



GIFFORD PARK'S PRIDE

Gifford Park Neighborhood: A great place to live, work, learn, and play.

www.giffordparkomaha.org



Neighborhood Meeting Announcement

When:

August 3rd, 2023
6:30-8 p.m

Where:

Yates Illuminates
3260 Davenport St.

Gifford Park neighborhood association's mission is to make the neighborhood a great place to live, grow, work and play. How are we doing? Let's talk about housing in the neighborhood.

33rd Friday Block Party

When: August 18th, 5-8pm

Where: 33rd and California

Parade at 4:45pm, meet in Gifford Park.



2023 GPNA Board

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Table of Contents

Page 3: Presidents Column

Pages 4: Letter to Editor

Pages 5-7: Board Member Column

Pages 8-9: The Science Club

Pages 10-11: Yates Illuminates

Page 12: Membership Application



President's Column

Gifford Park, a great place for everyone?

Gifford Park is a great place to live, learn, work, and play for many. Is that true for everyone though?

Meet Charlie*, a neighbor whose disability income failed to keep pace with rent increases in the neighborhood and found himself living in our park between the recent deaths of his father and then his mother since covid. After attending the memorial service of his mother he went back to Red Oak, IA with his sister to get back on his feet. I missed visiting with him during the brief period of getting to know him before he left. A number of other neighbors enjoyed aiding his plight as well as outreach workers from local shelters. Although Charlie is a war vet, he represents himself as an empathetic man who has to remain vigilant against bullies among other unhoused persons in the area.

He talked about assaults and harassment over the best panhandling intersections in the area. On one occasion he was bludgeoned in the face breaking his nose over a tent he was watching for another vet who at the time was missing in action in an electric wheelchair. He says the attack woke him out of slumber on the park bench. The blood stains on the bench and path beneath corroborates his account.

So back to the question. Is Gifford Park a great place to live, learn, work, and play for everyone who lives here? If not, what should the rest of us do about it? Before you answer, allow me to share a few more disclosures he offered as I gained his trust as someone who actually cares. Somehow the bowl of gumbo I shared with him and the bags of apples every other day earned credibility in his eyes. Go figure. I wish I were in a position to provide him shelter, but my resources were currently tapped.

Is Gifford Park a great place to live, learn, work, and play for the underage sex worker who made her way to proposition him several times over a week or so?

Before you say his or her choices are all to blame, what about the meth users who use the same benches to get high on a regular basis? His account on this resonates because on several occasions I have been approached about buying stolen tools on the cheap from middle age men walking in the park.

And by my observation, the plethora of \$3.20 bottles of vodka easily available at the corner store littered the park during this stint of becoming acquainted with our neighbors residing there. Add to these environmental hazards the undercurrents of the occasional party days of our beloved university scholars and after-hours gathering in the parking lot of the park by local teens and young adults.

I recall neighborhood watch coordination with police authorities in years past to clean up criminal activity in the area all of which we are grateful for the results. And although similar results of local civility and lowered mischief are desired, the path to desired results must reflect the season we find ourselves in. There is no longer tolerance for criminalizing one demographic partly because the demographics of unwanted behavior have shifted from historical target groups to ones that have status and political power. Perhaps this is cause for reflection of fairness as a society, but let's not pigeonhole on issues too large for us to influence. The purpose of this writing is to spark dialogue towards attainable goals we can achieve in the measurable future.

Underage sex workers indicate sex trafficking activity right under our noses. Local meth use implicates a possible lab close by perhaps in our borders. At the very least we have drug sales occurring in the area. And as much as there is a time and place for police involvement in my humble opinion, not every group in our diverse population can expect the same treatment by the law. So the burden is on us as an association to decide how to navigate our part for the greater good of Gifford Park.

How many transitional housing units do we have? How many recovery programs do we have? How many adult workshops do we have? How many advocacy groups for American born neighbors? When was the last time we did a community wide survey to take the pulse on neighbor needs and interests?

Bear with us as the newly enlarged board works through team synergy processes to improve efficiency in managing all the changes in the air. In as much as remembering our strong 30 year roots is an asset, the tree above ground and the fruit it bears must prove nourishing for all who live here to pass the civility test. So all who live here can say loudly together, Gifford Park is a great place to live, learn, work, and play!

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Gal 5:14

Wendell, Pres GPNA

*Charlie is not his real name. Names have been changed to protect identity.

LIVE

LEARN

WORK

PLAY

Letter to the Editor*

Magpie Magnuson

The use of images of indigenous members of our community, in a recent email chain of neighborhood leaders in Gifford Park, is a disgusting and sad perpetuation of the “drunken indian” stereotype. This discriminatory trope has been used for hundreds of years by white people and has its roots in the genocidal appropriation of native land and destruction of their culture.

Alcohol was used as a weapon by frontiersmen and US diplomatic forces, the “perfect colonizer” for helping aid in negotiations and destroying indigenous communities. Alcohol dependency was also furthered by the many destabilizing conditions indigenous communities faced in the last 200 years.

“The root causes are pretty well documented at this point — residential schools, the Indian Act, child welfare issues, Indian agents, geographic isolation, racism, intergenerational trauma — the list goes on.”¹

Instead of asking, why are these people using alcohol, what can I do to help, does anyone need water, some continue to use the police and their social capital to argue for the removal of these people from their property, our neighborhood and essentially from existence.

Many of the first arguments for the removal of indigenous tribes were based on a similar logic.

“Some settlers even used alcohol to justify their seizure of Indian lands — since Native Americans could not control their insatiable thirst for liquor, they argued, they should be relocated even further from white communities, where alcohol would be less prevalent.”²

After centuries the arguments are still the same. After a decade of conversation and engagement it seems clear to me that there are those who would rather not think about these members of our community and the deep systematic reasons why they might be using alcohol.

Move the problem away, down the street, to another neighborhood, not on my properties, back to the rez..

So I’d like to speak to those of you that want to find a solution that includes those who are perpetually excluded:

This work is not easy, but there are many creative ways we could work together to actually come up with responses that are centered in compassion and also solutions. Let’s build tiny houses on the empty lots some of us own. Let’s make community garden pots specifically for unhoused folks to harvest from. Let’s create a supply of essential items that can be given out by folks when they find someone in need. Let’s invite people without roofs onto our porches. The only limitations here is our own privilege to ignore these people in need and our creativity to come together.

This neighborhood is home to many, including some chronically unhoused people, a majority of which are of indigenous descent. We need to find places to house them, we need to give them support materially and emotionally. We need to extend our circle of compassion to include them and not cast them as ‘other.’ **Baseline, we should never perpetuate stereotypes that continue to harm indigenous communities, like that of the “drunken indian.”**

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/the-drunken-indian-stereotype-and-social-healing-1.729514>

² <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1622&context=gsp>

***Editorials do not necessarily reflect the opinions among the GPNA board. Contact the GPNA for editorial guidelines.**



Board Member Column

LIVE

LEARN

WORK

PLAY

Hello Neighbors in Gifford Park!

My name is Lauren Alston. I am new to the GPNA Board this year. I am so excited to collaborate with our amazing community partners and I cannot wait to meet as many of you as possible. My outlook on life has always been to learn from others. I value deep connections and crucial conversations. I think the only way to be a proactive member of any society is to know who you are involved with. Know each other's stories. We must know about our individual goals, aspirations, struggles, and boundaries. Knowing each other on a personal level, in my mind, is the only way we can collaborate, then work to craft a better future for ourselves, our kids, our families, and our future generations.



I graduated from Central High School and come from a long line of Eagles! My passions are teaching, caregiving, gardening, and learning. My other half, Eddie, and I will have been married for 10 years this coming August. We have been together for more than half of our lives now and let me tell you, marriage is a commitment. Waking up every single day and choosing to keep our commitment has taught us so many lessons. We were 19 when we learned that our oldest daughter, Aubrianna was on her way to us. I thought I knew the meaning of love before I was a mom, but man – God showed me better. Not only have I learned how to parent in love, but I have learned how to be raised in love by the beautiful family and friends that my husband gave me.

I'm a talker so - story time:

I am my mom's only child. My mom was Carla and she was a single mom, raising me on her own, shortly after I turned 5 all the way up until I was about 14. My dad Willie wasn't really able to be involved in my life significantly, until then. I have two older brothers that I don't get to see or talk to much, and more estranged siblings, but I am the youngest of 11 on my dad's side. My maternal side of my family is scattered on the coasts of the country and there have not been a lot of times where I experienced the village that she would tell me it takes to raise a child.

Instead of more immediate family, my mom gave me community via my second mom's family, charity groups, youth programs, neighbors, teachers, a few estranged cousins, and pushed me to make friends.

Hattie, my second mom, is my mom's best friend. I am grateful to Hattie and her children every second for showing me what true family is when we were spending so many nights together. So many summer days listening to music, playing video games, and hanging out. So much love, and Black Joy fills my heart when I reminisce about those days. Hattie's family was part of the village for me.

My cousin Titus, who lived across the street from my mom and me, with his partner Jeff, was a part of my village. Mrs. Howard across the street gave me my spark for gardening. Though my lessons in gardening stopped during middle school (because well, teenagers), I can still feel her hand on mine as she explained which bugs were good or bad. I remember bits and pieces of her house. The smell of fresh cut flowers all the time. There were evenings when I would just lie in the garden and she'd be weeding or watering. She was my village.



I was an awkward kid and making true friends did not happen until about 6th grade.

As you can imagine, my mom and I were like two peas in a pod. It was us against the world. I must emphasize this, especially now that my mom has passed, and I have heard stories from family members who are now willing to share details of my mom's life before me. Out of love, and grace, these stories were kept with the elder cousins so that my mom's dignity was as secure as possible. I now also hold her memory and dignity close, so I won't share details, but my mom struggled for most of her life with mental illness. To what end, I don't know 100%, but I can tell from my memory of her, my life now (in these crazy times), and my empathetic imagination, that her struggles were significant and deep. With all the demons my mom had to battle, raising a child was not easy. She tried so very hard. To make up for where she perceived she was lacking, my mom made sure to expose me to all kinds of examples and all kinds of villages. Even in the throes of illness and confusion, my mom knew how important the village is for a child, and frankly, for anyone. She made sure to create as many safe spaces as possible for me as she could. She made sure to acknowledge where she perceived she was lacking and she made sure to communicate that to me, even at 6 years old, when she dropped me off at Girls Inc. for the first time.

Girls Inc. was my village.

It was important for her to see me grow and develop a strong sense of self.

Let's fast forward to me at 18. My mom lived out of state with my Aunt Ellen and Uncle Warren and had come back to Omaha for a visit. She and I decided to have lunch on Green Hill (what she and her siblings referred to Adams Park as growing up). I'm terrified, telling my mom that not only have I met my future husband, and had just started a brand-new job, but that I was pregnant. I was so ready to hear all kinds of epithets and screaming but she didn't say anything for what seemed like eternity. Then finally she said, "You're going to be a wonderful mom. You know exactly what not to do."



You see, at this point, I like most other teenagers, had no interest in seeing my parents as whole, complicated, dialectically striving humans. My mom was just a symbol of oppression to me. She had rules, boundaries, and expectations that I didn't see the need for, nor did I see the reason for living up to those abstract ideals. We were always intensely arguing. That is why I was terrified to even tell my mom about my engagement and her first grandchild. So when she said, "...you know exactly what not to do," I was able to let my walls down and see my mom for the woman she was. I was able to see myself, as this amazing woman's daughter, in a new light. She and I had such a breakthrough that day and became so close during Aubri's pregnancy. My mom felt Aubri's kicks before anyone else. She and I were inseparable until she had to leave again. I would only get another 9 months of having my mom in her full, gracious, loving, heal(ing) self before her stroke that took out a 1/3 of her brain function.

My mom's siblings all stepped right up to help me organize my mom's care and to be an even closer village. They all lived out of state, except my aunt Adrienne. She was here in Omaha with me and basically did everything for me. My three aunts were Ellen, Celeste, and Adrienne, my mother's younger sisters, and Uncle Charles (Chuck), is my mom's older brother. My mom and Uncle Chuck are 15 months apart, so they had a very special relationship. My aunts were all called home before my mom. Uncle Chuck and I talk as often as possible, and he continues to be a guiding light in my life. I still wish I had more time with my late Uncle Cliff. I want to make more time with my other uncles.

For the longest time, they were my village.

My husband, Eddie and his family have been arguably the largest part of my village since Aubrianna joined us in life. They are Dave (father-in-law), Jess (sister-in-law), Brad (Brother-in-law), Sheri (mother-in-law) and Bill, Deanna, and Sunnie (Eddie's grandmothers; both now called home). Sheri's dad is Jim. His wife is Joyce. The kids call them JJ, like Brangelina (lol). Bill's mom is Jean. In so many ways that I can never fully express, they are the village I need most. I didn't get to have any of my grandparents growing up, that I can remember. The fact that my kids get to live so much of their lives, with their great grandparents, is such a gift.

(next page)

When my mom moved in with us, shortly after we bought our house in 2020, our friends, Courtney, Andrea, Bryce, Mercedes, Jimmy, Chris, and Eric were such an important part of our village. My mom needed 24/7 care and giving her that would have been impossible without our friends. When my mom passed in Nov 2022, each of them made sure that we wanted for nothing and still make sure to check on our spirits.



Earlier I was speaking of giving grace. Nothing tests my ability to be gracious more than being a parent. Full stop. Those villages I had growing up, and have now, are the reason I can offer grace to my children, to myself, and to my neighbors. Because of the gift of grace, I can then offer love. Because I can love, I can act on behalf of those that cannot act for themselves. I can serve through action, with love, because I was given the grace of the village.

We all have the same stories to tell in one way or another; we just have different stage crews.

Commitment involves so many crucial conversations, hard decisions, equitable grace, and compromise. The first step toward a better future for all of us should always be grounded in love, curiosity, and grace first.

Just as my village was committed to me, I am committed to my neighbors.

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Looking for a way to support the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association? Scan this QR code to donate today! Help maintain Gifford Park as the perfect place to live, learn, work, and play.





Yates Illuminates
and
Gifford Park Neighborhood Association



Sundays
1:30 – 4:30 PM

Between 6 – 16 years olds

The Science Club



June 25,
July 9 & 23,
August 6, 18* & 20,
September 10 & 24,
October 8

Sign up!
aspetrescu@alumni.pitt.edu
Write full name and email of parent, names and ages of youth participants.

Address: Yates Illuminates, 3260 Davenport St.



Parent Testimonial

"Thank you for another awesome science club day! Looking forward to finding out future dates [they are in the flyer herein]. Over the years it's been difficult finding clubs or activities that aren't all sports related for my daughter Kaylie who LOVES science. Thank you for creating an opportunity for intelligent kids to feel like they belong somewhere, and to get recognition in areas they otherwise wouldn't. She recently tested at the college level in reading and science. We have tried every sport or activity and this has been the first she thoroughly enjoys and looks forward to. My son Eli really wants to do a lego activity next time, but is so proud of his and Kaylie's Hydrocar!"

Testimonial from Katie Grzebielski (parent of Kaylie, Eli, and Nora, neighborhood future inventors coming to The Science Club)
Kaylie's and Eli's hydrogen powered solar fuel cell model car is currently the three years in a row record holder with a 71 feet distance run on a solar charge. Congratulations, Kaylie and Eli. It's a well deserved record. But remember, competition is fierce and constant improvement is always the name of the game in technology. See you soon back at The Science Club.
Adrian and the team.

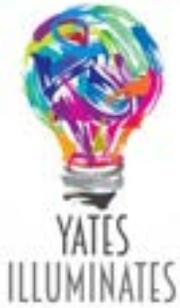




THE SCIENCE CLUB



Yates Illuminates By Marie Hélène André, Executive Director



Have you heard drums recently around Yates Illuminates and wondered what is happening in the building? Did you come for our first Earth Day Celebration or for Restoring Dignity's First Ever Gala? Did you enjoy watching 'Wiconi: The Stories of Our Elders' by Bluebird Cultural Initiative or 'Practice House' presented by Great Plains Theatre Commons? Maybe you came for the latest GPNA General Meeting in May and learned about resources available for homeless people. Or your children spent their Sunday afternoon at The Science Club, and you attended a workshop organized by MCC. Or is it the fresh produce harvested from the MCC Hydroponic Growing System in the front yard that caught your attention?



These are just a few examples of what Yates Illuminates is offering, while the restoration of over 100 windows goes on and the kitchen is being built. More to come soon, including:

- Summer Drum Camp Concert on Friday, August 4, at 7 pm, FREE admission.
- OPEN Omaha on August 5 and 6, from 10 am to 5 pm: Visit Yates Illuminates and learn about the building and its restoration (<https://omahabydesign.org/2023-venues>).
- The Science Club, for youth 6 to 16 years old, starting Sunday, June 25, from 1:30 to 4:30 pm (flyer in this newsletter).
- MCC Summer Camps for youth and MCC Continuing Education (www.mccneb.edu/CE/Yates).
- Porchfest on Sunday, October 1: more information soon! (<https://www.facebook.com/PorchfestOMA/>)



Provides meaningful programming to the community that enriches their understanding of the history and cultural traditions of Native American Peoples of the Great Plains. bluebirdculturalinitiative.org



Helps youth reengage with the educational system through a variety of programs. d2center.org



As a technology library and workshop, it empowers its members through technology access and education. DoSpace.org.



Preserves and protects the Neighborhood through volunteerism, teamwork, integrity, and communication to make it a great place to live, work, learn and play. GiffordParkOmaha.org.



The Great Plains Theatre Commons strengthens the community by supporting creation and sharing of diverse new stories. gptcplays.com



Improves the dignity, quality of life and physical well-being of seniors from around the world through advocacy, education, access to social services, and cultural enrichment activities that benefit the entire community. interculturalseniorcenter.org



Delivers immediate philanthropic support to equip vulnerable and underserved refugee and immigrant populations by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate client-centered services and peer support. icrius.org.



Offers responsible financial coaching and affordable, alternative loans. lendinglinkomaha.org.



Delivers relevant student-centered education to a diverse community of learners. mccneb.edu



Empowers, connects, and champions the African and African American business communities in Nebraska and in the Midwest. midlandsafricanchamber.com



Improves the lives of refugee women, both personally and professionally, through compassionate relationships and culturally competent programming. refugeewomenrising.org



Actively advocates for the human dignity of the refugee population by providing critical resources that both relieve suffering and enable resettled families to thrive in their new environments. rdomaha.org.



Shapes the future of South Sudanese youth through academic support, mentoring, and cultural awareness. youthforgreatergood.org

Visit YatesIlluminates.org, like and follow us on Facebook: facebook.com/SaveYatesForOmaha.



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.