



North End Connection

The Newsletter of the Creston Neighborhood Association

Fall 2012

The benefits of membership

By: *Sandy Stuckhardt*

My husband and I moved into the Creston neighborhood over 25 years ago. I was originally from the West Side and he was from the Northview School District. We literally picked a neighborhood in between the places we were both raised; our thought was that we'd buy a fixer-upper and stay about 5 years. Now we're both ingrained into the neighborhood and can't get ourselves to leave.

This neighborhood suits us perfectly. It's picturesque with all the trees and park spaces, close to eve-

rything and has the most interesting and eclectic residents. As my friend and neighbor Matthew Downey says, "This neighborhood is not all neat and tidy. It's a real place with real people." It really is a happening neighborhood and I am proud to be involved and to be a paid member of CNA.

There are many social reasons for you too to become a member of CNA. People active in membership associations are usually more politically and socially engaged in general. They care about the people and things around them and they use the neighborhood association

as a mechanism to pursue shared interests or address common concerns. I like that CNA is relationship based and people-focused and that relationship-building communicates the benefits that CNA offers to the local community.

If you are receiving the CNA newsletter by mail it's because you too are a paid member of the Creston Neighborhood Association and a mailed newsletter is one of the perks of your membership.

CNA often describes members as supporters, donors or friends of

See: Membership pg. 2

An island success story

By: *Deborah Eid*

The bio-retention island project that closed part of Plainfield this summer is complete, and a complete success.

On August 28 Mayor Hartwell and the City Commission of Grand Rapids recognized the creative collaboration used in Creston to make the project happen.

The "smooth as glass" road is now reopened for business and Nyleene, a Creston High School graduate and owner of the Earth-bound T-shirt business, says she's proud to be calling her old classmates from Creston to suggest that they drive and walk the new and

improved roadway.

On September 12 all the contributing private and public donors will be recognized publicly at our dedication ceremony in front of Red Jet Café. The water quality islands project is a first in the State of Michigan. The islands will also be enhanced by several educational signs placed in front of Creston High



Photo by: *Pete Tabberer*

One of seven newly completed bio-retention islands on Plainfield across from Creston High School.

See: Islands pg. 2

Membership: Cont. from pg. 1

CNA. Members join CNA because they believe in CNA's mission or because sometimes they receive benefits that are worth the member fee but beyond all the social reasons, discounts, newsletters and helpful information did you know that CNA members also have a say in the structure and priorities of the organization? You can do this at the various neighborhood meetings that are held throughout the year or at any one of the very fun *Hello Neighbor* events.

As a member you have the right to elect board members and approve amendments to the bylaws and your opportunity to do this is at the Annual Membership meeting that is always held in October. The social fabric of the Creston neighborhood depends on all this involvement and input and there is always room for more.

As a member you can help grow the neighborhood. Tell your neighbors and friends how great Creston is. Get them to sign up to also be a member of the association so we can be assured this will be a decent place for future generations.

Islands: Cont. from pg. 1

School and closer to Leonard. Soon students of all ages will be able to read the story with a visual explanation of the role these self-irrigating islands will play in protecting the Grand River.

Maintenance of the islands will be done during the first year by the contractor, and for the next 20 years a portion of the money raised has been set aside to keep this new community asset looking green and capturing storm water for many years into the future!

A message from our city comptroller

Hi Neighbor. I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you about the unique opportunity you have to fundamentally change the City's financial management structure. On the ballot this November you will find a Charter Amendment that, if passed, will change the selection process of my position, consolidate departments, eliminate inefficiencies, save money, and create a modern day financial structure. You get to decide our future.

As you may know, the Comptroller is the City's chief accountant keeping track of the money the City spends. Currently, the two qualifications necessary to serve as Comptroller are to live in the City of Grand Rapids and to win an election.

As the chief accountant, I recommended a Charter Amendment to the City Commission that would change the selection process of the Comptroller from elected to appointed by the City Manager and confirmed by the City Commission. The City Commission voted unanimously to place the Amendment on the November

ballot.

If the amendment passes, all the responsibilities, duties, powers, and authorities given currently to the Comptroller in the Charter will remain. But this proposal is much more than a change in the selection process – it's a consolidation of two positions and two departments. This change would merge the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) with the Comptroller and provide the Comptroller with those responsibilities assigned to the CFO such as budgeting, purchasing, and debt authority.

In addition, this change would require the Comptroller have credentials such as being certified by the accounting industry and have years of experience in finance and leadership. These qualifications are not currently required of the City's chief accountant. This new design best represents a modern day financial structure.

Thanks for your time.

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Community Gardens for all!

By: Andrea Hensen

Creston Community Gardens has continued efforts to build a stronger community by providing a gardening space that is inviting for everyone. One of the founding visions for the gardens was to create a space where accessibility was not an issue. Therefore anyone with an interest in gardening at any level of mobility would be able to participate, including people with developmental disabilities (and other disabilities).

We were able to realize this vision with the help of a grant from ION (Including Our Neighbors Fund) through MDRC (Michigan Disability Rights Coalition). There were also many people who contributed to the formation of these gardens and we are thankful to three groups in particular who participated in making them possible: Creston High School, Hope Network, and Artists Creating Together.

For the past two years the garden community has worked alongside special education students from Creston High School. These students in particular were heavily involved in the construction of the garden beds, filling them with soil, and planting seedlings in the community beds. Their enthusiasm for being outdoors and doing meaningful work with the community has been an encouragement to all of us. Our relationship with this class continues to thrive and we are excited to work with them again when school starts up in the fall.

Residents from Hope Network have also become a part of the garden community by taking on two of their own garden plots to tend. Their plots, currently full of bright colored flowers and beautiful purple beans that dangle against green leaves, are the first plots you

see upon entering the garden and we are very thankful that they have become a part of our garden community.

Last year Mandi Creveling, Creston Community Garden's former ION coordinator, developed a partnership with Artists Creating Together (Formerly Very Special Arts), a non-profit that connects people with disabilities to art. They helped successfully pilot a four week class called *The Art of Gardening* in the Carrier Street Garden.

The class included an introduction to the garden space, an overview of community gardening, in garden sketching, taste testing, plant and weed identification, harvesting, and concluded with a potluck and mini art show for students and their families.

Through our relationship with MDRC and our connection with the ION grant we have learned that people with developmental disabilities are valued and can participate fully in and contribute to the life of their community. They bring many gifts and talents to the garden community and we are a richer community for the opportunity to build relationships that emphasize gardener's abilities and not their disabilities.

This coming September will be our second year working with *The Art of Gardening* class and we are extending an invitation to all gardeners, and garden friends, to participate in the classes and attend the closing potluck on Tuesday, Oc-



Photo by: Andrea Hensen

A member of Artist Creating Together participates in Creston Community Gardens Arts in the Garden class at the Carrier Crest Garden.

tober 2 at 5:30pm.

This year the students aim to create artwork specifically for the garden as this will beautify the space as well as create an opportunity for gardeners and students to engage the space in a creative way by making art together. The class will meet on Tuesdays from 5 - 6pm from September 11 to October 2. If you are interested in volunteering or attending the potluck, please contact Andrea at crestoncommunitygardens@gmail.com or (616) 755-8619.

Our relationships with these groups have continued to grow and we are eager to continue in our efforts at becoming a community that is welcoming and inclusive of all people.

National Night Out highlights public safety

By: Mac Brown

National Night Out at Sweet Street Park was a great success this year! We had over 120 visitors enjoying many activities for kids including bean bag toss, face painting, a bounce house, water balloons, and bobbing for apples. Many representatives from the police department and the city attended.

A special thanks to Creston's Public Safety Committee for doing a great job organizing the event. A big thanks goes to Dave Everts and Karen Arndt from the Community Emergency Response Team for supplying the bounce house and running the Sno Cone machine. Once again our neighbors have shown their dedication to public safety by attending events, getting educated, and

keeping connected with neighbors.

Creston's public safety program is a solid one and includes a strong volunteer element in our block captains and neighborhood watch participants, our partnerships with the Grand Rapids Police and Fire departments and a staff who track crime patterns, organize neighborhood watches, and continue to be a crime prevention resource for all Creston neighbors. The effectiveness of this program relies on the constant communication between these participants as well as proper funding.

CNA's board continues to do its part in maintaining staff to ensure just that. Most of our public safety dollars come from the Federal Government in the form of Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) administered by the

City of Grand Rapids. These monies are specifically dedicated to the area in our neighborhood which the city has deemed an area that is most at risk for public safety issues.

Creston encompasses an area far greater than this target area. In order to get our public safety programs into other areas we rely on our paying members to help us staff block meetings and address public safety concerns. Crime has no boundaries but money does, so many thanks to those supporters of CNA that ensure that our public safety message reaches all corners of the neighborhood by their continued monetary donations.

Anyone interested in organizing their block is encouraged to contact Mac Brown at CNA to learn how and to have support during the process.

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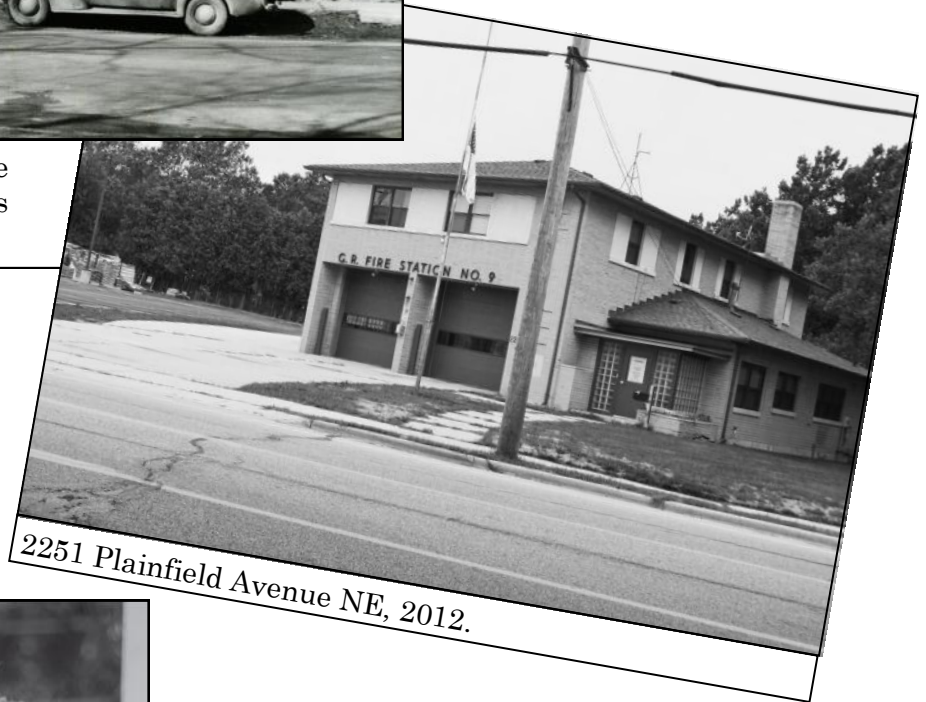
The fire station under construction in the winter of 1950-1951. Courtesy Grand Rapids Public Library (Coll 273-3).

The fire station at 2251 Plainfield was constructed over the winter of 1950-51. Originally Fore Station No. 14, it opened on July 26, 1951.

The house in the background (left) was the home of Jay E. Post, poultry breeder.

The fire station has been in continual use since opening. It was changed to Fire Station No. 9 in 2007.

G.R. Fire Station No. 9



2251 Plainfield Avenue NE, 2012.

A Message for Creston from Commissioner Rosalynn Bliss:

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Then and now

Plainfield Avenue School



Plainfield Avenue School in 1888. Courtesy Grand Rapids Illustrated by E.B. Fischer, 1888.

Plainfield Avenue School was built in 1884 and closed in 1933. The school was replaced by Lafayette Avenue, a parking lot and a grocery store. The grocery store was built in 1938 as an A&P. The former grocery store is now Optical Supply.



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The Piggeries: Grand Rapids' first recycling program

By: Roger L. McClary

In the early years of the City of Grand Rapids there was no systematic method of garbage collection. Most families disposed of their household waste by throwing it to livestock, or dumping it into abandoned wells or even directly into the Grand River. In 1895 the garbage problem in the river was so bad the Army Corps of Engineers complained to the mayor that it was a hazard to navigation.

The earliest garbage collectors were not municipal employees, but West Side entrepreneurs. The first had a small, two-wheeled cart drawn by a huge Belgian dog, with a barrel in the cart. He often used a whip on his dog. This did not go over well with the Number Three Fire Company who are said to have once sprayed him into the next block. He would

collect the waste in his cart, mix it with water to form swill, and then feed it to his pigs at home.

The second entrepreneur was a foreigner, home country unknown, also on the West Side, who had a larger two-wheeled cart, drawn by a steer. He would often go without a hat, and frequently without a coat. His cart was followed by his daughter, whose real name is unknown, but the neighborhood boys called her "Sloppy Ann."

The city decided to build a coal-fired garbage burner in 1897, located at an island in the Grand River which is now the 200 block of Market Street. It had a daily capacity of 39 tons and cost \$6,000 a year to operate. The city finally instituted mandatory garbage collection in 1905.

The Alderman of the Common Council wanted a new method to dispose of garbage

and, hopefully, keep costs down. They were particularly interested in a way to turn trash into fertilizer. They awarded a contract to Alvah Brown of Garbage Reduction and Utilization Co. He promised a "chemical means" of animal and vegetable waste and would pay the city \$1200 a year. The city would collect the waste, and separate it into the animal and vegetable matter which was sent to Brown and other materials which were sent to the incinerator.

What Brown didn't tell the Council was that his "chemical means" was a massive piggery of more than 500 pigs at what is now Alger and Plymouth.

While Brown only retained the contract for a few years, the piggery as an institution remained a part of Grand Rapids garbage collection policy until the last piggery was closed in December 1957.

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Editor's Corner: A rodent scourge

By: Pete Tabberer

Autumn is coming and that means two things. First, it will soon be time to plant next years tulip bulbs. Second, it is time to resurrect my yearly feud with the neighborhood squirrels.

Let me be perfectly clear, I like squirrels. When they are doing adorable things like chattering gleefully, or fearlessly sailing from tree to tree, or chasing each other around the yard. At those times, squirrels and I get along swimmingly.

But, when it comes time to plant tulip bulbs, the squirrels and I have a problem.

Here's the story. I plant tulip bulbs. An hour later a squirrel hops along and digs them up. They don't eat them or carry them away. They just dig them up and leave them laying there. This happens every fall.

Little is more frustrating than spending an afternoon planting bulbs only to find

them unearthed later that day.

And the game continues. I stoically replant the bulbs. As soon as my back is turned they scamper over and dig them up again. It's like some sort of contest that I don't know how to win.

Eventually enough bulbs stay in the ground long enough to take root, but until then it is an uphill battle against the rodent scourge.

Why do they dig up my tulips? I wish I knew. Do they imagine they are digging up a recently buried acorn? Are they powerless to resist the urge to dig freshly turned soil? Of course, I could stop planting tulips, but then the squirrels will have won. That would be unacceptable.

I, like many, look forward to tulips in the spring. Tulips make me happy. But, my happiness for the coming spring is slightly tempered by the knowledge of the coming battle with the squirrels.



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Board meets the 4th Thursday of most months.
6pm @ CNA offices.

The North End Connection

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The North End Connection is produced by volunteers and published by the Creston Neighborhood Association. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the staff, Board of Directors or membership of the association.

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Printing of this publication is done by KISD.

Welcome New & Renewing Members!

As of: 8/15/2012

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- E-newsletter
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- Pancake Breakfast
- Walking & delivering flyers/announcements
- Delivering yard signs
- Volunteer recruitment & appreciation

Fundraising Committee: Plans & implements events to sustain CNA services and programs

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- Art Battle
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CNA's Mission:
To organize residents and resources to promote the social, economic and environmental health of the Creston community!



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 6pm @ CNA offices –Public Welcome–

CNA Annual Meeting
 Thursday, October 25
 6:30 pm @ Berean Baptist Church

Election Day
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Fall 2012



North End Connection