

Gifford Park's Pride

GIFFORD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD: A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, LEARN, AND PLAY
WWW.GIFFORDPARKOMAHA.ORG



GPNA Neighborhood Meeting
Thursday, August 5, 2021
6:30 pm
California Taco - 3235 California Street
Chips/Dips/Soft Drinks Provided



Longtime Gifford Park residents Bob and Virginia Hutton enjoy a rose from one of their many rose bushes at their home on 33rd and California.

What's New

**YOUTH GARDEN &
ADVENTURE
PLAYGROUND**
.....

SOCCER CAMP
.....

**ART & SCIENCE
IN THE PARK**
.....

Food Distribution Every Thursday

by Big Muddy Urban Farm

Neighbors,
If you or someone you know could use help with food this week or in the future, please know there is a food assistance distribution program taking place every Tuesday starting at 10am in the Big Muddy Urban Farm garage located at 3328 Burt Street. Each week a delivery comes to the garage of donated, post-dated food that ranges from apples to salad greens to meat and more. Each week is different in variety and quantity. Please come by for what you may need. We expect to keep it balanced and fair in the distribution process and support the health of our neighbors.

Yates Illuminates Introduces Itself to the Neighborhood

by Susan Mayberger, GPNA Secretary

Approximately 150 people attended the May 6th Open House for Yates Illuminates with many staying for the neighborhood meeting. This event was to introduce the neighborhood to the different agencies that will be housed at Yates and to hear about the services that they will be providing to the community. The weather was lovely so there were tables and booths set up outside the building and tours were given to show people what the plans are for the renovation of the building. Boxed dinners prepared by Witney Stanley and her family were provided by GPNA.

At the neighborhood meeting, Daniel Padilla who is currently managing Yates Illuminates and Katie Weitz from the Weitz Family Foundation were introduced and spoke about their excitement about working with the neighborhood to ensure the success of Yates Illuminates. Representatives from the different organizations introduced themselves and talked about their programming. This article will highlight three of those organizations.



**GIFFORD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET
FRIDAYS 5-8PM AT 33RD & CALIFORNIA**

GIFFORD PARK'S PRIDE

2021 GPNA Board

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847-477-2156

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402-558-4070

Wendell Stanley
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402-306-8454

Brent Lubbert
brent.lubbert@gmail.com
402-213-9646

Opportunities – Contacts

Community Garden/Youth Garden
Chris Foster 402-290-8187
Adventure Playground
Monica Lehn 402-660-9046
sfadventureplayground@gmail.com
Midtown Neighborhood Alliance Rep
Adrian Petrescu, 402-769-9070
aspetrescu@alumni.pitt.edu
Gifford Park Market
Martin Janousek 402-558-4070
Youth Soccer
Eric Purcell 402-719-5108
eric@thresholdcommunity.org
Youth Tennis
Chris Foster 402-290-8187
Newsletter Editors
PLEASE VOLUNTEER TO EDIT OUR
NEWSLETTER. Send email to
giffordparkomaha@gmail.com

Restoring Dignity – RD

Restoring Dignity’s goals are to help families maintain a healthy living environment by assisting them with household items, cleaning, and organization education. Staff go directly into homes and teach cleaning skills.

RD also provides critical housing advocacy for refugees who are struggling with substandard living conditions such as what occurred at Yale Apartments in 2018. Here are two ways that the neighborhood can help refugees:

Donate Home Items - any and all home items (ie. couches, tables, chairs, lamps, kitchen items, toiletries, decorations, beds). All items brought to its storage facility are then distributed to local refugee families.

Volunteer -Want to transform a family’s home in just two hours? Sign-up for one of our make-over projects. Great at organizing? Come help sort donations at our storage facility. Are you good with tools? Sign-up as a “handy person” volunteer. Are you a natural teacher? Volunteer to teach cleaning skills to local families. Like GPNA, volunteers are the heart of the organization! Contact us at: volunteer@rdomaha.org

The Great Plains Theatre Commons – GPTC

GPTC was founded by Metropolitan Community College as the Great Plains Theatre Conference in 2006. At the time, the concept of a national playwriting conference was uncharted territory for both the College and the community.

Over the years, GPTConference found its roots both locally and nationally, and has helped develop hundreds of new American plays. In 2020, the Conference became an independent theatre nonprofit organization, the Great Plains Theatre Commons, in order to expand its programming and service to the local and national community.

The GPTCommons continues to build and to grow, honoring both the past and future of the American theatre community while moving deeper into programs that serve our community year-round.

Kevin Lawler – Artistic and Organization
klawler@gptcplays.com

Ellen Struve – Community Connector
estruve@gptcplays.com

Refugee Empowerment Center – REC

REC’s mission is to provide holistic and culturally effective refugee resettlement services that empower newcomers to thrive in their new lives. They state that by welcoming immigrants and refugees into Nebraska, we are creating a stronger and more diverse community for all of us. REC meets the immediate needs of newcomers in their first 90 days by helping refugees settle into their first home, get a job and enroll in school for the children and English classes for the adults. In addition, REC empowers their clients by providing driving classes, financial literacy classes and helping them connect with others in the community.

Amanda Kohler, Executive Director
info@refugeeempowerment.org



Bearing Fruit

by Rose Carlson

Long ago when my daughter was small, she ate an apple and wanted to plant one of the seeds. We did, and it wasn't long before a tiny plant pushed its way out of the dirt. When we told our horticulturist neighbor about our little project, she shared our excitement, but cautioned us that even if it continued to grow, it might not bear fruit, as the seed had been from a commercially-grown apple. The tree grew well in a pot in the house for another year or two before we transplanted it to the backyard, alongside a full-grown apple tree.

After a couple more years, the seedling grew to be the same size as its neighbor.

Year after year, the older tree bore hundreds of apples, becoming more and more bent and crooked as time went on. The younger tree grew straight and tall, but never did a blossom nor an apple appear. We knew it often takes a number of years for a tree to produce fruit, but after year eight, nine, ten and beyond, we assumed it was barren and contented ourselves to enjoy it as the lovely tree it was, without further expectations. Seeing the trees together, one working so hard and doing so much, and the other just being beautiful, was always a wonderful metaphor for the way things are, the way plants are, the way people are.

Everyone and everything is different. One of the apple trees gave us apples. The other kept the first apple tree company and reminded me of the curiosity and creativity of a long-ago little girl who once sat at my table thinking about seeds.

This April of 2021, while passing by our apple trees, I looked up to the surprise of blossoms on not one tree, but on both. A little online research revealed that some varieties of apple trees can take longer to bear fruit, even up to ten years. But ours took fourteen. This tree continues to be a symbol of companionship, beauty and nostalgia, but is now a reminder of even more: it's never too late to change direction. It's never too late to be someone else or to do something else. And it's never too late to surprise people with apples.



Youth Soccer Camp is back on the pitch! Wednesdays in the park.

After our ninth year was Covid-canceled last summer, Gifford Park Soccer Camp is back on the pitch for its 10th summer of action! So far it's been pretty hot, but the kids and parents are tough and hungry to play! Camp is on Wednesday nights from 6:30-7:30 and runs through July 21. It is free for kids ages 3-11 and you can still sign up! We'd love to have you play along!

“Martyrs of the Race Course”

submitted by Mike Caban

David W. Blight, a historian at Yale, traced the Memorial Day holiday to a series of commemorations that freed black Americans held in the spring of 1865, after Union soldiers, including members of the 21st United States Colored Infantry, liberated the port city of Charleston, S.C.

Digging through an archive at Harvard, Dr. Blight found that the largest of these commemorations took place on May 1, 1865, at an old racecourse and jockey club where hundreds of captive Union prisoners had died of disease and been buried in a mass grave. The black residents exhumed the bodies and gave them proper burials, erected a fence around the cemetery, and built an archway over it with the words, “Martyrs of the Race Course.”

Some 10,000 black people then staged a procession of mourning, led by thousands of schoolchildren carrying roses and singing the Union anthem “John Brown’s Body.” Hundreds of black women followed with baskets of flowers, wreaths and crosses. Black men, including Union infantrymen, also marched. A children’s choir sang spirituals and patriotic songs, including “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

“The war was over, and Memorial Day had been founded by African-Americans in a ritual of remembrance and consecration,” Dr. Blight wrote in a 2011 essay for *The New York Times*. “The war, they had boldly announced, had been about the triumph of their emancipation over a slaveholders’ republic. They were themselves the true patriots.”

The African-American origins of the holiday were later suppressed, Dr. Blight found, by white Southerners who reclaimed power after the end of Reconstruction and interpreted Memorial Day as a holiday of reconciliation, marking sacrifices — by white Americans — on both sides. Black Americans were largely marginalized in this narrative.

“In the struggle over memory and meaning in any society, some stories just get lost while others attain mainstream recognition,” Dr. Blight wrote.

His claim is not universally accepted; the fact-checking website Snopes says of the 1865 remembrance: “Whether it was truly the first such ceremony, and what influence (if any) it might have had on later observances, are still matters of contention.”

What is clear is that the holiday is about freedom. Speaking at Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day in 1871, Frederick Douglass laid to rest what today we would call a false equivalency — the notion that both sides were engaged in righteous struggle.

“We must never forget that victory to the rebellion meant death to the republic,” Douglass said. “We must never forget that the loyal soldiers who rest beneath this sod flung themselves between the nation and the nation’s destroyers.”

Gifford Park Community Garden & Adventure Playground 2021
at the Gifford Park Community Garden (35th & Cass Street)

2021 Schedule ~ Saturdays 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

- July 10 Edible Flowers / Herb toppings
- July 17 Garden Art
- July 24 Cooking in the Garden with Obed Sanchez
- July 31 Bees in the Garden
- August 7 Neighborhood Tree and Garden Walking Tour
- August 14 Seed Saving & Food Preserving (canning)
- August 21 Wildlife Adventure in the Garden
- August 28 Pizza Garden Harvest PARTY! (Big Muddy Urban Farm)
- Rest of growing season - tend your plot

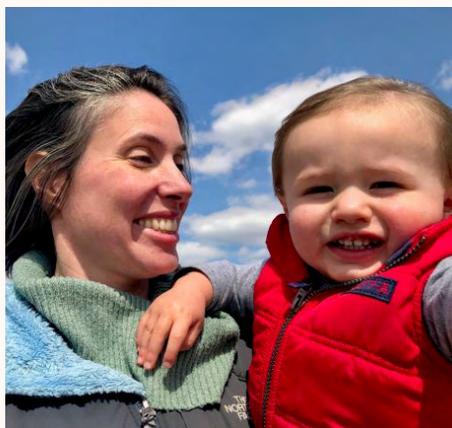


The Gifford Park Youth Garden is a fun, educational program for school age youth. Volunteers, parents, and children meet Saturdays from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. at Gifford Park Community Garden on 35th & Cass Streets.

Ways parents can get involved:

- Post this schedule of activities in your home
- Ask your child what they have been learning at the garden
- Accompany your child to any or all sessions
- Pick a date to bring snacks

To register, You can reach Rhonda Freeman with questions or suggestions at 402-968-6675 or rhonda@bigmuddyurbanfarm.org.



I have lived in Gifford Park for nearly 10 years, the longest I have lived anywhere. This has given me the opportunity to realize the full worth of being a part of a community. Gifford Park is made richer by the diversity of its residents and visitors, its free programming for kids, and features such as access to public transportation, the community garden, and Yates. My family and I are eager to continue the momentum of building a nourishing environment and I look forward to giving my time and energy to this goal. I am a botanist by training, but have worked extensively in conservation-focused endeavors with communities in Madagascar and engaged with international volunteers. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this neighborhood and make a difference at home.

Cynthia Frasier, Board Member of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association





Gifford Park Neighborhood Association and
Yates Illuminates
PRESENT



Science and Arts in Parks
(youth 8-16 y.o.)

HAVE FUN
and
learn about physics and the energy of the future,
build and race solar powered fuel cell model cars,
learn to build solar concentrators—heat water,
learn to take & edit great nature pictures.

Compete in teams for great prizes.

Youth 8-11 will learn power of air and water and will build functional Lego-like machines and electric circuits.



Youth 12-16 will learn uses of solar energy, will build and race solar fuel cell powered model cars, will build large functioning household solar concentrators and will imagine a business.

Program dates:

**Saturday, July 24, July 31, August 7,
August 14, September 25
2-6 pm**

Sign up your youth by emailing Adrian at aspetrescu@alumni.pitt.edu.
Subject line "SAP Sign up" including full name and email of parent, and names and ages of youth participants. Spots are limited.



Project funded with a grant from the Omaha Community Foundation

Creating a Space for Skateboarding in Gifford Park

by Drew Newlin

As a nine year old kid, I watched on TV in awe as Tony Hawk landed the first-ever 900° during the 1999 Summer X-Games, and begged my mom to buy me the inaugural “Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater” video game later that year. A subsequent birthday trip to visit my uncle in sunny L.A. brought me my first pro model skateboard and my first real skate video, and as luck would have it, it was on that same skateboard that I finally learned how to ollie. From that moment on, the doors of my creativity opened and have yet to close – after years of sporadic attempts at conventional team sports, I had finally found my thing in skateboarding.

With skateboarding on the rise locally, regionally, and globally, – notably, with skateboarding becoming an Olympic sport and Des Moines now boasting the biggest skatepark in the country (the 88,000 sq. ft. Lauridsen Skatepark, which recently hosted the Olympic qualifiers for skateboarding) – we have an ideal opportunity to spark that same creativity within young minds all across our city, and more specifically, among our youth here in Gifford Park.

Even at age 31, I’m still avidly skating throughout Omaha in search of the next concrete wave to ride, forever captivated by that freeing feeling of creative expression that’s inherent to skateboarding and so many other subcultures. Now, however, I also work as the Project Manager of local nonprofit Rabble Mill, which works with Nebraska youth statewide toward the belonging, purpose, and upward mobility they need to grow, achieve, and reinvest in their community through programs in skateboarding, music, and digital art. (One such initiative is our Skate School program, which I’m currently teaching to ~120 OPS students weekly between three North Omaha elementary schools and Lewis & Clark Middle School.) I simultaneously serve on the Board of Directors of another 501(c)(3) nonprofit called the Nebraska Public Skateparks Council (NPSC), whose mission is to ensure that our communities statewide have skate spaces that are constructed with integrity to design, safety, longevity, and inclusivity.

The beloved skatepark of my youth was comprised of several mostly modular obstacles housed in the gymnasium of a former Salvation Army worship center (aka “Salvy” to us) located on 41st and Harrison Street in South Omaha. Salvy provided me a safe space where I could hone my ollies into more advanced tricks off ramps, ledges, and rails, but perhaps more importantly, it provided me a place to learn the innumerable soft skills that come through skateboarding, such as patience, persistence, problem solving, self-confidence, consistency, and creative thinking. Salvy also brought me right into the heart of our burgeoning local skate scene, through which I established hundreds of positive peer relationships with friends and mentors who I will know, love, grow with, and skate with for the rest of my life.

Though Salvy is no longer, I still see and feel our skate community growing and flourishing all throughout Omaha, and I truly haven’t seen this many young people with skateboards since the golden days of my youth.

Creating a Space for Skateboarding in Gifford Park (continued)

by Drew Newlin

In South Omaha in particular, the same skateboarding stalwarts who frequented places like Salvy in the late 90s and early 2000s have become the de facto mentors for the tidal wave of youth who have chosen places like the 20th Street DIY skatepark (at James F. Lynch Park) to cultivate their newfound love of skateboarding.

The NPSC has supported the Lynch Park skateboarding community by working with the Mayor and Omaha Parks & Recreation to establish the 20th Street DIY as a more permanent skate space, which we're looking to build more upon in the coming months. The NPSC is also consulting with a private developer and a professional skatepark contractor, Hunger Skateparks, on a small skate space coming to north downtown later this fall as part of the new Millwork Commons district. Summarily, the NPSC and I have approached the GPNA board and Parks & Rec. about creating a similar space for skateboarding here in Gifford Park — an idea which both entities are in favor of exploring further.

The attached image shows a rendering of just one idea the NPSC has envisioned for a skate space in the park, just adjacent to the former basketball court, which we would also love to see reanimated in conjunction with the creation of said skate space. (Please note that all other youth activities pictured are purely imaginative on our part!)

The GPNA board, the NPSC, and I invite you to give your feedback on the prospect of creating a space for skateboarding in Gifford Park through a very short online survey at the following link: bit.ly/3guEa4Z.

I ask you as your neighbor here in Gifford Park to offer your candid perspective on the idea of creating a safe, fun, inclusive space for skateboarding in our community, akin to places like Salvy and the 20th Street DIY. Omaha needs more quality skate spaces where our young people can learn the same technical hard skills and intangible soft skills that I learned through skateboarding.

Where they might meet their future lifelong friends and mentors; where they can hone their craft to become the next up and coming Olympic-level skateboarder. Why not have that future Olympian come out of Gifford Park?

**THE GPNA BOARD
AND THE
NEBRASKA PUBLIC
SKATEPARKS
COUNCIL INVITE
YOU TO GIVE YOUR
FEEDBACK ON THE
PROSPECT OF
CREATING A SPACE
FOR
SKATEBOARDING IN
GIFFORD PARK
THROUGH A VERY
SHORT ONLINE
SURVEY AT THE
FOLLOWING LINK:
[BIT.LY/3GUEA4Z](https://bit.ly/3gUEA4Z).**

Creating a Space for Skateboarding in Gifford Park (continued)

by Drew Newlin



Creating a Space for Skateboarding in Gifford Park (continued)

by Drew Newlin



Spring Cleanup 2021 Recap

by Cynthia Frasier

After a year without neighborhood clean-ups, news that the City of Omaha was bringing them back, starting with the spring 2021 event, was especially welcome! Some people may have noticed, that the City clustered the cleanups so that numerous sites in the same area were running on the same day. For example, Gifford Park, Joslyn Castle and Walnut Hill were all on May 22nd. This was helpful in case one site was backed up, people could be re-routed to nearby locations without spending a lot of time driving across the city. It also made it easier for the city's cleanup veterans who provide advice and help trouble-shoot. They were able to efficiently visit multiple sites throughout the day to keep things running smoothly. This was much appreciated by us at Gifford Park since this year's organizers (Anna and Cynthia) were novices.

Since there were no clean-ups hosted in 2020, we were anticipating there would be a lot of accumulated items that people would be eager to get out of their homes. Therefore, we were surprised at the relatively quiet trickle of people, with only the occasional backup. The real torrent of activity was saved for the last 45 minutes of the day. From 1:15 until closing at 2pm, vehicle after vehicle were lined up until the entire road from the park to Davenport St, was packed! Thank you to the volunteers (Anna, Alex, Brent, Chris, Hannah, James, Jennifer, Jim, Lily, Reed, Obed, and Susan) who chipped in to direct traffic, unload vehicles, collect donations, and assist those needing help getting their items to the Gifford Park cleanup site. Thank you also to Cross Electronics Recycling who diverted metal and electronics away from the landfill.



Thanks to these Creighton University students who joined the 2021 spring cleanup efforts, Gifford Park is a little tidier.
From left to right, Lily Reinikka, Hannah Olsen and Jennifer Ecklund.

Guidelines for Letters to the Editor

by GPNA Board

What is a letter to the editor compared to a regular old article? Letters to the editor are mostly opinion as compared to articles which are mostly fact.

Newsletter review committee: The newsletter review committee shall be the person(s) who create the newsletter and at least one member of the board. Lately, the full board has been reviewing editorials, but this review can be done by a smaller group of people. The editorial review board can decide its process of communicating with neighbors who submit letters to the editor about edits to their submission, etc.

Values: The Gifford Park newsletter letter to the editor section is a forum available to all who live in the neighborhood. It is the goal of the editorial review board to allow anyone who wants to submit an editorial to have that editorial published if that letter is in line with the guidelines below.

Guidelines: (some items below are adapted and borrowed from HereToHelp 2019)

General Guidelines:

GPNA will only print letters that address a specific issue, theme, or article.

Letters may not be more than a single page of the newsletter. The letter can be words, pictures, or other images as the author decides to express themselves.

GPNA will not print more than one letter per issue per writer.

Letters do not necessarily need to be edited for style, clarity, or grammar. This is to preserve the author's intent. To provide clarity to readers, the newsletter review committee may suggest edits to the author.

Letters do not necessarily need to be in any particular language. The newsletter review committee will work with the author and others to translate the letter to English as well. Both versions of the letter will be printed and each version can have the allotted single page per letter.

Final determination of whether a letter is published is made by the newsletter review committee.

GPNA will not print:

Letters that incite physical violence.

Letters that are threatening. This includes personal attacks, intimidation, bullying or threat of harm against a person or organization.

Letters that make false statements of fact about other people. These letters would be potentially libelous. You can disagree with someone, but you can't claim they did something damaging unless you can prove it.

Discriminatory on any grounds. This includes discrimination based on age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or culture.

Letter that are obscene. This includes any statement that is vulgar, profane or offensive.

Letters that are promotional. Letters cannot promote products or services. Letters may discuss resources that have helped the author if it is specific to the neighborhood or if it refers to another newsletter article. Promotion of products or services is advertising, and the newsletter provides other routes for advertising.

Letters that discuss any candidate for public office. This is because GPNA is a 501(c)3.

Personal Informa Editorial due date: The deadline for submission of editorials is the first of the month.

The author must provide their full name or alias. The name is printed alongside your letter.

Anonymous letters will not be published.

If the letter identifies another person, the GPNA prefers that person is asked for their permission before the author sends their letter to the GPNA. For example, if you the author shares a personal experience and mentions a family member, GPNA hopes that family members was asked permission to identify them in the letter. When you submit a letter to GPNA, we assume that the author received consent from other people. GPNA reserves the right to edit any letter to protect personal identity.

Any letter containing matters of personal or financial interest to the author must be disclosed by the author.

Editorial due date: The deadline for submission of editorials is the first of the month. Email to giffordparkomaha@gmail.com.

We Need a Newsletter Editor

Call for Volunteers

If you've got design skills or someone you know is interested in editing this neighborhood newsletter, please email giffordparkomaha@gmail.com for more details.



Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
PO Box 31462
Omaha, NE 68131



**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.