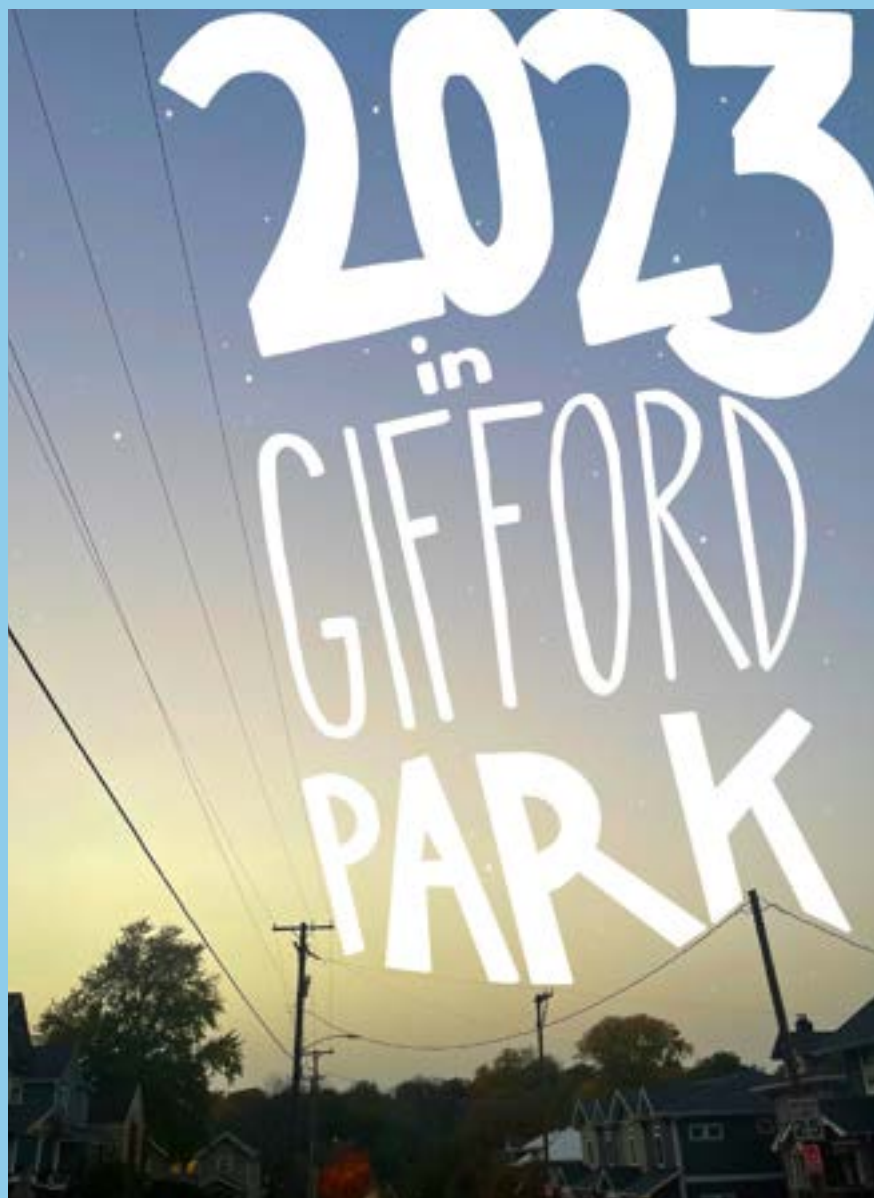




GIFFORD PARK'S PRIDE

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

www.giffordparkomaha.org



Neighborhood Meeting Announcement

When

Thursday,
February 23, 2023
6:30-8p.m.

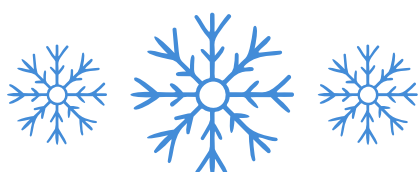
Where

Yates Illuminates
3260 Davenport St.
Main Auditorium



Be a Good Neighbor, Please Shovel Your Sidewalk

Omaha has a city ordinance to clear sidewalks within 24 hours of a snowfall. Residents can call the Mayor's Hotline (402-444-5555) to report addresses of properties that do not clear their walks within the 24 hours. Pitch in and help shovel your neighbor's sidewalk if they need help!



2023 GPNA Board

President
Wendell Stanley
wvstanley@gmail.com
402-306-8454

Vice President
Zedeka Poindexter
znpoin Dexter@gmail.com
402-212-5869

Treasurer
Paul Pellerito
pellpa7116@live.com
402-709-0229

Secretary
Rose Carlson
rhcarlson4@yahoo.com
402-639-5952

Anthony Stepka
anthonystepka85@gmail.com
540-820-5299

Dr. Adrian Petrescu
asprescu@alumni.pitt.edu
402-769-9070

Alex Goswami
Omaha_beef@hotmail.com
847-477-2156

Tyronda Pierce
maypierce82@gmail.com
402-598-0919

Business Liaison
Martin Janousek
mjanousek14@icloud.com
402-558-4070

Contacts

Community/Youth Garden
Chris Foster
foster3413@cox.net
402-290-8187

Adventure Playground
Monica Lehn
sfadventureplayground@gmail.com
402-660-9046

Midtown Neighborhood Alliance
Dr. Adrian Petrescu
asprescu@alumni.pitt.edu
402-769-9070

Youth Soccer
Jeff Spurlock
jeffspurlock@icloud.com
714-315-2272
&
Magpie
402-706-7496

Gifford Park Market
Martin Janousek
gpnmarket@gmail.com
402-558-4070

Youth Tennis
Chris Foster
foster3413@cox.net
402-290-8187

Newsletter Editor
Abby Rick
abbaer@gmail.com

Table of Contents

Page 3: Presidents Column

Page 4: Halloween Festival

Page 5: Holiday Banquet

Page 6: Welcoming Anthony Stepka

Page 7: 2022 vs. 2023 GPNA Yearly
Revenue & Expenses

Page 8: Community Bike Project &
Gifford Park Cleanup

Page 9: Neighbor of the Year

Page 10: Remembering Jan Franks

Page 11: Remembering Eva Swanson

Page 12: Roger Freeman celebrates
90th birthday

Page 13: Know What You Have: The
Power of Community Tree
Inventories.

Page 14: Letter to the Editor

Page 15: Big Muddy Update &
#YLM Initiative Petition

Page 16: GPNA membership
application



President's Column

Methodical negotiation over protest as a best practice of change management

Wendell Stanley

In a free society such as America the beautiful, literally everything in life is negotiable. I am reminded of a snapshot in our national history when a fatally fractured Union with all its triumphs and challenges was mercifully benefited by the visionary leader of huge proportions. He was an unexpected change agent who chose negotiation over protest during a very culturally adversarial season. He had every reason to raise grievances to the highest heaven. But he put his hand to the plow of a reasonable solution and quietly transformed his part of the world.

Booker T. Washington (BTW) was the exceptional man. His autobiography, "Up From Slavery" is an awesome read for anyone interested in the triumph of an highly unlikely over-achiever. Beyond earmarking his narrative for commemorative reasons, zoom in on a key aspect of his exceptional mindset. Perhaps it helps reset our community consensus for broader empowerment in Gifford Park.

In the eighteenth paragraph of his opening chapter approximately three quarters in, Washington highlights in one particular sentence an extraordinary perspective of faith which transcended the biases of the post reconstruction era. Ranging from the end of the Civil War (1865) through the Compromise of 1877 when Reconstruction ended he saw past the landmines littering the political landscape.

Sixteen years leading up to founding Tuskegee Institute in 1881 through to the 1901 publishing of his memoir, the trail blazer dared to redefine and practice possibilities outside the normalcy of his day. In any event the following quote from his disclosure provides insight into his inner make up.

"When freedom came, the slaves were almost as well fitted to begin life anew as the master, except in the matter of book-learning and ownership of property."

His optimism was that of "glass half full" instead of "glass half empty" dripping with goal orientation. We can glean from his example towards common opportunities in Gifford Park in 2023. The attitude proportionally describes our current board, the active membership and functioning partners of Gifford Park Neighborhood Association 30 years and running forward.

We build and maintain social bridges from neighborhood threats to tranquility, from isolation to engagement, between perceived needs and mutual empowerment, between cross-cultural blinders and empathetic representation of as many neighbors as dare join our growing ranks and discover our circles of influence and appeal.

Stick a pin in the goal of a minimum of 50% membership growth from 2022's 116 membership benchmark. The exec board unanimously adapted the goal during the January meeting. Please step forward with any suggestions to help exceed the goal of 174 members in 2023. One possible path is if 58 members from last year successively refer one additional family, business, or organizational membership each, we will celebrate the milestone together assuming all 116 re-up.

Moreover, what if all returning members from last year and the referrals joined before March 1st, how grander the team win would resonate into the neighborhood events schedule the remainder of the year. And to what end? The more families and entities that benefit from the enriched village and municipal connections coordinated through our activities, meetings, and events, the more momentum we enjoy to build bridges to untapped cultural groups residing in our boundaries.

Join forces with me in leaving identity politics in the rear view and avoiding known fault lines of futile contention.

Let's rather account for and strengthen the shared assets in our common areas of agreement. And from these benchmarks help enlist more beneficiaries, volunteers, and resources to our forum for exploration deeper into the untapped diversities of our multi-culturally endowed community. Join me today in negotiating a better tomorrow for all gathered in our wonderful neighborhood.

We had four openings for members at large on the executive board and which I was determined to fill immediately. All are filled fulfilling an expansion from 9 max members up to 13 for broader representation of diversities in the community.

Our cause remains the same in spirit, facilitating a great place to live, learn, work, and play. Join the fun and synergize today. Help make the difference forward. At the very minimum drop me an email or text with any and all valuable feedback. We need all the help we can muster.

Halloween Festival

By Chris Foster

Once again we had great fall weather for our 27th annual Gifford Park Neighborhood Halloween “Festival“ event held Saturday evening October 29th at the Gifford Park playground area.

On behalf of the GPNA, thanks to the Creighton Phi Delta Theta Fraternity (Hank Englebert) and the Delta Zeta Sorority (Becca Boen) for helping supervise activities stations! Tremendous thanks to Brittney Rubek (and her daughter Arianna, and grandmother Jan Franks) for organizing the event from the GPNA side, Mike Caban for keeping an eye on safety from our GPNA Watch Group, and the Stanley family for baking a cake! Other volunteers putting in extra effort were Tyronda Pierce, Alissa Pierce, Terri Davis, Alex Clarke, Amir Romero, Monica Lehn, Rose Carlson, and Michael Van Sant.

Activities included pumpkin painting, musical chairs, scary decorations, treasure hunt in the playground sand, ring toss, face painting, bowling, mummy wrap, dart board, roast marshmallows & smores over a firepit, and treats & refreshments under the park shelter. It was great to see so many families enjoy the festivities, and many kids dressed up in their Halloween costumes!



MRG | MASTER REALTY GROUP
BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY | Ambassador Real Estate
 HomeServices
"Building Relationships. Building Futures."
 Residential Investment Specialist
Carl Griffin REALTOR® | 402.415.1333
 carl.griffin@bhhsamb.com | Carl@MRGOmaha.com

G P
T C
GREAT PLAINS THEATRE COMMONS
Great stories, fascinating people
 website: gptcplays.com | Instagram: @gptcplays

Here in Gifford Park we have a number of older folks who need help with transportation, shopping, snow shoveling, lawn care, food, sorting through mail and more. Or maybe you're interested in just visiting and getting to know one or more of these neighbors and hearing their stories. If so, please call Rose Carlson at 402-639-5952.

Holiday Banquet

By Tyronda Pierce

Hello, my name is Tyronda Pierce. I am a current member of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association and head chair of the 2022 Banquet Committee. I would like to say thank you. It was a great pleasure to showcase the holiday banquet. The committee and I hope you had a great time.

Ultimately, there were two goals. First we hoped to reach as many neighbors as possible. Our volunteers sparked conversations, went door to door, passed out flyers, sent emails, text, etc. to get the word out. Secondly, we aimed to bridge the generation gap and many lifestyles of our neighbors, by combining new experiences with older traditions. I realize this banquet was different from past events. But it maintained the core value and theme "Gifford Park is where families connect." I truly believe the banquet is a unique opportunity for diversity, dialogue, family fun, and fellowship wrapped in a year-end celebration. I hope you were thoroughly open to the experience.

Over 125 GPNA members, family, friends, and guests gathered at First Congregational Church for our 32nd Annual GPNA Holiday Banquet on Thursday, December 1st. We hope you didn't miss our traditional display of historic memorabilia and photos (including history scrap books created by our past GPNA historian Eva Swanson) and rolling slideshow of annual activities. Past GPNA president, Alex Goswami, was our eloquent banquet emcee. I led an interactive handprint activity to reiterate our theme of connection. I also personally enjoyed the ice breaker presented by guest comedian, Jarell Roach. Our program included updates on the M.U.D. Gas Line Project, the passing of Eva Swanson, Gifford Park Elementary, Yates Illuminates, Omaha Mobile Stage, recognition of Big Muddy Urban Farm director Brent Lubbert, and finished with Neighbor of the Year recognition for Brittney Rubek.

This year all children, teens, and young adults received a gift or coupon. The raffles were just as special, keeping up with the theme of promoting fresh fruit as an alternative at our events as we've done throughout 2022. A new attraction was Christmas music played by our very own talented youth. They were terrific! The kitchen committee was awesome and so was the meal. Thank you, Wendell and Alyssa Stanley family and staff, you did it again!

We thank First Central Congregational Church for offering their space and aid in everything. Thanks to our dignitaries who attended: County Board member Roger Garcia, Police Lt. Paul Hanson, and Northeast Precinct Crime Prevention Specialist Samantha Flynn-Harter. We appreciated JP Carter (retired KETV photojournalist) for videotaping much of the banquet program, and also interviewed Wendell Stanley and Bob Hutton about their neighborhood experiences. I'd like to recognize Brittney Rubek, Rose Carlson, Wendell Stanley, Witney Stanley, Paul Pellerito, Marie Hélène André, Adrian S. Petrescu, Alex Clarke, Alex Goswami, Brent Lubbert, Emily Speck, Liz Potter, Martin Janousek, Hannah Vlach, Terri Davis, Lauren Alston, Eddie Merrill, Chris Foster, Chase Boyd, Meriem Tarek, Faushia Weeden, Rosetta Davis, and Brandy Broadway. We thank all our donors, sponsors, organizers, family and friends for your part in making the banquet a success.

I'll end with my final thoughts. I acknowledge the differences this year but hope there were also some welcome changes. While familiarity may be comfortable, unity is built through trust. That is what I saw when I looked out at a room full of faces. I'm grateful you entrusted me with the opportunity to lead and infuse new ideas. It's one of the things I love best about Gifford Park. Our ability to compromise and communicate will keep our neighborly bonds and friendship growing.

P.s. Guess what? You can experience this again or be a first timer. Join our yearly membership (as an individual, family, or business.) Your membership and volunteering helps us stay connected. GO Gifford Park Neighborhood!



Welcoming Anthony Stepka!

Hello Gifford Park neighborhood! My name is Anthony Stepka, as the newest member of the GPNA Board I wanted to give a very brief introduction of myself and talk about an event I have been hosting in the neighborhood and to invite everyone to upcoming occasions.



I started attending neighborhood events in the fall of 2019, getting involved to various degrees, sometimes solely attending, other times helping out in various (usually small) ways. In February 2021 I moved into the neighborhood, being even more active in the neighborhood.

I love working with kids and technology. Some of my hobbies include scootering (kick, trick one) at the skatepark, playing video games, programming, and playing with toy cars, trains, and marble run sets. Another big part of my life is autism. Although I was diagnosed at 16 with Aspergers, now part of the Autism Spectrum Disorder, I didn't look into what autism was or how it affected me until 10 years later in December of 2021.

I have been involved with my religious community, the Baha'i Faith, since I was about 14. Baha'is and their friends around the world have been trying to learn about creating a pattern of community life centered on meaningful conversations about noble values and selfless service to all. In the last few years, among other things, one of the activities I have been hosting I call Grace, Games, and Grub, or G3 for short. Though the format isn't set in stone, the general format of the G3 I host is to start off with writings and quotes from various religions and inspiring historical figures that I have prepared, usually on a particular theme. After the prepared readings are done, anyone is welcome to share any quotes, prayers, or songs regardless of topic that may be calling out to them. After this there is usually discussion centered around the night's theme followed by potluck dinner. As people finish eating, individuals and groups transition to board/card games, many also brought by attendees, as they are ready.

For years G3 was being hosted at the Omaha Baha'i Center but since June of 2021 it has been hosted nearly every month at my house. Starting with the G3 on March 3rd (Caring for Nature) and going forward, G3 will be at Yates Illuminates.

With April being Autism Awareness Month, the G3 on April 7th will be on the topic of Accepting Neurodiversity. All G3s are 6:30pm to 9:30pm. As part of the discussion in April I'm trying to gather a panel (group) of people who are neurodivergent (i.e autism, ADHD, etc) themselves to answer questions from a neurodivergent perspective. If you or someone you know would like to be a part of this panel, contact me no later than March 24th. If wanted, even if you won't be attending, you can submit questions to the panel by March 31. Attendees can also ask questions the night of.

If you would like automated text reminders for upcoming G3 events text @g3graceg to 81010. To get in touch with me to help setup/cleanup at any G3, to be on the panel in April, or to assist in planning future G3 events, feel free to call or text me at 540-820-5299 and email me at anthonystepka85@gmail.com

Omaha Mobile Stage

Youth Advisory Board

Do you have a passion for the performing arts and building community? Omaha Mobile Stage's Youth Advisory Board is comprised of performing arts students in grades 6-12 throughout the Omaha metropolitan area. The board will assist Omaha Mobile Stage with promotion and programming of the youth talent show series. Nominations accepted now at www.omahamobilestage.org

Talent Show

This summer, the Omaha Mobile Stage will host 10 youth talent shows throughout the metro for ages 3 - 19.

The series concludes with a Finals competition at Gene Leahy Mall in downtown Omaha on August 20. Registration and events are free and open to the public. Bring your entire family and friends to enjoy a night of entertainment. Registration here: <https://www.omahamobilestage.org>

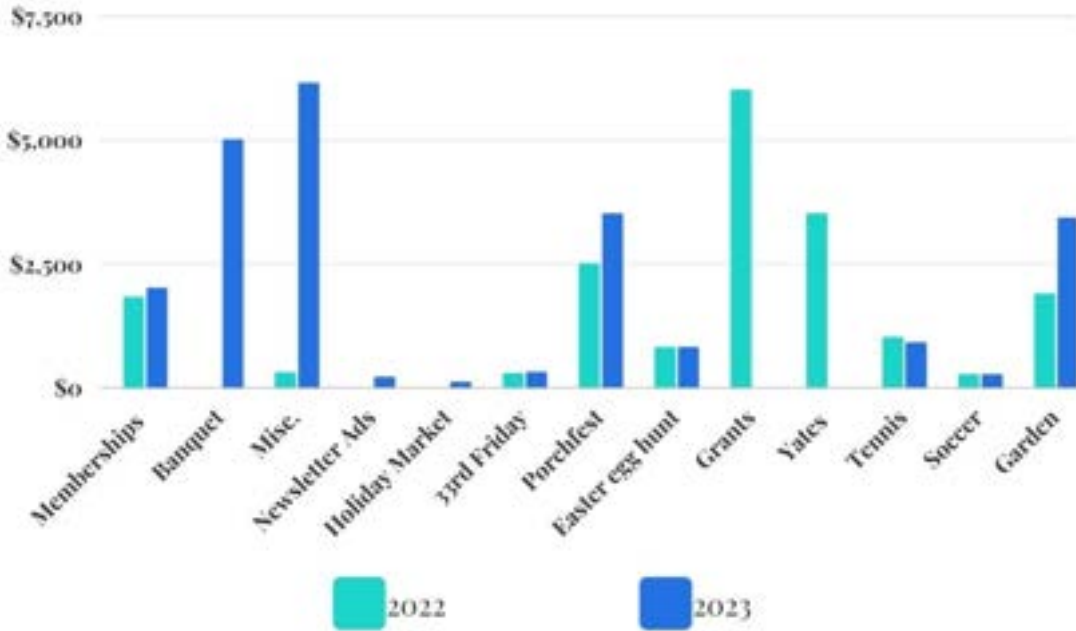
Camp

Register now for camp on Thursday, July 18, 9 am - 5 pm. Participants will learn from industry professionals, rehearse their talent show pieces, and gain performance skills through theater games and exercises. In addition to receiving valuable feedback before their scheduled talent show, students will get a behind the scenes tour of the Omaha Community Playhouse and meet their fellow talent show contestants.

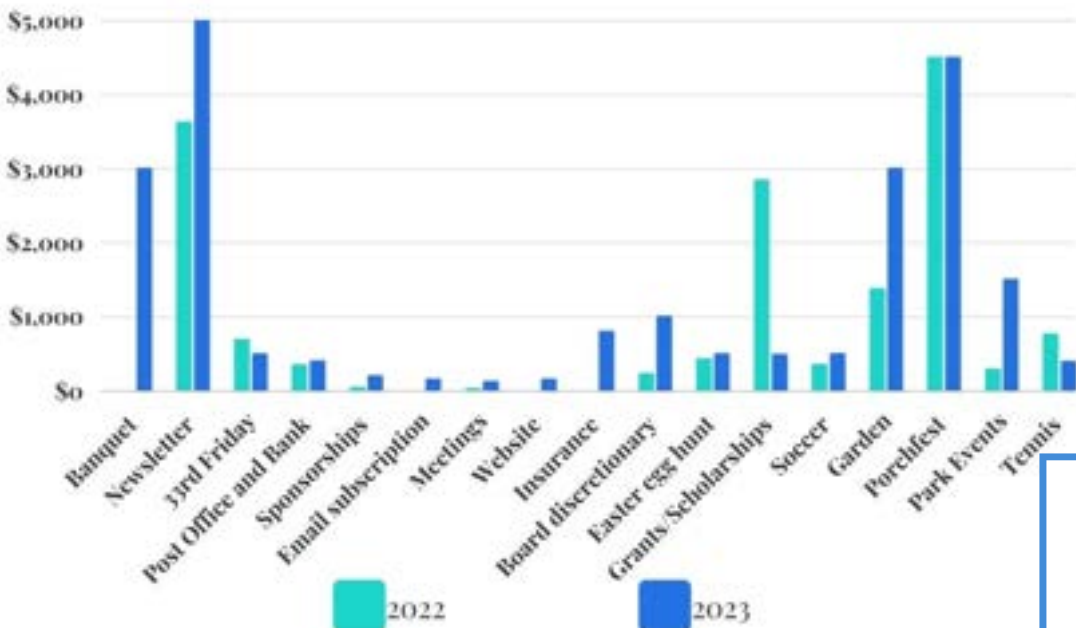
For questions regarding camp, contact: Maddison Gilcrease at mgilcrease@omahaplayhouse.com

2022 VS. 2023 GPNA Yearly Revenue & Expenses

DONATIONS AND REVENUE



EXPENSES



Marie Hélène

Marie Hélène André
Executive Director
Yates Illuminates

(402) 915-2808

mhandre@YatesIlluminates.org

YatesIlluminates.org



Handy Stanleys™

Fixing stuff and knowing things after decades paying tuition of attention to detail.
Wen, field ops

text 402-819-7725
for exceptional service



Business owners, please consider advertising in Gifford Park's Pride! A business membership costs \$25 and includes the first ad free in our newsletter! Subsequent ads are \$25.

Community Bike Project



Adam Sundberg

January is traditionally a slower month for us at the Bike Project. Cold weather keeps all but the most dedicated inside (at least for bike riding) and Earn-A-Bikes are at their lowest ebb. Open Shop hours are shorter this time of year as a result. You might be surprised, however, to find how busy the shop is despite these seasonal changes. Stop into our Open Shop between 2-5pm Wednesday through Sunday and you'll likely find our Shop Manager Jacob Stacy hard at work repairing bikes, or helping some community member fix up their bike for cold and/or snowy ride.

The slower pace generally means we also have time to reorganize and plan for the coming year. We have plenty in store, including the return of long-established events and some entirely new ones. We are also planning some adaptations to existing events. For instance, Beers and Gears (our annual collaboration with a local brewery) will take place at a new location this year. For the past several years, we've worked with Farnam House Brewing Company. It was a wonderful partnership, and we were saddened by their closure, but his has also opened new opportunities. This year, Site-1 Brewing Co. will host the event.

Mark your calendars! The event will take place on Tuesday March 7th, between 6:30-8:30pm. Like in years past, there will be a three course, beer-paired menu. Proceeds go directly to our shop. We'll also have a bike raffle for those of you interested in a new ride. Keep an eye out on our facebook page too, since we'll be creating a FB event page with a menu, reservation details, and more soon. We can't wait for this fan favorite event, and hope to see you there!

As always, If you have any questions, simply shoot us an email (info@communitybikeproject.org), message us on our facebook page, or just pop in during our regular shop hours. (Wed-Sun 2-5pm)

We hope to see you soon!

Wolf Tattenbach, J.D.
Agent
NE Lic. #233109



New York Life Insurance Company
18140 Burke Street
Suite 201
Elkhorn, NE 68022
B 402 881 0717
wmtattenbach@ft.newyorklife.com

Monthly Cleanup



We are calling on every Gifford Park resident to participate. If we all come together and decide to eliminate our trash fiasco, we can bring our neighborhood back to its glory!

Since last August GPNA has partnered with Keep Omaha Beautiful to provide gloves, garbage bags, and trash picker sticks to supplement our neighborhood volunteers to pick up trash and cleanup Gifford Park on the second Sunday of each month at 2pm (weather permitting).

Next trash pickup: Meet at the tennis courts in the park on Sunday March 12th at 2pm and the second Sunday of the month thereafter.

Contact Hannah Vlach 402-305-8139 or hannah.alynn.vlach@gmail.com with any questions.

FOR AN APPOINTMENT CALL
402-213-6893

OPEN MONDAY - SATURDAY
SUNDAY BY APPOINTMENT
Top Notch Service at an Affordable Price

EVOLUXION
BARBERSHOP

CONTACT US
Evoluxion Barbershop - Gifford Park
530 N 33rd Street, Omaha, NE 68132
Evoluxionbarbershop.com
402-510-6770

LET'S GET SOCIAL
Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp icons

2022 Neighbor of the Year

By Chris Foster

Brittney Rubek



The GPNA honored Brittney Rubek as our 2022 ‘Neighbor of the Year’ at the 32nd annual GPNA Holiday Banquet December 1st. Somehow we kept it a secret from her, she was quite surprised! I have known Brittney since she was very young (late 1990's) when her grandmother Jan Franks brought her and brother Zach down to Gifford Park to participate in our Youth Tennis Program. She participated in the tennis program for many years and even received the girl’s sportsmanship award in 2001. Since then, Brittney has volunteered every year with the tennis program to help with administrative and other duties. She has and continues to volunteer, and now leads or helps with other Gifford Park Neighborhood Association events and activities including our annual Easter egg hunt, Halloween festival, Sun Dawgs youth summer program, neighborhood cleanups, youth garden, Adventure Playground, 33rd Street Block Party, youth basketball, Slip’n’Slide, this past year’s holiday banquet, and others. She has always been very helpful, committed, and supportive for our most important activities our neighborhood association organizes, especially our youth programs.

Brittney has also been active with trying to find solutions to neighborhood issues related to absentee landlords, out of control parties, and poorly managed rental properties by attending meetings with Police, Creighton, and local officials. Five years ago, she was part of our Educational Specifications community committee which worked with Omaha Public Schools and Architects to design and plan Gifford Park Elementary.



Brittney with grandmother Jan volunteering at a GPNA table at Show Wagon Youth Talent Competition in Gifford Park.

Brittney is a young mother of 11 year old daughter Arianna and 6 month old baby Keymari, she cares deeply about our neighborhood, especially families and the delicate fabric of Gifford Park. She has faced very difficult family challenges growing up, thankfully she had a very loving grandmother Jan Franks who was very supportive...sadly Jan passed away in December. Her desire to continue her education, work, raise her young family, and volunteer is inspiring. She looks for ways to improve our neighborhood and not afraid to approach and challenge people who are causing neighborhood problems - this is rare for a younger person like her to take a strong stand and do something about it. Her lifetime neighborhood roots, participation, and volunteer efforts show her Gifford Park heart!

We are honored to have you receive our GPNA 2022 ‘Neighbor of the Year’ recognition, and we look forward to working with you for many years to come on our exciting events and activities, which you have been a big part of since your early childhood...especially my favorite, the Slip’n’Slide!



Chris Foster presenting Brittney with girl’s sportsmanship award in 2001 Gifford Park youth tennis program.

Remembering Jan Franks

1940-2022



Jan Franks with granddaughter Brittney, great-granddaughter Arianna, and grandson Zach.

Sad news of the passing of Jan Franks in December, our dear friend and Gifford Park institution. She is survived by her grandchildren Brittney and Zack Rubek, and great-grandchildren Ari (Arianna) and baby Keymari. Jan was incredibly dedicated to our Gifford Park neighborhood, especially families and children by taking real ownership and a high level of commitment to whatever neighborhood activity and people she was involved with, whether it was the Easter Egg Hunt, Spring and Fall Cleanup, Community Garden, Sun Dawgs Summer Youth Program, Show Wagon, Music in the Park, Block Party, Tennis Program, Halloween Haunted House, Kellom Elementary School fundraising, and others. Jan was honored as our 2006 GPNA 'Neighbor of the Year'. She continued to volunteer up until recently when unfortunately, health issues got the best her. Jan's family and friends gathered February 2 to celebrate Jan's life. Please keep the family in your thoughts and prayers.

Jan was born in 1940 and raised in the Gifford Park neighborhood. She attended Yates School through 8th grade, then graduated from Tech High. For many of her early years, Jan recalls many fond neighborhood memories, including ice-skating and sleigh riding in Gifford Park, seeing 25-cent Saturday afternoon movies at the Circle Theater, and meeting at the Grass Shack restaurant before and after school (both the theater and restaurant were located near 33rd & California). In her later years she spent a lot of time raising her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and watching over the park.

You could always count on Jan to be there when she's needed most, and many times I would call her to brainstorm and prepare for the many GPNA youth activities...and she would not hold back if we needed to tweak something for improvement! Jan has always encouraged her grandchildren Zach and Brittney (and Brittney's daughter Ari too!) to participate and then eventually volunteer and lead many youth activities mentioned above. In fact, Brittney was honored at our December 1 GPNA holiday banquet as our 2022 'Neighbor of the Year', you can read about her volunteer efforts in this newsletter. Jan always says "it's no big deal" when mentioning her efforts - this couldn't be further from the truth...IT IS A BIG DEAL!



Remembering Eva Swanson

By Rose Carlson

July 5th 1926- November 25th 2022

Going back to GPNA's beginnings, Eva was there. She is one of rare GPNA members whose membership was current every year from the time GPNA began in 1988 until her death in 2022, a total of 34 years! She was Neighbor of the Year in 2001. And long before we were a neighborhood association, Eva was doing the things neighborhood associations (and neighbors) do, making Gifford Park a great place to live. She was born in 1926 and attended Yates Elementary and Central High School, and after college worked at UNO for 41 years before retiring.

Eva lived with her parents on Webster St. from the time she was born until the time of their deaths, and then she continued to live there until she was 83, when she decided it was time to downsize.

Eva's contributions to Gifford Park neighborhood would take many pages to describe! For many years she had a plot at the community garden, where she grew tomatoes. She was the neighborhood historian, and saved every picture and article in which Gifford Park or a neighbor was mentioned, pasting them into unique scrapbooks handmade by her friend Leo Wilwerding, who was another neighborhood legend. With Chris Foster's help, Eva wrote a history of Gifford Park, based on her memories and research, which can be found on our website. During the 1980's and 90's when our business district became less-than-family-friendly, Eva walked with the neighborhood watch group, carrying a bag for picking up trash. She participated in her own way. Eva never seemed to feel uncomfortable or out of place, regardless of the setting, but had a quiet, purposeful confidence and a gracious spirit.

During this time when our neighborhood had problems with crime, Eva tells a story of coming home one day in her car.

When she got out of the car, someone ran up to her and grabbed her purse. At this point in the story I expected Eva would express how shocked and scared she had been. But instead she said, "Well, that was mine, so I held on and wouldn't let go!" Purse or no purse, this thief was mistaken if he thought a little older lady was going to be an easy target!

Eva's last major contribution to our neighborhood was in 2020 during the second Save Yates campaign. As part of a letter-writing endeavor to convince OPS to sell us the building, we asked Eva to write a letter to OPS stating why they should choose us to buy Yates.



Eva in front of her Webster Street home after October 1997 snowstorm

By this time Eva was having trouble writing, but she could still carry on a conversation. We went to her apartment to talk with her about what to put in the letter. Eva started talking about the neighborhood watch group, and at first we were confused because we thought she would want to talk about Yates. Eventually we understood that what she was saying was that if the neighborhood association had what it took to turn the tide against the crime that had taken over the business district, it could also take on the challenge of the renovation, management and care of Yates. Her letter was unique in this comparison, and also in that hers was the only letter from a Yates alumni. Along with many other neighbors' letters, Eva's letter helped sway OPS in our favor.

By human standards, Eva lived a long and full life. Yet in the grand scheme, it was only a brief, golden moment in time that this lady with the lovely name and the lively blue eyes was with us in our little corner of the world. Knowing her was a blessing, a privilege and an ordinary miracle.

“

**Nothing Gold Can Stay
BY ROBERT FROST**

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

”

Roger Freeman Celebrates 90th Birthday!

By Chris Foster



Roger Freeman the “Smooth Operator” cleaning up the park.

We thought through the GPNA newsletter would be a good way to make all the residents and people who use Gifford Park aware of the wonderful volunteer job Roger Freeman has been doing. Before the snow every Sunday you can see him with his rake and trash sacks cleaning up the park.

When he is finished you see no broken glass or litter. He never brags or complains, just gives you a friendly greeting and big smile. We want to give you a big pat on the back Roger, and thanks a bunch.” - Vera & Jim Horton, Gifford Park residents for 52 years

The above comments speak to what being a great neighbor is all about, and that is why the GPNA chose Roger Freeman as the “Neighbor of the Year” back almost 20 years ago in 2003. Well Roger, the “Smooth Operator” as we like to call him because he is quite the charmer, celebrated his 90th birthday January 17 with a big party at his church a few days later with family, neighbors, and friends...including a good showing from his YMCA friends (Roger has been a YMCA member for 75 years!). There was dinner from Roger’s favorite restaurant Olive Garden, cake, and music. Roger spoke how “family, friends, and God are what matters most” - well said!

Roger grew up in Boston before joining the Air Force in 1953. He was stationed at Rheimmain Air Force Base in Frankfurt, Germany during the Korean War (84th Air Rescue Unit Detachment to the 60th Troop Carrier Wing). Roger moved to Omaha from New York City in the summer of 1975 because he was tired of the big cities. In October 1975 he started work with Omaha Public Schools (OPS) as a Supervisor in Student Transportation. In 1979 Roger met his soon-to-be wife Sandy, who had been living near 33rd & Cass St. (his current address) since 1965. Sadly, Sandy passed in 2013.

Besides being past chairman of the GPNA Park committee for years (with lots of help from Sandy), and keeping the park picked up (they were basically our park caretakers without getting paid), Roger frequently walked the neighborhood picking up aluminum cans and trash. His route included roughly from 30th to 36th from Farnam to Burt. Roger is a great mentor for younger people in our neighborhood. He has a great sense of humor, yet he also has a way of encouraging and even challenging others to do better, especially litter cleanup. He sometimes paid kids a few bucks to pick up litter in the neighborhood. Roger says he first started picking up the park in the late 1980’s when the late Jack Atkins used to do this duty. He and Sandy also used to bring many stray animals to the Humane Society.

In his younger days Roger was involved with other GPNA activities including the spring and fall cleanups, community garden, tennis program, newsletter delivery, and putting up holiday lights in the park and 33rd & California business district...and hobbies have included tennis, racquetball, handball, hockey, working out at the YMCA, and photography.

Happy 90th birthday Roger, thanks for letting us celebrate with you!!



**Roger Freeman and his late wife Sandy in front
of the Gifford Park ballfield taken in January 2004.**



Know What You Have: The Power of Community Tree Inventories.

By Alex Goswami and Graham Herbst

The Gifford Park neighborhood received a Community Landscape Award from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum Nov. 5, 2021. There are so many gorgeous trees living and breathing in our neighborhood, so what do we do now to celebrate our neighborhood canopy? In collaboration with Graham Herbst, Community Forester at University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the Nebraska Forest Service, we want to take the next step and build a community tree inventory. We are assembling a team to work on our tree inventory this spring, and we'd love to work with as many neighbors as we can. You can join us for a few hours or more to walk the neighborhood and collect info about our trees.

Why? If you ask any public works director how many electrical poles they have throughout town, the condition of a particular sewer line, or what type of light bulb is needed for their traffic lights they can find that information easily. Being able to track and monitor the infrastructure that they maintain is critical for their job. Cities around the world are beginning to manage the green infrastructure of their community in a similar way to traditional grey infrastructure, and for similar reasons. By collecting data about the community forest (trees that grow on public property) city managers have a clearer picture of its condition, diversity, and distribution that is used to plan budgets, minimize risk, and guide planning decisions while maximizing the public benefits that they offer to everyone.

When we do our inventory, at minimum, there are four types of information recorded for each public tree; genus or species of the tree, size of the tree, condition of the tree, and its GPS coordinates. The most common data collected for tree size is the trunk diameter at 4.5 feet above the ground, but height and average canopy width are measured as well in some cases. The condition of a tree (typically excellent, good, fair, or poor) is subjective, so it's important that all data collectors have a similar understanding of the criteria for each category. Don't worry, we will guide you through all of this. There are expert foresters on our team. Lots of other information can be collected initially or later on, including; photographs of the tree, observed defects, or work that has been done to the tree or needs to be done. The process takes some time but is relatively simple. Data collectors will typically enter the information onto a tablet or smart phone using "point and click" drop-down menus for their selections. The tree's location is either entered manually by clicking on the tree in a satellite image or calculated digitally by your device.

Once the task of entering the data is done, an inventory becomes a powerful management tool. Since each tree has a GPS location, the community forest inventory has a similar format to the data for a city's grey infrastructure. For example, the path of a proposed sewer line can show how many trees would be impacted by the project, stormwater and energy savings benefits provided by a stand of trees can be calculated, tree diversity can be analyzed for smaller parts of town to refine tree planting priorities, detailed response plans can be made before a devastating tree pest is introduced in the community. Tree inventories are not only useful for those that care for public trees, but also non-profit organizations, neighborhood associations, other city agencies, and environmentalists.

Join us! Email hello@giffordparkomaha.org to work on this project!



Gifford Park Elementary updates from Principal Kim Jones and PTO.

Kindergarten Enrollment for 2023-2024:

If you have a child who will turn five by July 31, 2023, and lives within the Gifford Park neighborhood, please contact Gifford Park Elementary School and/or Student Placement at the Teacher Administration Building to enroll for the 2023-2024 school year. Proof of address (MUD, OPPD, Cox or lease agreement) is needed, as well as a birth certificate and proof of immunizations. Parents are also able to enroll your future kindergartener online by following the link for kindergarten enrollment at www.ops.org

Charles B. Washington

Letter to the Editor by Junior Stanley

From Omaha, Nebraska, Charles B. Washington was a journalist, mentor, and activist. He is known for his work in the North Omaha area. Born in December 1, 1923 as a child, he went to Howard Kennedy Elementary for grammar school and later went to Omaha Central and Omaha North High Schools. As a young man, Washington was a paperboy for The Omaha Star Newspaper, an all-African American run business. Charles B. Washington was a prominent figure in Omaha, Nebraska, who made significant contributions to the city through his work as a journalist, mentor, and activist. Born and raised in the North Omaha area, Washington spent his entire life dedicated to serving his community and advocating for social justice and equality.

As a journalist, Washington reported on the struggles and triumphs of the people of North Omaha, giving voice to their stories and raising awareness about the issues affecting the community. He wrote about poverty, education, and other social and economic issues, shining a light on the challenges faced by residents and calling for action to address these problems.

In addition to his work as a journalist, Washington was also a mentor to many young people in the North Omaha area. He devoted his time and energy to helping young people develop their skills and reach their full potential, inspiring them to become active and engaged members of the community. Washington's work as a mentor helped to create a new generation of leaders in the North Omaha area, who continue to carry on his legacy of service and activism.

As an activist, Washington was a tireless advocate for social justice and equality. He worked to address the systemic inequalities that existed in North Omaha, and he was instrumental in organizing and leading efforts to bring about positive change in the community. He was a strong supporter of the civil rights movement, and he fought for the rights of marginalized groups, including people of color, women, and low-income residents.

In recognition of his contributions to the North Omaha community, the North Branch of the Omaha Public Library was renamed in honor of Charles B. Washington on September 14, 1986. This renaming was a fitting tribute to a man who had dedicated his life to serving his community and advocating for social justice and equality. Today, the Charles B. Washington Branch of the Omaha Public Library continues to be an important center of learning and culture in the North Omaha area.

In conclusion, Charles B. Washington was a journalist, mentor, and activist who made a profound impact on the North Omaha community. Through his work, he helped to give voice to the people of North Omaha, mentor young people, and advocate for social justice and equality. The renaming of the North Branch of the Omaha Public Library in his honor is a testament to the lasting legacy of his contributions to the city and its residents.



Community Garden

This is the time of year folks start thinking about gardening. Soon we will start to plan for community garden projects, youth garden program, as well as Adventure Playground. Stay tuned for more updates in our next newsletter as spring approaches. If you have any questions or are interested in becoming involved with the community garden, youth garden program or Adventure Playground, contact Chris Foster (402-290-8187 or foster3413@cox.net), or Rose Carlson (402-639-5952 or rcarlson4@yahoo.com).



Scan this QR code to read the complete guidelines for letters to the editor!

Big Muddy Update

New Directors

Kourtney Wismont joined Big Muddy Urban Farm in autumn of 2022 as the Program Manager.



They have been an untiring leader in the urban farming community for the past seven years and have spent numerous hours working in leadership roles in other non-profits.

Their main mission was always to grow fresh produce in order to gain food sovereignty in North and South Omaha. Having co-founded Free Farm Syndicate in 2016 with a handful of talented peers, they managed to cultivate and produce thousands of pounds of free fresh organic produce for the community every year.

Currently, Kourtney is furthering their expertise in plant and pollinator knowledge by finishing their Biology degree at UNO, as they value and want to teach practices of building biodiversity within urban growing landscapes.

#YLM Gifford Park Omaha 2023 and beyond!

Like congress we shall make no rule or bi-law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. (1st Amendment US Constitution)

Furthermore, in as much as political sects of the sorts exists in society for seasons of demographic cause and effect of utility, we maintain open ears, active listening, and merciful acceptance of all positions, even those opposing our own in the spirit of mutual clarity. We choose to act on points of agreement instead of points of separation if challenges of unions and respective joint ventures are in net worth preserving. We encourage, uphold, and defend a pact of nonpartisan collaboration whenever possible preserving safe places and opportunities of community enrichment for the most vulnerable in our borders

Nate Johnson (he/him) joins Big Muddy Urban Farm as its Grants and Finance Administrator.



Coming from the field of outdoor education, Nate is passionate about getting people outside and touching dirt. He hopes to use these experiences to help grow Big Muddy's impact on our community.

When not at Big Muddy, Nate is often found working with groups like Elevate Omaha and Inclusive Communities or working on his graduate degrees in urban studies and public administration at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. In his free time, reading, experiencing nature, and spending time with his loved ones. You can see him going for walks around the neighborhood and with Big Muddy at its market stall or farm plots.



Scan for GPNA Board Member Application



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.