



Gifford Park's Pride

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

Summer 2024

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

33rd Friday Block Party August 16, EVERYONE WELCOME!

Next Meeting
Thursday August 8
6:30 pm
at Yates Illuminates
3260 Davenport St.

Guest Speaker
Councilman
Danny Begley
will discuss
Nuisance Ordinance,
Public Works, Park,
and other updates

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Back to School Safety Tips for Drivers

Please be extra careful when driving and follow these tips...be aware of school buses; stay alert and avoid distracted driving; follow speed limits, especially in school zones; watch for pedestrians, children, and cyclists; be cautious of new drivers on the road; do not pass a stopped bus; be prepared for traffic, obey crossing guards and crosswalks. Thank You!

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Welcome Students!

By Terry Wilwerding

We have a large number of university students living in the area who have returned for another year of school, or who are just starting college this year. Welcome (back) to Gifford Park! The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) has been working very hard to improve the appearance and safety of our neighborhood. The goal of the GPNA is to improve the neighborhood and make it a better place for all 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. First, we ask students to be considerate in terms of noise, especially after 10 pm. Many families in our neighborhood have children or go to work early. Parties are another problem. Unfortunately, parties can end up bigger and noisier than first planned. Another issue is parking. Our neighborhood is short on parking, so you may not always be able to park directly in front of your residence. Please do not park on lawns, across sidewalks, or on the wrong side of the street (facing traffic). Besides being a serious safety issue and making the neighborhood look bad, all of these are parking violations and are subject to ticketing. Also, please do not litter and help us to keep our neighborhood picked up. Many of us pick up trash that we did not leave and we ask that you would help us by doing the same. Finally, consider coming to our quarterly neighborhood meetings and joining the GPNA. A single membership is only \$10 and the membership form is on the back page of this newsletter. We welcome 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, work, learn and play!

Parking, Trash Bins, Scooters, and Pets

From Jim Wilwerding's Spring 2024 GPNA newsletter article "Gifford Park is a Walkable Neighborhood"

Unfortunately, we have people who obstruct sidewalks in a number of ways. Perhaps most common is drivers parking on the sidewalk. This is not only against the law, it is a bad idea. While street parking can be a challenge in some areas, please be considerate of pedestrians. Probably next most common are trash containers left on the sidewalk 24/7. Again, the law requires they be removed within 24 hours of trash day. More recently, we are seeing rental scooters left laying on sidewalks, presenting a hazard to pedestrians. It would be helpful if users left them parked on the edge of the sidewalk, not crosswise or laying down. Finally, we have pet owners who do not clean up after their pets. While this problem seems in decline, along certain routes it is still common. No one wants to spend time cleaning up their walking shoes when they get home. Please do your part to keep our neighborhood safe and walkable.

**For City Services, Information,
 or Complaints Call:
 Mayor's Hotline 402-444-5555**

**In Case of Emergency Call 911 for
 Police, Fire, Rescue,
 or Medical Emergency**

**For Police Non-Emergency
 Call : 402-444-5600**



Porchfest returns for the 8th Annual event on Sunday, October 6th from 11 am to 6 pm

Take in over 30 performances on neighborhood porches throughout Gifford Park, including the market stage and Omaha Mobile Stage at Yates Illuminates. Enjoy fun activities including face painting, chalk painting, art displays, games, food trucks, and more! Bring the whole family to this free event celebrating our community!



Gifford Park Neighborhood Market

**Every Friday Night 5-8 pm
33rd & California through September 27**

520 N. 33rd St.



- Fresh Produce
- Farm Raised Meats
- Breads
- Honey
- Plants
- Handmade Items and more....
- Food Trucks



Community Garden Updates

By Chris Foster

The community garden at 35th & Cass Street has benefited this year from generous rains in May, June, and July to hopefully carry us through the rest of the growing season. Everyone is welcome to walk through the garden and Adventure Playground and check out the gardens, flowers, chickens, bees, compost, two-story tree house, and a new memorial bricks dedication feature. Our Youth Garden (GPYG) program began May 11 with our “Season Opening” event and will end with our “Pizza Garden Harvest Party” August 24. Youth participants gardened in 44 raised beds (each 30”x30” plots) and learned from volunteer presenters on these topics: Music, Bio-Blitz, Nebraska Archaeology and Fossil Making, Yoga, Storytelling & Comics, Insects, Scavenger Hunt, Pickling, Cooking & Nutrition, Herbs, and Art. Thanks to our many dedicated parents and volunteers with special shout outs to GPYG director Monica Lehn and volunteers Amy Lanspa, Mike Caban, Rose Carlson, Cale Bracker, Lourdes Vega, and our chicken-care families! Thanks Cynthia Shuck for designing and planting the community garden front wall areas with a variety of native and drought-resistant plants...and doing bee-keeper duties. Thank you to the Omaha Community Foundation for awarding GPYG and Adventure Playground a grant to enhance these programs for the community! For more information, contact Chris Foster (402-290-8187, foster3413@cox.net), Monica Lehn (402-660-9046, mmlehn@gmail.com), or Rose Carlson (402-639-5952, rhcarnson4@yahoo.com).



Last newsletter we introduced a new feature to our garden - a memorial bricks dedication site located at the front-center area near the Peace Pole, there is a heart-shaped area in the middle of this brick feature planted with red salvia surrounded by white alyssum). The purpose of this feature is to give family members or friends, who have had a connection to Gifford Park neighborhood or the community garden and have contributed in an impactful way, the opportunity to have an engraved brick for loved ones who have passed away to honor them. If you are interested in learning more information, or how to go about purchasing a memorial brick, contact Chris at 402-290-8187, foster3413@cox.net.





Big Muddy Urban Farm (BMUF) is happy to welcome back Gavin Johnston as our Farm Manager. Building on his time as a Resident at Big Muddy, Gavin will expand on our community collaborations and will continue our work as a leader in urban agriculture. BMUF is actively exploring partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals who share our passion for urban farming. We are excited to continue our weekly food distribution with Nancy and Sam's assistance! You'll also notice community members farming the 34th & Burt Street plot, growing vegetables to supplement the donated foods from local grocery stores. We look forward to expanding our reach, exchanging knowledge, and working together towards the common goal of creating a more sustainable and resilient community. For more information email us info@bigmuddyurbanfarm.org.

GPNA Membership Drive

What a deal...Gifford Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) annual membership dues are only: \$10 for Single, \$15 for Family, \$25 for Business. Your membership simply helps support our events and programs including neighborhood cleanups, park improvements, newsletters, public safety, and many youth activities like Science Club, tennis, soccer, gardening, and Adventure Playground. We currently have 81 memberships for 2024. Our goal is to exceed 100. We are a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization.

To join or renew your membership:

-Use the form on the last page of the newsletter and mail your payment to: Gifford Park Neighborhood Association, PO Box 31462 Omaha, NE 68131

-PayPal to hello@giffordparkomaha.org

For more information contact our membership chair Rose at rhcarlson4@yahoo.com or 402-639-5952
Thank you to those who have already joined!

The Summer Sinkhole Saga



Anyone living near or trying to navigate 33rd Street at Cass Street since late May when a large sinkhole opened up knows this turned into a much bigger project...but it should be completed before our August 16th 33rd Friday Block Party event!



Youth Soccer Camp

By Jeff Spurlock

A core memory of my childhood was our annual Soap Box Derby race down the street my parents lived on. A bunch of families bought these basic DIY kits, and we built cars out of them. My brother and I shared a red car that my dad built, another kid's dad owned a welding shop and made his car entirely out of aluminum, while another kid, whose dad was a painter, showed up in the car with the coolest paint job: photo realistic flames, down a glossy black car, with matte black racing stripes down the center... The kids were there for the race, but the dads were there to one-up each other. One of the moms who was into crafting built a giant bracket board to keep track of who won which races and determine the winner. We'd all take turns racing down the hill; the older kids wanted to win, the younger kids just enjoyed the thrill of it. I think we only did it for 3-4 years before most of the cars started falling apart and the idea of building a whole new round of vehicles had lost its charm for the dads.



As of writing this, we have only two weeks left of Soccer Camp 2024, which will wrap up the third year since Magpie and I took over. As a parent, summer can be hard. Kids are home all day and I think the word “bored” gets mentioned at minimum 3 times a day at our house; I’d bet you have a similar experience. When we took over soccer camp, my main goal was just to let kids have fun, but over the past three years I think my goal has changed. If in 25 years, one of our camp attendees gets to write a letter in their neighborhood newsletter, I hope they can start it by reminiscing about the fun times they had playing soccer every Wednesday night with all their friends. The memory of the thrill of scoring their first goal in the 3-4 year-old field, or remembering the time they dribbled around three defenders and put one in the net, or the memory of standing in front of the camp table and getting sprayed with water because it’s 103 degrees outside... That’s what my goals are now; create good childhood memories of growing up in Gifford Park. And all of our coaches who donate their time and parents who donate snacks and drinks make that possible. Thank you to everyone who has been attending and contributing this year. I can’t wait to see you on the pitch again in Summer 2025!

Youth Tennis Programs

By Chris Foster

Thanks to the Stanley family for once again leading our June and July Wednesday 10 am to Noon youth tennis program at Gifford Park. Your dedication, talent, and enthusiasm is inspring! See page 7 of this newsletter for information our Wednesday evenings in August program starting August 7th...the Stanley's will be there!





31st Annual Gifford Park Free Tennis Program



For: Youth (3 to 18 years old)
Dates: August 7, 14, 21, 28
 (each Wednesday in August)
Where: Gifford Park Tennis Courts
 (33rd & Cass St.)
Time: 6:00 - 7:00 pm



The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association is offering **FREE Tennis Lessons** and will provide tennis racquets, balls and instructors for each lesson. Parents and others are welcome to help.

To be enrolled, YOU MUST complete the form below and bring with you to the tennis lessons. Special prize for those who attend every lesson and demonstrate good sportsmanship. Space is limited so please **be on time**.

For more information, contact **Chris** at **402-290-8187** or **foster3413@cox.net**

Registration/Permission Form - Bring this form (completely filled out) with you to the tennis lessons to be enrolled.

Youth's Name: _____ Parent/Guardian Name: _____
 Street: _____ Street: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____ City, State, Zip: _____
 Age: _____ Date of Birth: _____ School: _____
 Parent/Guardian Phone: _____ email: _____

As the parent or legal guardian of the child named above, I hereby give my full consent and approval for my child to participate as a member of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association Youth Program. I understand that there are certain risks of injury inherent in the practice and play of this sport, as well as related activities incidental to my child's participation, and I am willing to assume these risks on behalf of my child. I hereby certify that my child is fully capable of participating in this sport and that my child is healthy and has no physical or mental disabilities or infirmities that would restrict full participation in these activities, except as listed below.

I hereby waive, release, and hold harmless the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association Youth Program, and the City of Omaha, Nebraska, its Officers, coaches, sponsors, supervisors, and representatives for any injury that may be suffered by my child in the normal course of participation in this sport and the activities incidental thereto, whether the result of negligence or any other cause. Further- more, I give consent to any necessary medical treatment in case of emergency. I permit the taking of photos during Gifford Park Neighborhood Association Youth Program activities for publication and use as the program deems.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

- Monthly Park Litter Cleanup -

EVERYONE WELCOME to meet at the Gifford Park tennis courts on Sunday August 11 at 2 pm and the second Sunday of the month thereafter. GPNA has partnered with Keep Omaha Beautiful to provide gloves, garbage bags, trash picker sticks, and other cleanup tools. Contact Chris at 402-290-8187 or foster3413@cox.net with questions.

Mark your Calendar – FREE events at Yates Illuminates

By Marie Hélène André, Executive Director



The first six months of the year have been busy at Yates Illuminates!

Not only did we have the Official Grand Opening at the end of April (and I hope you joined us), we also started offering more and more services, resources and programming. From MCC's Adult Education and Continuing Education to The Science Club and the SWEET Circle, from Bluebird Cultural Initiative's family nights to International Council for Refugees and Immigrants' STEM afterschool programs, and to Refugee Women Rising joyful Eid celebration, and all the other programming, Yates is becoming what the community wanted: a dynamic and lively center where everyone is welcome!

And we have more to come! Mark your calendars for this first weekend of August:



On August 3 & 4, from 10 am to 4 pm: Yates Illuminates is one of the 75 exceptional venues open to the public. Come and learn a little bit more about Yates's story or contact me

(mhandre@yatesilluminates.org) if you want to volunteer to welcome visitors and guide them around.

Also, what better way to end your Saturday than to join us for a **FREE Public Performance by our Summer Drumming Camp Participants on Saturday, August 3, at 7 pm?**



I hope to meet you soon at Yates Illuminates!



Yates Illuminates
and
Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
invite you and your future young inventors to



THE SCIENCE CLUB

Join us if you are interested in Learning while having Fun on
Sundays 2 PM – 5 PM

Where:

Yates Illuminates, Community Room

3260 Davenport St, Omaha, NE 68131

- **July 21:** Mechanics - Pulleys and Archimedes Screws
- **August 4:** Mechanics - Mouse Trap Cars
- **August 18:** Aerodynamics – Making Kites
- **August 25:** Robotics
- **September 8:** Engineering - Egg Drop experiment
- **September 22:** Electricity - Generators
- **October 13:** Special guest
- **October 27:** Special guest
- **November 10:** Special guest
- **November 24:** Grand Finale - The Science of Cooking



Sign up your youth: email Adrian at aspetrescu@alumni.pitt.edu. Subject "Science Club Sign up" with full name and email of parent, names and ages of youth participants.

The Science Club is FREE. Youth 4-16 y.o. are welcome. Spots are limited.



Funded in part by Omaha Community Foundation, Midtown Neighborhood Alliance, and donors to Yates Illuminates

Where Is The Turner Park Statue of Liberty?

By Jim Thompson

Years ago while picking up litter in Turner Park, there was a round base of flowers, where the existing flag pole is on the east end of the park, with a rusted pole sticking up in the middle. I inquired to the Omaha Parks Maintenance Supervisor what that pole was for. I quickly found out it was what was left of an old Statue of Liberty replica that had been there for years. To my amazement the statue was still around, resting in the rafters of the City Parks Maintenance building on 24th Street. And she was broken, smashed and was forlorn as could be. She was “taken out of service” in the mid-70’s due to vandalism. Efforts at the time to replace her were minimal.

After a lot of research on this grand lady, I discovered she was dedicated on July 4, 1951, as a major project of the Boy Scouts of America. Further, there was a national effort by the Scouts to have penny drives to buy one of the statues and place her in various cities, depending on the success of each chapter. A total of 200 were placed around the country during 1949-1952. About 20 years ago an inventory was taken, earning an Eagle Scout award to the young fellow, and it was discovered there were 100 missing, 100 still standing. The Omaha icon was classified as missing. We are about to change that.

The establishment of an Advisory Committee to Strengthen the Arm of Liberty took a few years to develop. But this group of concerned community folks now have the mechanism to replace the older lady with a solid, beautiful replica on a fresh granite base. To sculpt a new one (the 1951 replica was made of copper sheeting on a wood frame), will take some time, as well as the type, style and looks of a proper base that has yet to be designed. But she will look grand! The exact location will change slightly from the original because of the Midtown Crossing renovation. She will still face East, as does the New York original. With the flag pole and the bandstand behind her, my patience will be tested until the unveiling.

Of course this type of project will require funding, more than what you might think. The plan is to apply for a challenge grant to cover a significant portion. Details on another penny drive are being discussed to assure the historical factors of the original Boy Scout effort are recognized. I am proud to live in a philanthropic community and have confidence that many folks will come forward and join the effort. We are fortunate to be working through the non-profit Omaha Parks Foundation. The window is now open!

The hope to re-establish this national symbol in Turner Park is coming closer to reality. I’ve been to the real statue on Liberty Island in New York Harbor and it was most impressive. The 8-foot replicas that were proudly placed around the USA many, many years ago reflected freedom, inspiration and hope in many local communities. Surely not as grand as the Lady looking East towards France, but our addition will join others around the country to inspire us and remind us of the freedoms we need to hold dear and continue to strengthen.

Stay tuned on the progress. And as far as the original statue, she is resting well in the rafters of an old building, collecting dust. Final display for this icon is yet to be determined but melting down the copper is not an option. If you have any questions or comments feel free to contact me: jdtompson1001@gmail.com.



Around Gifford Park Neighborhood...





Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
PO Box 31462
Omaha, NE 68131

Place
Stamp
Here

Gifford Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA)
Membership Application

GPNA membership year runs from January 1 to December 31
We are a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization

Type of membership: ___ Single (\$10) ___ Family (\$15) ___ Business (\$25)

Today's Date: _____

Business Name (if applicable): _____ Phone: _____

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

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

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

Return this completed form along with your payment and mail to:

Gifford Park Neighborhood Association, PO Box 31462, Omaha, NE 68131

or PayPal to hello@giffordparkomaha.org