



# Gifford Park's Pride

Gifford Park Neighborhood: A Great Place to Live, Work, Learn, and Play  
[www.giffordparkomaha.org](http://www.giffordparkomaha.org)

March 2015

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

## Restore Omaha



The 2015 Restore Omaha Conference brought together preservation-minded individuals for a day of networking, learning and sharing.

The opening reception on February 27 was held at The Pella at Blackstone. Attendees toured the new event space in the former Pella Lutheran Church at 41st and Harney Streets while enjoying food and a special "Pella Punch" created by Hap Abraham Catering who leases the space from owner Brad Iwen. Restoration Exchange Executive Director Kristine Gerber shared the background of how this building was saved and invited John Lund and Dan Houlihan to the stage to talk about the resurgence of the 40th and Farnam that they have helped make happen. Restoration Exchange, with the help of Restore Omaha keynote speaker Bernice Radle also introduced "Preservation Speed Dating" to the event, a chance for attendees to present a restoration problem they are having in front of the attendees who could offer their advice.

Saturday's conference at Metropolitan Community College featured 30 exhibitors, breakout sessions including topics on Redeveloping Historic Properties, How to Refinish a Basement, Tips and Tricks to Restoring Exteriors and Researching

**Next General Meeting  
Thursday, May 14**

**7:00 pm  
CHI Health-Creighton University  
Medical Center  
Morrison Seminar Room**

## Upcoming Events

**Easter Egg Hunt Saturday April 4  
noon (park cleanup 10:30)  
at Gifford Park**



**Spring Cleanup Saturday  
April 11 9am-2pm at  
Gifford Park**

**Park/Playground Cleanup  
April 25 9 am-1 pm at Gifford Park**

the History of your Home, six hands-on sessions on things like paint removal, plaster and wood selection, Restoration Jam presentations including several Gifford Park projects and keynote Bernice Radle a passionate preservationist from Buffalo New York showing us how young people are changing the face of preservation.

*continued on page 5*

**2015 GPNA Officers**

**Luther Larson, President**

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**Eric Purcell, Vice President**

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**Martin Janousek, Business Rep**

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**Chris Foster, Landlord Rep**

402-290-8187 | foster3413@cox.net

**Opportunities – Contacts**

**GPNA General Meetings**

Luther Larson, 616-9350

**Community Bike Project**

Charles Mitchell 309-0777

**Community Garden/Youth Garden**

Chris Foster 290-8187

**Adventure Playground**

Teal Gardner 402-875-1896

teal.gardner@gmail.com

**Teen Market Garden**

Cynthia Shuck 556-2090

dalilabush@cox.net

**Gifford Park Market**

Martin Janousek 558-4070

**Yates Community Center**

Susan Mayberger 557-2431

susan.mayberger@ops.org

**Youth Soccer**

Eric Purcell 719-5108

**Youth Tennis**

Chris Foster 290-8187

**Spring Cleanup**

Luther Larson 616-9350

**From the President**

*By Luther Larson*

Spring is just around the corner and so is the Neighborhood Spring Clean-up, April 11th from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM in the parking lot at the park. Please take advantage of this service provided by the City of Omaha to improve the beauty of our neighborhood. With the nice weather we are having in March, get out and meet the neighbors and offer help in hauling away that junk that has become an eyesore. If you have no ability to haul away materials please email/call and leave a message with me or any board member (see contact information at left) so we can schedule a pickup to stop by on the clean-up day.

With the warmer weather and the spring clean-up just ahead, the time is right to improve the welcoming of the Gifford Park neighborhood, the “Restore

Neighbors One Home at a Time” initiative. Think of the most welcoming home(s) you have seen, what is different about it? What makes it so welcoming? Welcoming homes typically will have the front door visible with the porch/entry open and free of obstructions. The front yard is landscaped so as not have barriers between the sidewalk and the front door, but instead flowers and shrubs that add to the welcoming effect. So our initiative is to have GPNA promote (communicate) that you are undertaking an improvement; so that neighbors can volunteer to help, provide you with tools through the GPNA tool rental program and publish the results in the newsletter to encourage others to participate. Our goal is to give neighbors a reason to work together on an activity where everyone is a winner, including the neighborhood. If interested in participating email me at LutherLar@cox.net.

**Good Neighbors**

As Murphy's Law states, "Your car tires will go flat only when the temperature drops below 10 degrees." This was the state of the car and of the weather one day in February when my daughter Maria and I tried to leave the house. I tied a scarf around my red cloak, donned my wool gloves, and fished the air pump out of the trunk. I tried to put air in the tire, but it would not hold. Occupied with the tire dilemma as I was, I did not notice at first that Maria was peering through the bushes talking to someone. It was our neighbor. He called Maria over to his garage. They came back looking like an ad for "Tires Are Us". Our dear neighbor, who no doubt had his own places to go and people to see, took off the tire, put on the spare and located the leak in the flat. I thanked him as he collected his tools and went back through the bushes separating our residences.

Could I change a tire if I had to? I hope so, but with neighbors like this it's tough to find out.

Editor's note: If you have news of interest to the Gifford Park Neighborhood, we encourage you to submit an article for the monthly newsletter. Editorials are subject to approval by the GPNA Executive Board. Please include your contact information. Articles may be submitted by email to jill.lynn.westfall@gmail.com.

## Update from the Bike Shop

By Charles Mitchell

With spring and summer on the horizon, all of us at the Bike Project are looking forward to helping more folks fix and earn bikes. We're also looking forward to the return of our seasonal rides and annual events.

If you need a refurbished bike to take advantage of the warming weather, there are still a number of ways to get yourself rolling. Kids' Bike Club gives kids aged 5-9 the opportunity to earn a free bike and helmet by attending 4 classes on Saturdays from 11AM-12PM. Youth Earn-a-Bike, for youth aged 10-15, shows young cyclists how to completely overhaul and safely ride a bike and provides a free bike, lock, and helmet. Adult Earn-a-Bike, for individuals 16 and over, requires 5-10 hours of shop volunteering in exchange for a free bike. Adult Earn-a-Bike now provides low-income individuals with a free light set and U-lock to complement their bike.

If you already have a bike but need to tune it up for the bicycling season, our Open Shop hours are for you! Volunteer mechanics can walk you through any repair/maintenance process and the shop is equipped with six repair stations complete with all of the necessary tools.

The Sunday Funday Ride, our monthly family-friendly and all-ages "slow roll" group ride, will be returning in March or April (depending on the weather). Join Bike Project volunteers, Earn-a-Bike graduates, and friends for a casual ride on streets and trails the last Sunday of every month. We meet at the shop at 6 p.m. and roll out at 6:30



p.m. Sunday Funday rides are so much fun!

ExhiBIKEtion, a bike-themed art exhibit, will also return to the Bike Project on March 20 6-9 p.m. Local artists and cycling enthusiasts will be displaying bike inspired artworks inside the shop for one night only. Support local art and the Bike Project at ExhiBIKEtion.

Lids for Kids, an annual fundraiser ride to support our Youth Earn-a-Bike programs, is on Sunday, May 3. Start the cycling season with a fun and invigorating 25 or 50 mile ride that starts in Gifford Park, travels up to Neale Woods, and visits Fort Calhoun before returning to the Bike Project. For up to date route and registration info visit [www.communitybikeproject.org/lids4kids/](http://www.communitybikeproject.org/lids4kids/).

Now is a perfect time to get involved at the Bike Project. If you'd like to volunteer during Open Shop or Earn-a-Bike, join us on a ride, or help out at an event, stop by the shop or email me at [charles@communitybikeproject.org](mailto:charles@communitybikeproject.org) to get started!

## Salvation Army's 36th & Cuming Project Overview

Gifford Park residents are invited to attend Bemis Park Neighborhood Association's April General Meeting for a presentation by the Salvation Army on their new building project at 36th & Cuming. Representatives from the Salvation Army and their architect HDR will give a short presentation at 7:15 p.m. and answer questions about the project.

Date: Tuesday, April 7, 2015

Time: 7:00 PM – 8:00 p.m.

Where: Augustana Church, 38th Street & Lafayette, Main Floor Library Room

Parking available in the church parking lot.

## Neighborhood Projects Update - School, Soccer Field, and Community Center

*By Chris Foster*

The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) continues to work with various stakeholders on three very important projects with big impacts on the future of ours and surrounding neighborhoods. The three projects are: 1.) building a new neighborhood elementary school; 2.) keeping the Yates building as a community center; and 3.) repurposing Turner Park North to be a recreational youth soccer field. We presented these project updates as part of our vision at our GPNA holiday banquet in December and at the February general meeting. Because these projects are related and affect each other, we have been meeting to seek support from the stakeholders involved including Omaha Public Schools (OPS) Board & Administration, Creighton University/CHI Health, Omaha Planning Department, Omaha Parks Department, Senator Sara Howard, Councilman Chris Jerram, Restoration Exchange Omaha, philanthropic foundations, surrounding neighborhood associations, and local residents.

With passage on November 4 of the \$421 million Omaha Public Schools (OPS) bond issue, efforts now focus on implementation. Specifically for our neighborhood, there is nearly \$17 million slated in the OPS facility plan to build a new elementary school in our neighborhood, the location is still a big question and this is where things get complicated.

We have been unified and clear since last year about the goals and needs of our neighborhood children and families, and the neighborhood as a whole. We do not want OPS to tear down the existing historic Yates School building at 32nd & Davenport Street, nor tear down existing homes around Yates. We would like to see the Yates building continue to serve as public use (as the existing programs do) and even serve more people as a community center for ours and

surrounding neighborhoods in the future. We believe the Yates building and location lend itself very well for a community center with Gifford Park on the west and Turner Park North on the east. The GPNA is currently working with the City on plans for a recreational youth soccer field and walk/bike trail in Turner Park North.

Over the next few weeks OPS will host community meetings to discuss the Student Assignment Plan which will help determine school attendance boundaries. We have been told there is a thorough process for deciding location and timeline, and our neighborhood will be involved in this decision-making process.

We have also met with Creighton University to discuss any possibilities of them offering to sell existing parking lot property near 32nd Street between Burt and Webster, or sell other Creighton-owned property that OPS could use to build a new school. These locations would be advantageous for building an “urban” designed school that would fit into our older neighborhood and address parking, traffic and safety concerns, as well as saving the current Yates building. Creighton is still figuring out their master plans and we plan to continue meeting as plans evolve with both OPS and Creighton.

Besides the school location and design questions, there will eventually be discussions regarding school principal, curriculum & programs, PTA/PTO, neighborhood partnerships, etc. – this is where we will need your help and involvement to work toward the best solutions for the future success of the school and neighborhood. For more information, contact Chris Foster 402-290-8187 or [foster3413@cox.net](mailto:foster3413@cox.net). Stay tuned.

## Restore Omaha

*continued from page 1*

The GPNA hosted a booth at the conference promoting the good qualities of our neighborhood – thanks to GPNA volunteers Marie Hélène André, Martin Janousek, Luther & Deb Larson, Alex Goswami and Chris Foster. Gifford Park residents Adrian Petrescu and Chris Foster presented their own 'old home' restoration/fix-up projects at the Restore Jam, where attendees

were invited to share before-and-after photos of their own projects. Special thanks to Brent Lubbert and Matt Cronin of Big Muddy Urban Farm for recording video/audio duties of both the reception and conference. And finally a big thanks to the entire Restore Omaha committee for organizing another great event! For more information, visit [www.restorationexchange.org](http://www.restorationexchange.org).



## Restore Omaha - A first-timers perspective

*By Alex Goswami*

The new residents of Gifford Park are lucky that the long-time residents are here to teach the lessons of restoration and preservation. The Restore Omaha Conference taught me that. On February 28 at Metropolitan Community College's south campus, the Restoration Exchange hosted the Restore Omaha Conference. A day of breakout sessions, presentations, and networking to learn how to restore Omaha's gorgeous older properties. Gifford Park Neighborhood Association was represented by many of the stalwart restoration experts in our neighborhood.

Gifford Park is so rad because of the efforts made to keep the neighborhood looking original. Imagine if we tore down our buildings and put up apartment complexes and parking lots. It will look like every other American Starbucks-laden city and frankly that is boring. So I was excited to go to the Restore Omaha Conference to learn how we are going about keeping Omaha looking like Omaha.

Of the presentations that I saw, I was most impressed with the developments happening on 26th and St. Mary Ave in Travers Row. These are detached row housing that have become dilapidated but a local real estate interest including an architect have set out to restore these properties to look as they did when they were first built. Not only will the buildings be restored, but the lane in front of the homes and the porches on front will foster opportunities to get to know your neighbors. I think that this restoration project will be a huge success because people who want to live in the city do not want to live in a brand new building. It is cool to live in a building that generations have lived in before you. It feels real. The people at Restore Omaha get that. So if there is an old house you want made beautiful again, do it. Start to restore. There is a strong network of people to help you and the best of them are right here in Gifford Park.

## Adventure Playground

*By Teal Gardner*

This winter I have been wondering on an idea: How to make an Adventure Playground in Gifford Park? I brought this idea to the GPNA board last October. We got all excited, and thought we'd keep it in mind. Well, the months have gone by, and I am so excited to announce that Gifford Park will indeed have its own Adventure Playground – the first of its kind in Nebraska! It won't be the kind of playground we tend to imagine when we think of what is usually installed by cities for kids – there will not be any plastic slides or monkey bars or rubber matting. Rather, it will provide the kids of Gifford Park with space, tools, and raw materials so that they can decide on their own forms and shelters to play in. There will be hand tools, shovels, barrels, pallets, sticks, wood, rope, tires, and tarps! It will be staffed by helpful adults who will be there to assist the kids in building things.

Kids have always been making huts and hide-outs, and taking over spaces with their play. I saw a lot of it last summer when I was doing Play Lab at the Gifford Park Neighborhood Market, and see it when I am just walking around: a little stick fort up against a fence, somebody's tree house in a backyard, or chalk lines drawn on the street as a baseball diamond. Kids are ingenious with their play, and our neighborhood is full of these clever, creative people. The Adventure Playground will provide another space for kids to be kids. I think of play as a valuable and necessary aspect to healthy living, and am very excited to provide for more play in our neighborhood starting this summer!

The Adventure Playground will be at the Gifford Park Community Garden, located in a parcel of land just west of the big square plot that Big Muddy used for potatoes last year. We will commence work in early spring by moving some fences to open up and define the space. We will use one of the sheds in the garden for tool and materials storage. The Adventure Playground will open on Saturdays after the Youth Garden activities, beginning May 16. More hours will be added



as needed, in response to interest and volunteer availability.

You can get involved with the Adventure Playground by coming to the Adventure Playground meetup and information session on Saturday, April 11th at 9 am at Yates Community Center. At this meeting we will discuss in more depth the playground, volunteering, materials donations, and answer any questions that folks may have. People interested in volunteering can stay for a short session on Playwork immediately following the info session.

Many thanks to Chris Foster and the GPNA board for their support of this project to this stage! Please feel free to contact me with any questions. teal.gardner@gmail.com.

## Community Garden/Youth Garden Update

This is the time of year folks start thinking about gardening. We are starting to plan for community garden projects and the youth garden program. Stay tuned for more updates in our April newsletter as spring approaches. If you have any questions or are interested in becoming involved with either the community garden or youth garden program, contact Chris Foster (402-290-8187 or foster3413@cox.net), or Mike Caban (402-341-4722 or caban3321@cox.net).

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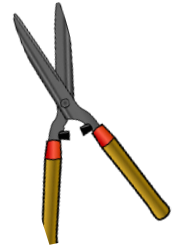
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### TOOL LENDING HOTLINE

Call Chris 290-8187

Mowers - \$5  
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## Better Know a Board Member

*In 2015, Gifford Park is welcoming four new members to the GPNA Board. Get to know two of our newest members, Charles Mitchell and Marie H el ene Andr e.*

My name is Charles, I'm the shop manager at the Community Bike Project Omaha and live right next door to the shop in Gifford Park's business district. Before moving to Omaha two years ago, I was working at a community garden organization in Lincoln. I love teaching, learning, gardening, and, of course, riding my bikes. I'm constantly inspired by Gifford Park's investment in youth development and the unique experiences and attitudes youth bring to the neighborhood.



I am Marie H el ene Andr e. I was born and raised in Rwanda where my parents worked. Like Frank Bogard (who built the California Pharmacy – now the California Tacos & More), I come from Belgium. I met my (Romanian-American) husband Adrian in Texas, and we got married in Omaha at the end of 2011. I arrived in Omaha a year later, and yet another year later we moved to Gifford Park. I have one stepdaughter, Isabel (16). I am a Training Manager, and I am currently working at Metropolitan Community College as an English as a Second Language Instructor, and I volunteer at the Literacy Center of the Midlands.





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"/> Newsletter Distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleanup/Beautification | <input type="checkbox"/> Landlord/Tenant Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> School Liason           | <input type="checkbox"/> Tool Lending  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Garden       | <input type="checkbox"/> Memberships            | <input type="checkbox"/> School Achivities       | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Planting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easter Egg Hunt        | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Walks     | <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Garden  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History                | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Watch     | <input type="checkbox"/> Teen Garden             |  |

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