



Gifford Park's Pride

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

July 2020

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Community Remembers Elijah Walsh with Bike Ride

Chris Foster

The Community Bike Project of Omaha (CBPO) and Gifford Park neighborhood honored the memory of Elijah Walsh with a remembrance bicycle ride around the neighborhood Friday evening July 10. After the ride, we gathered in the Big Muddy Urban Farm garden plot at 32nd & California Street for a reception where we shared thoughts and good memories. Many thanks to the CBPO (Sara Adkisson Joyner, Adam Blowers, Mohamed Ukach, Jacob Stacy) and GPNA for organizing the event.

Elijah, his mom Jasmine and his two younger brothers Emmanuel and Ethan lived in Gifford Park at 3504 Cass (the house with the Adventure Playground tree house in back) for about five years until a little over a year ago when they moved out of the neighborhood into a bigger home. They loved the neighborhood and embraced the Community Bike Project, community garden, Adventure Playground, and all things Gifford Park. Sadly, we lost Elijah April 22, 2020; he was 17 years old.

In 2015 at our GPNA holiday banquet, we honored Elijah as our 'Youth Volunteer of the Year' for his tireless efforts and involvement with practically all of our neighborhood youth activities and programs... in recognizing him, we said "Elijah is EVERYWHERE in Gifford Park and a great role model!" We all will hold onto great memories of him helping at the bike shop, community garden, youth garden, Adventure Playground (building the tree house!), park cleanups, Easter egg hunts, tennis, soccer, and others. His many Gifford Park friends really appreciated Elijah (and Jasmine, Emmanuel and Ethan too!), and described him as a sweet young man, a gentleman, active, strong, athletic, friendly, great sense of humor, eager to participate and learn, volunteered with numerous neighborhood activities, a great spirit... these characteristics not only defined Elijah but also

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

Watch for an announcement about the next neighborhood meeting coming soon!



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Editor's note: If you have neighborhood news or an editorial to share, we want to hear from you! Please include your contact information and put "GPNA Newsletter" in the subject line and submit by email to a.r.huckins@gmail.com. Editorials are subject to approval by the GPNA Executive Board.

helped shape Gifford Park in very positive ways in the way too short time he was here.

Elijah's passing is tough for me because I saw him grow from 12 to 17 years old, literally in my backyard. He was always respectful, helpful and had a great attitude. His mom Jasmine accurately described... "the whole Gifford Park neighborhood was his backyard". He was a natural leader and friends wanted to be around him...who wouldn't with his active adventurous lifestyle! I loved to see Elijah, his brothers and friends fully use the neighborhood as a blank canvas for being creative, exercising, growing and building healthy relationships. Elijah has inspired me to do my best to create and support an active healthy environment for youth and adults in our Gifford Park neighborhood. I also want to thank Jasmine for her courage and letting us all remember and celebrate her son's life.

Others shared their thoughts:

"I remember Elijah as such an integral part of the jubilant Gifford Park community. He always seemed to be energetically leading a group of friends from one activity to the next, at the bike shop, adventure playground, community garden, or the park. And anytime he ended up back at the shop, he brought the playfulness and energy of the neighborhood with him. He truly made all of Gifford Park feel connected and thriving, and helped form the fabric that coalesces a place into a community. I am grateful for all the joy Elijah brought to the bike shop and Gifford Park, thankful for all that I learned from him, and comforted knowing that there is such a strong community in Omaha to remember and honor Elijah's life and spirit."

-Charles Mitchell
(past Community Bike
Project Shop Manager)

"Hey everybody. This is Teal. I wish I could be with you right now. Thank you Sara for offering me space to share about Elijah. I remember how Elijah took such great care of the younger members of our community - his younger brothers and beyond. It stuck with my how he'd be so bright and engaged with some project or another - and his enthusiasm made it safe and fun for the younger kids to get involved. I have a great image of him poking his head out of one of the post holes at the adventure playground like a prairie dog - just immersed in the silliness of play. That playful energy is ageless. And it is enduring in all of us who were touched by him. I will always remember and cherish my moments with Elijah, so grateful to have known him so closely during our playful, joyous summers in Gifford Park. Thank you all on this ride for carrying on his memory and for letting me participate in this small way. I love you all. Ride on, for Elijah."

-Teal Gardner,
(past Adventure Playground Director
and Bike Shop volunteer)

From the President

I have been thinking about what to write in our newsletter for a while now... Every time I had an idea and the right words to express it, something happened and my story was obsolete, another crisis broke out and nothing made sense any longer.

Spring came and went, and the COVID-19 pandemic forced GPNA to cancel the Easter egg hunt, spring cleanups, neighborhood meetings, the youth garden and the Adventure playground, the youth soccer and youth tennis programs, and so many other occasions to meet.

We had hoped summer would bring back some sense of normality, and the neighborhood would buzz again. Unfortunately, it is not the case and we have to cancel all the future events: Slip'n'Slide, 33rd Friday Block party mid-August, Porchfest early October, potlucks and movie nights, and more... But this will pass and we will gear up for 2021...!

On top of this seemingly endless pandemic, the country witnessed horrible events leading to racial tensions and social upheavals. Our reality and our beliefs are shattered; we are trying to make sense of what is happening and find answers to existential questions. We are now in a time of great changes and we have entered uncharted territories.

The crisis did not spare our community in Gifford Park Neighborhood. Although the Association already promotes diversity and inclusion through its numerous programs, we realize we can do more so that everyone really feels welcome, recognized, respected and valued in our neighborhood.

More diversity is certainly needed at all levels of GPNA, starting with the Board, **and we need your help! We want to hear your story, we want learn about your dreams and how they will change our community for the better!**

If you want to be involved in the conversation, if you want to share your reflection and ideas, if you want to help us in our effort to shape a future where everyone feels safe and welcome, I invite you to join the GPNA Board. Together, we want to make Gifford Park Neighborhood an even better and greater place to live, work, learn and play!

I leave you with a few words from the song 'Ensemble' by Belgian singer Pierre Rapsat (free translation)

*Ensemble, ensemble
Même si l'on est différent
Et savoir traverser le temps
Tout simplement ensemble
Ensemble, ensemble
Découvrir que l'on a un don
Vivre les mêmes émotions
Avoir le coeur qui tremble
Sur cette étrange mappemonde
Où le plus beau côtoie l'immonde
Pour se défendre*

*Car même si tout va plus vite
Il y a autant de choses tristes
Autour de nous
Dans les images qu'on nous propose
Autant de gens qui s'opposent
Et de portes closes
Mais ensemble
Même si l'on est différent
Et savoir traverser le temps
Tout simplement Ensemble...*

*Together, together
Even if we are different
And be able to flow through time
Simply together
Together, together
Discover you have a special talent
Experience the same emotions
Feel your heart shake
On this strange planet
Where the most beautiful exists next to the filthiest
To defend itself*

*Even though everything goes faster
There is still as much sadness
Around us
In the images we are subjected to
So many people opposing each other
And so many doors closed
But together
Even if we are different
And be able to flow through time
Simply Together...*

Stay safe, stay hopeful and stay tuned!

*-Marie Hélène
GPNA Board President*

P.S. Feel free to contact one of the Board members if you want to learn more about what we do and how you can help.

Editorial Corner: Neighborhood Voices

Readers are welcome to submit their letters for the Editorial Corner to any Executive Board member (see page 2) prior to the Executive Board meeting held the third Thursday of every month. The Executive Board has final approval for all editorials appearing in this section. Full name, address, and contact information must be included on all letters submitted (address and contact information will be kept confidential). The views and opinions stated are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the GPNA or the Executive Board.

Dispelling the Myths of Racism (Part One)

Wendell V. Stanley

They questionably cry the riddle of racism louder and louder every time it happens. As a segway of a new journey I began with a certain man of a different religion, born of a different city, learned of a different way I submit today therapeutically; "black man - silent no more". Below is a creative writing, the first installment of a series during this fallow ground breaking season. This first offering is dedicated to my mother, my step mother, my sister, all my aunts, my lovely wife, my five spectacular daughters, and my many sisters in life, neighbors, family and friends. They call me a black man. I know not practically why when I reflect on who I truly am and who I see in the mirror. I am simply who I am. The seed I plant reproduces according to the diligence of my hand. The sweat of my labor fuels my plan to smile as I eat and share with others. My friends enjoy fellowship at my right hand. My foes know exactly where I stand. I am a man that can do what I say I can. Trust is the bond of a man's man.

George Floyd's death was the latest edition of the prime time crime scene drama we see playing out in our urban centers too many times to count. Activists groups, family and friends of the latest victim join the procession of mourners who dread the endless bloodshed of young 'black' men as the media and pop culture fuel the phenomenon. We have all seen hollywood movies depicting the alleged street reality of impoverished communities. But now increasingly so daylight hours killings in front of a camera for the world to see seems to be out pacing blockbuster scripts. How soon before the producers and stars begin receiving Oscars for their stellar productions and performances. There is an actual genre of snuff films where very graphically violent homicides take place under the well lit sets.

It saddens the heart to see malice taking place too frequently against men of color. And yet one son we are raising into a gentleman to make his mark on life. This article is to outline why we are not afraid for his future.

Humor helps those of us issued the losing costumes and roles in life. Laughter does good like a medicine a proverb reminds us. In the green room hoping for a rewrite where we win for once, we bite down on our pride trying to calm the butterflies in our stomach as the show curtains glide back. However we feel about the roles written or the way the scenes are directed, when it's show time, the show simply must go on. Oddly enough the metaphors denoted here are nowhere near as surreal as it is to be classified black in a world that has a set of unspoken rules where you know you can be taken as a scapegoat at any time according to the alleged ghosts of slavers past. So you keep your head on a swivel and enjoy whatever quality of life you can muster living for the cause of making it better for your descendents several generations in the future. Because it simply is what it is. One of the beautiful things about our culture in all its humiliated tapestry is the inbred contentment, resilience, and unspeakable joy despite the occasional obstacles.

The saddest part of the matter is the fact that the entire virtual reality is the concoction of evil pseudo scientist generations past. Those who initially put the grift into play should receive the 'greatest of all times' award for cons. The entire scheme is a well put together scam, a house of mirrors of the sorts. But there is an efficient and failsafe to escape the ploy for anyone willing to pay attention to detail, their surroundings, and the inner voice in their hearts. The sort of inner and outer spheric vigilance described here is called character. And whatever side of the equation we find ourselves on during this blip in history, what about the genocide of the native man? What's our collaborative plan to restore his clan?

Editorial Corner: Neighborhood Voices

Open Letter: To my white neighbors and friends

Tyler Magnuson

The last 6 weeks have seen a wide autonomous movement against the police and the unequal systems, racism being one, they enable and enforce across this country and even the world. This started with the burning of the 3rd Precinct in Minneapolis in response to the brutal killing of George Floyd and has continued with people pulling down statues of symbols that represent our country's racist roots. Along with this there has been a broad shift in understanding among white people about the individual ways we continue to make our communities unsafe for BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of color). We perpetuate harm, as white people by explicitly creating unsafe conditions and also by our unwillingness to listen, learn and examine our own behaviors and place in the world.

This upheaval has touched Gifford Park as well. In the past weeks we have seen black community members threatened, police called on indigenous community members and racial profiling by police. These are not new occurrences, similar situations have happened before the murder of George Floyd, and we should have recognized and addressed them then. But as a part of this national moment we find ourselves in, it is important that we stop and understand, from a new angle, how we as white people are complicit in this harm, and what we can do to address it. Here are a few ideas and points of open conversation that have been happening within the groups of people I know;

1. ***Make BIPOC community members feel welcome, safe and heard in our community spaces.*** This is not to say that some people who are black don't feel safe here already but there is no one black identity that can speak or represent all black people. I have heard black friends and acquaintances say that they are unsure if Gifford Park is safe and welcoming to them. Specifically, these comments have come on the heels of several incidents. First, an event I hosted perpetuated harm. Second, the absence of a Black Lives Matter sign supported by the Gifford Park Neighborhood Market. Third, a neighbor threatened to shoot a young black resident with a gun. We (including myself) must start to understand how we help heal from these acts of harm and how we create a neighborhood that holds us accountable to each other.

2. ***Don't call the police, and don't invite them to neighborhood events or meetings.*** The police create unsafe conditions for minorities in our neighborhood. They are a threat of deportation to members of our community without legal documents. They are a threat of prison time to members of our community without homes. They are a threat of death any time they are called but specifically to BIPOC members of our community. We have a neighborhood with strong bonds of solidarity and affinity, we can solve problems ourselves without inviting outside agitators (the Omaha Police Department) into our community to cause more harm. There will be space to talk about what a Gifford Park without police will look like soon; bring your dreams and ideas!

3. ***Open space for more diversity into our decision making processes, organizations, and activities.*** There are some things that happen in Gifford Park that are truly beautiful, diverse and powerful. I would put all of the kids programming that happens on this list. But there are also problematic glaring differences; like who comes to our annual banquet, what is the racial make-up of the board, who owns and makes decisions about major properties in the neighborhood. Even if we feel like we (white property owners and community leaders) can host diverse events and are open to include people from all different backgrounds we can never hold the experiences of BIPOC community members in our hearts because we do not know what it is like to be anything but white. If we are a community then all voices need space, all voices need a say and all voices need the ability to materially create and build this neighborhood.

I do not intend this to be a checklist for anyone or to stand on some ground of higher moral authority. I am flawed, I have caused harm, I am trying to move forward with authenticity and humbleness. There is so much growth in all of this that it should not surprise us that feelings of defensiveness or fear come popping up. That is our white privilege trying to shield us from guilt, and the truth is we are guilty. But, the path forward is listening and vulnerability. To act but also be willing to hear criticism and understand the unique ways your white privilege has made it possible to have all the things you have, all the time to talk and people to listen to you. Other people do not have that, and if we really are a community in the truest sense of the word we must do everything we can to give everyone those same opportunities.

Feed The People and Midtown Mutual Aid Food Distributions: By Neighbors, For Neighbors

Amanda Huckins

Two different groups are holding food distributions at Media Corp.- an informal community space at 515 N. 33rd. Street- on the first and third Saturdays of each month from 11am to 1pm. While the organization of each distribution is handled by different groups of people, the idea is the same: it's important for people to do what they can to help each other directly, as community members and as equals. Both groups, Feed the People - Omaha and Midtown Mutual Aid, believe in solidarity, not charity.

Even before the current public health and economic difficulties, folks in our neighborhood have been dealing with the stress of wondering how they will put food on the table for themselves and their loved ones. A group called Feed the People - Omaha has been distributing food and personal hygiene items (like tampons, toilet paper, diapers, and baby wipes) to fellow community members in



The third Saturday monthly food distribution welcomes donations of canned vegetables, dry pasta, and pasta sauce, among other items



A Midtown Mutual Aid volunteer packs bags with food and toilet paper

Gifford Park each first Saturday of the month for nearly three years. You can find out more about Feed the People - Omaha on facebook and twitter.

Another distribution began in April of this year. It has been planned and carried out by Midtown Mutual Aid, a loosely affiliated group of "neighborhood point people" who have become acquainted with each other through a common desire to build stronger community networks in response to the uncertainty we all faced as COVID-19 made it more difficult to go to work, see each other, and get what we need. If you would like to learn more or become a "neighborhood point person" for your block, email mutualaidnetworkomaha@gmail.com.

Are you interested in donating food to be distributed to our neighbors? Here's a list of some of the food items we're accepting, which can be left in the clear plastic tub on the porch of 515 N. 33rd St. any time: *shelf-stable milk (almond, soy, etc.), pasta, pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly, rice, canned or dried beans (black beans, pinto beans, and garbanzo beans), boxed mac and cheese or "helper" meals, canned chicken, canned tuna, breakfast cereal, complete pancake mix, canned veggies, and canned fruit.*

If you have excess garden produce or perishables (like dairy milk or eggs) that you would like to contribute on the morning of the first or third Saturday, please contact me at a.r.huckins@gmail.com or 402-312-3158.

Youth Garden Update

(from the Gifford Park Youth Garden Newsletter)

Rhonda Freeman

Grow-Along-Garden

When you look at the Youth Garden plots we get the feeling that everything is coming together. The tomato plants have cages and are growing bigger everyday. The pepper plants have “tiny baby” peppers and the cilantro and (some) of the onions are sprouting, turning the Youth Garden into marvelous edible shades of green. But... not all plots turned green which allowed us to add other awesome plants to the Youth Garden. In some of the plots where the onions and peppers didn't really grow we planted marigold and basil seeds as well as a stray green bean plant. We chose marigolds and basil because they are great companion plants. (def. noun: plants from different crops planted close together to maximize space, increase pest control, and crop productivity) Another way to think of companion plants: Plants that are really good friends because they help each other grow. Here's a list of tomato friends: Basil, marigolds, asparagus, carrots, celery, the onion family, lettuce, parsley, and spinach. Here's a list of tomato frenemies (plants that don't like helping tomatoes grow): Corn, cabbage, potatoes, beets, peas, fennel, dill, and rosemary. If you have some empty space in your Grow-Along-Garden try companion planting to fill in the gaps.

Happening at Community Garden: **BOOKS!**

We've added new children's books to the Community Garden Library Box. Reading a new book on your porch, under a tree or even in your room is a great way to spend a hot summer afternoon. Remember, we are here to help and available to answer questions Saturday mornings from 10a - noon. If you don't have any questions, you can still stop by, say hi and see what's in bloom.

To make sure you're receiving the Gifford Park Youth Garden digital newsletter, email Rhonda Freeman, Program Coordinator at getinvolved@bigmuddyurbanfarm.org

Junior's Lawncare Open for Business

Chris Foster



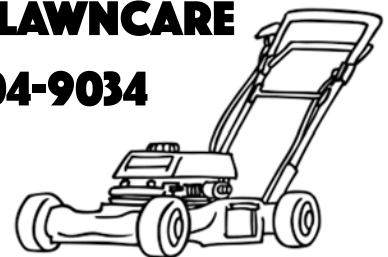
Wendell “Junior” Stanley has started a lawncare business

I want to let Gifford Park neighborhood folks know 13 year-old Wendell “Junior” Stanley just started his new business – Junior's Lawncare (call 402-804-9034). You may have read Wendell was recently recognized by GPNA as one of our ‘Youth Volunteer of the Year’ recipients. He has grown up in Gifford Park and involved with EVERY neighborhood youth program & activities – tennis, soccer, basketball, youth garden, Adventure Playground, 33rd Friday block party, market, park cleanups, Easter Egg hunt, Halloween festival, holiday banquet, and more. Wendell balances hard work and play with a great attitude...he is known as a peacemaker with a million-dollar smile! Wendell is home-schooled and an excellent tennis player.

When I hurt my back in early July, I called Wendell to do six lawns (and some trimming) including the community garden and Adventure Playground spaces, he mowed them the very next day and did a fine job! I personally recommend Wendell, or “Junior” as I usually call him, he'll do a good job for you!

JUNIOR'S LAWCARE

402-804-9034



Around the Community Garden



Chris and Maggie of plot 24 picked one of the first ripe tomatoes of the season on June 30th! So early for tomatoes! Their dog is named Winkie after an elf in the 4th Harry Potter book and she is a chihuahua russell terrier mix

Young neighborhood gardener Soul standing in alyssum flowers that make up a heart-shaped garden planted by Mike Caban in memory of his wife Judi

To Our Seniors...The Class of 2020... Dana Carlton-Flint

You make your neighbors PROUD!

It was your year to shine, to be in the spotlight
It was your year to bask in the glory of Graduation
It was your year to leave an impact on the underclassmen
It was your year to lead the way, to fly, to succeed,
TO BE AMAZING!

This Senior year like no other before it will go down in history, you the senior class of 2020 will go down in history. Not because your high schools held their first ever Virtual Graduations, not because your year was finished out by online learning, but because of you!

It is your year to show everyone how resilient you are
It is your year to adapt and overcome
It is your year to leave an impact on the underclassmen, your teachers, faculty, family and friends

It is your year to forge new roads, travel uncharted waters, TO BE AMAZING!

Congratulations to all of our Gifford Park Neighborhood Graduates and all graduates of the Class of 2020...BE AMAZING!



Congratulations on your graduation from Central, Curtis!

Community Garden/Adventure Playground Update

Chris Foster

It's interesting to tour the garden and experience the changes on a weekly (if not daily) basis...such a wide variety of vegetables and flowers in the plots. It's been nice to see so many people and families coming through the garden and Adventure Playground...to garden, weed, tend youth garden plots, pick serviceberries and blackberries, adding to and turning over the compost, checking out the bees and chickens, the vertical growing peas in the Big Muddy Urban Farm plot, exploring the Adventure Playground space and tree house, having small gatherings and conversations, seeing the hollyhocks/yucca/lilies/purple clematis in bloom, the pollinators behind Ellen's house, Mike's heart garden, the Peace Pole, and other forms of nature like garter names and groundhogs! See photos in this newsletter of flowers and plants and other sights around the community garden, Adventure Playground and Ellen's "garden" house backyard with the pollinator plants and beehives.

We want to give out some well-deserved thanks: Rhonda Freeman w/Big Muddy Urban Farm and Witney Stanley for tending to the youth garden plot area; Thanks Brittany Stebbins and Rose Carlson for weeding and being around the garden to help gardeners; Cynthia Shuck for managing our beehives, and Big Muddy Urban Farm for caring for the chickens; Scott Farrington, owner of Indian Creek Nursery on Saddle Creek Road, for donating four flats of tomato plants - they have been generous supporters of the community garden and youth garden program since we started in 2001; Mike Caban for constant encouragement of all things community garden...stay safe, Mike!

Gardeners are welcome to plant miscellaneous annual flowers (lots of sun!) in open areas along the front wall on the plateau around the bushes...this would add some nice color! Please ask Brittany or Rose regarding planting in the other flower/planting beds. We continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic regarding formal youth garden and Adventure Playground programs, obviously we hope to resume more



The treehouse at the Sallie Foster Adventure Playground is a great place to enjoy outdoor play

normal programming next spring.

Weather permitting, each Wednesday 5-8pm, AND Saturday's 10am-Noonish we will have the garden shed open and water turned on for anyone wanting to work on your plot, weed the various planting beds, turn over compost, socialize (at a distance of course!), or just enjoy the nice weather. Everyone is welcome to stop by anytime to check out the chickens and 2-story tree house.

If you have questions about the community garden, contact Chris Foster (402-290-8187 or foster3413@cox.net); for garden plot information, contact Brittany Stebbins (402-318-2355 or brittanyastebbins@gmail.com); for Adventure Playground, contact Chris Foster, or text Monica Lehn 402-660-9046, or email us at sfadventureplayground@gmail.com or on Facebook.

**GARDEN SHED OPEN/WATER ON:
Wednesdays 5-8pm
Saturdays 10am-12pm**

New Swing Seats at Gifford Park Playground

The GPNA wishes to give special thanks to Operation Playground leader Maria Devlin & husband Rory and Maria's parents George & Patty Doyle for their amazing support of Gifford Park and our neighborhood! They recently provided funding for five brand new playground swing set seats, FJC Builders volunteered to install them in June. Francisco and Solomon also "volunteered" to "test" the fun-factor of the new seats...they passed the test! Thank you Doyle family for staying engaged for over a dozen years with maintaining and improving Gifford Park.



Francisco and Solomon of FJC Builders installing the new seats...



New flat swing seat at Gifford Park playground



...and doing quality assurance!

Event and Program Cancellations *a message from the GPNA board*

Unfortunately with the COVID-19 pandemic, and like so many events and programs everywhere around the world, we GPNA have had to cancel most of ours too including Easter egg hunt, spring cleanups, youth garden, Adventure Playground, youth soccer, youth tennis, 33rd Friday Block Party, Porchfest, pot lucks, Slip'n'Slide, meetings, and more. But we will plan to gear up for next year...it's really not that far off...so, stay hopeful and stay tuned!

Yates Future Update plus Science and Art in Parks

Adrian S. Petrescu

Walking around the neighborhood, and reaching out to Omaha friends, we ran many a time into neighbors asking us where Yates is going, and if they should still keep the Save Yates signs up. We updated everyone in person, as we did online on social media as well. Yes, please keep the Save Yates signs up. Because the Omaha Public Schools Board of Education met online on Zoom we did not need to reach out to ask for everyone's support in the meeting when Yates--the building--was decided upon. Things have progressed significantly since we last wrote here.

In several Zoom meetings interested future community organizations tenants and representatives of the Yates Future effort discussed with our major foundation donor and our facilitator of possibilities all the dreams everyone has, space allocations, compliance with city code future issues, and all the details of the needs for immediate and future upgrades in the building in the eventuality that we'll win the bid to purchase it from OPS. Representatives of every community organization interested to co-locate at Yates visited the building at least once, sometimes twice or more times, to familiarize themselves with the space and put a visual space together with the dreams discussed previously by looking at architectural plans alone. We all dreamt some more and imagined the spaces filled with beneficiaries of all the programs envisioned, from entrepreneurship after school programs for youth to chefs training, and from dancing and music for everyone to citizenship classes for new-Americans, all growing more and more over the next few years. Plus, as expected, a continuation and extension into the months of non-Summer of all the programs that Gifford Park Neighborhood Association has been organizing for all youth of Omaha over the years. The conversations felt good even through the mandatory masks, especially because we were all dreaming of better times that we'll be returning to and growing further together as a community.

On June 15, 2020, the OPS Board of Education voted to surplus Yates the building and to place it on sale with an educational use stipulation.

As assessors have been working on determining what is so-called "fair market value," the

Omaha community has been thinking through who is selling what to whom for what purpose. We tried several times in OPS Board of Education meetings to make the argument that the community already paid for the building and its maintenance through property taxes over the years.

There is a viable plan in place. Now OPS is marketing the property and it will be taking in bids from interested potential buyers.

The community has a buyer and an allocated sum for the purchase and for some of the immediately necessary repairs. We will put in a bid and we are confident it's a very strong community-oriented proposal likely to win. We continue to hope that the fact that it is a community paid for building, and that Omaha has a strong history of transfer back to the community of public buildings at peppercorn prices, will be taken into consideration in the bidding process when selecting the buyer and the sales price to the community based buyer. Because the sum available for the purchase is limited, more fundraising will be necessary for more repairs. Yet, if we win, the building will be nonetheless operational from day one.

In our dreams that we discussed repeatedly among all the partners, the mission of the future Yates Community Center stays an educational one, with a major educational community partner, and several other community serving partners, committed to host programs and nurture dreams and cross-fertilize possibilities for everyone. Meanwhile, OPS Programs have been on their way moving and being re-established into the Teachers and Administration Center.



"Ask your mom to help you write to your City Council member"
(continued on page 13)

Condolences to the Rubek Family Chris Foster

Sadly, Brittney Rubek's and brother Zach Rubek's mom and Jan Franks daughter Michelle Rubek passed away in early July. Michelle lived at 3515 Davenport Street (right across the Gifford Park playground), she had been struggling with health issues.

Anyone either living in Gifford Park or participating/volunteering in one of our GPNA events, programs or activities probably knows Brittney, Zach and Jan...and good chance you know Brittney's young daughter Arianna. Brittney, Arianna and Jan live at 321 N 35 Ave

(just north of the playground). Jan has been volunteering since the 1990's and was our GPNA 'Neighbor of the Year' in 2006. Brittney (and Zach) started participating in GPNA youth activities as a youngster in the 1990's as well, and last few years has taken on leadership roles with the Easter egg hunt, Halloween Festival, and Slip'n'Slide...along with her continuing volunteer efforts with youth tennis, Block Party, park cleanups, and other youth activities. Arianna of course participates in all GPNA youth activities and attends Gifford Park Elementary!

Our thoughts and prayers are with you Jan, Brittney, Arianna, and Zach.

At the Neighborhood Market



(continued from page 11) Do you know of any other organization that may benefit from being located at and offering

services from Yates? Let us know your suggestions.

As for us, we kept dreaming and planning through the crisis. In our turn in the visioning sessions, we used “Act like an Owner” technique to imagine a tribute to Chief Standing Bear statue and painting at the entrance to Yates Community Center, directing the attention of all visitors to the historic importance of Omaha and Nebraska to First Nations.

In May we got other related news that we must share here, that we hope will also sway the OPS Board of Education’s members to indirectly vote for our many dream projects for children in Omaha that we are working on for when hopefully we’ll be able to purchase Yates.

Building on the long standing tradition that Gifford Park Neighborhood Association built over the years in youth programs, like the tennis program and several others, we put in for a grant and received an Omaha Community Foundation grant to offer a new program to sixty Omaha youth, starting this year.

The new Science & Art in Parks program will start this year as soon as we find a way to meet in the park while respecting social distance recommendations. Sixty teenagers will be able to take part. We hope to expand to more participants in years to come. We want to help youth learn more about the importance of energy conservation, of necessary improvements in efficiency and innovation in vehicles’ design, about use of renewable energy sources, and energy savings. In this multi-activity program, youth will also develop an eye and the skills to capture natural wonders in the backyard and city parks and render them in art.

We want to teach children and youth more about science, technology, art and the environment, and applied math through hands-on design activities and healthy friendly competition. As with all the other things the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association has done with and for youth, we are intent to use Yates Community Center, if we buy it from OPS, to continue to help develop and foster leadership and curiosity traits, and nurture in youth self trust in their own abilities.

We can’t wait to see the teenagers build and race solar powered fuel cell model cars, and work together to improve their respective team’s constructive competitive stance across multiple challenges. We would of course showcase the photos

the teams will take of wildlife in the city, and we would hope that this would grow everyone’s passion for nature, and for using technology available easily to everyone to capture beautiful images of nature and promote and celebrate its beauty and marvel. After all, we also have a tradition in Gifford Park and at Yates to keep making the point that gardens belong to pollinators (thank you, Curtis, and congratulations on your graduation). Everyone can take beautiful nature pictures right in our own backyard, and it would be a pity to miss them, and to miss watching and even learning from the love and care that we can see in birds caring for their young right here without driving anywhere. Then we can only imagine why we would expect that everyone’s creative entrepreneurship will be inspired and elevated by the lifetime dedicated to nature and wildlife photography by world renowned, and proud Nebraskan, photographer Thomas D Mangelsen, with his donated mini-exhibit that would be permanently located at Yates, showcasing a lifetime of a committed career in wildlife conservation and raising awareness in everyone on natural marvels and beauty.

This July we celebrate 60 years since Jane Goodall, long time friend of Thomas Mangelsen, got first to Gombe, where she observed and researched a family of chimpanzees, leading to amazing discoveries shattering our knowledge and to a lifetime dedicated to conservation and popularizing science. We can always hope that our small efforts to help children embrace science and art in the park and at Yates will have equally strong life and career defining contributions to all of our youth.

Please watch this spot in the August newsletter for more details, and how to sign up your children.

If you believe in our dreams, please keep working and wishing us all the best of success on the Yates Future effort. Now could be the time to write your Board of Education member again, to tell them to vote in favor of selling Yates to the education use community effort based foundation buyer.

The country and the world mourn with terrible sadness the unbelievable loss in the passing of a titan of humankind’s history, Congressman John Lewis. Rest in Peace. Biographer historian Jon Meacham insists that John Lewis believed unreservedly in our ability to make happen Heaven on Earth, if only we opened our hearts to one another. Let’s keep opening our hearts more and more to one another in Gifford Park, in Omaha, and everywhere.

Big Muddy Urban Farm Update Brent Lubbert

One of the more difficult parts of this year is that civic discourse is limited because our interactions are limited. The limited interaction time has made it difficult for Aspiring Farmer Residents to know the many wonderful people in our neighborhood and for neighbors to know the great work that Aspiring Farmer Residents are doing.

Though we haven't been able to host many farm tours this year like we have in years past, we are gearing up for a safe, socially distanced farm tour on Saturday, July 26 starting at 10am at the 3215 California Street Farm Plot. We hope that you will stop by to enjoy a walk around the neighborhood, see what's growing, and hear from residents about all the good work they've been doing this year. Masks are a necessity (we will have some on hand if you need one) and we will stay at six feet distance. To help us understand attendance numbers for this event, please rsvp by sending us an email at info@bigmuddyurbanfarm.org or texting Brent at 402-213-9646.

As a brief farm update, residents have selected and grown a diversity of vegetables, herbs and flowers that have supplied a 30 member CSA program, with additional shares going to No More Empty Pots and an assisted living home, and donations to free farm food stands. New this year, Residents initiated multiple wholesale markets making fresh produce more accessible in our community. Big Muddy veggies are stocked in the front cooler at Danny's Corner Store, meaning you can get neighborhood grown, fresh produce everyday of the week now. Residents have also begun working with Exist Green as another wholesale outlet.

For more farm updates, join in the Farm Tour on July 26th and find out about what all is growing at the farm while walking the neighborhood. Hope you are staying safe, well, and creative.



BIG MUDDY FARM TOUR
Saturday, July 26th // 10am
RSVP: info@bigmuddyurbanfarm.org

A Letter to Brook Bench Upon Retiring as City Parks Director

Chris Foster on behalf of GPNA

On behalf of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) I want to say THANK YOU for your great work and leadership during your time with City Parks & Recreation. I know you got pulled into other stuff too! Of course I'm bummed you are leaving!

You have always been very responsive, way more than fair and very accommodating to me and GPNA whenever we have needed anything for Gifford Park...and as you know we use the heck out of Gifford Park – youth tennis, youth soccer, cleanups, playground, tree planting, bicycle events, parades, and best of all people use the park for many unorganized recreational activities, it's a great balance and seems to work well! Keeping Gifford Park mowed and maintained is no small task – the park is the heart & soul of our neighborhood, and our namesake. We appreciate the true partnership we have between GPNA and City Parks Department... please share our thanks to your staff too.

A few noteworthy things that stick out in my mind. A number of years ago our 24' wide tennis backboard (my grandfather and my family paid for and installed) was blown down during a thunderstorm...you guys built a much stronger new one including fence repair, new poles and footings – it's been a great asset. And the two old Sun Dawg shacks you delivered to us years ago for our Friday Night Gifford Park Neighborhood Market has served our neighborhood and beyond tremendously to store our tents, tables, chairs, etc. – they serve as storage for many other of our GPNA events and programs.

We also appreciated your nice comments in the Omaha World Herald when Sandy Freeman passed away in 2013..."She will be missed dearly by the Parks Department. She was always my second set of eyes. We regarded her and Roger as our neighborhood Gifford Park caretakers." We all still miss her.

Congratulations on the Dewey Park Dog Park, a huge success! I pretty much grew up my whole life playing tennis at Dewey ever since my parents landed in Omaha at 28th & Cass Street (the interstate is there now) in 1962 when I was about a month old, my dad was in the Air Force in New Hampshire and got stationed at Offutt Air Force

Base. Thank you for your service in the Coast Guard! My family and friends have great memories of Dewey so it's great to see the park so active with amazing variety – tennis (hard and clay courts... and new lights!), basketball, handball, horseshoes walking, biking, dog park, playground, community center meeting space, etc.

Good luck in your next chapter, I'll see you on down the road!

Community Bike Project Omaha

CBPO still isn't open for Open Shop or Earn-a-Bike but is accepting bike donations on Saturdays from 2 to 5pm. Just leave the bikes out front and if you need a tax receipt knock on the door at 525 N 33rd St.



One bike, twice the fun!



Mohamed Ukach repairs a flat tire



Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
 PO Box 31462
 Omaha, NE 68131

Place
 Stamp
 Here

**Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
 Membership Application**

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

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

Business Name (if applicable): _____
 Business Phone (if applicable): _____

Name (1): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Name (2): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Name (3): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Name (4): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Name (5): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

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

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

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