



Gifford Park's Pride

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

September 1999

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Traffic Safety Becomes Issue As New School Year Begins

With the closing of Yates School as our neighborhood school, students who live within 1.5 miles of Kellom School must walk or find their own transportation. At this time Kellom School officials estimate at least 200 children will not receive transportation. The Omaha Public School (OPS) Board decided to close Yates because there are over 400 OPS students in the Yates area, and the capacity of the Yates building is significantly less than this. With the passing of the bond issue, Kellom became our neighborhood school. The following is the safest and most direct route from our neighborhood to Kellom, as recommended by OPS:

From Yates School walk west on Davenport to 33rd. Turn right on 33rd.

Walk north on 33rd to Cass. Turn right onto Cass.

Walk east on Cass to 32nd. Turn left onto 32nd.

Walk north on 32nd to California. Turn right onto California.

Walk east on California to 30th. Cross at the lights at the corner of 30th and California.

Walk north on 30th to Burt. Turn right on Burt.

Walk east on Burt to 24th. (Students will use crossing lights at Burt to cross I-480 access street). Use lights to cross at 24th & Burt.

Walk north on 24th to Kellom School. Students will use crossing lights at 24th and Cuming as they walk on 24th toward Kellom.

Some families participated in a district-wide "Safe Walk to School" Thursday, August 19. The walk, which followed the above route, started at 5:30 p.m. at Yates and went to Kellom, taking about 35 to 40 minutes to complete one way. The distance is an issue, but the primary concern is the children's safety. There are dangerous intersections (most with NO assigned patrols) that children will have to cross during rush hour traffic.

If anyone would like to serve as crossing guards to help provide a safe walk to school for our neighborhood children, volunteers are needed in the mornings (7:30 to 9 a.m.) and afternoons (3:30 to 4:30 p.m.) to patrol intersections along the route to Kellom. Specifically, 30th and California, 30th and Webster, I-480 and Burt, and 24th and Burt. There are also four kindergarten classes at Kellom – they will need patrols during the midday hours. We have contacted the City Traffic Department to have engineers adjust timing for crosswalk signals, install school crossing signs, and paint crosswalk lines on streets where appropriate. The GPNA has notified the Police, St. Joseph Hospital, and Creighton University to pay special attention to children walking to and from school. We have asked the OPS Board to help provide transportation for our neighborhood children, but they have said there is nothing

Next Meeting

**Thursday, September 2
7:00 P.M.**

**"Lead Poisoning In Children"
Kathy Leinenkugel
Lead Program Coordinator
Douglas County Health Dept.**

**St. Joseph Hospital
Dining Rooms A, B, and C**

they can do at this time. So it's very important for parents and other concerned adults to get involved and help provide a safe walk for our neighborhood children.

There may be a few options for parents to choose another school for their children to attend (busing would be available for these children). However this does not include Kindergarten students and there may only be a few openings for selecting another school. Contact O.P.S. Student Placement at 557-2710 or O.P.S. Parent Assistance Line at 557-4444 for more information.

We encourage anyone concerned about these issues to attend these upcoming meetings: O.P.S. School Board meeting – Wednesday, September 8 at 7:30 p.m. at the TAC Building at 3215 Cuming, second floor conference room. If anyone would like to speak, great, but there is a five minute time limit.

At the September meeting of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association we will have an update on Yates/Kellom School matters Thursday, September 2 at 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Hospital, Dining Rooms A, B and C.



**Back
to
School**

**Please
Drive
Carefully!**

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KELLOM SCHOOL LIAISON

Dana Carlton 346-4575

From the Desk of the President

As summer winds down our neighborhood continues to deal with two important issues, both involving public safety. The first is the safety of our neighborhood kids walking to Kellom School as a result of the closing of Yates as our neighborhood's school. I hope you read the article on page 1 describing the current situation our neighborhood children are facing this new school year. I want to pass on a couple additional notes related to the Yates closing. It's very important for parents to get involved with their children's education. The Kellom PTA is a great starting place.

The second issue is public safety around 33rd and California. We continue to monitor the situation and are addressing specific problems in the area. The GPNA has contacted property owners regarding documented problems and police arrests. WOWT Channel 6 aired a story in mid-August about crime in our area. At that time, the Police Metro Unit was doing a checkpoint operation and a couple of significant drug arrests were made. The GPNA was set to meet with Northeast Precinct Captain Pitman Foxhall in late August, but the meeting will be rescheduled for early September, just after police shift changes occur. On that agenda we plan to discuss getting more police presence around 33rd and California. We have also put in a request to have Chief Donald Carey speak at one of our upcoming meetings – he was guest speaker last October.

Kids in our neighborhood had lots to do this summer. The Sun Dawg shack on the west end of Gifford Park was host to a variety of activities. We wish to thank the City for continuing to use our park as a site for the Sun Dawgs program. We had a very good turnout for the annual GPNA Tennis Program in Gifford Park. You can see by the pictures in this newsletter the kids had a good time. We also anticipate the PKA Fraternity (Creighton) will host their annual Halloween Haunted House in late October, see details in next month's newsletter. Kids can pick out their favorite pumpkin at the annual fall cleanup in Gifford Park, it is scheduled for Saturday October 23 for GPNA members only, so it's a great time to join the neighborhood association.

We have a large number of university students living in the neighborhood who are returning for another year of school. The goal of the GPNA is to improve the neighborhood and make it a better place for all the residents, and we would ask our new student neighbors to become a part of this effort. The largest part of being a good neighbor is consideration for others. The GPNA has been working with the city and police to improve the appearance and safety of our neighborhood, and we would ask you to help us in this effort. First we would ask the students to be considerate in terms of noise, especially after 10:00 p.m. Many families in our neighborhood have children or go to work early. Parties are another problem. Unfortunately, parties always seem to end up bigger and noisier than first planned, and the police have been more active in enforcing noise and underage drinking ordinances. Another difficult problem is parking. Please do not park on lawns, across sidewalks or on the wrong side of the street (facing traffic). Besides making the neighborhood look bad, all of these are parking violations. Finally, consider coming to one of our meetings and perhaps joining our association. A \$5 yearly membership will get this newsletter delivered to you every month and helps pay for many other neighborhood activities, including neighborhood clean-ups (we can always use more help). We welcome the students for the upcoming year, and we hope that you will help us continue to make the Gifford Park neighborhood a better place to live.

continued on page 3

**TOOL
LENDING
HOTLINE**

*Mike 344-3233**Chris 342-6006***Mowers - \$5****Rent for most tools - \$3**

From the Desk of the President

continued from page 2

I believe most of us would rather not have to worry about some of the current neighborhood problems we have faced. However, these problems can offer opportunities for us to refocus our energies and show that our neighborhood can become stronger when we are committed to a cause and work hard to find solutions.

by Chris Foster

Mini-Cleanup Targets 33rd and California St.

On a sunny morning, August 8, several members of the GPNA put down their Sunday papers and cups of coffee and grabbed shovels and trash bags in order to help spruce up the neighborhood. In a little over an hour's time, a large amount of trash and litter was picked up along 33rd and California St. The results: a much neater, cleaner looking area thanks to the following volunteers: **Mike Caban, Ben Caban, Jim & Kathleen Wilwerding, Terry & Sue Wilwerding, Roger Freeman, Maureen Calabro, Sandy Saner, Brad Bogard, Melvin Ziola, and Chris Foster.** Just a reminder: if everyone would help by throwing their wrappers, bottles, cans, etc. into the trash receptacles located in the area, the neighborhood would stay neater longer!



The mini-cleanup crew poses in front of the GPNA office. Their efforts yielded several trash barrels full of refuse picked up from the street, sidewalks, and other areas along 33rd and California.

**College Students: Welcome to the
Gifford Park Neighborhood
from the GPNA
Have a safe and successful year!**

Charles R. Kilgore Jr. Attorney At Law

4913 Underwood Avenue

558-5000

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Historically Speaking... Mutual of Omaha

EMPLOYMENT — that's what the giant to the south of the Gifford Park neighborhood means to many of our people. With an employment number of 2,500, it's easy to see what this means to us. To other people in the United States and around the world, Mutual of Omaha means insurance.

Some of us have watched the buildings rise from what was once a residential area to today's landmark on Omaha's skyline. In 1940, the first rather modest building was completed facing Farnam Street at 33rd. By 1948 an addition was added, and in 1958 a second addition was built. The "Tower of Service" with its Indian head logo was built in 1970, and in 1985 the 50,000 sq. ft. Omaha Property and Casualty Bldg. at 3102 Farnam was completed. 1986 saw a 10 story building south of the main Home Office also completed. Parking garages were built and expanded. By 1990 the Home Office complex consisted of 2,250,000 sq. ft. in 14 buildings. One of the most interesting buildings is the "dome," a three level underground structure completed in 1979. Besides office space, the dome houses dining rooms, a "Wild Kingdom" display, and meeting/reception areas. The underground levels were planned as an effort to conserve heat and light.

The insurance giant began in 1909 when a young medical student at Creighton University, C. C. Criss, recognized the need for more comprehensive coverage than the limited policies of his day. Together with his wife, Mrs. Mabel Criss, he operated out of a small office shared with a tailor in the Brandeis store building in downtown Omaha. Within 10 years the company had outgrown one whole floor in the City National Bank Building. They were on their way.

Today the company includes: Mutual of Omaha Insurance Co., United of Omaha Life Insurance Co., Companion Life Insurance Co. of Rye, N. Y., Omaha Property and Casualty Insurance Co., Kirkpatrick Pettis (security, brokerage, public financial services), Mutual of Omaha Investor Services, Inc., Exclusive Healthcare Inc., and Innwave Incorporated (water purification system).

As a responsible corporate citizen, Mutual of Omaha sponsors "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom." This TV show has made the company name a household word. It premiered more than 30 years ago with star performer Marlin Perkins of the St. Louis Zoo. Jim Fowler is the present day expert on wildlife. The program has received 41 major awards and can still be seen on limited PBS stations and the Discovery Channel. I'm sure we all remember seeing Marlin and Jim wrestling with huge snakes or stalking lions and tigers. Sometimes they had smaller animals and beautiful birds.

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Homemade Mexican Food

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**33rd & California Street
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New Hours:

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Closed Sunday



The first president, of course, was C. C. Criss. V. J. Skutt took over in 1949, and today the Chief Executive Officer is John W. Weekly. C. C. died in 1952 at the age of 73. V. J. Skutt died in 1993, one day short of his 91st birthday.

Under CEO Weekly, Mutual of Omaha's assets under management exceed 13.4 billion dollars! The companies have committed significant funding and in-kind support for educational, service and cultural organizations, including United Way/CHAD, United Arts Omaha, College World Series, YMCA, United Negro College Fund, Urban League, Jaycees, Special Olympics, Junior Achievement, and Big Brothers-Big Sisters of the Midlands. Many other volunteer projects are undertaken by the employees including work on a Habitat for Humanity house.

The GPNA salutes our giant neighbor on our southern doorstep.

by Eva Swanson

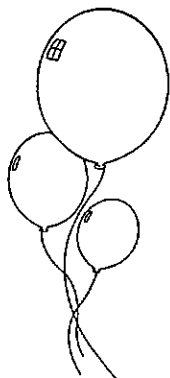
Children's World Learning Centers

Newest Location

126 North 35th Street

Children's World Offers:

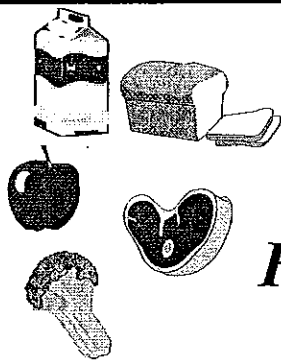
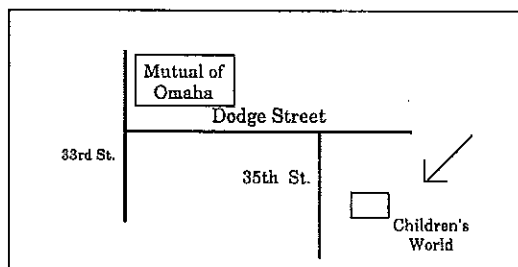
- * Quality childcare for children ages 6 weeks thru 12 yrs.
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- Spaces are limited, so enroll now!



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Editorial Corner

Neighbors Express Their Views on Yates Closing

The views and opinions stated are not necessarily those of the GPNA or the GPNA Executive Board.

A Recipe For Destroying A Neighborhood: Take Away Its School

Yates is closed for all intents and purposes to the children of **OUR NEIGHBORHOOD**. For Yates to be a functioning "school" in our midst is even worse than if it were closed down completely. At least then, there would be the hope for a new school in our own neighborhood someday. But no, not only is OPS going to bus in children from somewhere else to **YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL**, and send your kids 1.5 miles away to Kellom, but they're not going to provide transportation for **YOUR CHILDREN**! Ain't that a kick in the pants!

I'm not surprised though - OPS has given us the run around for over twenty years now. The Yates PTA (whose members created the GPNA in 1988, by the way) couldn't buy a decent set of playground equipment for the school children because Yates was **ALWAYS IN** the "5 Year Plan". Funny how all of those plans seemed to leave Yates **OUT** by the time they were actually implemented. And good old OPS; they are so smart. They'd send one of their "suits" down to talk to the "little people" and hear our concerns. They'd tell us we were on the next 5 Year Plan, and how wonderful the changes would be... baloney! Plain and simple manipulation. Anyone who attended the August GPNA meeting got a taste of what I speak of, when Ms. Nancy Huston gave all of us a taste of what OPS and for that matter our school board representatives think of the Gifford Park Community. Condescending arrogance is the kindest thing I can say about their attitude toward us and our concerns. I mean really, the woman had the nerve to tell us that your children "will just love walking along the Cuming Street underpass" on their 1.5 mile trek to Kellom. How stupid do these people think we are?

Unfortunately, Gifford Park doesn't have enough clout, and once again our community has fallen victim to "OFFICIAL NEGLECT". We're getting pretty used to that by now. OPS has made a decision that will put another nail in this neighborhood's coffin, perhaps the final one. There isn't much we can do to change that, except what we have been doing for a long time now... **GO DOWN FIGHTING!**

by Mike Caban

Making a Positive Out Of A Negative: Our Children Attending Kellom

A building is not what makes a neighborhood. People make a neighborhood. A building is not what makes a school. Students, teachers, staff, and parents make a school.

True, we have lost the Yates building as our neighborhood school. However, we've gained a bigger, more modern facility that can accommodate all of our children in a single educational environment.

For obvious safety reasons, we will not give up the fight to gain transportation for all Kellom children. This will remain our first priority. But, for the children's sake, let's help them transition to their new school and be proud of attending Kellom!

Almost the entire staff of Yates Accelerated Learning Academy chose to transfer to Kellom and they will be continuing the academy approach started last year at Yates. Our children are receiving a quality education with programs that enhance our diverse neighborhood population.

Some may see this as our neighborhood losing its school, but we like to think of it as our children gaining more space and because of the additional space, more opportunities to learn.

*by John and Jackie Lynch
Parents of a Kellom/Yates Student*

Fall Cleanup Set For October 23

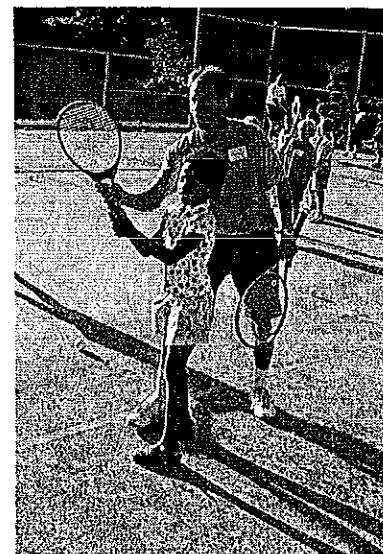
The GPNA Fall Cleanup has been scheduled for **Saturday, October 23**. This is a **member-only** activity, so **now** is a great time to join or renew your GPNA membership. The application is on page 8 - just fill it out, mail it in along with the appropriate dues, and you're a GPNA member!

Watch for more details on the Fall Cleanup in the October (members only) newsletter!

1999 Tennis Program Highlights

The 6th annual GPNA Tennis Program averaged well over 40 kids for each of the 5 sessions. This was a free program due mainly to the terrific volunteers who donated their time and skills. Many thanks to **Roger Freeman, Greg Slayden, Stan Bohmann, Jenny Foster, Jackie Foster, Chris Foster, Sallie Foster, Dodie Lincoln, Ron Frey, Ed Hubbs, Jim Wilwerding, Kathleen Wilwerding, Mike Miller, Paul Johanek, Lindsey Johanek, Mark Forster, Ron Goodman, Nancy Gaardner, Chris Seitzer, Ed Hendershot and Bob Martin**. Special thanks to **Scott Veitzer** for his generous donation to the program. A VERY special thanks again this year to **Betty Slayden** and **Betty Tanner** for helping with check-in and prizes each week.

For more information for those wishing to pursue further tennis instruction, call 342-6006 for upcoming fall and winter lessons. Thanks to all the kids and parents who participated. See you next year!



(Left) Jackie Whelan practices her backhand. An automatic ball machine was available to give the kids practice with their returns. (Upper Right) GPNA President Chris Foster helps a participant with her forehand. Plenty of volunteers gave the kids an opportunity to receive more attention and assistance. (Right) A group of players takes a break from the weekly practice drills. This neighborhood program gives kids the opportunity to become exposed to tennis, a game they may enjoy for many years to come. (Photos by Chris Foster and Terry Wilwerding)



The Sun Dawg Days of Summer

The Sun Dawg shack in Gifford Park was a popular place to be this summer, because neighborhood kids were having a lot of fun participating in a variety of outdoor activities. This year the shack was staffed by Supervisor Jessica Boro (back row, third from right) and Assistant Supervisor Laura Quest (back row, far right). 83 children signed up this summer, with an approximate group of 25 each day. Activities included daily crafts, hopscotch, softball, and tennis. The shack was visited by a variety of "specialists" who demonstrated skills such as giant bubble blowing, tennis, and theater. The group took several field trips, including a visit to the zoo and attendance at a Golden Spikes baseball game at Rosenblatt Stadium. According to Laura, "We had a great summer!" So kids, spread the word to the entire neighborhood that the Gifford Park Sun Dawg Shack will be the place to be next summer!

What's Happening in the Neighborhood . . .

Make plans to attend the September GPNA General Meeting on **Thursday, September 2, at 7 p.m.** in St. Joseph's Hospital Dining Rooms A,B, and C. **Kathy Leinenkugel**, coordinator of the Douglas County Lead Testing Program, will present information concerning a topic of vital importance to the health of our neighborhood's children - lead poisoning. The GPNA would like to thank **Nancy Huston**, OPS Board Member, who was present at last month's meeting to provide information and listen to the views of neighbors concerned about school transportation issues.

Saturday Night Alive, a Contemporary Jazz Worship service, will be held **Saturday, September 18th, at 5:00 p.m.** at **Augustana Lutheran Church, 38th and Lafayette**. The service blends the uniquely spiritual music of jazz with the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Come to worship and stay afterwards for a light meal gathering. For information, call Augustana at **551-4728** or E-mail the church at augustan@novia.net.

The GPNA would like to thank **Rob Parolek**, a member of the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association, who attended the August GPNA Executive Board Meeting. Rob described his experience of working with the City of Omaha to develop a landscape plan for his neighborhood, and he has expressed an interest in assisting GPNA members in drawing one up for Gifford Park.

The Dundee-Memorial Park Association announced that **Dundee Day** will be held on **Saturday, September 11, at 50th - 51st & Underwood Ave.** The day starts with a pancake breakfast presented by the Pancake Man from **8:00 - 11:00 a.m.** Other activities include the Dundee School Carnival, Grow Nebraska Artisans, and other crafts and exhibits. A DMPA Home Tour is planned for **Sunday, September 26.**

For City Services, Information, or
Complaints
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444-5555

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First Central To Dedicate Labyrinth

First Central Congregational United Church of Christ, 36th and Harney St., will dedicate its new labyrinth during the 10:30 a.m. worship service on **Sunday, September 12**. First Central's labyrinth is a public outdoor meditation space, and is believed to be the first church labyrinth in Omaha and the first in Nebraska with 24-hour public access. Labyrinths are ancient, sacred, geometrical, and archetypal spiritual tools that have been used for thousands of years in all major religions, and are enjoying a resurgence in modern Christianity. They have only one path that leads to the center and back out again, and differ from mazes in that there are no tricks or dead ends. The labyrinth is painted on the floor of the church's outdoor patio. Benches, tables, and umbrellas provide comfortable seating for walkers to rest, pray, meditate, and eat.



GIFFORD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

532 N. 33rd Street, Omaha, NE 68131

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Please print clearly)



Membership year: _____ (Membership year runs from June 1 through May 31)

Type of membership: Single (\$5) _____ Family (\$8) _____ Business (\$25) _____

Name of business _____

Name _____ (Last) _____ (First)

Spouse _____ (Last) _____ (First)

Address _____ (Street) _____ (City) _____ (State) _____ (Zip)

Telephone Number: _____ (Home) _____ (Work)

In case of an emergency notify: _____ (Name) _____ (Address) _____ (Phone No.)

May this information be included in the GPNA Neighborhood Directory? Yes _____ No _____

Signature _____ Date _____