 10am-Noon the Creighton Sorority Pi Beta Phi will help dedicate a Little Free Library with kids' reading stations, face-painting, snacks, and other activities. Then on Saturday May 7, 10am to Noon we have our annual Season Opening Event. Here is a list of some known and potential projects/events/activities that we plan to do:

- Little Free Library dedication event (Saturday April 23, 10am – Noon)
- Garden & Adventure Playground Season Opening event (Saturday, May 7, 10am - Noon)
- Youth Garden Program (Saturdays 10-11:30am, May 14-August 27)
- Adventure Playground (Saturday afternoons starting May 14, Noon – 4pm)
- Pot Luck dinners
- Wednesday evening work nights (6-8 pm during the growing season)
- Garden tours (get folks familiar with different parts of the garden)
- Theme garden maintenance (rose, butterfly, senses, perennial, front wall & parkway, herb, berry bushes, etc.)
- Compost bins – turn over compost pile
- Planting & weeding (on-going)
- Chickens care

Let me know if any of the above interests you, and if you have any questions or ideas with the community garden, contact Chris Foster (402-290-8187 or foster3413@cox.net).

Big Muddy Urban Farm Chicken Academy

Big Muddy hosted its first Chicken Academy to talk about all things chicken. The chickens for this year's flock will consist of Cornish, California White, Isa Brown and Rhode Island Red. Visit bigmuddyurbanfarm.com for more info on the three remaining Chicken Academies, as well as the Soil Health Academy that begins in May.



Congratulations...

Congratulations to longtime GPNA member Cynthia Shuck on her marriage to John Savage on April 2! Cynthia has been hugely involved with the GPNA since buying her home at 35th & Cass in 2001. Starting in 2003, Cynthia served as GPNA vice-president for 2 years, then as president for 2 more years, and the GPNA honored her with 'Neighbor of the Year' in 2008. She has been very active with community greening projects and the community garden, youth garden, and directed the Teen Market Garden. In recent years she has also been our GPNA representative on the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance board and served as their treasurer. Many of you know Cynthia is an Architectural Project Coordinator and Design Architect with HDR. Her husband John is a Structural Engineer at HDR. Good Luck!

Project Embrace: a summer program for neighborhood children

Project Embrace will be held at Augustana Lutheran Church, 3647 Lafayette Avenue, Omaha, from June 13 through July 22. The morning program, for ages 4-8, will be held from 8:30-12:00; the afternoon program, for ages 9-12, will run from 12:00-4:00. Breakfast, lunch, and snacks are provided. Activities include swimming, roller skating, arts and crafts, outdoor games, computer skills, kindergarten readiness for 4 and 5 year olds, field trips to the Henry Doorly Zoo, the Omaha Children's Museum, and more. The cost is \$25 per child, scholarships are available. For more information or to register for the program, contact Augustana Lutheran Church at the address above or at 402-551-4728.

Gifford Park Neighborhood Annual Easter Egg Hunt



Creighton Print Center
<http://printcenter.creighton.edu>

Xerox Corporation
 Murphy Building
 701 North 20th Street
 Omaha, NE 68178

creightonprintcenter@xerox.com
 tel 402.280.2515
 fax 402.280.2370





Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
 PO Box 31462
 Omaha, NE 68131

Place
 Stamp
 Here

**Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
 Membership Application**

The GPNA membership year runs from January 1 to December 31.

Type of membership: ___ Single (\$10) ___ Family (\$15) ___ Business (\$25)
 Today's Date: _____

Business Name (if applicable): _____

Business Phone (if applicable): _____

Name (1): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name (2): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name (3): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name (4): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name (5): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Volunteer Opportunities! I'm interested in helping with...

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Call committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Holiday Banquet | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Watch | <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleanup/Beautification | <input type="checkbox"/> Landlord/Tenant Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> Tool Lending |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Garden | <input type="checkbox"/> Memberships | <input type="checkbox"/> School Liason | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Planting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easter Egg Hunt | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Market | <input type="checkbox"/> School Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Garden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Walks | <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer | |

Return completed form along with check or money order to:
 Gifford Park Neighborhood Association, PO Box 31462, Omaha, NE 68131.